



Intergenerational Solidarity



Plenary Session 8-13 April 2002 – The initial intentions of the Academy, as formulated at its first plenary session, were to give some priority, among other themes, to the study of intergenerational solidarity. Nothing could be done for this purpose during the first years. But at the end of 2000 it was decided to open a programme which would extend over several years and which began with the roundtable whose papers are published here. In this first meeting the main purpose was to sort out the various issues that the Academy should investigate in depth. Already during the early discussions of 1994 there had been some uncertainty about the exact scope of the programme. In particular three questions had been raised to which answers will now have to be given. How should the Academy delineate the contours of the family problems which it ought to tackle within the new programme? There are a number of aspects which definitely belong to the field of intergenerational solidarity and to which social scientists might usefully contribute: the role of families in the education of children and teenagers, in the support of parents and old-age members, in the provision of a better safety net than may be publicly provided, and last but not least, in contributing to building the cultural environment in which future generations will live. Too often on this last point, however, families enter into conflict with other social forces, and the state itself often disregards or misjudges effects on future generations. The roundtable devoted a good deal of attention to surveying a large part of this complex of problems, with in particular the contributions of Academicians Glendon, Ramirez, Villacorta and Zampetti. Should the whole set of problems posed by the development and/or reform of the ‘welfare state’ be considered as belonging to the list of issues that the Academy ought to take up in the near future? These problems were occasionally approached in past years when ‘democracy’ or ‘work and employment’ were the main focus. But a clearer view of what the Academy wants to study about them is now needed. Here the paper of Academician Raga Gil surveys the main issues. It will play a central role in our tenth plenary session of 2004, which will be completely devoted to the welfare state, following the recommendation given in the general discussion at the end of the roundtable. Should the list of problems to be investigated during the next few years also include those concerning behaviour and policies bearing upon the natural environment? Here Academician Dasgupta shows that indeed these problems are serious, particularly for developing countries. No doubt, they will have to be closely studied.

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