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RESEÑA DE "LA CONTINUITA DELLA VITA UMANA. IL
CONTRIBUTO DI KARL WILLIAM KAPP ALLA FONDAZIONE
DI UNA TEORIA ISTITUZIONALE CRITICA" DE PIETRO
FRIGATO E MARCO GIOVAGNOLI (A CURA DI)

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PIETRO FRIGATO e MARCO GIOVAGNOLI (a cura di), *La continuita della vita umana. Il contributo di Karl William Kapp alla fondazione di una teoria insituzionale critica*. Torino, L´Harmattan Italia, 2000, 194pp.

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This is a very interesting book which makes a multidisciplinary analysis of the contributions of one of the non traditional economists of the twentieth century: Karl William Kapp. Pietro Frigato, researcher at IUED in Genever and Marco Giovagnoli, professor and researcher at Bologna and Ancona, put together in this book several European and North American authors achieving to show clearly the different facets of this particular economist of the institutionalist school. The studies of Kapp, according to the editors of this book, have been characterized by a singular prospective amplitude. That is to say that Kapp extends his approach from the economy to the rest of the social sciences, going from the theory of social cost to a bio-cultural theory of institutional evolution.

The principle of "the continuity of human life", which gives the tittle to this book, tries to define one of the normative criteria in which the institutional economy is based. These normative criteria imply that human life has to continue so that the future generations will be able to have rights to live in an adequate environment which can support its reproduction.

Thus, this German thinker has promoted an economic and social science which is based on two main values: the maintenance of the possibility of human survival on the planet, and the minimization of the human suffering. These are the singular characteristics of this book that introduces the thought of Kapp into the present discussion about sustainability.

Another topic which is studied by the editors of this book has a relation with the systemic and evolucionistic matrix of Kapp approach.

It means that Kapp has defined the "evolution continuity" existing among the different levels or organization of reality. Being these different levels physic, biological and social systems having a complex and circular relation and considering their qualitative differences. But in the context of the continuity between humanity and nature, it is necessary to consider a specific characteristic: "human beings only exist within culture as well as culture is only present in human beings". As Kapp defined, human beings can be described as "culture-building" and "culture-transmitting".

All these aspects of Kapp´s thought, which are studied by the editors and the authors included in this book, show the interest that the work of this economist has into the contemporary debate on the relationship among nature, society and progress.

Frigato and Giovagnoli guided the selection of the articles and organized the book according to three main points: the philosophy of science, the philosophical anthropology and the theory of social cost. These aspects summarize Kapp´s work since the "*long reasoning*" of this economist follow a unitary discourse: the theory of social cost is constructed on the basis of a human social theory (bio-cultural concept of human nature) which refers to a pragmatic philosophy of science.

In the first part of this book, called "L´intima unitarieta della realtà e l´integrazione delle scienze sociali" Fred Blum in his article "Kart William Kapp e una scienza dell´essere umano nella società" explores the epistemological basis of Kapp´s social theory. The essay of Blum represents, according to the editors, a good and brief reconstruction of "Toward a Science of Man in Society" (1961), one of the most organic and complete works of Kapp.

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To this essay of Blum follows an article by Kapp himself: "Economía política ed umanesimo razionale", first published in the Swiss *Kyklos* review in 1968. This essay of Kapp represents, for the editors, the best achieved synthesis of his program about the sensitiveness towards human needs in social science.

The second part "L'uomo tra biologia e istituzioni: la teoría sociale di Karl William Kapp" starts with the article of Frank Schulz-Nieswandt intitled "La sociología come scienza dell'uomo: agire e contesto in Karl William Kapp". Emotionality and rationality, action and context, individual and society are analyzed as fundamental components of the social theory of Kapp.

Then an essay about the institutional conception of the social economy of the german scientist follows. The author of this essay is Regine Heidenreich and his work is called: "L'economía come scienza della cultura. La fondazione costruttivista dell'economía sociale nell'opera di Karl William Kapp". The objective of the author is to explain the diverse theoretical veins in which the institutional perspective of Kapp is based.

"La teoría dei costi sociali: rilevanza empirica ed umanizzazione", the third part of the book, has an article by James Swaney and Martin Evers called "Il concetto di costo sociale in Karl William Kapp e Karl Polanyi". The Kappian economy theory is analyzed taking into account the important difference that exists between the traditional concept of externality of the neo-classical economy and the concept of social cost. Also Kapp and Polanyi concept of social cost is compared by the authors.

The book finishes with an article of Christian Lepert who reformulates the Kappian theory of social cost in a new context where the environmental aspects of the industrial development are considered as very important. Precisely, the tittle of this essay is "I costi ecologici e sociali derivati como fondamento dell'analisi".

To conclude, this is a highly recommended book to be thought for another alternative to classical economy and which has been formulated after the contemporary ecological (or environmental) economy and the contemporary idea of sustainable development, having some theory components unfortunately not enough considered at the present time.