

**The Professions of the Future**

**By Sam Vaknin, Ph.D.**

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Predicting the future is a tricky business. There have been countless ridiculous failures at identifying the trends and products which will determine the future shape of our life and our environment. Even more difficult is trying to guess which of us will be deemed a useful member of the community – and which an obsolete relic. To a large extent, the answer to this question lies in determining the useful professions of the future. This is an age when people are determined, defined and categorized in strict accordance with their professions. Whereas during the Renaissance, a person might have been defined by his range of interests (remember the likes of Leonardo da Vinci), by his familial, religious, or ethnic affiliations, by his or her gender and so on – today the first and foremost question is a person's profession. The first question that we must provide a clear answer to is: What constitutes a profession (as opposed to a hobby), a vocation (as opposed to an avocation)? To qualify as a profession, the act must bear the following hallmarks:

It must be continuous and pursued for a long time.

It must occupy most of the waking hours.

It must yield earnings or compensation whether in money or in kind.

The person must have an advantage in that field of knowledge or activity, at least over laymen. In other words, the categories of laymen and expert – which are the result of highly specific education – must exist and prevail.

It must be hierarchically layered with clear flows of professional authorities and responsibilities and with a clear career path (progressing up the professional ladder).

The second relevant question is: What are the trends which determine our future? It is useless to look at microtrends. These are too volatile and, in principle, unpredictable. Much more important are the trends that last for hundreds or even thousands of years. These are usually not the results of technological conjuncture or geopolitical upheavals. Rather, they are the outcomes of characteristic human activities which are uninterrupted. Healthcare, for instance, is such a human activity. Humans – terrified of death and infirmity – always wanted and are very likely to continue to want to improve their health and thus to postpone the inevitable and better the quality of what is available. Another such overriding tendency is education: this is a part of the human survival kit. By educating oneself, by studying a profession, by learning more about the

world – one better one's chances to survive. Out of this set of human, almost deterministic activities, a group of overriding trends emerges:

### From Less Mobility to More Mobility

People, goods and, lately, information became and become, daily, more and more mobile. Physical distance has been shrunk. A global marketplace has formed. Information is almost instantly available anywhere. This was described as the global village – an outdated concept which might soon be replaced by the global home. All the professions which has to do with more mobility will benefit and represent preferred professions of the future. The moving of people: pilots, drivers, the car industry, sophisticated traffic planners and automotive innovators, tourism related professions and so on. The moving of goods: shipping, trucking, air and modern train travel. This area is already so specialized that I do not consider it as offering opportunities in the future (put differently, I do not regard it as a growth industry). The moving of information (today dubbed: "The Service Industries"): Trading systems, the Internet, Networking and communications related professions, the field of communications within the computer industries, telecommunications, entertainment related professions, technologies of banking. The creation of destinations for people, goods and information (commonly known as Markets or Marketplaces): advertising, marketing, trading, design, image and public relations experts.

### The Age Polarization of Society

Better medicine will lead to a polarization of the age structure of society: there will be more older people and more younger people. Gradually, as birth rates fall and contraception becomes widespread, a reverse pyramid will be formed: most people will be middle aged and old. This offers a clear view of professions which will be required in the future: Professionals to take care of older and younger people (which have very similar needs): nurses, paramedics, nannies, entertainers, leisure time professionals, companions, specialized equipment manufacturers, operators of homes for the very old or for the very young, pension planners, manufacturers of specialized medical and paramedical needs and products for both age groups, legal and accounting specialists in pension and inheritance laws and tax planning. Virtually every industry and field of human activity will have to adapt themselves to these demographic changes. Age-related expertise will develop in each one of them. This applies to the arts (mainly music and cinema) as well as to the crafts, to industry as well as to agriculture, to infrastructure as well as to government. Human society will be enormously influenced by these shifts.

### The Fragmentation of Society

Initially, society was composed of very large units. People belonged to tribes "nations". These were groupings of up to hundreds of thousands of people. They felt amply defined by this belonging. Nothing was left out when you said that a certain person was "Hebrew". Nothing needed to be added. Stereotypes were more than sufficient and, usually accurate.

Later, the concept of family fully emerged. First, in a very extended form: the family

comprised a few generations and all removed family (blood) connections. Gradually, the family shed more and more layers. People began to be called by family names only 250 years ago. The nuclear family was an invention of the 19th century, when the industrial revolution and modern methods of transport and communication broke families apart. Even this relatively small units came under a debilitating attack in the last 50 years and the nuclear family underwent a nuclear implosion, it disintegrated. Today, the basic unit of society, its cell, its atom, is the individual.

People will tend to isolate themselves: stay more at home, work from it with flexitime, form and break up short term attachments to other humans or be engaged in non-committal activities with others, activities which will not threaten their absolute freedom and mobility. Solitary media will be predominant: the Internet is a one-user medium (television was a family medium).

The professions which will cater to the needs of individuals and separate them from society (while maintaining the survival need to communicate) will be the professions of the future: Internet, entertainment (especially customized), telecommunication, singles-related industries (dating and couple matching, for instance, single's bars, to mention another), virtual reality, small businesses which can be run from home, agencies for temporary work placement and other professions catering to the conflicting human needs of being together while being alone.

All the other seeming trends are recurrent illusions. There have been ages of more or less democracy, more or less market orientation, more or less polarization between rich and poor people. The human race experienced numerous forms of government, of marriage, of economy, of management, of residence, of production, even of trying to predict the future. It was the wisest of all men, King Solomon, who said: "There is nothing new under the sun". True, but it is getting stronger.

Sam Vaknin is the author of "Malignant Self Love - Narcissism Revisited" and "After the Rain - How the West Lost the East". He is a columnist in "Central Europe Review", United Press International (UPI) and ebookweb.org and the editor of mental health and Central East Europe categories in The Open Directory, Suite101 and searcheurope.com. Until recently, he served as the Economic Advisor to the Government of Macedonia.

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Pakistanis' future in US

By Syed Asad Ali Zaidi

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Pakistanis' future in US

Of late, Pakistani society in the US is going through a lot of soul searching to identify a strategy for our future in this country. We are gradually working towards understanding the subtleties of American culture.

Generally, these values are acceptable to the Pakistani-American society. We value the diversity and the plurality of opinions that is embedded, in an immigrant community.

The Pakistani-Americans form an industrious community having a positive attitude towards American society. We have always worked for the betterment of our host country. We volunteer our time in promoting general welfare. Being highly qualified in the areas of science and technology, we are successful in various professions.

Having strong work ethics, we are respected in the business world as well. All this makes a sound foundation for a successful immigrant society. Our future depends on our continued strength, which lies in the ingrained values that we have accumulated over the years. Strategically our future is intertwined with that of the American society. We should continue our future generations to be adequately educated in areas of science and technology.

This strategic path will bring most of us into the mainstream of Americana. Our future in the United States also depends on how we continue interacting with the society at large.

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