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Response:
A reaction by Joseph Gravina to the paper entitled *Promoting Democratic Citizenship: an exploration of the current educational debate about what students at the beginning of the 21st century should be encouraged to understand by the concepts of 'democracy' and 'citizenship' by Philip Caruana that appeared in the last issue of JMER.*

Joseph Gravina
joseph.gravina@um.edu.mt

Joseph Gravina teaches Systems of Knowledge at the University of Malta Junior College, which he joined since its institution in 1995, having previously taught the same subject at G.F. Abela Higher Secondary. He has also taught this subject at the Gozo Centre of the University of Malta, St. Aloysius' Sixth Form College and Lasalle Institute, Floriana. Has published separate chapters in the official 'Guidebook' I and II of Systems of Knowledge, 'The Examined Life' (edited by L.J. Scerri) and 'Values in Systems of Knowledge: A Multidisciplinary Approach' (one of the editors). Has published 'Values in Systems of Knowledge Book I' (2003). He holds B.Ed. (Hons) and M.Ed. from the University of Malta, and is presently a doctoral student at the Faculty of Education of the same University. Has taught and organised seminars at the Faculty in 'Human Rights Education' and 'Democracy and Education'.

Abstract:

This paper is a critical reading of Philip Caruana's study of citizenship education and is based on a theoretical analysis of, amongst others, his suggestion to synthesise national identity and shared fate concepts in order to improve the effectiveness of education for citizenship. The promotion of democratic citizenship is considered restrictive both because it is intended to mould as well as because it applies exclusively what it considers 'liberal' ideals.

The critical exercise leads to the reworking of a broader programme for which the main areas of knowledge are traced: the state, the economy and culture. This, it is claimed, along with a relevant contribution of studies about the Maltese experience related to the study, also prepares for a return of social and economic interests to citizenship education. At the same time, a wider global view of world events is attempted, away from institutionalised canonical versions. Only in this way, it is claimed, can a political education curriculum be more effective.

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1. Introduction: the Liberal mould.

Although Caruana (2006) departs from a small section of the post-secondary syllabus for Systems of Knowledge, the first module amongst four entitled 'Democracy and Citizenship', he moves on to discuss issues that go far beyond the mere limits of a single school subject, albeit a subject that is obligatory for University of Malta admission and enrolment. Unfortunately, he starts off with a rather unwarranted and patronising touch as he suggests he will address "what students at the beginning of the 21st century *should* be encouraged to understand" by the concepts of 'democracy' and 'citizenship' (p.67)[1]. One can argue of course that it is one of the responsibilities of intellectuals to share with the public their analyses and even come up with proposals and ideas supported by strong reasons, but it can also be asserted that in the past, the Maltese educational sector has had its fair amount of institutionally supported frock-clad and suit-dressed purveyors of the truth who have imposed (and continue to do so) their *shoulds* and *should nots* to excuse a certain distrustfulness on the reader's part[2].

Our initial fear and unease for the prescriptive nature of the essay are proved correct and justified when, later in his contribution, Caruana exposes what apparently had been the over-arching intent accompanying the build-up of his main argument. In the latter half of the article in fact he presents a set of guideline indicators to introduce and explain better his preferred liberal programme and, at that point, Macedo's political agenda features heavily. Facing one of the main challenges in the traditions of ideological crusade, namely how to create the ideal citizen in concrete practice, Macedo argues that the construction of a liberal "critical mass of citizens with appropriate moral commitments and affective attachments cannot be left to chance" because "liberal citizens do not come into existence naturally" (Caruana, 2006: 73). Whilst premising (in Caruana's words) that a "just regime" does not "adapt itself" to its citizens, he therefore advocates that it "must consciously *mould* citizens who share a sufficiently cohesive political identity" (*ibid*).

If we ignore the 'naturalist' thread and place the argument where it may bear more epistemologically rewarding fruits - the politico-ideological context - it will be possible to offer at least one suggestion why it has been so difficult for intellectuals, whose declared aim is to mould others with their liberalism, to achieve their goal[3]. The class basis of this politico-ideological practice proposed by Macedo, and by association Caruana, may go unnoticed because sociologically, the concept of class has become less clear since class appurtenance is run through transversally by socially relevant identities such as gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity. However, ideological practice complements and is contemporaneous to class division and therefore does not start at a specific point but is permanent in class-based social formations. It is more firmly rooted and therefore *anticipate*s Macedo's deliberate strategy. The difficulty of spreading or popularising liberal ideas through subjecting

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[1] This and all other italics in the essay are mine, unless a note indicates otherwise.
[2] This was highlighted in Wain's strong argument against the paternalism of the authorities, political and educational, in his diatribe against the then prevalent practices in terms of curricular debate and development. See Wain (1991).
[3]The rejection of liberalism on the macro-regional scale in post-war Europe paradoxically followed a war against Fascist and Nazi *anti*liberalism. The Liberal Parties were pushed aside by voters in post-war elections and one reason for their defeat was that they were without close connections with the popular classes and therefore deprived of an electoral base. See, Gill and Law (1994).

members of another class to ideological practice does not therefore arise from lack of trying but from the indelible resistance of class 'instinct' derived from the social relations founded at the economic level[4]. This unschooled anti-liberal trigger was a favourite with Maltese social democrats, who throughout were accompanied for a number of different reasons in fighting 'liberal' threats by a strange bed-fellow, conservative clericalism. Extending beyond national frontiers, religious obstruction to rampant liberalism (a *neo* version) has become a common ideological stand against westernisation and its *raison d'etre*, globalised capitalism, at least that controlled by the advanced capitalist economies.

Undeterred by all this, Caruana still proposes 'moulding' and although he does not find anything morally dubious in the process, still manifests a certain disquiet in the need to justify it all by asking us to take him for his word and believe in all faith that "to mould" is not truly "questionable ethically" but "should be taken in a positive connotation" (p.73). In a way, he is right (although nowhere does it surface that this is his line of argument) because education as a politico-ideological activity implicitly involves 'some' moulding, and sometimes explicitly even more than that. What he does not discuss and therefore justify is such matters as who is to decide about the moulding both as process and content. Bereft of accompanying arguments, and whilst the discussion is still on, we ask why liberal and *only* liberal? Is this liberalism a self-evident truth, a political belief, or perhaps something else?[5] Without answers to these queries, the 'moulding' we are asked to consider becomes palliative at best, but when located within a broader neoliberal framework can turn out to be deceitful.

2. National and shared fate citizenship duality

Our misgivings are not placated when the citizenship debate develops into the 'national identity' and 'shared fate' citizenship duality. Having and holding on to a national identity, we read, is anything but easy: "it is difficult to imagine how a society can maintain the same identity with all the movements of citizens, globalisation, and the way the world is evolving" (p.72)[6]. So, bowing to rather hastily described global phenomena, national identity as a concept of citizenship is transformed into membership in a community of shared fate, within (one assumes) a national but also an international sphere. Multiculturalist societies demand it and global media and communication create the space and technological means to achieve it on the broader scale. This extension however sounds the alarm. Heater's "feeling of universal identity and the acceptance of universal morality" spills the beans (Caruana, 2006: 73). Caruana raises the stakes and attempts to establish a connection between Macedo's 'cohesive political identities' at national identity level and this shared fate 'universal morality'. Huntington may not be convinced, but neither will the political left.

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[4] Further elaborations on instinct and class distinctions see Poulantzas (1975) and Laclau (1977).

[5] The social democratic experiment carried out in continental Europe (and Malta) in the last century, a political and economic experience not without faults of course, is brushed aside without a thought. See Giddens (1998), included amongst Caruana's references.

[6] This stubborn dedication to the liberal way(s) is amply attested by the subject-matter and general approach in the new publication intended for post-secondary education *Systems of Knowledge: A Multidisciplinary Approach* (various editors) especially the section edited by Caruana on democratic values and citizenship.

In fact when the author suggests we are influenced by norms and values as an "automatic process that cannot be halted" (p.74), we ask whether what he proposes can ever happen[7]. Global media and communication technologies have transformed access to western cultural products and ideas. The point is that it does not follow at all to consider media impact as 'automatic'. The drilled repeatability and uncontrollable pervasiveness indicate, according to Adorno (1996), that it is the culturally degraded intention to push for consumerist psychology. The contradictory reactions one gets from empirical research in cultural responses to global media onslaught indicate however that responses may be surprising and contradictory[8]. And so it is difficult to understand how Caruana is to turn back what is 'automatic' especially when the bibliography suggested at the end of the article does not include any Maltese contribution. If 'national identity' has a role to play in his 'shared fate', than the criteria of relevance and concreteness demand its exploration. Even its absence remains of course analytically valuable. Otherwise the entire construct based on the two categories has to be dropped. Without any traction from the 'national' context, not only do we miss the 'shared fate' stage (what are we going to share anyway?) but, based on the 'absence' of a local identity, we are up for grabs[9]. This, possibly, also answers the query why Caruana sees the spread of globalisation as 'automatic'.

Historical reference and the international scenario may assist us in understanding at least partly what is involved and why educators in democracy and citizenship need to be bothered. The Atlantic pact was a first postwar stage of capitalist (and liberal) cohesion building; without the Soviet threat, the strategy could now be extended further, in fact globalised. The US administration however does not want to rule the world, writes Amin, it just wants to pillage it[10]. And there is no real interest in democracy. Kuwait was not democratised. So are hegemonic schemes, fruit of conspiracy theorists working on global scales? The links between liberal argument and international colonial interests are well-known[11]. On an ideological scale, during the nineteenth and most of the twentieth century it was socialism that had an internationalist bent; now it appears there has been an increase in the internationalisation of a liberal creed, termed neoliberalism (Anderson, 2002; Amin, 2004) supporting the globalised economy. FDI, IMF, World Bank, WTO, unilateral aggressive military and trade policies, almost unrestricted macro-regional expansion in Eastern Europe, I am sure all have their rationally justified role to play in a grand scheme of world capitalist development, and yet they do provoke an itch, and there is

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[7] In 'A Historical Science of Society' from *The German Ideology*, Marx whilst outlining the active involvement of the human factor, proposes to ascend from earth to heaven. Others, he adds, prefer to depart from heaven to come to earth (p.17).

[8] Morley (1994), p.155, especially notes 25, 26 and 27. Also, Gravina (2003), in 'The media and the news'. Radical groups can use these means.

[9] Paul Piccone remarks, "In Gramsci, the logic of the whole, unencumbered by a fatalistic Marxist theory of history, can grasp the particular without reducing it to an extension of that logic and thereby suffocating its uniqueness and specificity." See Landy (1994), p.42. Giddens felt the need to point a counter-tendency in his 'Foreword' for Sultana and Baldacchino (1994), p.xxix: 'Malta cannot be studied, it is demonstrated over and over again, as though it were an isolated unit. It is part of a wider global society and the influence of the wider global order appears almost everywhere'.

[10] This may explain, at least in part, one of the main differences in the British management of empire and the postwar American version: the former exported imperial functionaries all over the world and these were in direct contact with the colonised 'national' territory, the latter does not.

[11] Laclau, for example, mentions the symptomatic liberal "mythology according to which everything colonial was identified with stagnation and all things European with progress". See Laclau (1971)

very little to remove the itch[12]. This is a gloomier perception of Caruana's suggested concept, 'shared *fate*', and Fukuyama's trumpeted epitaph, a liberal democracy that is the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and final form of government, in other words, the end of history.

As for the Americans, the lessons from the Vietnam War are still alive. Back home, the liberal national identity has to be appeased. Which does not mean of course that liberal appeals to bridge the us/them divide, educate for the politically correct disposition of impartiality, or the appeal of individual rights (part of Caruana's concoction) while intending to revive[13] democratic and citizenship debate paradoxically do not serve the opposite purpose: a moralistic cover-up for genuine democratic politics, Mouffe's 'reality of conflict' (2005: 149). She premises that modern democratic politics linked to the human rights universal declaration, another major 'universalist' postwar agenda, "imply" a "reference to universality" but only as a "horizon that can never be reached" and a "content" that "must remain indeterminate" (pp.146-7). In other words, division remains indelible, both nationally and globally. Paradoxically of course, this should not create impossible difficulties to grasp, seeing that it is within the nature of democracy and capitalism, after all, to be divisive systems. But it does run counter to any idealistic universality and sharpens Macedo's reference to national cohesiveness rather than opens it up.

If the world scenario is complex, local realities may assist in focussing on the consequences[14]. At the local level, the crisis in social reproduction patterns especially in certain important conditions of long-term social development such as social integration, education and culture, natural resources and ecological safety mentioned by Brie (2006) indicate that society is not unaffected. The relative weakening of the family and the state in some of their core functions is paradoxically accompanied by a drive towards educational, health and political reforms meant to guarantee elementary services and equality of chances when economic policies schizophrenically threaten the foundations of such reforms, undermine them, and at worst make them impossible. Privatisation and the extension of market-economy competition to the private sector (even if not necessarily the very big guns) but also the public, the commitment to an even more far-reaching deregulation of state control over finance streams, the deregulation and further commodification of the labour market are processes that neoliberalist inroads and their 'disintegrative consequences' intend to impose, against any resistance (*ibid.*)*:* more liberty for less welfare. Asking capitalists to carry a *social* responsibility that runs counter to their interests is indeed a worrying sign-post.

3. Defining 'democracy'

Focussing on democracy within the context of the nation-state, seeing that democracy in macro-regional or indeed global spaces is more or less a concession to formal frameworks rather than significant decision-making processes, we need to identify attempts to elaborate a meaningful conceptual presentation of democracy. Whilst Caruana (2006) rightly refers to the many definitions of the concept, we find it is not

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[12] The democracy we are familiar with works (when it does) in a nation-wide system with its self-imposed rules but the world economy does not share the same organisation and legitimation.
[13] Revive? Dworkin (2006), instead of addressing socio-economic aspects for the terrible mess in the US democratic debate continues to follow the 'pure' civil and political liberal path.
[14] Amin (1997).

problematised in depth. And so when it is suggested that "if one reflects on the different governments of the world, one is likely to conclude that most people in the world favour democracy over other types of government", we are left in a quandary (p.68). For a start, asking people who today live in a 'representative' democracy of the Western world whether they would opt for a dictatorial, fundamentalist, colonial or monarchical regime, does not really push the argument too far ahead. The merits one guarantees for one's democratic pedigree are minimal. It would have been better to ask in which democracy one desired to live.

Then there is the alternative matter of asking others who do not live in such a democracy whether they would prefer the Western system. And what does one get for a reply?[15] Self-evident truths such as the preference for 'democracy' against a non-democratic regime are questioned. And the query is anything but superficial because it lies in the fundamental premise of any democratic belief that whosoever is considered to form part of the democratic polity has a right to have a say, one way or another, in decision-making. When the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) won the majority of votes in the first stage of the national legislative elections held in December 1991 in Algeria, the army intervened and elections were disrupted, the party on its way to rule was made illegal and its members hunted down in spite of its majority democratic support. The democratic process of the elections was not in doubt; opponents objected about a future threat against democracy by the fundamentalists. Then again, assuming this was a plausible possibility, had not the people chosen democratically this path?

If the assumed anti-democratic threats of the FIS in Algeria may have justified the over-ruling of the sovereign rights of the Algerians to their democratic choice (i.e. the fundamentalists would not have allowed the Algerians a future democratic choice), recent Palestinian elections provide a situation more difficult to justify. The Palestinians who through incredible hardships have maintained a democratic approach to politics whilst at the same time keeping radical Islam under control (which goes a long way in teaching their neighbours, friend and foe, about democratic politics) elected Hamas to government. The diplomatic activity, anything but surprising, to influence and change the democratic decisions of the Palestinians by the US and Israel most prominently but also by the EU, was a challenge from outside (although the spatial connotation in the case of Palestine is anything but clear) to the sovereign rights of the Palestinians[16]. In this case, the elected party was accused of threatening the peace. An understandable and morally hurt reply points out that Israelis regularly vote war-mongerers to government. A deeper consideration about democracy emerges that goes beyond the merely descriptive-definitional or moralistic level. In the cases we mentioned as well as others, democracy as a vehicle for people's choice (a more agreeable proposal than Caruana's high-flowing 'people prefer democracy' populism)

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[15] The landslide victory in 1990 for Milosevic in Serbia's first multiparty elections since World War II and anti-Chinese revolts in 1998 in Indonesia's return to democracy. And so we question Graham's terse argument about democracy having a special 'contingent' rather than 'conceptual' attribute: "justification and defence of political systems must come to an end in contingent facts not conceptual truths". See Graham (1983), p.95.

[16] Palestine is merely the last emphatic example. American Liberals and Conservatives (and the respective neo-versions) have been consistent on this. Chile in the 1970s and Nicaragua in the 1980s were not Islamic. They were however democratic. As for Palestine, the absolute lack of balance in power makes European diplomacy, at least at times, look ridiculous. The aid donor carrot however is perverse. See text adopted by the EU Parliament on 2nd February, 2006 from http://www.europarl.europa.eu.

is subordinated to other interests related to national or regional power (im)balance, and even deeper inter-connected interests such as global monopolies[17]. However that demands a new articulation with a different set of arguments which takes us away from Caruana's article and our present concern.

The question regarding people's desire for democracy is either naively honest or appeasing. If the former, it is idealistic and easily manipulated by the ideological undertones of the latter. And yet even as an academic exercise this question does not lead us anywhere in particular[18]. Impossible to answer because we have not yet established at least the contours of the concept, not even historical innuendos assist us: our democratic models share very few commonalities with the Athenian experiment mentioned in the essay even if Huntington's comment (reported by Caruana) that we should shy away from the Athenian 'democratic' system because the "highest offices were allocated by lottery" and its disquieting vulnerability to the "persuasive voices of irresponsible demagogues" leave us unimpressed. His focus on process is understandable, seeing his democratic concerns, but it is also true that the Athenians used 'lottery' so they could fight nepotism or other corruption. They also disliked or hated voting (a strong reason one presumes for Huntington's distaste) only because they believed in self-representation. As for demagoguery, a study of Gramscian hegemony should indicate that it may not be the most efficient technique for long-term control of a people's consciousness. Huntington certainly knows about this. Of course nothing here is meant to imply the Athenians were perfect. In fact they were impressive because they faced their weaknesses straight on.

4. The concepts of 'democracy' and 'citizenship': Caruana's argument

Caruana sticks to his guns and sees the task of finding "consensus on definition and approach" to democracy "*a priority*" (p.69). It appears however that Kerr, quoted by the author for validation of his thesis, sees the situation differently. The latter emphasises the importance of redefining concepts like democracy and citizenship only as "*a by-product* of a much larger, wide-ranging debate concerning the changing nature of citizenship in modern society and the role of education within that society" (p.69). The two are related but Kerr changes the priority order which, he argues, is due to a "less certain post modern world" (p.69). In other words, unless we get down to suggesting what the changing nature of citizenship is all about, we do not move the debate forward. Undeterred by the philosophical impasse and Kerr's challenge for a redefinition of citizenship, the author pushes forward with definition and amongst the hundreds of definitions, he prefers those "most adhered to in the west" and these are uncritically attached to educational curricula (p.70). It is from these that we are to 'evaluate' government's 'authentic' functioning, that is functioning "as close as

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[17] According to Amin (1997), the centres of global power have five monopolies over the peripheries: technological monopoly, especially military, which only large investments can guarantee; financial monopoly guaranteed by the control of worldwide financial markets of what previously circulated within largely national financial institutions: finance capital; the monopoly access to the planet's natural resources; media and communications monopolies allowing political manipulation, uniformity of culture, erosion of democratic practices, and expansion of media market; and finally, there are weapons of mass destruction over which the US holds a clear-cut monopoly.

[18] Students may even dream of being a prime minister for one day as they are invited to do in the Systems of Knowledge text. Imaginative but pathetic if not balanced by critical questioning. Why not consider a fifty year old citizen-worker who ends up unemployed? Or another who wants to learn what s/he has always missed because of the need to work to make a decent living.

possible to *the* basic norms and values" (p.70) [19]. Why? Because "it is well recognised that the European states, individually or as a European Union, have in these last years intensified their concern and effort to devise curricula that would be best suited to promote values within their societies, and to promote societal cohesion" (p.70). Intensity of effort does not of course equal justification.

And so, *pace* Kerr, we are presented with Patrick who argues that any debate about democracy should start with "minimal democracy" (p.70). This is where the author stumbles across Huntington who offers the following: a political system is "democratic to the extent that its most powerful collective decision makers are selected through fair, honest and periodic elections in which candidates freely compete for votes and in which virtually all the adult population is eligible to vote" (p.70). According to Caruana, this minimal, mainly procedural definition implies an emphasis on popular sovereignty, or government by the consent of the governed, where the government is directly or indirectly accountable to the people. If we were to assume, only for argument's sake, that this suggestion has any foundation at all, it has to be argued that this only works at a 'minimal' level otherwise one is hard-pressed to find any substantial exercise in sovereignty in it. Competition and participation at least as minimally defined by Huntington necessitate civil and political freedoms to speak, publish, assemble, and organise as the bare necessities for political debate and the conduct of regular electoral campaigns to proceed without impediment. This periodic media event is firmly rooted in the more sober Rights of Man tradition with an emphasis, amongst others, on opposition parties' freedom from being denied, curbed, or harassed whilst censorship is looked down upon.

Huntington's democracy is one in which the way elections are carried out is more important than anything else. That governments are inefficient or shortsighted, irresponsible or dominated by special interests, may perhaps be undesirable but not undemocratic. This is a minimal definition effective in knocking out radical Left alternatives and highlights the freedom bias of the West. And yet one could easily have opted for other minimal definitions such as that by Wringe (1984) who explained how a democratic state, "at the very least" can only "exist for the sake of the people in it" and in that case included even the corporatist democracies of Eastern Europe and Asia (p.7). The central criterion however is not inclusion but the decision to opt for the substantive rather than the procedural principle. The choice for Huntington puts the author in a difficult position when he tackles the educational aspect. There he refers to "new forms of active citizenship" by Evans that demand the promotion of "the highest forms of learning with understanding, critical skills, and above all, lifelong learning and inquiry" because "knowing how is *not* the same as knowing why, and the social dynamics of the time demand that we know '*why*' as well as 'how'" (Caruana, 2006: 72). And so it becomes difficult to understand the "positive connotations" (p.72) of Huntington's ideas when all his system demands is a ready and steady pool of political cadres.

5. Youth and education.

Still recoiling from philosophical indeterminacy, political difficulties to reconcile norms with reality, and the disturbing ideological nature of educational moulding,

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[19] See not 7 above.

another hurdle is dropped into our path – the purported disaffection of young people today. Particularly since the late Sixties, youth has been considered a social problem necessitating attention from a wide-ranging spectrum of interests including commercially-motivated breakthroughs as well as theses-seeking university research. In the essay we are offered readings that indicate young people today face a crisis and/or suffer from some undesirable attitude. Kerr, for example, refers to "the worrying signs of alienation and cynicism among young people about public life and participation, leading to their possible disconnection and disengagement with it"[20]. One of course queries whether they were connected or engaged at all before, and if they were, how. Evans describes two parallel phenomena: "young adults are experiencing an uncertain status *and* are dependent upon state and parental support for longer periods than would have been the case a generation ago" (Caruana, 2006: 69). It is not clear whether between the two, there is a consequential relation or else it is a case of concomitant development. This situation, Evans argues, has created a generation of youngsters who suffer uncertainty not because of knowledge but because it is a "manufactured uncertainty"[21]. Why the author does not follow this up is not known. He seems to steer away from the implications of the arguments raised by Evans and prefers to stick to her liberal choice-based individual propensities which emerge from "personal aspirations with available opportunities and their own values" (Caruana, 2006: 69) rather than the 'objective' contexts providing such opportunities: the domains of education, consumption, politics, work and family life[22]. If one is to talk about young people, albeit their citizenship and democratic experiences, can one not 'socialise' these contexts into the political debate? Is the reluctance to discuss the relationship between work and citizenship the same reason why the only main topic wiped off the 'old' Systems of Knowledge syllabus in relation to the 'new' was that of work and leisure?

One final comment regarding Caruana's paper is his observation of young people "taking things for granted", an attitude which he considers is to blame for making "democracy so vulnerable" (p.70). With all the uncertainty around, it becomes interesting to find how they can take things for granted. More to the point however is to ask how they can be in a position to take things for granted in their experience of democratic life when they still lack enough substantial experience in it for this to occur; indeed an effort in democratic education is commendable (even if not restricted to the liberal model presented) because of the paucity of meaningful experiences in it and not because of people taking things for granted[23]. An even deeper reservation however runs throughout the youth debate in terms of the general approach followed

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[20] Caruana (2006) found that 10.8% amongst the Junior College students participating in his survey thought the Maltese system was a direct democracy. Many reasons can be given but one is hard-pressed to take this to represent a purported youth crisis.

[21] Actually, Evans adopts this term from Giddens. See, Karen Evans *Back to the future: are Britain's reforms of post-16 education working?* Accessed from http://www.emeraldinsight.com/Insight (date of accession: 02/03/2007).

[22] The metaphors by Evans could have presented an alternative dimension for the sufferings of youth. See previous note.
It becomes difficult to explain how liberals have found it difficult to attract youth when, if Hobsbawm is right about the young, they 'can only be mobilised' in the private sphere over such issues as lifestyles, environment, emancipatory gay rights or drugs'. The attractiveness of liberal belief is its penchant for freedoms. See Hobsbawm (2000), p.112

[23] Unless of course Caruana refers to taking past democratic conquests for granted, the lack of respect towards which is undesirable, but considering it to blame for putting democracy in jeopardy is an exaggeration.

by the author who prefers to take attributes of a psychological nature - in short, youthful disenchantment - as a basis for the elaboration of a political education programme. This does not mean of course that people's attitudes are insignificant, in fact it means the opposite as I shall argue briefly, they are so important that we must delve deeper than meets the eye, or fills the bountiful data sheets of interviews, so that we can understand better.

Apparently the constitutional legislative and political branches, but also the wider cultural context have fallen short of favouring the democracy some liberals crave for, and so the remedy is (as with the partial solution of other perceived social crises) to turn to education. In this essay we shall argue otherwise and not necessarily because we intend to keep education out of the picture, but because education (or schooling to limit the range) is a branch of a larger structure, the state. And if that becomes too tall an order to confront then we can resign ourselves to patchwork. It takes time however and meanwhile we diligently note that democracy remains a contested concept stretching from an instrumental mechanism for decision-making processes to the ultimate test in normative civic conduct. Its problematisation is a desirable educational experience and schools, in spite of all other difficulties they have to face, need to provide such an experience if they deserve to be called learning or educational institutions[24]. However to suggest as the author does that "one of the issues that can be taken as an example" of the challenge in education is to "question whether in a democracy citizens should be free to vote or not to vote in national elections or for elections for the European parliament" is an understatement and misses the point (p.76). Voting is important but conjunctural. Caruana paradoxically demolishes any educational value in discussing voting: "if citizens do not take up their duty to vote, they are forfeiting their responsibility in upholding popular sovereignty as has already been argued" (p.76). Question opened, question closed. And there is no appeal: "adopting a *laissez-faire* attitude including deciding not to exercise the right to vote (…) will get no one anywhere' (p.76). This approach, I argue, will in fact get *us* nowhere and at this point we break off from the essay and present a triad of concepts in order to radically transform the platform over which a new political programme can be built.

6. A tentative, but radically different approach based on the triad: state, economy and culture

(a) The state and education

The concept of the state is basic, it is argued, to discuss meaningfully democracy. Taking from Poulantzas (1975) his instrumentally useful structural elaboration of the state, we can thus place the schools in the function-related locus reserved for them. The state 'condenses' the fundamental *relations* amongst the social groups and the success of this condensation is basic to the health of the state which can, in this way, mediate through its institutions the contradictions characterising these relations. The State however is not neutral, as some liberals claim (or desire). It remains essentially a 'terrain' of power relations that determine, amongst others, a substantial part of what goes into schools or is left out. Cohesion is therefore basic for the peaceful reproduction at the economic and political levels of the social order that accords with

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[24] See Wain (2006) for differences between learning and education.

the fundamental class relations as established at the level of state power. Schools are there essentially, but not exclusively, for the 'reproductive' purpose. They do not repress as the army or prisons but perform at the ideological level[25]. Schools as state politico-ideological apparatuses do not possess power on their own account and so do not determine class divisions as such but they do contribute to them. In fact as the context for democratic education, schools can take us to the very heart of the state, an ideal context for critical reflection. At the same time (but just as importantly) the study of school helps us remove the 'ghostly' nature of 'state' discourse. On the other hand, the absence of discussion makes it a disturbing experience.

If any class or section attempts to change the balance of power in the relations 'condensed' within the state it cannot effectively do so merely on the basis of providing educational programmes that complement its efforts. Even acquiring executive democratic governmental power, a favourite theme in Caruana's essay, on the basis of citizens' votes is not enough. In fact although the newly-acquired power determines the role and functions of apparatuses, unless the sector or class it represents changes the apparatuses, then there will be no radical change from what went on before. A social class, of course, cannot even think of achieving this unless it captures those apparatuses through the acquisition of state power in the first place. Only then argues Poulantzas, can it think of proceeding to demolish and rebuild them. This has nothing to do with the physical demolishment or organisational regrouping of schools or institutes set up by one party in government following another. Such practices give too much credit to institutional determination. If it was like that, all it takes to 'repair' is to reform institutions, here and there. However the power relations we spoke about earlier occur beyond the limits not only of the school, but even that of parliament and all other sorts of institutions and apparatuses. It is at the level of the capitalist mode of production (CMP) that we get a comprehensive vision of the field. The CMP however has to be reproduced within a social formation, thus presupposing the reproduction of social relations. In turn this means political and ideological reproduction and therefore the apparatuses.[26] This remains the latter's contribution and claim to be taken seriously. This briefly sketched theoretical structure should make clear that the triad is really a unity, the elements of which are only separated for the purposes of explanation.

(b) The economic factor

Politics is not immune from the attractions of the economy as one elicits from Briguglio's good governance criterion part of the attraction potential for his economic resilience index which, it can be argued, aims at embedding the interest of capital, big and small, into the democratic polity.[27] The US and the EU have become masters in devising agreements using 'democracy' - their kind - as a requirement for others to

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[25] A middle class prerogative. Ideological apparatuses can repress and repressive apparatuses can have an ideological role but this is a secondary function.

[26] Further explanation, beyond the reach of this paper from, Poulantzas (1975), especially Part II of the Introduction, pp.24-8.

[27] Failure to safeguard the rule of law and security of property rights reduce resilience. Briguglio also refers to the Economic Freedom of the World Index which covers five aspects of governance: judicial independence, court impartiality, protection of intellectual property rights, military interference in the rule of law and political system, and integrity of the legal system. L. Briguglio *et al* (eds.) (2006), p.275. In other words, once you tie the hands of sovereign states with international legislation, then you have them on a platter.

receive aid. A certain strand in liberal amnesia may make us forget that the economy also thrives on strong relations with the educational sector. In other words, seeing democracy and citizenship (and relative educational programmes) merely as training in practising the right to vote and some other such rituals is putting on the blinkers. Human capital theory can express very clearly the close encounters between education and economy or, more pertinently, the perception of education as a subsidiary for economic needs.

According to Sultana (1997), human capital theory has been "very influential" in Malta "irrespective of whoever was in government" and in spite of ideological and other differences (p.335). This consistency (or, perhaps, consistent inconsistency as should emerge shortly) is reflected in Vella's (1995) argument about post-war economic policy in Malta. "The Maltese policy-maker", he wrote, "has never seriously questioned orthodox concepts of development" and so political economic policy has developed in a paradigmatic continuity (p.56). But to understand this, one has to disengage from the ideological paradigms of Left and Right, which coloured the *diversity* in the official formulations and practical implementation: the "unexplainable gap" between the ideologically motivated squabbling about policy-making and what was actually being followed (p.56). Thus, our political and economic experiences in the post-war period as a developing country on the peripheries of the European macro-region have followed a paradigmatic continuity which is interesting because during the same period there were diverse and contrasting official formulations and practical implementations of educational policy in response, it was claimed, to the purported needs of the Maltese economy. It was another case of Right-Left dichotomy, hybridised on a common human capital platform.[28]

Our 'catching up' capitalist economic development has on the whole, we are led to believe, contributed quite positively to the general welfare of the population providing opportunities for the materialisation of liberating aspirations (profit-making for some, wage-earning for many of the rest). Based on Sultana's research, Giddens (1995) does not believe there is an underclass in Malta such as in the USA and other European nations although the immigrant influx into the labour market has to be assessed. However the "increasingly pervasive influence of market philosophies" indicates it may only be a question of time or a factor that remains undetected (p.xxxi). Influenced and in turn affected by family and gender changes in society, the labour market changes but it cannot be taken as an absolute; instead it is better to compare with others. In this case, fewer Maltese women are in paid employment than elsewhere in Western Europe affecting the male breadwinner role which in turn faces a decline in life-time jobs and the reduction of those in the state sector, a phenomenon which leaves an impact on the private sector. Unionisation survives but the democratic participation experiments have broken down and new managerial ideas have taken their place - empowerment of the workers, job enlargement, quality circles, democratisation of the workplace - highly rhetorical even if backed by the latest university-promoted theoretical schemes of worker control and labour squeeze techniques.

(c) The cultural factor

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[28] Germani quoted in Vella (1995), p.56

Where does democratic and citizenship education fit in all this? "Democracy survives when the people choose it as their system of government, and it is always given a different moulding, depending on many aspects including the culture of the country where it is put into practice" (Caruana, 2006: 71). If we brush aside the 'people choosing their system' opiate, Caruana is right in paying attention to culture and how this predisposes our character. The culture argument seems to move back and forth between the polarised ideas of *economism* on one side whereby culture adjusts to the dictates of economic determinants, a typical capitalist strategy as outlined by the study of Fordism, and on the other, cultural *pluralism*, mostly Eurocentric cultures, held to be constants. The former is represented by the substitution of God in precapitalist worldviews with capitalist Progress significantly manifested in impressive material developments. In this way capitalism liberated the democratic potential but at the same time put it into a straightjacket with its *economistic* regulatory principle. Are our patterns of work and leisure producing a false consciousness in which, Amin (1976) asks, "all aspects of life are subject to the fundamental requirement that labour power be reproduced as a commodity"? (p.79) Leisure becomes "functional recuperation" and, adds Amin, is "socially organised" (p.79). In Amin's critique, talk about "the free individual" is ultimately part of the "heaven of ideas", a product of false consciousness whereby "the hell of reality is compensated for by the heaven of ideas". (p.78)

Immiseration today in the developed world does not mean living without enough income to pay for survival needs. It means that what was gained in the third quarter of the last century is eroded. Those gains, at least in Western Europe, were the result of a mix of Keynesian economic policies and strong class consciousness. Once deterioration is perceived, can one blame it on anybody that the 'cultural' legitimacy of democracy is undermined? It will not be easily undermined because labour-capital compromise in the advanced industrial nations is strong, to the detriment of labour in the peripheries. But if the balance is disrupted, massive capital leaving the OECD fold for example, then there will be problems. Meanwhile labour is asked to tidy up its act or fall. University outreach programmes and unemployment agencies will be hard at work to patch this up. And what do the liberals offer? It is already difficult to understand how, with their traditional bias for individual rights (not bad in itself, but ultimately ineffective without the guarantee of economic and social rights), they can protect middle class losses, let alone consider what happens to those occupying lower social sectors. Against this backdrop, freedom of individual rights sounds hollow. Liberal communitarianism as a substitute for self-complacent individualism, Caruana's 'integration' of the individual "with the communitarian feeling, with a feeling of sharing and giving rather than only receiving" (p.75) appears to be itself a poor, enfeebled substitute for a more emasculated class consciousness.

Extending individual rights to all, bolstering them further through liberal programmes of education and at the same time continue to expect the 'market' to take care of economic activity means ignoring the real consideration that the market is not a democratic concern (unless for minimum regulations to control exaggerations). Besides the consideration that democracy and the market do not imply one another, at least not in the real world, there is also the consideration that globalised economic forces do not bow to the market – they control it. Perhaps in the world of 'democratic governance' selling, index-quoting economists, there is a place to conveniently place

markets and democracy side by side. A broader perspective presents the relation between (political) power and (economic) wealth as not a stable one. Power (i.e. the political branch) was the source of wealth (i.e. the economic arm) in sixteenth century capitalism but the relation has been overturned. The increasing separation between the two has meant that managing state power was set apart from managing the accumulation of capital. Meanwhile, the promises of politics are cooled down by the reality of capitalist profit, and the best one can do is to opt for economic alienation, which privileges human liberty over other values and not only equality.

Democracy as a fossilised system may be inserted in the bargain. But our point is that one talks meaningfully when one talks about democratisation rather than a static reality. Democratic development has been the result of many factors but certainly one of these has been resistance or rebellion from within, promoted by classes that were not ready to bow to the system at the time, bourgeois revolution against absolutist politics in France, the fairy-tale of liberalism built upon concrete popular support, and the working class reaction against excesses in China and Russia. With the 1989 fall of the Soviet system, neoliberal writers of the West could not believe their luck. One could now start to erode the gains of the postwar social struggles in Europe. Those who resisted were associated with crumbling Eastern European socialism notwithstanding that in the West, since the 1950s there had been a rejection, excluding only a few die-hards, of the Soviet model. The European project celebrated this year has to acquire a character that could liberate it from the double identity it has carried since its birth. Started as a compromise to appease the threat of the working classes after the war, it turned into a social democracy which guaranteed favourable conditions for the workers that went beyond purely economic capitalism. On the other hand, the same threat pushed the western European countries into the fold of American global interests with all its military and transnational capital appendages. If it is going to be democratic politics within the triad we have proposed -state, economy, culture - then our students could always start from here.

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