La Vita.
James March talks to Giuseppe Delmestri [a]

by *Giuseppe Delmestri*[*]

Abstract

This transcript of a video interview is divided in three parts: Introduction, La vita è bella and La vita è folle. In the Introduction, Giuseppe Delmestri presents James (Jim) March with the 1st Italian Organization Science Award on behalf of the Italian organization studies scholars (who soon after will gather in ASSIOA) and talks of what connects him intellectually to Italy.

In "La vita è bella" Jim March talks about fundamental questions in organization and management theory, like the relationship between practical and theoretical knowledge, the importance of organization studies for psychology, sociology, political science and economics, the proper name for our field, future big and small ideas, the role our discipline could play in solving big issues such as poverty and climate change, and concludes with the importance of beauty in life – therefore the title.

In "La vita è folle", Jim March talks more personally about his career and life: the serendipity and 'foolishness' in his career; his encounters with European scholars; about how "almost everything can be a rewarding experience" depending on our attitude; why academics should not be mentors or protégées and students

[a] "La vita" is the transcription of a video interview conducted on April 16th 2009 at Stanford Studio. In 2009 James March received an award for his intellectual contributions to the establishment of the Italian organization science academic field. As Prof. March could not travel to Cagliari, Giuseppe Delmestri collected questions from colleagues in Italy and Europe and produced a video presented at the 10th WOA Workshop before the Keynote speech by Alfred Kieser (that's why Jim greets Alfred in the introduction). The following colleagues provided additional questions: Anna Comacchio, Stefano Consiglio, Enrico Cori, Renate Meyer, Davide Nicolini, Andrea Pontiggia, Peter Walgenbach, and Dante Zaru. Before the video interview, Prof. Delmestri met Prof. March to discuss and edit the questions. The title and subtitles of the video were discussed and approved by him.

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should be independent; how working on manuscripts needs "endless rewriting" and what the right identity and motivation are to start an academic career.

Keywords: interview, organization theory, biography.

Abstract. La vita. James March conversa con Giuseppe Delmestri

In questa inedita intervista, registrata presso l'università di Stanford quasi dieci anni prima della sua scomparsa avvenuta il 27 settembre 2018 poco dopo aver compiuto 90 anni e a un mese dalla scomparsa della sua amata moglie, James March, uno dei padri fondatori della teoria organizzativa, ripercorre alcuni temi centrali degli studi organizzativi mettendoli in relazione sia con le grandi sfide del nostro tempo (ineguaglianza, crisi climatica) sia con le condizioni istituzionali in cui i giovani studiosi si trovano oggi a operare, spinti più a perseguire 'la carriera' che la propria 'vocazione'. James March ci lascia un testamento morale di grande valore intellettuale ed etico: "Penso che tutti noi nella nostra vita abbiamo opportunità in cui possiamo, in misura limitata, rendere il mondo un po' più bello piuttosto che un po' più brutto, e penso che sia una delle cose che dovremmo fare".

Parole chiave: intervista, teoria organizzativa, biografia.

Introduction

Giuseppe Delmestri: Buongiorno a tutti, I'm very pleased to introduce you to James March, who is present at our conference in Cagliari in spirit but not in person. We are sitting now at Stanford Studio at Stanford University. Good afternoon James!

James March: It's very good to be here. Thank you.

G. D.: Thank you, James. We, all together, are really proud and honored to have the opportunity to give you this award which testifies your intellectual contribution to the foundation of the field of organization studies and organization science in Italy. I do not have to cite all the books which were foundational and read by the fathers and mothers of our discipline and so I ask you to accept this award. It is the first Italian award given to an organization science scholar for his or her outstanding contribution to the foundation of the field.

J. M.: Thank you very much Giuseppe. It's a great pleasure and I'm honored by you and your colleagues. As you perhaps know, some of the

earliest scholars of organization studies were Italian. Some of the ones that I've read, like Goffredo Pareto, who was one of the earliest ones to recognize the non-rational aspects of economic behavior. And Gaetano Mosca, who was one of the earliest ones to recognize bureaucracy and the importance of skill in bureaucracy and Benedetto Croce who understood that "art is life and life is art". These are the true founders of the fields of organization studies and they are all Italian. So thank you for allowing me to join that very distinguished crowd, and thank you also for allowing me to be virtually there, because I want particularly to wish that distinguished Italian scholar, Alfred Kieser, best wishes and greetings from Stanford. I wish I were there and I'm jealous of you. Thank you.

1. La vita è bella

G. D.: Jim, the title of our conference, *Per lo sviluppo, la competitività del sistema economico: il contributo degli studi di organizzazione*, regards the contributions that organization studies could give to the evolution, growth and success of the economic system, in particular the Italian economic system. What do you think could be the contribution of organization studies to the innovation and growth of an economic system?

J. M.: I suspect Giuseppe that I am not the right person to ask that question. For many years, I began each of my courses by saying "I'm not now, nor have I ever been relevant". I do not know that I really believe that, but I believe that the users of ideas should certify their usefulness, not the producers. And that those of us who are in the business of producing ideas should not attempt to advertise their usefulness. Even more generally, I think the pursuit of usefulness more often hinders than it helps fundamental scholarship, so I will not answer that question, but I hope others can.

G. D.: So, what do you think could be the relationship between the academic knowledge and practical knowledge, experiential knowledge?

J. M.: Well, Giuseppe, I think that organization experience is highly contextual. It depends upon a lot of variables that are specific to a specific situation. Academic knowledge is fairly general and it tries to lay out the general causal structures of relationships. So it is not very good for dealing with a specific contextual situation. I use to tell my students that if they ask an academic consultant what they should do in their work, and the academic consultant answers them, they should fire the consultant because the consultant simply does not have the kind of rich contextual knowledge that would permit him or her to answer detailed questions about what you

should do. Experiential knowledge is much better in terms of the specific situation, but the specific situation rarely has enough information in it. So that the learning that one gets from experience is filled with superstition, with mistakes, and all kinds of things of that sort. So, intelligence really requires combining the two. Of bringing together the academic knowledge and the experiential knowledge and when you do that, the academic knowledge is often identified in different ways of looking at a situation, which may not be right, but are different from the way that an experienced person looks at it. And that's what we as academics have to bring to the situation.

G. D.: Turning now to questions which are more related to our academic discipline of organization science. How do you see the relationship between organization science and disciplines like economics, sociology, psychology or even political science?

J. M.: Well, you know Giuseppe, organization science is a rather new field. It really was born after the Second World War. It has grown enormously from an institutional point of view. The field now has its own journals, and has its own home mostly in business schools. It cites its own articles, it hires its own graduates, it has constructed a separate institutional field. Fields of organizational economics, organizational psychology, organizational sociology, organizational political science still exist in a separate sense but they are much smaller in there in the fraction of the field that they represent and they perform important functions but the organization science field has become a separate institutionalized field. If you ask that question intellectually, it is a little different, however, I think. The field is primarily an importer of ideas, not an exporter. So most of the ideas in the field really come from outside the field. They are developed and elaborated within the field, and relatively few ideas from the field of organization studies have filtered back into economics or sociology or psychology. To some extent in economics, to some extent in psychology, to some extent in sociology, and to some extent in political science, but the primary movement of ideas has been from the outside to the field. So, I would say the field has become substantially independent institutionally, but less, much less independent intellectually.

G. D.: Are you talking about the U.S. situation or the general situation?

J. M.: Well, I'm an American, so I probably speak with greater information about the U.S. situation. I think the development, for example, in Europe, has been rather different but has many elements of the same thing. The American core exhibits many of the features that were dominant in social science in the 50s and 60s. The European core exhibits many of

the features that were dominant in social science in the 70s. These, I think, over the time tend to merge, but they have developed in interestingly different ways.

G. D.: So how should we call this field, should we call it organization science, organization studies, or organization theory?

J. M.: I think that's mostly a matter of taste – personal taste. I don't think there is any profound basis for a choice. I usually prefer to talk about organization studies rather than organization science because I think it's a somewhat more inclusive term. It includes more people and doesn't exclude any scholar. But I'm perfectly happy when people use other terms. Occasionally I do too. Organization theory is a term that I very rarely use because if you ask me "what it is" I don't know what to say. If you say "where's the theory" I don't know how to hold it out to you in the sense of a set of assumptions and derivations that one can point to. A small set of assumptions that lead to a large number of derivations, but that's a relatively narrow definition of theory. So I'm pretty relaxed when people use the term in a somewhat looser way. I'm not offended by any of those uses. Personally, I'm inclined to say organizational studies and I'm inclined not to say organization theory.

G. D.: But, what could be the unavoidable components of any theory of organization?

J. M.: I'm sure I don't know the answer to that question, but…

G. D.: The question was one of those, I have to say, that were collected collectively so…

J. M.: Yes, and now would you collect the answers and send them to me? So, I have a case, I said, there are some domains of organization studies or domains of thinking, the ways of thinking about organizations. We sometimes think about organizations as coherent actors – that's much of economic theory, organization is of that form. We sometimes think of organizations as social structures, as relationships, as networks, things of that sort. Much of sociological studies of organizations are of that form. We sometimes think of organizations as adaptive systems, that they change over time, and respond to experience. And parts of all of these fields have elements of that. And we sometimes think of organizations as systems of meaning or places in which people come to understand life and world and so on. I can categorize the field a little bit that way and I think somewhat usefully theoretically, but I don't know of any. I really don't know, within even any one of those fields, a comprehensive theory that matches that part; and certainly not any theory that comes across all of those fields. I don't

know. You said unavoidable components and… I've no idea what that would be.

G. D.: Nevertheless, could you think what could be the most powerful big ideas, which could lead the field in the next years?

J. M.: Well, as you know if you ask someone "what are the big ideas that are going to lead the field in the next years?" They almost always give you their own idea, their current ideas, because obviously those are the ones that are going to lead the world in the future. I think if you look at organization studies, there is an assortment of big ideas that have been important. These are the ideas that frame the way we look at things… rationality, or the ideas that the individuals have followed, their identities and logics of appropriateness, or ideas about the class struggle, or ideas about the struggle of the self, or ideas about the distribution and utilization of power, or ideas about the development of meaning. These are all big ideas, ideas about adaptation through learning or adaptation through selection. I call these the first paragraphs of knowledge, they are where you start and they are very useful and very important but they very rarely get you very far by themselves. You can have a class warfare frame, that's a good frame, but what you can say within that is very limited if you don't have other things. So I'm actually much more enthusiastic about what I call little ideas, and little ideas are mechanisms that we understand – that have some dynamic properties to them and that have relatively big effects. I think of things like 'satisficing', for example. That's a very little idea but a very powerful idea. It has all kinds of implications. Ideas like the low sampling of failures this is something that Jerker Denrell and I have pursued a bit and it's the basic notion that in any adaptive system, you sample less your failures than your successes, so you know less about your failures than successes. That's a very simple little idea that has all kinds of interesting implications. I think something like absorptive capacity, the idea that you have to have the capabilities to absorb new knowledge in order to use it and the capabilities to absorb new knowledge involves various kinds of competencies. Those are all little ideas, you can make a long list and that's only a very small list. That, I think, that's where the future of the field lies in developing more of these little ideas and I would guess you won't have much change over time in the big ideas, and any of these little ideas fit into any number of big ideas without any trouble.

G. D.: You studied organizational learning in depth; now our humanity is confronting very big issues like global warming, global poverty, this big economic crisis. How would you suggest humanity to address such big issues?

J. M.: Giuseppe, I don't think I can be very helpful but, in one hand, it's not really particularly difficult to know what to do about most of these things, about the economic crises, about global warming, about global poverty. What is difficult is to know how to do it, how to accomplish it and how to accomplish it in a way that does not cause all kinds of other problems. And what you can say about all of the problems you mentioned, I think, is they all involve a difficult trade-off between short-run and local effects, and long-run and global effects, and that most of them involve sacrificing things in the short-run and locally in order to accomplish things in a long-run and globally. And neither our governmental systems, nor our adaptive systems, nor ourselves, are very good at that. We are not very good at doing them. And the second thing in all these problems involved are what can be called side effects; and as you solve one problem you create another. We are not very good with those kinds of problems. We are not very good in two ways. One is: we are not very good in anticipating the side effects and when we anticipate the side effect we are not very good in negotiating with the people who are harmed by the effect – to make the trade-offs between those people and the people who have benefits. Until we get a governance system that is able to make those trade-offs, we will continue to know what we need to do, but not know how to do it.

G. D.: Jim, you used two big metaphors from literature, *Don Quixote* and *War and Peace* and you shoot two films, real feature films, not simple expression of theoretical ideas so, kind of art. So, what is, in your opinion, the contribution of art, literature to the field of academia?

J. M.: Wow, the thing that got me into those films was a realization that the questions of leadership are much broader than leadership, and that the questions of leadership are pretty much indistinguishable from some fundamental questions about life. The kind of things you ask are questions like 'what's the relation between a public life and a private life?', 'what's the relation between madness and genius?', 'what's the role of power in leadership?', 'what's the place of joy in leadership?'. Those are all very fundamental questions about leadership but they are also fundamental questions about life. And once you realize that, you realize the whole massive of intellectual and artistic performance of the human species is directed to these questions and the questions such as "what justifies great action?" is, I think, considered more clearly and better in great literature than it is in most social science. So you would look at *Quixote* and you would look at *War and Peace* to find answers to that kind of question. The more general issue is something about art and the role of art in life, and I mentioned Benedetto Croce earlier, the notion that "life is art or art is life"

whichever way you want to put it; that one of the main points of life is to contribute as much as you can to beauty, to improve the beauty of life. I don't know whether you know the Italian film *La vita è bella*. It's a beautiful film and the notion that you can act to create a world. The world is ugly, it has many elements of ugliness in it and the ugliness will not go away. In that film, Guido ends up being shot. But he created a world for his son that removed that ugliness or, at least, ameliorated that ugliness and I think that any of us in our lives have opportunities where we can, to a limited extent, make the world a little more beautiful rather than a little more ugly, and I think that's one of the things we are supposed to do.

G. D.: Thank you.

2. La vita è folle

J. M.: My life has been a wander, in some sense. I don't think there's any very big jumps, nor do I've any sense of really managing my academic life. I managed it in the sense that I don't think anyone else has managed it. But if I look at the various places I've stopped along my life and I spent some time at the University of Wisconsin, some time at the Yale University, some time at Carnegie Institute of Technology, some time at the University of California Irvine and some time at Stanford. And how did it happen that I went from one to the other? I don't think there is any kind of magic to that, you know? I finished undergraduate school, I had to go to graduate school. Why did I go the Yale? Well, I went to Yale because as I recall, Yale offered me 300 dollars more than Harvard did, and 400 dollars more than the University of Chicago did. So, you go the Yale, but that sounds trivial. I did never have any real basis for choosing, so that's what you chose.

Why did I go from Yale to Carnegie Tech? Because they offered me a job and it was two or three jobs that I was offered, but among those two or three it looked like the more interesting one. So. But it wasn't a fervent say "Oh, this is a great opportunity for me, and turn out to be wonderful and you know…" Why did I go to Irvine? Probably for almost partly personal reasons and partly just for the adventure. Why I did go to Stanford…well you know everybody goes to Stanford … I've learned from each of those, but I don't have any sense that I managed them in order to learn from them. I think I've wandered through life with a fair degree of irresponsible perversity and it served me well, but I would never advertise it to anyone else as a way of life…

G. D.: Let's say "Take risks, change"

J. M.: Sure but, you know, that makes it sound much more significant than it is. It's, you know, a certain amount of indifference – well, that sounds interesting, let's do that, or somebody says "I hear there's a show over here, let's go see it" "Ok" …

G. D.: Openness.

J. M.: Yes, it's probably openness, maybe it's just foolishness, maybe it's just some low-level stupidity. But some people talk these days about something called mindfulness, which I don't particularly think has too much content; but most of this is not mindful, it's just living. We spent a year in California while I was at Carnegie Tech, and my wife said "we can go back to Pittsburgh but we're going to live in California", so we did. Now: is that managing your academic career? Not particularly, but it seemed to work all right.

G. D.: And what about your encounter with Europe, in specific, with Scandinavia. Was it a turning point?

J. M.: Oh, it was a very important turning point, but it was almost all chance. When I first went to Europe, I was disappointed in the following sense: I was travelling in Germany, particularly, and I wanted to talk with young researchers but I couldn't because I was too distinguished. I had to talk to the Heads of the Institutes or the Heads of the Laboratories, who mostly didn't know what was going on and they were not nearly as interesting as the young people. But I really couldn't manage to talk to them. So I wasn't sure I could solve that problem. So the four somewhat unique and not particularly profound reasons, Johan Olson and Søren Christiansen came to work with me one year. We liked each other and we started working, and that was pleasant. That was one fortuitous thing. Hadn't they come, I probably would not have. The second is a family thing. I had resisted living overseas in order to be sure that our children had a stable family life and so on. I didn't want to uproot them, I thought. One day at the table, one of my sons said "if you are so well-known, why don't you ever get to go overseas? We want to live overseas", so I just misjudged them, so then I said "Ok"; and the next opportunity was an opportunity to go to Norway and Denmark, and so we went. And that started it: a long, very fruitful link with Scandinavia – a link that certainly was furthered by the fact that I grew up in a part of the U.S. that's heavily Scandinavian, so the culture was basically the culture like grew up in and…

G. D.: And went back…

J. M.: … went back to my culture basically, but all of these were fortuitous. You know, there wasn't a good reason for it and yet it turned out to make a lot of difference.

G. D.: So are you saying that the decision that led you then to develop the idea of the garbage can, together with the Scandinavians, it was itself a kind of garbage can decision itself?

J. M.: Yes, it was indeed, absolutely! You know there's an old saying about marriage. That most people spend too much time deciding to get married and not enough time making the marriage a good marriage, after they've gathered. What makes a good life, are not good decisions but good elaboration, good implementation, it's a kind of "La vita è bella" again – that almost anything can be a rewarding experience if you have that kind of attitude toward it…so you…you can even go to Italy and ever…

G. D.: Jim, in this wandering around in life, did you have mentors who helped you in this wandering?

J. M.: Oh, many people help me, but I'm not conscious of ever having a mentor, I'm not even sure that I believe that's a good thing. I think in the world in which I live, a serious scholar is neither a protégé nor a mentor; that those kinds of relationships, although they've many useful things about them, make it difficult to develop the tough independence that a good scholar has. It may be a freak of my peculiar life: the places when I might have had a mentor, for extraneous reasons, I didn't. So, when I was an undergraduate, well I went to University Wisconsin, basically I was only there for two years. I was there for a year, went to the army, came back, was there for a year and then off to graduate school. There was no time or inclination to develop close relations with any of my professors. I knew them, I liked them but that was it. I went off to Yale and the Yale faculty that I was in was engaged in a very bitter personal dispute. The senior faculty did not like each other and they were fighting all the time and the junior faculty were hiding so that they would not get caught in the gun fire. So, I thought that was perfect because that meant that none of the faculty had time to interfere with my education. So I got myself educated, but I really didn't establish very close relations with any of those faculty. I went to a first job which would be also a possibility, and I worked with Herb Simon – but that wasn't the kind of relationship. We had a much tougher relationship than that, so I've never been conscious of that relationship [of mentorship]. On my own part, I've resisted playing that role with students. I think they should be independent and they should not model themselves after me. I have no notion that it makes any sense to model yourself after me; and so, by and large, with most of my students, we spent a long time

talking with each other. We tried to develop some sort of shared ideas; but their work is their work, and they do not work on my problems, except accidentally.

G. D.: How do you personally work on a paper?

J. M.: Giuseppe, I might have been able to answer that question 40 or 50 years ago, but now it has become some sort of a routine and automated that I'm not sure that I understand it. But if I step back and try to understand it. I know some of the things. I'm always working on multiple papers. I'm not working on individual papers, I tend to engage in endless rewrites, as I rewrite a paper much more than I think most people do. Typically, I think papers start either with an idea or some empirical puzzle, and then you work out from those. But I don't know, I don't have any deep sense of a strategy or tactics or how this happens. I do have a fairly deep sense that, in a sense, I take responsibility for the paper, and I do not share responsibility for the paper…

G. D.: What do you mean?

J. M.: I mean that editors and referees are not joint authors. they are helpful colleagues, sometimes, but the paper is mine and I'm the audience that it has to satisfy – not an editor, not a reader, not an audience … I'm the audience … and that is somewhat at variance with sort of contemporary ways of proceeding. I've tried to persuade journal editors not to use the revise and resubmit decision. I think that's a bad policy because that tempts the editors and the referees into thinking they are co-authors. I think the editors' job is accept or reject and if the writer wants to do something and send it back, that's fine. But providing detailed suggestions of what and how you change the paper, confuses the issue. It makes you into a teacher rather than an editor, rather than a gatekeeper and probably not a very good teacher either. It leads to terrible consequences. I have colleagues and students who no longer work very hard on the papers before they submit them because they figured out: "We'll get rejected or we'll get revise and resubmit". They'll have all these new additional comments, why should they try to put the paper in final form before they solicit these comments? I think that's destructive of the whole system. so I think you write a paper, you take responsibility for the paper and you listen to any comments and criticism that people may make. But whether you pay any attention to them is entirely up to you and often you don't, so that's fairly important.

G. D.: And how did you choose or were chosen by co-authors for your projects?

J. M.: Well, 'projects' is a funny term because I don't think very often 'being on a project' in the sense of a large-scale grant that has several

functions or several parts, each of which has to fit together and so. I haven't worked on that kind of a project. If by 'project' you mean the papers I wrote – if you look at my list of publications, you will find that I have collaborated with a lot of people. I counted not so long ago. I think that I have had 48 different collaborators on published papers or books. A majority of those collaborators were students, but the collaboration was always of a form or, I think, almost always of a form that we were talking about ideas. And then we jointly tried and started trying to work with them. I think there is only one case in all those publications where I have co-authored a paper based on a dissertation. That's not the way I work with students. What happens is: the students work with me for a while and we get interested in a problem and go off and do something on it, and quite often students will come to me and say: "will you work with me on this paper?". I almost always say "No", because the motivation is wrong. The reason most students come to me and ask me to work on the paper – they believe that if I work on the paper it's more likely to be published, and I doubt that's true; but even if it's true, it's certainly the wrong motivation. So there, I try to discourage that kind of relationship. But if it grows out of a kind of collegial discussions and so on, then I find students some of the best colleagues I ever had. And now I've also written a lot of things with non-students or ex-students or colleagues, but for most of my life my primary collegial group has been students I know, and some of the better-known works that I've written are obviously written with collegial colleagues. You know I work with Johan Olson, and my work with Herb Simon or Richard Cyert. Those are colleagues, although Olson was originally a student.

So, you know, choosing or being chosen is… I think it's a good word but it's a little complicated process. I can give an example. Some years ago, I wrote a paper, by myself actually, which was published in *Psychological Review*, which showed that ordinary learning would produce risk aversion and it was a theoretical paper and basically a simulation derivation of that proposition. A little later I was working with a student named Jerker Denrell, now a colleague of mine, who was interested in that kind of problem and I said "Well, look, there is an unsolved version of this, let's work on it a while", so we published a paper, and after we published the paper, I said "There's still an unsolved problem of this, we haven't got an analytic proof". So, he then went off to develop analytic proof. It went from something that I was working on by myself to something I was working on with him, to something he was working on by himself; and it was all a very continuous stream of ideas – and I think very fruitful stream of ideas, which

he has developed now…several papers in very nice new directions. I think it is collaboration at its best for me.

G. D.: So, it seems that you say that co-authorship is more a kind of academic dialogue, an opportunity for an academic dialogue on unsolved puzzles…

J. M.: Absolutely! Sometimes it's a little different from that, but the best is that; and, in some sense, the papers are almost incidental to the dialogue. That was true, back many years, when I collaborated with Dick Cyert. We used to have lunch, bring our lunch and eat lunch together in a little corner of the building where no one could find us. It was behind the auditorium… it was really a secret place and we would eat lunch and talk about things; and that's out of that, came our work. The whole spirit was: "let's have lunch and talk"… and I think is the way scholarship should proceed.

G. D.: So you confirm an Italian attitude to discuss in front of food...!

J. M.: Absolutely! There are a few things I don't confirm, I don't drink cappuccino, and…That's about it!

G. D.: If you reflect about your experience what could be the "do's and don'ts" of academic scholarship?

J. M.: If I reflect on my experience, there are no do's and don'ts. The thing that is fairly clear is that very good scholars vary in their approach, in the way they think about things, the way to do things. I have scholars whom I admire greatly who are terrible people, who you would not want any of your children to marry, and you would not want to have in a party if you can avoid it – but they are enormously talented scholars. That's all they do, that's all they think about, and they do it very well. And I have other colleagues who are very Italian, filled with joy, filled with drink and food, and moments of pleasure – and they are very talented and good operating. So I'm not sure there is anything. I think that there is a distinction that I will make between a job and scholarship. Some of my colleagues do what they do because that is a job, and they secure pay from the job in order to do what they like to do, and that's their view of the scholarship.

G. D.: A kind of logic of consequence…

J. M.: Oh, yes, but a narrow set of consequences. This is an exchange but… and I think that there are more of them now than there used to be, partly because the pay is better than it used to be, and so, as the pay gets better, you attract people for whom pay is more important. So some of my colleagues, I don't fully understand – but they are driven by a desire to increase their income, increase their status – things of that sort and have no real intrinsic interest in the scholarship. It's just an instrument of

something. I think scholarship is something you should do because you are driven to it, because that's what you want to do. I met one of my colleagues who retired recently; and when he retired, he stopped all of his scholarship. He no longer has any interest in any of that. He does other things, but…. that for me, it says that he is probably not a real scholar. But you do what you do because you have to in some sense; and that quality of being driven is, I think, important.

G. D.: And we are now close to one of the themes, the main theme of your movie on Don Quixote: of identity, of expression of the self…

J. M.: Very much, the identity of a scholar, and what does that mean to say, try to fulfill that identity? You try to figure out what it is that a proper scholar does and then you do it; and how do you know what a proper scholar does? That's fairly complicated… I can't stand up here and tell you what a proper scholar does. You all do try to work on that, I can say some of the things the proper scholar does, and there is probably some flexibility in that; but in your mind, what you're trying to do, you say what is a proper scholar, how does one do it and in some of the traditional terms around here is called 'a calling'. It's an English word that may not easily translate into Italian.

G. D.: Vocazione

J. M.: Really? And the scholarship is a calling, it's a "you don't choose it, it chooses you" in a sense and once it has chosen you, you don't have a lot of options. As I said, quite a few different ways in which you can be a good scholar but, on some dimensions, you don't have any choices.

G. D.: Is there something of *Don Quixote* even in a good scholar?

J. M.: Oh, yes of course! You know, *Quixote* often did things that look foolish and *Sancho* asked him once "How do you justify all of this, what reasons can you give? What kind of consequential reason can you give for doing this?" And you know what *Quixote* said? He said *"Que hombre ce loco un cabrero andante con causa ni grato ni gratis el to que esta de satinar sino catión"*

G. D.: Which means…?

J. M.: Which means… "For a knight-errant to make himself crazy for a reason warrants neither credit nor thanks; the point is to be foolish without any justification"… and I like that! And *Quixote* said "I'm in love for no other reason than it is incumbent on knights-errant to be in love"

G. D.: Jim, thank you very much. It's always nice to talk to you.

J. M.: Thank you, Giuseppe, and thank you for coming to Stanford. Come again!