

# *The Art of Politics*

YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKING FORWARD  
TO THE FUTURE

Second Edition

THE SEMINARS

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FONDAZIONE  
DE GASPERI



Istituto  
Amintore da Costa



Wilfried  
Martens Centre  
for European Studies



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**THE ART OF POLITICS**  
**YOUNG PEOPLE LOOKING FORWARD**  
**TO THE FUTURE**

School of Political Education, Second Edition

Fondazione De Gasperi  
Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies  
Istituto Amaro da Costa

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## Summary

- 7 Introduction. School of Political Education  
*Lorenzo Malagola, Secretary General, De Gasperi Foundation*
- 9 Work as a gesture  
*Giovanni Maddalena, Professor of History of Philosophy,  
University of Molise  
Turin, October 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 2016*
- 19 The Supranational Non-Political Paradigm  
*Luigi Crema, Visiting Professor, University of Notre Dame Law School  
Lisbon, November 25<sup>th</sup> 2016*
- 27 Introduction to the role of centre-right think tanks in the  
policy-making process  
*Margherita Movarelli, Project Officer, Wilfried Martens Centre  
for European Studies  
Rome, December 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> 2016*
- 35 The future of global economy in post-capitalism  
*Emilio Colombo, Professor of International economics, Catholic  
University of the Sacred Heart, Milan  
Rome, December 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> 2016*

- 45 Geography, History and European Strategy  
*Raquel Vaz-Pinto, President, Editorial Board of MDL*  
*Instituto Amaro da Costa*  
*Rome, December 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> 2016*
- 53 A new humanism as answer to the crisis  
*Alberto Maria Gambino, Vice-Rector, European University*  
*of Rome*  
*Rome, December 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> 2016*



# Introduction

## School of Political Education

*Lorenzo Malagola*

*Secretary General  
De Gasperi Foundation*

In a world where everything seems to crumble, we are persuaded that politics can be revived only from below through patient efforts directed to the young generations who will be the main characters of the future. For this reason, the De Gasperi Foundation has decided, together with the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and the Amaro da Costa Institute, to bet on a school of formation, still considering it a useful tool for regenerating politics. It is an initiative which is part of an ongoing training for young people, which, throughout the year, is enriched with in-depth seminars, scientific publications and analyses, cooperation programs with international think tanks and educational projects in schools. Our school of politics was born to follow up previous meetings and to organize new ones, together with the youth who have taken Pope Francis's advice seriously: «Do not look at life from the balcony, but commit yourselves, immerse yourselves in the wide social and political dialogue» (National Ecclesiastical Congress 2015).

The main theme is the world we live in and the contribution we – individually and all together – can give. A world in turmoil, afflicted, in particular, by an identity crisis: there is less and less understanding of who we are, what the value of our tradition is, and – consequently – where we want to go. In a

context where everything is combined together – ethnic groups, religions, social classes and cultures – the question regarding identity and interaction has become a priority in order to avoid an increase in violence and conflict in every sphere of life. Ours is a world so wounded by a myriad of wars that the Holy Father spoke of «a piecemeal Third World War». It is in fact a globalized world shaken by cyclical financial crises that have overturned not only the economic balance but also the social one.

As a result, peoples and institutions seem bewildered, the first almost overwhelmed by a cynical indifference, the second widely powerless and delegitimized. We do not want to yield to all of this; on the contrary, we will be present with an original and constructive contribution. We will follow the example of De Gasperi who, during dark years for both Italy and Europe, was able to propose a lofty but concrete vision for their economic, social and democratic reconstruction together with many of his generation. There is a need today as much as back then for a new humanism, which draws from those values of the centrality of the person, of freedom, of subsidiarity and solidarity that have made our community great.

# Work as a gesture\*

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You can express the concept of «work» in many ways, even philosophical. «Work» is certainly a term belonging to political philosophy, philosophy of economics and of science, but also to moral philosophy, applied ethics, and finally to theoretical philosophy. In particular, the issue of work is an emblematic point of a certain conception of theoretical philosophy, which, in my opinion, needs a profound reconstruction.

Research carried out so far has led me to consider the analytic/synthetic distinction as the keystone of such conception, whose final outcome also originates that distinction between theory and practice that has a significant impact when it comes to the forgetfulness or devaluation of the term «work». The first purpose of this lecture is to recount this process and to introduce the idea of a new paradigm.

Finally, I will try to structure this paradigm applying it to the work scenario by basing my interpretation on a certain type of semiotics and trying to use it to present a definition of the rules that make «work» an action.

\* This is an updated version of the article «Il lavoro come conoscenza. Uno sguardo semiotico», published in *Spazio filosofico* I, 1/2011, pp. 91-102.

## 1. The Kantian heritage

It has been said that the devaluation of work, or the limitation of its philosophical meaning, is due to an inheritance that derives from Kant, whose most problematic element is the analytic/synthetic distinction. According to Kant, in fact, an analytic judgment subsumes a predicate under a subject, while a synthetic judgment must look outside the subject-concept into experience, to understand how the predicate is connected to a concept but not included in it.

In any case, Kant did not want to affirm the supremacy or the exclusivity of analytic judgments. He was well aware that, however important, analytic judgments do not bring new acquisition of knowledge which instead is the patrimony of synthetic judgments. What was then the kind of synthesis aimed at by Kant? There is a type of synthesis that is simply the reverse of the analysis: once we have dissected analytically the concepts included in the subject, we should put together the elements found in various ways.

Nevertheless, there is also another kind of synthesis, that is that of the synthetic a priori judgments, which should be radically different from every analysis. In any case, when Kant reflects on how a synthetic knowledge comes into being, he resorts again to the image of necessary belonging, which remains the last model with which also the synthesis should comply. It is true that according to Kant original synthesis precedes analysis, but this synthesis is designed as universal and a priori, i.e. within an analytic framework, which therefore remains the model of every kind of knowledge. Ultimately, as for Kant, pure or theoretical knowledge is either analytic or analyzable, that is divisible in fundamental elements which are both necessary and justified a priori.

According to this interpretation of knowledge, there is no room for cognitive elements that are as inherently synthetic as an action is, and, especially, for work, which is an act with a

purpose. Later authors – first of all Hegel – have sought concreteness, materiality and the whole activity of the existence in knowledge. However, the Kantian assumption remains solid: a radical unity of both the theoretical and practical aspect is at least difficult to find.

In this context, the proposal of American pragmatism becomes interesting. Pragmatists think that the meaning coincides with the sum of the real conceivable effects. In addition, these authors believe that the understanding of the meaning occurs in a practical way, through the realization of a «habit of action». In fact, we do not really understand a concept by simply being aware of how to use it in certain linguistic circumstances or by knowing a definition whose content we can analyze, but indeed we comprehend it when it produces a habit of action, i.e. a practical realization which is both constant and conscious.

According to pragmatism, the unity between theory and practice is at the same time the premise and the verification system of each type of investigation and transformation of reality. However, also pragmatism does not grasp such unity fully. In particular, it fails to comprehend that the persistent division between theory and practice lurks in the very concept of analytic and synthetic imposed by the German philosopher. In this way, pragmatism lacks an innovative vision, swinging between a more sophisticated type of intellectualism (Peirce, but more recently Putnam or Brandom) and an anti-intellectualism with a propensity to irrationalism (James, but also Rorty).

## 2. A new paradigm

A new paradigm is therefore needed, inspired by pragmatism and founded upon the idea of change as it may derive from Peirce's certain studies of mathematics and logic, which seem to have been confirmed by some recent theories (and practic-

es) of contemporary mathematics. This paradigm is based on three definitions:

- a synthetic judgment – or reasoning – is a judgment that recognizes an identity through changes;
- an analytic judgment – or reasoning – is a judgment that loses identity through changes;
- a vague or horotic (from Oros, limit) judgment – or reasoning – is a judgment that is blind to identity through changes.

The analytic reasoning proceeds by means of definitions; it can divide elements or passages infinitely, as definitions are too broad or too narrow by nature.

The vague reasoning coincides with a certain level of «familiarity» with our concepts and their use, and within its limits we are not necessarily able to arrive at some definitions. This is the stage where most beliefs of common sense belong, inherited from a long history of humanity.

The synthetic reasoning, which interests us most, presides over the conscious formulation of hypotheses, the creative processes and the achievement of moral certainties. In short, this refers to the reasoning that is normally used every time we consider knowledge in its concrete, dynamic aspect.

This new definition of reasoning should permit access to an original synthetic level which, in the end, would avoid the above-mentioned distinction between theory and practice. However, what does syntheticity mean? In particular, In which way can synthetic reasoning recognize identity through changes?

According to the proposition here to be discussed, we can recognize an identity through changes by means of a logical-semiotic tool, which I will refer to as «gesture».

The identification of this important instrument is the result of the study of Peirce's Existential Graphs, a kind of iconic logic which represents the continuum of change and identity. The

identity is obtained through a certain type of graphic line which shares the same characteristics as the continuum. An identity is thus obtained, which is not of the type  $A = A$ , but a more general one, expressed by the formula  $A = B$ , of which  $A = A$  is nothing but a degenerate form. The peculiarity of such logic is that there is no separation of the understanding of the identity and the graph representing it. Drawing the graph coincides with recognizing the identity in the same way as the fulfillment of what we call «Gesture» results in the recognition of an identity in our common reasoning. In both cases, this is an action which corresponds to the forming/recognizing of the identity itself through changes. Once again, the act forms/recognizes a wider continuity. «Gesture» is the minimum unit of our synthetic reasoning.

What is a gesture? «Gesture» is any real performed act which carries a meaning (from *gero* = to carry). Not only meaningful actions are gestures, but also every kind of developed and articulated ideas, the spoken or thought language, patterns employed as laws.

In general, we could say that we understand something when we are ready to act according to our ideas: performing the act – as long as it is meant in a broad sense which includes the possible and actual actions as well as the habits of action – is what synthetically involves our reasoning.

Even if every gesture implies a meaning, not every gesture is decisive to recognize an identity, i.e. every gesture is meaningful but not every gesture introduces or supports a synthetic reasoning. To find a gesture that embodies syntheticity we need to look for what I will refer to as a «perfect or complete» gesture, i.e. a gesture that reproduces those characteristics typical of the mathematical gesture of drawing a diagram.

To describe a «perfect» or «complete» gesture, we are going to use what Peirce, the founder of American pragmatism, considered as the grammar of logic: semiotics. The main distinction that describes the behavior of signs includes icon, index and

symbol. All these three types of sign concern the relationship between the sign and the corresponding represented object: the icons represent the object based on similarity, indexes on contiguity and direct relation, the symbols on interpretation.

A complete or perfect gesture is a gesture that implies the presence of these three semiotic elements in «almost equal» measure. Therefore in order to be complete, a gesture has to be a general law (symbol) that generates replicas; it has to be actual when it materially indicates a particular object (index); and it has to express different possibilities or aspects of the object to which it refers (icon). To put it simply: a complete gesture is a creative sign because of the different possibilities of its aspects, being singular and unique in its individuality, and recognizable for its unity and conformity to an established pattern. What do we then perform through a complete gesture? A particular act, chosen among the many possibilities represented by experience, carried out by a particular person and which embodies a general rule based on a certain interpretation.

A complete gesture therefore has two effects: on the one hand, the gesture itself serves to change the person who carries it out; on the other hand, the person performing it progressively introduces, creates or develops a required habit. The same gesture can be accomplished by many different people but it becomes actual only when a single person carries it out and only thanks to the intervention of a person it tends to become a general habit. The gestures thus conceived carry a possible and vague (horotic) meaning which gradually becomes determinate until a habit of action is established.

Our daily experience is full of gestures that have already reached this degree of clarity. Religious gestures are good examples because they are individual actions expressly intended as bearers of meaning according to a general interpretation: the bath of purification or baptism, the genuflection, the bow, the kneeling, lying prostrate to pray, and pilgrimages. As highlighted by anthropology, ritual gestures fill life in the same way as



education, love and death. A gesture is not like any other action as it is the expression of a meaning embodied by a certain person at a given point in time, which tends to become a habit of action for the person in question and, finally, for the generalized other, which is the entire people or the tradition. Gestures, being actions, also include mental gestures: what we call «empathy» or «identification» means simply to mentally perform another person's gestures – as explained by Mead and as it seems to be confirmed by the recent theories on mirror-neurons.

Carrying out complete gestures is what forms an identity and makes it recognizable through changes. The continuity between gestures is clearly not a metric continuity but a continuity of meaning. To sum up, we could say that «recognizing an identity» refers to the ability to repeat the same gesture in all its aspects. This is indeed the type of knowledge that the pragmatic rule supports by identifying the meaning with its practical effects.

### 3. Work as synthetic knowledge

We are now able to understand the reason why work is regarded as a synthetic instrument of knowledge since, in the strict sense of the term, it is a complete gesture that combines «almost equally» icon, index and symbol. In it, in fact, we can see the teleological transformation of reality toward a purpose (symbol), performed at a particular point (index) according to a set of infinite possibilities (icon). On the other hand, when a gesture loses one of its elements, it becomes formal. There are different types of formality which emerge clearly in the gesture of work.

When work lacks its symbolic aspect, the gesture loses its sense of purpose. It is therefore clear how intolerable work without prospects is – with the ensuing anger it creates – or how unfeasible work without a conveyed purpose or utility is.

When there is no law according to which an action should be performed, work becomes absurd, and consequently it is done in an incomplete or erroneous way as it lacks the cohesion of the parts that should compose a gesture.

Without its indexical aspect, the gesture loses its unique realization by becoming a mere repetition of the schema. The awareness of performing something unique is, in fact, an integral part of work. We can think, in a positive light, of the perceived difference between an «original» work and its however perfect copy, or of the strong interest in the direct participation in events or «live» events. On the other hand, to understand its negative aspect, it suffices to mention certain creations – b-movies or genre fiction – which reflect the general symbolic pattern and show perhaps different iconic aspects, but do not have the uniqueness that is ensured by an indexicality consciously sought. The lack of indexicality, in another sense, can also be identified from the absence of the concrete realization of ideas. For example, «daydreaming», which often results in the failure of the action, depends on the lack of indexicality in the gesture. The problem of repetitive work is precisely the loss of the uniqueness of the act that is taking place but, also, as well explained by Arendt, the removal of the perception of what is right and what is wrong, thus allowing any action as soon as the singularity of the act is avoided.

Without iconicity, gestures become devoid of novelty and creativity, i.e. they are repetitive with respect to absolute identity. This is the most alarming side of many jobs and the cause of enormous suffering. Indeed if we fail to find the aspect in which the action performed is part of the construction and of the communication of our own identity in a context, the action becomes alienating. However, being able to find a diversity in appearance and shape, which is the beginning of a new meaning, even in a repetitive action is precisely what allows any work to be enjoyable and able to form part of a person's identity.

In conclusion, when lacking one of these elements, gestures

cease to be complete and return to the level of their familiar usage or definition. They can be used to live and may also serve to intellectually understand what is happening, but they are not a «true» or «complete», or «pragmatic», understanding that can become a repeatable experiment, a science with foresight, a personality with a temperament, a history of ideas. They are no longer «complete gestures» which help develop and recognize identities through changes.

Obviously, it is possible to express these characteristics in psychological terms, as also attempted by Peirce himself: iconicity is imagination, indexicality is attention and symbolicity is expectation/satisfaction. At this point, the following question, as well as several others, arises: do we create reality while working? And, if this is the case, in what sense? There is no attempt here to develop these points that would require further discussion, but a last epistemological consideration can perhaps help draw some conclusions on what has been said so far.

If «work» is the general term for this process of synthetic reasoning based on the «complete gesture», within this term there is the need to summarize also the other epistemological instruments which have been developed to account for the dynamic and continuous aspects of our reasoning. If we want to state at least those mentioned here as belonging to the tradition of pragmatism (they are not, of course, the only ones, as it can be understood from the allusion to narrative paradigm), we will define as a part of work: the hypothetical creativity of abduction, the verifiability expressed by the pragmatic maxim, the auto-correction and improvement characteristic of fallibilism and of the logic of Dewey's research, and the social communication proposed by Mead. Without going into details, suffice it to say that in the synthetic context of work these dynamic instruments become meaningful and blend together, while, on the other hand, each of them contributes to a wider conception of work, which must be developed by means of the grammar of the «complete gesture» proposed here.

## Conclusion

Work thus conceived is no longer a field of application of a theory or an economic-dialectical law, but it is the name of the continuous transformation of concrete reality (index) toward its ideal end (symbol) through a continued acceptance of different aspects of the object of the experience. In other words, work is our way of reasoning synthetically and, when it is carried out in an appropriate manner, i.e. through «complete gestures», it ensures a true understanding of the identity (our own and others'). In this sense, there is no action that cannot become work and there is nothing like a useless job. It is no coincidence that Eastern Christianity considers liturgy as the work par excellence, where every aspect of reality is led toward its end, thus anticipating in some way the final redemption.

There is no doubt that the concrete conditions of daily work may seem far from this image, but if our daily practice is considered carefully the elements outlined here will be surely found.

# The Supranational Non-Political Paradigm

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Although there is a lot of talk about the spread of new populisms in the Western Hemisphere, it is also important to address one of the issues that is probably at the heart of the new way of doing politics (not only in Europe, but also in the USA, as Donald Trump statements have often highlighted), and that is mistrust for international cooperation. It is an issue strictly related to the current political crisis, and one that seems often to be floating like a ghost behind the words and rage that have been characterizing our times.

## 1. A European Phenomenon (Although Unrelated to the EU)

The expression *supranational non-political paradigm* is the negative label of what today's mainstream scientific literature refers to as *international liberal project*. It is to be preferred to the also negative term *European technocratic paradigm* so as not to create confusion with two concepts too-often criticized nowadays: the perennially blamed European Union, and the perennially blamed *technocracy*. These pages will deal with a global phenomenon, which is, however, more pronounced in Europe: the *supranational non-po-*

*litical paradigm*, that is the weakening of political institutions in favor of the market and supranational institutions (in fact, this is mainly a post-World-War-II-European phenomenon). Moreover, while *technocracy* is one facet of the paradigm, but not a term that captures its complexity; on the other hand, *non-political* is a qualification that better captures the transfer of delegated powers away from areas where choices can be challenged by voters.

These two qualities of the paradigm (*supranational* and *non-political*) are typical of the Western Hemisphere but are more marked in the European context. In the U.S., in fact, there is not such a fear of politics as in Europe. The U.S. does not recognize any supranational jurisdiction besides the weak NAFTA and BIT tribunals, and the WTO bodies. As for human rights (the core pillar of a democratic society), 47 European and Asian countries rely on the European Court of Human Rights of Strasbourg as the ultimate authority to define them, while in the USA the only institution dealing with human rights is its own Supreme Court (the Inter American Court of human rights, in fact, does not have jurisdiction over it. Furthermore, the USA is subject only to the monitoring power of the Inter American Commission of Human Rights and of the UN bodies).

## 2. A Supranational, Non-Political Paradigm with Its Assumptions

What I call *supranational, non-political paradigm* involves the following assumptions:

- Democracy alone (specifically the Weimar Constitution of 1919) produced Nazism, so we had better have strong institutional systems in place to control parliaments and governments.
- In order to avoid the outrageous tragedies occurred in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we should rely on supranational, stable organizations – courts, powers, bodies (note that, together with

the first assumption, this basically says that the tyranny of the majority of a court is better than the tyranny of the majority of a parliament).

- Sovereignty (state sovereignty) means «impunity». We do not want such a thing as we need political entities that are accountable.
- Nationalism, or national identity, has pushed towards too much violence and too many wars; we need a new identity beyond nations to have peace.
- Nations have retreated into themselves and generated unjustified racial/nationalistic pride. Following the successful inclusive experience of the USA, we need a common political identity which transcends differences, mobility across European states, and to make our societies open to migrants.
- Politics and politicians are biased actors good only for opinions, but without good expertise and competences. After the crazy and violent 70s, the utopia of «everything-is-politics and you-are-my-enemy» finally died. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, experts have been able to pursue pragmatic recipes, beyond political conflicts, for the promotion of common wealth.
- Politics is not to be trusted, because, instead of the purity of ideals, of science and of numbers, it pursues the corrupt and corrupting idea of *compromise*.
- Modern society is too complicated for politicians (and humanists?); therefore, we should rely on trained experts.
- Not only is it better to remove certain state competences from above, through supranational cooperation, but also from below, through authorities, such as the energy authority, the communications authority, etc.
- In short, we are better off with managers instead of politicians (and if we want to venture into some of the underpinnings of this idealistic portrait of the technocratic paradigm, we can describe globalization with the further assumption that what actually brings unity is not the politics of an iden-

tity, but the market. Open trade of goods and finance regulate the fair allocation of resources, and everybody, according to his or her abilities, will be free to contribute in an organic way to what he or she feels is best suited to his/her preferences, as part of a bigger project, more open and more efficient).

These are just examples. The list of assumptions could be much longer, but I wanted to mention just a few of the ideas you might hear in the hallways of a contemporary university of law, economics, or social science. Some of them are reasonable, some are more complicated, and all of them seem naïve if they are treated as given, as assumptions – at this point in history in fact they require some demonstration. The purpose of these pages is not to unpack all of them, but merely to challenge the idea that has crystallized and hardened these assumptions into a single, untouchable block.

### 3. Its Goal, Its First Stops, the Last Challenges, and the Difficulties of Starting over Again

The *supranational non-political paradigm* overcomes political and social differences by focusing on growth and wealth. However, without growth, its promises run short of breath. After 2008, challenges have arisen for the world based on the assumptions I listed above, not only because of the financial crisis, but also due to social factors.

The huge public debt cumulated in the past 35 years has silenced every voice coming from the left by talking about welfare and expenses.

At the same time, the emergence of long forgotten poverities and inequalities and the instability of jobs (and therefore of families and societies) have all made the voices of the free-marketist right seem naïve.



Wherever we turn our heads there are good reasons which prevent us from reasoning in terms of the political categories of the past. Therefore, politics – once again – has revealed itself as useless, and many of the assumptions listed above may appear to be valid: we need in fact experts with the right recipe to bring us out of this swamp. However, after years of political and economic confusion, is this really a credible hope?

There are many good reasons to start thinking again in political terms. Migration, the defense of European borders from rising neighboring powers, never-ending civil wars in several countries bordering on the Mediterranean sea, the fight against terrorism – they all call for forms of engagement that go beyond a win-win game in which experts find easy solutions by banding together. However, it seems that when challenges arise today there is no source of leverage, and no possible moves coming from the political sphere. Whatever one will propose and succeed in finding votes for, the room for solutions is tight.

#### 4. Populism?

It is no surprise that today we have been facing what is often referred to as *populism* – how curious: half of the assumptions listed above are precisely intended to avoid the degeneration of democracy, while the other half are dedicated to making societies and their governments more efficient; nevertheless, this set of assumptions has also been running into its share of problems. Let us focus for a moment on international institutions: they too (not only the so-called PIIGS and other bad economies) have not been working well. In the 90s the overload of cases at the European Court of Human Rights was not resolved by reinstituting the Commission as a filter, but rather by leaving greater discretion to single and triple judges. The WTO is not progressing, and probably will not do so. The system of protection of international investments has come under

strong criticism, and the TTIP and TIP failed negotiations are just the latest episode in a longer struggle that started with Latin American countries not paying damages at the end of arbitrations, or withdrawing from the treaties protecting investments in their country.

States are not the only ones facing very difficult times in making decisions, but international institutions, too, have been facing huge claims against their legitimacy.

### 5. Are We Left without Options, aside from Nationalism? The Lack of Flexibility in Addressing New Challenges

What to do, today? One easy option is: let's scream against something. The migrants. The European Union. NAFTA. The Euro currency. That is what Trump, Farage, Le Pen and Salvini do. One may think: «We just need a target, somebody or something to blame». Are we going to scream too? Against what? Are we trying to make the *supranational non-political paradigm* our target, too, and just expressing our protest in a more articulate and sophisticated way than the so-called «populists»?

Someone may argue that screaming serves a pragmatic purpose: «We need a target to blame because today whoever screams against something wins the elections». Sure, someone can get power that way – but then, how are we going to use it?

It is not sufficient to blame somebody in order to lead a reform, and one of such a breadth (although it can be useful to get elected, and there would be nothing wrong with it, if one's job were simply that. However, if we talk about how to change things, the problem is still there to be addressed). It is not clear, in fact, how one can challenge the *supranational non-political paradigm*, and its deteriorations into technocracy and in a mechanical builder of inequality. In politics the challenge occurs in the moment of voting – but what about the *supranational non-political*

*paradigm*? A ghost therefore appears in the room: is nationalism the only possible way to answer the abuses of the powers of our time? Are Brexit and Trump's isolationism the only answers available, the only logical consequences of our lack of a lexicon to articulate an alternative to the current system?

Rising nationalisms and populisms can also be described as a reaction coming from people's gut feelings, affirming a confused need for politics, for freedom. Let's be careful in attaching labels. If someone always keeps his baby locked in his arms in order to walk fast, instead of patiently teaching him how to walk, of course the baby will eventually struggle, and throw his fists around, and perhaps break the parent's glasses: who is to be blamed for the broken lenses? Is it the baby, or the impatient parent who grabs him instead of giving him some room to develop his skills and walk? The rise in populism reveals that this non-political society has left us without a lexicon and without opportunities to address difficult problems. We cannot face migration; we cannot face welfare; we cannot face public debt. There is always some international institution, some domestic or international court referring to some vested rights, some good reason to say that our attempts are wrong. By shutting ourselves off, moving ever inward, the pressure in the volcano will continue to mount against the walls, making the explosion inevitable.

## 6. Openings: Supranational Engagement, Freedom and Identity

We are talking about the failure of a paradigm, in Thomas Kuhn's sense. The idea that clear rules and the free market would have been sufficient to bridge diversity and create a new, more equal society is shipwrecked. Now, the question is whether it is possible to reform the idea to have a smooth transition. Or not.

A society can start imagining itself over again through the examples of communities, women and men refashioning it

through their action and example. Unfortunately, the non-political paradigm, at the moment, seems deeply suspicious of and positioned against the spaces of freedom which families, associations, and states would need. In our society, these freedoms are understood as being against the free-market/liberal project. This makes even thinking about human needs (humanism) impossible: humanism addresses the soul, and souls are dangerous because they evoke some kind of identity, which is, by definition, exclusive, shaped in concrete communities, and anti-egalitarian. Moreover, humanism needs a vision of the world, a *weltanschauung*. It needs space, it needs room and time to practice and grow, and concepts to play with – and at the moment these spaces are intentionally reduced to zero: in our social and legal systems clear-cut rules will fill all the gaps, and in the sunset of private morality, public laws will fill every inch private morality has left.

If we read De Gasperi, Adenauer, or Schuman (and before them Guardini, their likely source of inspiration), the idea of a European supranational cooperation was not anti-identitarian. Nevertheless, by contrast, the international liberal paradigm is explicitly anti-identitarian, turning necessarily into an empty project. Maybe if we go back to a conceptualization of our societies in which countries, social movements, and families are not described as illegitimate divisions between the clear order of rules and the free acts of individuals, we can manage to regain control of the rudder of this drifting boat. This *part construens*, although fundamental, requires more space and leads farther afield from the core issue addressed by these pages, but one has to have it in mind in order to understand the possible causes of the failure of the *supranational non-political paradigm*.

# Introduction to the role of centre-right think tanks in the policy-making process

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The main purpose of this presentation is to give an insight into some relevant aspects of think tanks' role and influence in the policy-making process. In particular, the analysis will be divided into two parts: first of all, we will present the theoretical definition of think tanks and we will explain how such organisations work, what they are supposed to do and how they accomplish their mission; then, we will focus on European centre-right think tanks and political foundations, trying to better understand what role they play in the political process.

The United States, namely the country where think tanks first developed in the early 1900s, currently leads the *Global Go To Think Tank*<sup>1</sup> ranking of countries with the largest number of such entities in the world: 1,835, one quarter of which (approximately 400) are located in Washington D.C. This explains why the majority of existing literature on think tanks focuses on the U.S., although this phenomenon has been spreading, especially in the past two de-

<sup>1</sup> The Global Go to Think Tank Index is the result of an international survey of over 7,500 scholars, public and private donors, policy makers, and journalists who helped rank more than 6,600 think tanks using a set of 28 criteria developed by the Think Tanks and Civil Society Program (TTCSP). <http://gotothinktank.com/>.

cares, all over the world. Indeed, while on the one hand 55% of all think tanks are still based in North America (Mexico, Canada and the U.S.) and Europe, on the other hand the rate of establishment of think tanks has declined over the last 12 years in both the U.S. and Europe. On the contrary, Asia, Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, and North Africa continue to see an expansion in the number and type of think tanks established<sup>2</sup>.

What is a think tank? How do think tanks operate? First of all, there is not a unique and worldwide-accepted definition of think tanks. According to the definition given by the *2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index*:

Think tanks are public-policy research analysis and engagement organisations that generate policy-oriented research, analysis, and advice on domestic and international issues, thereby enabling policymakers and the public to make informed decisions about public policy.

Think tanks may be affiliated or independent institutions that are structured as permanent bodies, not *ad hoc commissions*.

These institutions often act as a bridge between the academic and policymaking communities and between states and civil society, serving in the public interest as independent voices that translate applied and basic research into a language that is understandable, reliable, and accessible for policymakers and the public<sup>3</sup>.

Despite such a long and complex definition, there are three recurring elements that characterise every think tank.

First of all, think tanks focus on policy-oriented research: they do not just conduct research for their own sake but – and this is their distinctive goal – they also try to give the analysis a political

<sup>2</sup> *2015 Global Go To Think Tank*, Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program, University of Pennsylvania, p. 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Think Tanks and Policy Advice in the US*, Routledge 2007 and in *The Fifth Estate: The Role of Think Tanks in Domestic and Foreign Policy in the US* forthcoming University of Pennsylvania Press.

perspective, by providing new ideas and innovative solutions which can be used by policy makers in the creation and implementation of policies. This peculiarity is directly connected to some of the main reasons why think tanks developed in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries: the necessity to face increasing complexity and the technical nature of policy problems, linked also to the disruptive effects of the information and technological revolution; the crisis of confidence in governments and elected officials<sup>4</sup>, which seem unable – sometimes even unfit – to give concrete answers to complex problems. Think tanks are supposed to use their knowledge in order to fill in this competence gap and help policy-makers in the accomplishment of their mission.

A second recurring element is that think tanks are permanent bodies. It does not matter if they have a specific affiliation or if they stand as independent institutions, one of their peculiarities is to have a clear and permanent structure which enables them to carry out their activities with continuity.

Last, but by no means least, the third distinctive element of think tanks resides in their capacity to act as bridges between knowledge and policies – by conducting in-house research and influencing the policy-makers – and between politics and societies – by disseminating information among the public opinion and stimulating the public debate.

The above definition leads us to the three approaches which constitute, all together and at the same time, the basis of think tanks' activities. First, the research approach: more long-term, with an emphasis on new, «big ideas», tackling major policy problems that require in-depth analysis. Secondly, the advising/consultancy approach: characterised by a more immediate response to a limited number of questions, commissioned by a specific client, usually part of an existing agenda. Eventually,

<sup>4</sup> McGann, James G., ed. *Think tanks and policy advice in the US: Academics, advisors and advocates*. Routledge, 2007.

the influencing/advocacy approach: based on already existing research evidence and including strategic communications, capacity development, networking, campaigns, etc. Through each of these three different approaches, think tanks exercise their role and influence in the policy-making process, trying to fulfil their mission and achieve their goals.

How do think tanks concretely get to influence policymaking? Investigating such a complex process is hard work, as is measuring the influence that think tanks have on the policy-making process. Indeed, such influence can take many different forms and may have an impact at different stages of policymaking: for instance, in the so-called «issue articulation» as well as in «policy formulation» and «policy implementation». The influence that think tanks have at various points in the policy cycle is related both to external factors (institutional and political system) and internal factors (financial and human resources). Such a role, including impact and influence, may be attested and measured both by resource and output indicators – ability to recruit leading scholars, level and quality of financial support, proximity and access to decision makers, number and quality of proposals, publications, seminars – and by utilisation and impact indicators – media citations, web hits, recommendations considered or adopted by policymakers, awards granted, career progression of researchers into government or international organisations. None of these indicators could alone attest the influence that a think tank has on the policy-making process, while all of them combined can give, to a certain extent, the dimension of such influence. Moreover, since it is unlikely that methodological obstacles in measuring the influence of think tanks will be overcome, it may be more appropriate to discuss the relevance they have in the policy-making process than to investigate how much policy influence they wield<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*



The theoretical analysis conducted so far can help shed light on the development and role of such organisations at European level. Throughout the twentieth century, and in particular after World War II, think tanks have been growing all over Europe. Since 1980, independent think tanks have started to grow also in the so-called «EU bubble» and influence the policy-making process at EU level. Just to mention some of them and the year they were founded: Centre for European Policy Studies (1983), European Policy Centre (1997), Friends of Europe (1999), Bruegel (2005), European Centre for International Political Economy (2006).

In 2007, the European Commission and the European Parliament decided to encourage the creation of a new model of think tanks by promoting the development of European Political Foundations<sup>6</sup> affiliated to political families present at EU level. The launching of the European Political Foundations Pilot Project is the milestone of this process: European Political Foundations, affiliated with the major European political parties, started to develop and become new actors with the possibility and power of influencing the policy-making process.

Financially, they were funded for the period from October 2007 to August 2008 by action grants awarded by the European Commission under the pilot project. From September 2008, the European Parliament (EP) has taken over the funding and now awards annual operating grants. The grant can cover up to 85% of the eligible expenditure of a foundation, while the rest should be covered by its own resources. It can be used to meet the ex-

<sup>6</sup> «A political foundation at European level is an organisation affiliated with a political party at European level which underpins and complements the objectives of that party. A political foundation at European level observes, analyses and contributes to the debate on European public policy issues. It also develops linked activities, such as organising seminars, training, conferences and studies» (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/contracts-and-grants/en/20150201PVL00101/Political-parties-and-foundations>).

penditure directly linked to the activities set out in the foundation's programme of activities, such as: meetings and conferences, publications, studies and advertisements, administrative, personnel and travel costs. The grant cannot be used, among others, to meet expenditures such as: campaign costs for referenda and elections, direct or indirect funding of national parties, election candidates and national political foundations.

Any foundation meeting the required conditions can apply for funding, by sending an application by 30 September each year to the European Parliament, together with its activity programme and budget for the following year. Once the applications are evaluated and approved, the funds are distributed among these foundations according to a set scale: 15% is distributed in equal shares and 85% is distributed among those that are affiliated to such political parties at European level which have elected members in the European Parliament, in proportion to the number of elected members. A first instalment, representing 80% of the total awarded grant, is initially paid by the end of the first quarter of each year. The balance is paid the following year after the final report of the foundations has been approved by the Bureau of the European Parliament<sup>7</sup>.

Such foundations' funding system – which is subject to the respect of both the EP and internal regulations as well as to annual parliamentary and political audits – assures on the one hand the necessary financial stability in order to plan and carry out activities and, on the other hand, it makes the foundation's work develop in a more open, transparent and controlled environment.

The former Centre for European Studies, the official think tank and political foundation of the European People's Party (EPP), was founded in 2007 in the wake of the above mentioned

<sup>7</sup> <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/contracts-and-grants/en/20150201PVL00101/Political-parties-and-foundations>.

pilot project. Its activity has reflected since the very beginning the vision of its founder, the former President of the EPP Wilfried Martens, after whom the Centre was renamed in 2013 when he passed away. Martens strongly believed that political foundations could play a major role in shaping and developing new ideas and policies. «By creating a network of likeminded foundations,» he said, – «they will act as a catalyst in the bridging process between national and European politics.»

The core of its vision – which still remains one of the main ambitions of the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies – was to use the think tank model as a «reservoir» of talent and ideas to be made available to the policy-makers and, at the same time, to create an umbrella organisation at EU level capable to serve as a common platform for similar think tanks, associations, political foundations operating in the member states, in order to bridge the existing gap between Brussels and the rest of Europe.

Throughout the years, the Martens Centre has engaged in a large number of different activities, taking part in the preparation of EPP programmes and policy documents; organising seminars and training; contributing to the formulation of EU and national public policies; producing research studies and books, policy briefs, and the twice-yearly European View journal; offering a platform for discussion among experts, politicians, policy-makers and the European public; and finally, co-operating in common projects with member foundations and partners all over Europe.

The Martens Centre's network now includes 31 member foundations and 15 official partners from 25 countries, in cooperation with which it organises every year an increasing number of events across Europe. All of the foundations and partners which are part of this network – like De Gasperi Foundation – have a strategic role in the policy-making process of their respective countries. The fact of being at the same time a think tank and a platform made up of likeminded foundations operating in the member states has enabled the Martens Centre – like other

European political foundations – to transfer its influence and impact from the European level to the different national levels.

In particular, the concrete impact of common projects held in cooperation by the Martens Centre and its partners is to contribute to the increase of knowledge on EU decisions and functioning at national level; to transfer and harmonise as much as possible national priorities at European level; to create connections and the exchange of ideas among European and national key players (politicians, stakeholders, media, NGOs, etc.).

The way European political foundations – such as the Martens Centre, ranked as the 10<sup>th</sup> top think tank worldwide with a political party affiliation<sup>8</sup> – operate and influence the political process constitutes an interesting model which has, at the same time, differences and similarities with respect to the Anglo-Saxon model of think tanks described in the first part of this presentation. In terms of financial resources and mindset, one could say that the differences prevail over the similarities, while in terms of general approach, goals and ambitions think tanks from both sides of the Atlantic have a lot in common.

What is interesting to observe is that these new actors, both affiliated political foundations and independent think tanks, have conquered an increasingly relevant role in the national and European policy-making process. Despite the different systems which govern in each European country the activity and funding mechanism of such institutions – affecting their size and performance – all have a crucial role in the political process and constitute an enormous source of policy innovation. This is also the case of European political foundations operating in Brussels: in almost ten years they have become strategic players, able to shape and influence European public opinion and the political agenda, with an enormous potential that still has to be fully explored.

<sup>8</sup> 2015 Global Go To Think Tank Index Report (2016).

# The future of global economy in post-capitalism

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We live in a time of great uncertainty in which the international economic system and, in particular, the European one have been characterized by challenges and crises. 2015 was the year of Grexit fear, 2016 the year of Brexit and 2017 could be the year of Frexit fear, given the possibility that Le Pen might take office in Elysee Palace, not to mention Italy in case populist parties win in the forthcoming elections. In all these terms, the keyword is *exii* which denotes the desire to abandon a status quo which is not considered satisfying. It is clear then that many want to leave a paradigm of integration which, in one way or another, has not proved to be up to expectations.

Even on the other side of the ocean, there are similar concerns. During the electoral campaign, Trump made no secret of wanting to introduce economic policies which, if not protectionist, are certainly less liberal than those of his predecessors.

Moreover, in his policy plan for his first 100 days in office, the most powerful element consists precisely in the cancellation of the TPP, the trade agreement with Pacific countries which has been recently concluded by the Obama administration.

All of this constitutes a radical shift in comparison with the paradigm typical of a few years ago. Twenty years ago, in fact, globalization was seen as the beginning of a new extraordinary

era that would have brought great opportunities to all. However, today many people do not think so anymore and many countries have been trying to close themselves off instead of opening to others. Some time ago the Economist described our world as «a gated globe», a world delimited by gates.

It is true that globalization has been and continues to be a huge opportunity for the world, suffice to think of the millions of people who, in recent decades, have been able to breach the poverty threshold thanks to international trade; in this regard, China and India are the two most striking examples. Figure 1<sup>1</sup> is quite eloquent as well, showing the distribution of income at global level in 1988 and 2011. Over a 20 year span, the entire distribution has moved toward the right thus denoting an overall improvement of the income in real terms. In particular, the greatest gains have been occurring for the poorest sections of the world population.

However, the advantages for the world as a whole have not been uniformly distributed among all individuals as there were some who have gained much, while other much less.

Figure 2<sup>2</sup> shows the cumulative variation of per capita income for percentiles of the income distribution between 1988 and 2011. The graph clearly indicates that there are winners and losers in the globalization process. Among the winners, there is the so-called middle class of the world, encompassing the bourgeoisie of emerging countries (China, Brazil, Indonesia, India, etc.), as well as the «top 1 percent» group of the richest, the subject of considerable analysis following also the publication of Piketty's book. On the other hand, there are also losers and these are clearly those that constitute around 80% of the distribution of world income. Who are these people? They are indeed the middle class of developed countries. While all the others have expe-

<sup>1</sup> From Milanovic B., *Global Inequality*, Harvard University Press, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

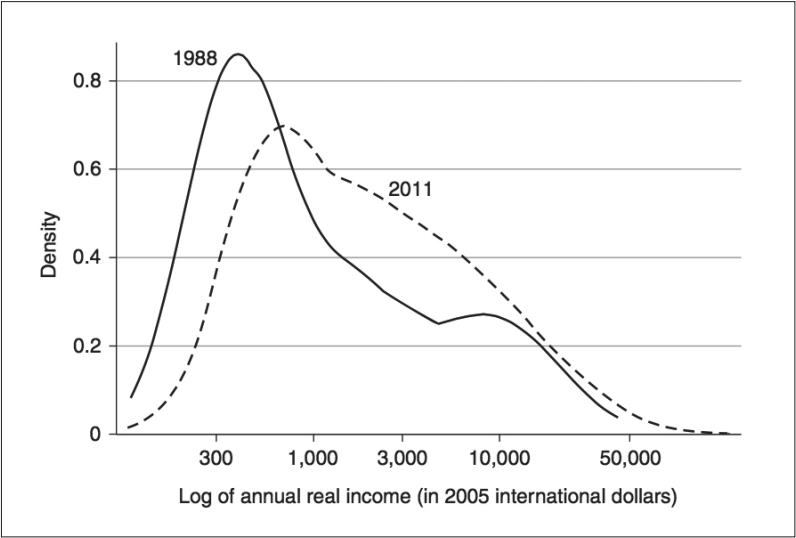


Figure 1

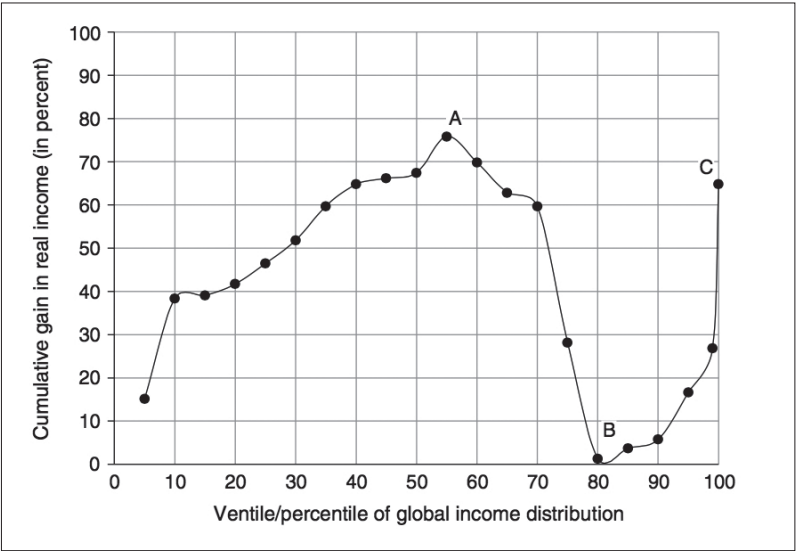


Figure 2

rienced an increase in their per capita income, these have not. The loss of purchasing power of the middle class is a phenomenon rather widespread in almost all developed countries both in America and in Europe but being particularly strong in the USA. These *losers* of the globalization have been analysed by political scientists very well because they have been proved to be decisive in determining the electoral outcomes in many countries. They are the so-called *blue collar workers not graduated* or workers with low or medium degrees who are not graduated, even if in Europe and, especially, in Italy several graduates are part of this category given the absence of a strong return to education in our country.

There are two main explanations for the relative loss of income on the part of the middle class of developed countries. Both these explanations have to do with globalization and they are so intertwined with each other that it is difficult to separate them. The first one refers to globalization, defined as international trade; while the second refers to technical progress which obviously is itself one of the main determinants of globalization. In fact, the large redistributive effects of trade are well known. For example, if a person has skills specific for the sector in which he operates, for instance the textile sector, and he loses his job because his company closes to open in China and perhaps he finds a job in another sector, admitted that he manages to find it, it is clear that his productivity in that area will certainly be lower than it was in the original sector, precisely because of the specificity of skills. Indeed, he will be unlikely to put his knowledge and skills at the service of the other sector in the same way he used to do before. Consequently, this results in a loss of income.

In recent years, this aspect has been accentuated by the phenomenon that, in jargon, is referred to as *unbundling* of the *value chain* or the fragmentation of the production process in many small units that are in fact goods themselves. Here is a little example: in 1980, Apple used to produce all its computers in the



United States. There was therefore a single good, the computer, that was manufactured in a single country. On the contrary, nowadays Apple produces almost nothing in the USA but it also writes «designed in California», «made in China» on its iPhones. The design and research phases are in fact kept in California while the production is carried out in China. The phone is then sent back to California where the last part of the production process, including marketing, advertising etc., takes place as it is performed in the United States. What used to be one good has become three goods: the good «research and development», the good «manufacture of the phone», and the good «marketing». This is the meaning of *unbundling* of the *value chain*; in fact three goods have been created from one. Moreover, these goods are traded because it is as if California was exporting «know-how» to China which then came back through the good «phone», etc. This is possible because of *outsourcing* and *offshoring* which can be used to move abroad part of the production. What are the consequences of this phenomenon on the labor market? Apple does not employ anybody who assembles a mobile phone, while it hires graduates in marketing or engineers, as they are the ones who take care of the design. On the contrary, all manufacturing activities have been moved to China. Therefore, *low skill* activities are moved out while those which are *high skill* are kept internally. This however is not a neutral phenomenon, is not a zero-sum game, because no company is full of engineers and *high skills* are generally only at the top, while *low skill* activities require more workers. In the end, this process results in a decrease in the total number of jobs.

This is not a small phenomenon and there is very accurate data for the United States. To give you an idea, the loss of income arising from these so-called *displaced workers* is about 25%, which is not a small amount. A well-known economist, David Autor, has been studying the effects of the trade with China on the US labor market for several years. What makes the Chinese case interesting is its strong similarity to a natural experiment.

There is in fact a China 1.0 which is prior to its admission to the WTO in 2000 and the consequent opening of trade, and then there is a China 2.0 subsequent to that date. It is therefore possible to easily estimate the causal effect of the entry of China into the arena of international trade. Autor shows that the trade with China alone is able to explain 20% of employment loss in the United States from 2000 up to today. We are talking about the last fifteen years. All this has obviously had social and electoral repercussions and the interesting element is that the data on trade is granular so it can be traced back to the sector and the specific region of production. David Autor has mapped the loss of production in American counties for each sector characterized by the trade with China. The comparison between this diagram and the map of the election results shows a surprising correspondence: counties where Trump has achieved more consensus are also those who have been affected the most by the trade with China.

Autor has recently published an article in which he carries out a formal analysis of the effect of trade with China on the American election results. By performing a counterfactual analysis considering the so-called *swing states*, he has shown that if the trade with China had been 50% of what was actually, these States, which are Michigan, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and North Carolina, would have elected a Democrat rather than a Republican. In other words, it is as if the president of the United States had been elected... by Chinese rather than by the Americans!

It is possible to carry out the same analysis for the United Kingdom. In fact, by comparing the data relating to the penetration of the Chinese imports in the different British regions, some authors have found a strong correlation with the results of the *Brexit* referendum. The areas most affected by the Chinese imports have seen a prevalence of votes for *Brexit*, contrary to those less affected which have mainly voted to *remain*.

The case of China obviously constitutes only an example of

a broader process that tells us that globalization is not neutral: it has effects on income distribution because it generates winners and losers. It is possible to be skeptical about the fact that in the long term the election of Trump or Brexit can actually benefit these people but there is no doubt that there is an actual discomfort that has determined a certain election outcome. The fact is that these processes are very persistent and it is therefore to be expected that the electoral implications of the losers of globalization will linger on for many years. It is amazing how the political class of advanced countries has not realized this phenomenon for which the literature has been providing documentary evidence for years. It is very dangerous for a society to reach such a point of suffering and tearing like this because in democracies unexpected outcomes, which are to some extent also dangerous, can occur.

The Greek example is emblematic. The electoral outcomes in Greece, first with the election of Tsipras and then with the paradoxical referendum on the permanence in the eurozone, have led many to think about cases of collective irrationality. After pondering the question, though, the explanation is quite simple: in a country with an unemployment rate at 25% and with a youth unemployment at 50%, can we expect that people will behave in an absolutely rational manner or can we expect a large component of the votes to be decided out of anger and frustration?

It is consequently necessary to try to understand and interpret this social hardship so that a society does not come to breaking point as the Greek one did.

I will now discuss the second element which is complementary and interconnected to the theme of globalization: the technological progress. The two elements have a similar nature and expression. Moreover, the technical progress has generated a strong polarization phenomenon of the labor market. In recent years, technology has in fact allowed us to replace more

and more routine tasks and this has obviously threatened the workers employed in these activities. Why has this phenomenon polarized the labor market? Because routine activities are mainly found at the midpoint of the intensity scale of *skills*. Let's order professions in terms of increasing skills with *low skills* at the low end and *high skill* professions at the highest end of the scale while bearing in mind their routine component. We can notice that few *high skill* activities are performed as a routine and can be replaced by a computer and by a machine: let's think of the tasks of a doctor, a teacher, an engineer. On the other hand, also many *low skill* occupations are characterized by a limited routine component. We can consider, in this case, all the activities related to the care of people (carers), cleaning, etc.

Thus, the effect of technical progress is a polarization of the labor market by means of reducing the demand (and therefore also the salaries) of medium-skilled professions. Also in this case there are many studies of labor economists that have documented and quantified this polarization phenomenon affecting the labor market in both Europe and the USA. This phenomenon is similar to that of globalization: there are winners and losers and those who are penalized the most belong to the so-called middle class.

If these are the challenges faced by our society, how can we address them? It is evident that erecting walls does not make sense so it is unthinkable to lock ourselves in an ivory tower and reject all of the advantages offered by globalization; at the same time, it is necessary to tackle this issue in a clear manner. For example, the debate that is taking place in Europe on the possibility of giving or not China a market economy status is a decision that must be very well pondered.

From a more general perspective, in my opinion, there are two areas which need to be considered to achieve the only sensible response that a society can give in this context thus put-

ting its own citizens and especially young people in the best possible conditions to address the challenges outlined above. These regard work and education, which, incidentally, are also the two cornerstones of the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Economic policies must have the protection of employment as their first objective. This does not mean protecting it through laws as, for decades, it has been done in Italy without actual results. If Italian workers are threatened by Chinese imports, there is no use in having a special law to prevent their loss; instead, we must put our workers in the condition of being able to employ their skills in a different framework which is more profitable for them and for the economy as a whole.

For decades, in Italy we have thought of implementing labour market policies simply by dealing with the contractual aspect. Currently the Italian labor market is extremely flexible on paper – we have all the possible contract typologies, such as permanent, temporary contracts, increasing legal protections, etc. However such measures have solved neither the problem of unemployment nor that of economic growth.

The fact is that the labor market in Italy does not work... because we have never had a serious industrial policy. Employment is not created by laws, but by businesses. Indeed, all empirical evidence has shown that good firms, those which grow, have a turnover, export, etc., also create good jobs not only in terms of quantity but also in terms of pay, working environment, etc.

A good firm keeps good workers very close, pays them handsomely and treats them well because it understands their value.

Italy needs to invest more in industrial policy and, if we consider it carefully, we notice that this is one of the aspects in which we are lacking the most compared to our major European partners such as France and Germany.

The second element is the theme of education. What does educating mean? For our ministry of education as in many other countries, to educate means to develop the so-called cognitive

skills as we live in a complex world where technological contribution is relevant. All this is undoubtedly true; however, cognitive skills are necessary but not sufficient to deal with the challenges of today's world. They allow us to tackle the complexity of technology but what technology has shown us in recent years is that it has been determining a factor of change that has no precedent.

For people of the generation before mine it was common develop all their career path in a single workplace (same company, same hospital, same school, etc.); while the people of my generation have experienced more change with an average of four different jobs. Finally, teenagers today will undergo an even greater change. What kind of education is possible while facing change?

This is more difficult to teach at school as, for it, the importance of cognitive skills is not so relevant.

Psychologists and also eminent economists, such as Nobel Prize winner Heckman, have shown that in this context the so-called non-cognitive skills are equally important. These competencies are those which develop the principal traits of the personality, including openness to experience and the others, conscientiousness, cooperative spirit, emotional stability, etc.

Research has demonstrated that non-cognitive skills are equal to if not more important than the cognitive ones in predicting the wage and the type of work.

The fact is that while cognitive skills can be learned through a classical and traditional form of education, non-cognitive skills have not so much to do with the content of teaching as with the way in which the teaching takes place and with the cultural context in which it occurs.

In other words, non-cognitive skills can be developed in a school which puts the person and not the subject at its center. In Italy, the great value of Catholic schools but also of many state schools was traditionally this but in recent years it has been lost miserably. For this reason, it is necessary to start afresh from here to be able to meet the challenges of the future.

# Geography, History and European Strategy

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*President*

*Editorial Board of IDL*

*Instituto Amaro da Costa*

First of all, I would like to thank the De Gasperi Foundation for such a kind invitation and for the chance to hear so many pertinent comments and analyses. Secondly, it is always great to be back in Italy, my second favourite country in the world, naturally after Portugal, for its art, architecture, food, wine, way of life, beautiful landscapes and people, substantial and significant heterogeneity, and, of course, my favourite: *Il Calcio*. So I will always be grateful to Italy for Paolo Maldini, the greatest defender ever and one of my idols, Franco Baresi, Carlo Ancelotti, Alessandro Del Piero, Andrea Pirlo, the last great *regista*, and nowadays Gianluigi Buffon, Leonardo Bonucci, Giorgio Chiellini and Andrea Barzagli, the eternal Francesco Totti as well as the exciting youngsters Alessio Romagnoli, Andrea Belotti and Manuel Locatelli, amongst others. Although I could speak for hours and hours about Italian football, unfortunately, I cannot speak Italian well and, therefore, please forgive me for speaking in English.

When I was asked to reflect upon the identity and future of Europe and after talking with Luigi Crema last week in Lisbon, where he presented a very interesting paper on the pre-conditions for populism, I thought that the best way to highlight the

enormous challenges that we are facing in Europe would be to look at the real bone of contention: Strategy.

In fact, although it is commonly believed that «the concept of ‘strategy’ has proven notoriously difficult to define», it is ever present in almost any domain of our lives<sup>1</sup>:

Everyone needs a strategy. Leaders of armies, major corporations, and political parties have long been expected to have strategies, but now no serious organization could imagine being without one. Despite the problems of finding ways through the uncertainty and confusion of human affairs, a strategic approach is still considered to be preferable to one that is merely tactical, let alone random. Having a strategy suggests an ability to look up from the short term and the trivial to view the long term and the essential, to address causes rather than symptoms, to see woods rather than trees<sup>2</sup>.

Moreover, «strategy is a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty, and ambiguity dominate.» It «involves geography, history, culture, economics and governmental systems» and «like politics, strategy is the art of the possible; but few can discern what is possible»<sup>3</sup>. This is even truer when we look at the European Union.

We are all very much aware that the longer the European Union lacks a coherent and feasible strategy the more the pace of strategic irrelevance will thrive. One just needs to take a

<sup>1</sup> Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, «Introduction: on strategy», in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, Alvin Bernstein (eds.), *The Making of Strategy. Rulers, States and War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy, a History*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013, p. ix.

<sup>3</sup> Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley, «Introduction: on strategy», in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, Alvin Bernstein (eds.), *The Making of Strategy. Rulers, States and War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2009, pp. 1-23 (quotations from pp. 1, 23 and 22).



quick look at the globe to realise that in a world where our transatlantic partnership is no longer taken for granted (although we have to wait and see if the candidate and President Trump are the same *political* person) and where Russia and China have re-emerged, we Europeans are facing a tougher international life. We do not even have to mention the crises along our «borders» ranging from Crimea, Eastern Ukraine through Syria and Libya.

So, from a rational point of view, it would make sense, I would even argue it would be common sense, for the members of the European Union to pool resources and develop a common strategy in order to have a better chance of fighting its strategic decline.

Strategically speaking, the more divided the more irrelevant are we as global players. So, why don't we act accordingly? Why is it so hard to coordinate a European strategy?

We should begin by pointing out the obvious: the European Union is not a state.

What we have at best is some kind of coordination in certain areas but not much more than that. We have German or French strategies and so forth. One of the most frequent comments that non-European students make is a comparison with the United States. From their perspective, there is great cultural homogeneity within Europe, so why don't we pursue a similar path and become a federation?

At the heart of my answer are History and Diversity. Take my country for instance. We have been independent since the 12th century and our borders were more or less settled at the end of the 13th / 14th centuries. With just an exception of 60 years (from 1580 to 1640), we have been an independent, homogeneous nation-state since then. Our history, however, differs from other European Union member-states such as Estonia.

In historical terms, the Eurocentric world was followed by a period of centrality of the United States, whose nation and state-building processes were completely different from the Eu-

ropean Union of today. The United States built federalism from scratch and even then it was not easy to find, amongst the original 13 colonies, other things in common besides *just being against* the British Empire. As thoroughly studied and researched, the fundamental balance and compromise of the US federalist experience were between stronger and weaker states, like Virginia and Delaware, larger and smaller states, like New York and Connecticut, and agrarian and commercial states. Imagine doing that with centuries and centuries of history as independent states, with intense histories of friendship, rivalry, conflict and wars. Indeed, many wars and some which have had a global impact.

To say it differently: No matter how pro-European Union we are, are we all prepared to let go of our full sovereignty? Are we really all that cosmopolitan?

The answer to this question, however, has now become irrelevant. The issue of national identity and sovereignty has been given new life with Brexit and there is no point in denying it. Throughout its history, the European Union has always had borders but not frontiers in its imagination so it could expand and enlarge. Everybody wanted to enter. Take Turkey for instance.

From a political point of view, the decision to leave coming from a key-state such as the United Kingdom has killed this Grand Narrative. Moreover, with Brexit the European Union has lost one of its most important voices in economic, financial and defence terms. It was also an Atlantic voice in an institution that has become more continental. As it is commonly observed, in 2004, «the power centre shifted even more to the East». And this brings me to another point and, once again, Estonia is a good example. Unlike Portugal, it is manifest that the main reason for Estonia to join the European Union and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) was Russia. That explains why Estonia is one of the few countries of NATO

that meets the threshold of 2% of GDP in military expenditure. The same argument is good for Poland as well.

For us, the Portuguese, Russia is a non-issue in terms of perception of threat. This is understandable if we take into account history and geography, and both have not been kind to the Estonians. For Portugal, joining the European Economic Community was crucial for two reasons which were shared by the political elite, academia and society at large. Firstly, we joined the European Project in 1986, only a decade after our democratic Constitution. We needed to leave behind ourselves almost half a century of dictatorship. Secondly, and like so many others, we wanted economic and social progress and we wanted to join the developed European countries. For us, defence issues were clearly non-existent also because we were founding members of NATO. Even with circa 20% of the population voting for far-left parties, such as the Portuguese Communist Party and the Trotsky-inspired Left Bloc, which are profoundly anti-NATO (as well as anti-American and Euro and European Union), our anchor, in terms of defence policy, is the transatlantic relationship.

The times of great enthusiasm for the European Union are now gone. The 2008 economic and financial crises added insult to injury after the 2005 political and «constitutional» crisis. The austerity measures, the emergence of a coordinated anti-globalisation sentiment and movement, different types of populists (what the European Council on Foreign Relations calls the insurgent parties)<sup>4</sup>, with their anti-establishment and anti-intellectual claims (the frightening *Post-Truth politics*)<sup>5</sup>, are

<sup>4</sup> Susi Dennison and Dina Pardijs, *The World according to Europe's Insurgent Parties*, European Council on Foreign Relations, June 2016, available at [http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR\\_181\\_-THE\\_WORLD\\_ACCORDING\\_TO\\_EUROPES\\_INSURGENT\\_PARTIES\\_NEW.pdf](http://www.ecfr.eu/page/-/ECFR_181_-THE_WORLD_ACCORDING_TO_EUROPES_INSURGENT_PARTIES_NEW.pdf) (last access: 2nd December 2016).

<sup>5</sup> William Davies, «The age of post-truth politics», in *The New York Times*, 24th August 2016, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/24/opin->

all part of the equation. And, needless to say, the impact of the refugee and humanitarian crises has been profound.

We are also now caught in a referendum spree. This need for direct democracy really reminds me of one of the great classics: *The History of the Peloponnesian War* between Sparta and Athens, by the Athenian Thucydides<sup>6</sup>. His description of populists like Cleon is a powerful guide to the role of passion and emotion. It also highlights the dangers of democracy when there is a lack of leadership: post-Pericles Athens was indeed less able to start a strategic discussion<sup>7</sup>. Most of the strategic errors made by democratic and imperial Athens, such as the decision to invade and conquer the distant territory of Sicily, were self-inflicted.

In a nutshell, I would argue that, from a strategic point of view, 2005 was the beginning of the end for the EU as a relevant global player. And Brexit was, to use the historical analogy of Julius Caesar, the crossing of the Rubicon and, as for the Roman legions, there is no turning back.

We could also highlight the division and the primacy of national strategic interests regarding Brussels if we consider the relationship with China or Russia and their increasing role in Europe. They are a good barometer of the fact that there is a *strategic void to fill*.

Moscow has been using an assertive military tone both in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, always invoking the need to protect Russians abroad. At the same time, it is actively financing

ion/campaign-stops/the-age-of-post-truth-politics.html?\_r=0 (last access: 2nd December 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Robert Strassler (editor), *The Landmark Thucydides. A Comprehensive Guide to the Peloponnesian War*, Free Press, New York and London, 1996.

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. Robert Zaretsky, «The Mytilenean Dialogue From 428 B.C. Explains Who Really Won the Trump-Clinton Debate», in *Foreign Policy*, 28th September 2016, <http://foreignpolicy.com/2016/09/28/the-mytilenean-dialogue-from-428-bce-explains-who-really-won-the-trump-clinton-debate/> (last access: 2nd December 2016).

anti-European parties and movements such as the French National Front<sup>8</sup>. On the contrary, the Chinese approach is at the other end of the spectrum since it has pursued a low-profile stance built on a preference for investments in the economies of European member-states. We now have so many examples «[...] long chain of investments by Chinese state-owned and private companies in Europe in search of quality and technology»<sup>9</sup>. Italy is a good case in point with the acquisition of *Pirelli* and now of both football clubs from Milan, Inter and Milan, although the latter one is pending confirmation from Berlusconi.

At the same time, China's investment in Europe has been so strong and increasingly visible that it has prompted a debate: «Should there be areas in which China cannot invest as it happens in the US? There are essentially [...] reasons for saying «yes». The first deals with the state-led capitalism that characterizes China. High-dollar deals mean one is dealing not merely with Chinese companies but the state and its one-party regime as well»<sup>10</sup>.

This important debate has been reinforced by the discussions around the lack of reciprocity in terms of market access. In other words: Chinese companies have access to the European market but the other way around is very difficult... still. This is a central argument in the discussion about conceding (or not) the status of market economy to China<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>8</sup> Fredrik Wesslau, «Putin's friends in Europe», in the *European Council on Foreign Relations*, 19th October 2016, [http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary\\_putins\\_friends\\_in\\_europe7153](http://www.ecfr.eu/article/commentary_putins_friends_in_europe7153) (last access: 2nd December 2016).

<sup>9</sup> Raquel Vaz-Pinto, «China's Pivot to Europe with British Characteristics», in *The American Interest online*, 29th October 2015, available at <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2015/10/29/chinas-pivot-to-europe-with-british-characteristics/> (last access: 2nd December 2016).

<sup>10</sup> *Idem, ibidem*.

<sup>11</sup> Insa Ewert and Jan Philipp Pöter, «Market Economy Status for China: The Views From Brussels and Beijing», in *The Diplomat*, 25th July 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/07/market-economy-status-for-china-the-views-from-brussels-and-beijing/> (last access: 3rd December 2016).

The best barometer of this changing reality is what is taking place in China's biggest European partner: Germany. Due to the recent systematic acquisition of many high-tech companies by China, German authorities have decided to block some of the deals like the one regarding Aixtron<sup>12</sup>.

In regard to this crucial issue (China having market economy status), an editorial in *The People's Daily* is quite telling: «It reveals the EU's insincere attitude toward international treaties and the WTO rules, but it must keep in mind that observing international obligations without attached strings is the only right choice»<sup>13</sup>.

As you can see my vision about the future of a European strategy is pessimistic<sup>14</sup>. Unfortunately, it is my conviction that we should start to prepare for the post-European Union world and dig deep into a kind of project post-mortem.

The dynamics of the world will not stand still in order to give Europeans some time to get their act together. In fact, they will make it harder for us to develop such a strategy.

However, we need to acknowledge that we are in dire straits (without any musical reference).

Only then will we be able to rise to the challenge and, to use Lawrence Freedman's words, to develop «an ability to look up from the short term and the trivial to view the long term and the essential, to address causes rather than symptoms, to see woods rather than trees.»

<sup>12</sup> Paul Mozur, «Germany Withdraws Approval for Chinese Takeover of Aixtron», in *The New York Times*, 24th October 2016, available at [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/25/business/dealbook/germany-china-technology-takeover.html?\\_r=2](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/25/business/dealbook/germany-china-technology-takeover.html?_r=2) (last access: 3rd December 2016).

<sup>13</sup> Zhong Sheng, «EU should observe WTO rules without reservations», in *People's Daily* via *The Global Times*, 30th November 2016, available at <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1021020.shtml> (last access: 3rd December 2016).

<sup>14</sup> For a «musical» account of this reality see Nicholas Gallagher, «The State of Europe's Union Is Bleak», in *The American Interest online*, 6th August 2016, <http://www.the-american-interest.com/2016/08/06/the-state-of-the-europe-union-is-bleak/>

# A new humanism as answer to the crisis\*

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## Introduction

The need for a close and loyal collaboration between the Christian and political community can be considered today fulfilled both historically and theologically. Between these communities, in fact, there can be no opposition or separation but complementarity: although clearly distinct, they coincide in pursuing the personal and social growth of citizens. The Church therefore becomes socially present and relevant, because «pursuing the saving purpose which is proper to her, the Church does not only communicate divine life to men but in some way casts the reflected light of that life over the entire earth, most of all by its healing and elevating impact on the dignity of the person, by the way in which it strengthens the seams of human society and imbues the everyday activity of men with a deeper meaning and importance. Thus through her individual mat-

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ters and her whole community, the Church believes she can contribute greatly toward making the family of man and its history more human» (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 40)<sup>1</sup>.

In particular, the Council Fathers have entrusted the laity with the specific task to animate the temporal order according to Christian values<sup>2</sup>, all the while respecting its nature and rightful autonomy, and cooperating with other citizens according to the specific competence and responsibility. The consequence of this fundamental teaching of the Second Vatican Council is that «the laity are never to relinquish their participation in «politics», i.e. the many and varied economic, social, legislative, administrative and cultural actions intended to promote organically and institutionally the common good», which includes the promotion and the defense of goods, such as the public order, peace, freedom, equality and the respect for human life as well as for the environment, justice and solidarity<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Sorge B., *Laici o cattolici? Cittadini*, Editoriale in *Aggiornamenti Sociali*, January 2011, available at [www.aggiornamentisociali.it](http://www.aggiornamentisociali.it). In the past two centuries, several times the Magisterium has discussed the main issues regarding the social and political order. Cf. Leone XIII, Encyclical Letter *Diuturnum illud*, ASS 14 (1881/82) 4 et seq.; Encyclical Letter *Immortale Dei*, ASS 18 (1885/86) 162 et seq.; Encyclical Letter *Libertas praestantissimum*, ASS 20 (1887/88) 593 et seq.; Encyclical Letter *Rerum novarum*, ASS 23 (1890/91) 643 et seq.; Benedict XV, Encyclical Letter *Pacem Dei munus pulcherrimum*, AAS 12 (1920) 209ss; Pio XI, Encyclical Letter *Quadragesimo anno*, AAS 23 (1931) 190 et seq.; Encyclical Letter *Mit brennender Sorge*, AAS 29 (1937) 145-167; Encyclical Letter *Divini Redemptoris*, AAS 29 (1937) 78 et seq.; Pio XII, Encyclical Letter *Summi Pontificatus*, AAS 31 (1939) 423 et seq.; *Radiomessaggi natalizi 1941-1944*; John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et magistra*, AAS 53 (1961) 401-464; Encyclical Letter *Pacem in terris*, AAS 55 (1963) 257-304; Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio*, AAS 59 (1967) 257-299; Encyclical Letter *Octogesima adveniens*, AAS 63 (1971) 401-441.

<sup>2</sup> Vatican Council II, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, n. 31, 36, 41, 43, Decree *Apostolicam actuositatem*, n. 7; Dogmatic Constitution. *Lumen gentium*, n. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, 2002, n. 1.



In regard to the role and identity of the laity, the Council, moving from the previous predominantly negative interpretations, has shifted to a certainly positive vision and has expressed his fundamental intention to recognize the *laity's full belonging to the Church and to her mystery and the distinctive character of their vocation*, which especially has the purpose «to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and directing them according to God's will»; «the term 'laity' – as the Constitution *Lumen gentium* defines it – is here understood to mean all the faithful except those in Holy Orders and those who belong to a religious state approved by the Church. That is, the faithful who by Baptism are incorporated into Christ, are placed in the People of God, and in their own way share the priestly, prophetic and kingly office of Christ, and to the best of their ability carry on the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world»<sup>4</sup>.

Even after fifty years from the opening of the Second Vatican Council, documents in it elaborated – as John Paul II wrote at the conclusion of the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 – continue to offer «a sure compass by which to take our bearings in the course» of the third millennium (*Novo millennio ineunte*, 57). As the years have passed, in fact, the Conciliar documents – Benedict XVI said in the wake of his election – «have lost none of their timeliness; indeed, their teachings are proving particularly relevant to the new situation of the Church and the current globalized society» (at the end of the Eucharistic Concelebration with the Cardinal Electors in the Sistine Chapel, 20 April 2005).

The Council, in other words, has played and continues to play an important part in «making the truth and beauty of the faith shine out in our time, without sacrificing it to the demands of the present or leaving it tied to the past: the eternal presence

<sup>4</sup> See John Paul II, *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Christifideles Laici*, n. 9.

of God resounds in the faith, transcending time, yet it can only be welcomed by us in our own unrepeatable today»<sup>5</sup>.

Therefore, as the Council continues to have an active and permanent role, in this paper we will focus on three fundamental aspects of the commitment of the laity in the world, such as their being citizens, their giving testimony in the political sphere, and their participation in the creation of the common good, also in order to reconsider the richness and the transforming power of the social doctrine in this moment of moral and economic crisis.

### 1. The man, the person and the layman as citizen

The apostolate of the lay faithful, as well as their vocation and mission in general, engages in the relationship between the Church and the world. Christians, in fact, as stated by an ecclesiastical writer of the early centuries, «participate in public life as citizens»<sup>6</sup>. The active, responsible and generous involvement

<sup>5</sup> Benedict XVI, *Sermon of the Holy Mass for the opening of the Year of Faith*, 11 October 2012. During his homily, the Holy Father also noticed that «Recent decades have seen the advance of a spiritual ‘desertification’. In the Council’s time it was already possible from a few tragic pages of history to know what a life or a world without God looked like, but now we see it every day around us. This void has spread. But it is in starting from the experience of this desert, from this void, that we can again discover the joy of believing, its vital importance for us, men and women. In the desert we rediscover the value of what is essential for living; thus in today’s world there are innumerable signs, often expressed implicitly or negatively, of the thirst for God, for the ultimate meaning of life. And in the desert people of faith are needed who, with their own lives, point out the way to the Promised Land and keep hope alive. Living faith opens the heart to the grace of God which frees us from pessimism. Today, more than ever, evangelizing means witnessing to the new life, transformed by God, and thus showing the path».

<sup>6</sup> *The Epistle to Diognetus*, 5, 5.

of Christians has always helped to animate the public life, while taking different shapes through the centuries.

In this respect, by means of the Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, the Council Fathers have tried to successfully apply John xxiii's idea of «the signs of the times», that is to discern what we have in common before considering what divides us. Already the words of the introductory statement characterize this fundamental vision of solidarity among all men in joy and hope, in affliction and anguish. The Constitution focuses precisely on the extraordinarily vast area that Christians share with all men: the act of existing and operating in the world, the common aspiration to build an earthly reality of true fraternity and progress, of economic, social and cultural activities, and the common relationship with the fundamental institutions of life, such as marriage and family, the state and the community of people<sup>7</sup>.

The specific mission of the laity is expressed, as we are taught by the Decree *Apostolicam Actuositatem* (n. 13), first and foremost by conforming life with faith, which makes lay people the light of the world, and by honesty in all their dealings, so that they attract all to the love of the true and the good and finally to the Church and to Christ; then, by fraternal charity which makes them share living conditions, labors, sorrows and aspirations with their brethren and little by little prepares the hearts of all for the workings of saving grace; finally, by full consciousness of their role in building up society, for which they strive to carry out their own domestic, social, professional duties with Christian magnanimity. Thus their manner of acting gradually penetrates the living and working environment<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Bazzichi O., *Il Concilio Vaticano II: Punto di svolta della DSC*, available at [www.pslvr.it](http://www.pslvr.it).

<sup>8</sup> In other word, it is typical of the lay faithful «to seek the kingdom of God by engaging in temporal affairs and by ordering them according to the plan of God. They live in the world, that is, in each and in all of the secular

There is, essentially, an indissoluble bond between spiritual dimension and social commitment. In fact, this is an old truth: in the III century A.D., Anthony the Great, the founder of Christian monasticism, raised important moral and political questions: «Why are there those who are poor and those who are rich? Why do wicked men prosper and why are the just in need?», but – the source reports – «a voice came to him, saying: «Anthony, keep your attention on yourself» (saying, § 2). Keeping our attention on ourselves is not an invitation to disengaging but rather to intensifying the care of the spirit when a sensitivity emerges towards the social and political conditions with an ensuing desire to improve them<sup>9</sup>.

Exactly from this conversion of the heart, the laity draw strength and motivation for the promotion of every person's dignity and feel like an obligation, a commitment to heal institutions, structures and conditions of life contrary to human dignity. The laity must therefore «*work at the same time for the conversion of hearts and the improvement of structures*, taking historical situations into account and using legitimate means so that the dignity of every man and woman will be truly respected and promoted within institutions» (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, n. 552).

In this regard, it must be remembered that «it often happens that Christians are more concerned for the social, cultural and political consequences of their commitment, continuing to think of the faith as a self-evident presupposition for life in society. In reality, not only can this presupposition no longer be taken for granted, but it is often openly denied. Whereas in

professions and occupations. They live in the ordinary circumstances of family and social life, from which the very web of their existence is woven. They are called there by God that by exercising their proper function and led by the spirit of the Gospel they may work for the sanctification of the world from within as a leaven» (*Lumen gentium*, n. 31).

<sup>9</sup> Grandi G., *Coltivare (dentro di noi) la buona politica*, in *Segno*, n. 11/2011, 6-7.

the past it was possible to recognize a unitary cultural matrix, broadly accepted in its appeal to the content of the faith and the values inspired by it, today this no longer seems to be the case in large swathes of society, because of a profound crisis of faith that has affected many people»<sup>10</sup>.

A certain mediocrity or relative importance of the presence of the laity in the socio-economic field has its roots in a modest spiritual life. Only by means of an explicit and continued adherence to the Lord, and an exacting engagement with Him, we can hope for the influence of lay believers who are not mediocre, but capable of exposing themselves, even while risking derision, and able to fight for what they believe in. Saint Paul does not disdain this clearly figurative language, which however well explains what it means to act in environments which are indifferent and, sometimes, hostile (the Italian Episcopal Conference, Cardinal President's speech, Rome, 24 September 2012, 6).

It is the respect for the person that makes democratic participation possible. As the Second Vatican Council teaches, the protection of «the rights of the person is a necessary condition for citizens, individually and collectively, to play an active part in public life and administration»<sup>11</sup>.

In this context we can understand why the believer must be able to read the modes of today's life, must comply with the rules that govern civil society and the social and political organization, and – more deeply – must clarify the idea of man and of society in the light of reason and faith. This is a *complex operation that must involve all believers*, called to discern and to act, certainly with the pastors' encouragement and guidance, but

<sup>10</sup> Benedict XVI, Apostolic Letter *Porta Fidei*, n. 2.

<sup>11</sup> Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, cit., n. 3.

also by employing their characteristic responsibilities and their specific skills and experiences of life<sup>12</sup>.

It therefore appears evident that the commitment of Christians as citizens is that of the construction of «a code of ethics for all, but which rediscovers as primary transcendence, above the freedom of the individual and of society, the world of values, the world of rights, the world of duties. In the context of a church that opens up to men, the themes of justice and peace become relevant, in addition to the topic, not less urgent, of the integrity and safeguarding of creation»<sup>13</sup>, which was fully developed in Pope Francis's Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si*<sup>14</sup>.

## 2. Testimony and political commitment. The mission and the apostolate of the laity

The right and duty to participate in social and political life derive from a person's citizenship. Being Catholic does not create special conditions which increase or decrease them with respect to the rest of society; however, it constitutes a further reason to live such political commitment in a more responsible way according to one's own conscience.

The Church, therefore, highly values the genuine political action; it regards it as «worthy of praise and consideration» (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 75) and refers to it as «a demanding form of charity» (*Octogesima adveniens*, n. 46).

To this end, we need – as already mentioned – an adequate

<sup>12</sup> Tettamanzi D., *Il Concilio Vaticano II e il rapporto Chiesa Mondo seguendo la bussola della Gaudium et spes*, 7. The text is available at [www.webdiocesi.chiesa-cattolica.it](http://www.webdiocesi.chiesa-cattolica.it).

<sup>13</sup> Giorgio La Pira's quote, also mentioned by Ernesto Preziosi in his article «Giorgio La Pira e il Concilio Vaticano II: la libertà di coscienza fondamento di laicità, una questione attuale», available at [www.fondazionealapira.org](http://www.fondazionealapira.org).

<sup>14</sup> Available at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

training and a serious commitment: «It is to the laity, though not exclusively to them, that secular duties and activity properly belong. When therefore, as citizens of the world, they are engaged in any activity either individually or collectively, they will not be satisfied with meeting the minimum legal requirements but will strive to become truly proficient in that sphere. They will gladly cooperate with others working towards the same objectives. Let them be aware of what their faith demands of them in these matters and derive strength from it; let them not hesitate to take the initiative at the opportune moment and put their findings into effect. It is their task to cultivate a properly informed conscience and to impress the divine law on the affairs of the earthly city. For guidance and spiritual strength let them turn to the clergy; but let them realize that their pastors will not always be so expert as to have a ready answer to every problem, even every grave problem, that arises; this is not the role of the clergy: it is rather the task of lay people to shoulder their responsibilities under the guidance of Christian wisdom and with careful attention to the teaching authority of the church» (Pastoral Constitution, *Gaudium et spes*, n. 43).

By expressing the same concept, but with rare communicative efficiency, Pope Francis reminds us that: «In reality, lay people who have an authentic Christian formation should not need a helmsman-Bishop, or pilot-monsignor, or the input of clergy in order to take on their proper responsibilities at all levels, from the political to the social, from the economic to the legislative! They have, rather, the need of a Pastor Bishop»<sup>15</sup>.

In fact, the Church is called to offer the world, through prophetic language, the beauty of the new man who does not resign himself to evil but overcomes it with good. St Paul's motto «*Vince in bono malum*» has defined, through the centuries, the revolution-

<sup>15</sup> From the introductory speech of Pope Francis at the Opening of the works of the 68th General Assembly of CEI, 2015, available at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

any example of Saints: the transformation of the darkest moments of human history in horizons illuminated by hope and love.

Precisely this is what is missing in our society increasingly isolating itself: not only is it unable to distinguish right from wrong but, even worse, it fails to dream about it and desire it. Pope Francis has accelerated the merciful impact of such admonition, being well aware of the urgency for the Church not only to be, but also to appear a credible proclaimer of the Gospel message. Pope Francis warns and indicates the pressing necessity for the Church, mother and teacher, to be «salt and light» of a «weary and oppressed» world, an authentic witness to the beauty and joy of the encounter with the Risen Christ and faithful companion of the poor, the marginalized and the last on earth. Nevertheless, in order to do so and have the credibility to enlighten the modern man's conscience, which is too often dormant, the Church and her believers must not be accused of being more indulgent toward themselves. To show «the way, the truth and the life» to the man who falls and struggles to get up, they must follow the behavior of those who want, indeed must «admonish» sinners by strengthening their own conversion while inspiring others', through daily practice, habits and lifestyles which can demonstrate that it is possible not to be defeated by the existential banality and mediocrity. Rosario Livatino wrote that, at the end of our life, we will not be asked about the extent of our faith but of our credibility<sup>16</sup>. The Pope invites us all to be credible, knowing that this will be possible only if we are first authentic believers.

All Christians enjoy a wide freedom in their political actions, but not only in their actions: according to the just mentioned teaching of the Vatican II, in fact, they have the same autonomy

<sup>16</sup> From Rosario Livatino's notes, mentioned in D. Agasso, «Rosario Livatino il magistrato che visse da santo», in *La Stampa*, September 29th, 2011, available at [www.lastampa.it](http://www.lastampa.it)



as regards the ideals and projects to be proposed in this context. Also for this reason, in their commitment to «Christianization» of the political reality, the laity are not simple performers, but the creators of social thinking. Their work of interpretation and translation of the social doctrine is in fact enriched by the specific experience of faith and of the knowledge of which they are repositories. This is of great utility for the updating and diffusion of the Christian social doctrine, which can develop its own theoretical values thanks to a fruitful and constant communication and unity of purpose among the various components of the people of God<sup>17</sup>.

Indeed, the legitimate plurality of temporal options preserves the matrix of the commitment of Catholics to politics and relates directly to the Christian moral and social teaching. This is the teaching that lay Catholics are always required to consider as to be sure that their participation in political life is characterized by a coherent responsibility for temporal realities<sup>18</sup>.

It means, in substance, unity in distinction, that is bringing together the fidelity to Christ and the one to the autonomy of the temporal sphere<sup>19</sup>. Indeed, it is necessary to be able to join – as the Council teaches in *Gaudium et Spes* – the wisdom of the Gospel to human experience (n. 46).

For the layman who is committed, it is possible to accept Martha's role, without neglecting the most important role of Mary<sup>20</sup>, as Christianity is a message of salvation which is embod-

<sup>17</sup> See Colom E., *L'impegno dei cristiani in politica*, at [www.eticaepolitica.net](http://www.eticaepolitica.net), 2004.

<sup>18</sup> The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, cit., n. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Lazzati G., «Le condizioni dell'impegno politico del fedele laico», *Ibid.*, Chiesa, cittadinanza e laicità, a cura dell'Azione Cattolica di Milano», In dialogo, Milan, 2004; cf. *Gaudium et Spes*, 36.

<sup>20</sup> Bachelet V., «Prima di tutto fu sacerdote», in *Sociologia* 3 (1959), 339-340.

ied in history, addresses the person as a whole, and positively affects our moral life in both private and public. In a Christian vision, there should be the syntheses of authority and liberty, of justice and charity, which must actually become the cornerstone of moral life and therefore also of political life. A correct formulation of the political commitment requires not the conflict but the harmony between politics and morality which ensures an organized society and authentic democracy<sup>21</sup>.

Consequently, every believer is called to a renewed and renewing life, to be a living presence in the many and various «human and vital spaces» in which our daily existence takes place. These are, for example, the area of personal relationships; the working environment and celebrating occasions; the area «comprised of the forms and conditions of existence in which human frailty emerges»; the one «indicated by the term tradition, understood as the act of transmitting what constitutes the vital heritage and cultural life of society»; and that of «citizenship which represents human civil and social belonging». We can therefore understand the importance of the baptismal vocation, of adult people of faith and the promotion of the Christian connotation of the lay conscience. In this regard, the attention to the lay faithful is not a simple strategy recommended for a Church which desires to be more jointly responsible, but belongs to the most authentic and profound heart of the Christian vocation<sup>22</sup>.

### 3. The common good as a common objective

If therefore the secular citizen has the right and the duty to work also in the political field, what should his priority objectives be in

<sup>21</sup> Pennisi M., *L'impegno politico dei cattolici secondo Luigi Sturzo*, at [www.al-mocollegiocapranica.it](http://www.al-mocollegiocapranica.it), 24.

<sup>22</sup> See Tettamanzi D., *Il Concilio Vaticano II e il rapporto Chiesa Mondo seguendo la bussola della Gaudium et spes*, 12-14.

a pluralist society, often experiencing deep conflicts? The magisterium teaches that «no expression of social life – from the family to intermediate social groups, associations, enterprises of an economic nature, cities, regions, States, up to the community of peoples and nations – can escape the issue of its own common good, in that this is a constitutive element of its significance and the authentic reason for its very existence» (*Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*, n. 165).

As pointed out by the cardinal Scola, the common good is shared in the same society and, as human good, it has no automatic implementation but must be sought and practically pursued (society is *maxime opus rationis*). It is the foundation of society, as a good of people whose value gives substance and together exceeds the common good. For this reason, the common good, understood in all its aspects, is not limited to the historical and social one, but it includes the common good of people as such. In this way, it is not possible to fully respect human dignity without overshadowing an eschatological perspective of fulfillment of the person and of all people<sup>23</sup>.

The common good corresponds to the highest of human instincts, but it is a good which is very difficult to attain as it requires the constant ability and effort to pursue the good of others as though it were one's own good (*Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church*, n. 167).

In particular, we must begin anew from the regard for the original vocation to the good which each man, in his unrepeatable uniqueness, represents, by rediscovering it as the first and most significant factor of change of the social and economic reality. Before mechanisms and formulas, in fact, it is essential to restart from the centrality of the man and his natural inclination

<sup>23</sup> Scola A., *Il significato del «bene comune*, speech given in occasion of the Congress «Più sociale nel social. Strategie e strumenti per diffondere il concetto di bene comune», organized by Fondazione Cariplo – Fondazione Pubblicità e Progresso, Milan, 26 April 2012, 4.

to realize himself in relationship with others. The common good is the community spirit of this inclination: because it is precisely from the condensation of «good fraternal relations» that the rules and institutions of civil life originate and find sense (the Sicilian Episcopal Conference, *Amate la giustizia, voi che governate la terra* – Reflections of the Bishops of Sicily on the social and political situation, 9 October 2012, 10-11).

Everyone, therefore, has the responsibility to contribute to the creation of the common good according to his own abilities. No one can feel exempt from such high responsibility, nor can invoke the «complexity» of the problems to step down from such duty, which requires the acceptance of the «divergence of visions of the world, believing at the same time that it is possible to agree on concrete intervention. This, however, does not mean giving up the idea of a theoretical justification of the practical action: that would be a choice rooted in nullism. On the contrary, it means recognizing that to be healthy the political sphere does not need a total consensus (unlikely) around significant visions of life. By accepting this limit, we can understand the essential common good which Maritain suggested while referring to human society as «*corps de communications sociales*» [...]. Actually, a wider vision sustains the obligation to contribute to the practical good of being together while at the same time formulates proposals about all the anthropological, social and economic aspects of life in a society»<sup>24</sup>.

In the present historical moment, particular importance is to be given to concrete proposals on the protection of the right to religious freedom, on the development of an economy that is at the service of the person and of the common good in accordance with social justice, the principle of human solidarity and subsidiarity, according to which «the rights of all persons, families and groups, and their practical application, must be recog-

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

nized» (*Gaudium et spes*, n. 75); on the great theme of peace, which is always «the work of justice and the effect of charity» (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2304) and demands the absolute and radical rejection of violence and terrorism<sup>25</sup>.

The political and institutional contribution of committed lay people must not, therefore, settle for responding to the urgent needs of a market logic, but will have to continue to regard as central and essential the pursuit of the common good, correctly understood, as well as the promotion and protection of the inalienable dignity of the human person. It is particularly relevant today what the Council teaches us: «The disposition of affairs is to be subordinate to the personal realm and not contrariwise» (*Gaudium et spes*, 26).

Such order of the person is «founded on truth, built up in justice, and animated by love» (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 1912) and it cannot be discerned without constant attention to the Word of God and the Magisterium of the Church, particularly on the part of those who are inspired in their activities by the Christian principles and values<sup>26</sup>.

Ultimately, presumption and personalism, instrumentality and hysterias must be abandoned. The warning of the Book of Wisdom conveniently reminds us that «severe judgment awaits the exalted» (*Wisdom* 6:5)<sup>27</sup>.

The baptized person knows that love is never an impossible task for him and that he can always rely on a «force» able to constantly purify the reason and which would therefore make it concretely possible to apply charity to politics. Pope Benedict XVI said very clearly in *Deus caritas est* that the God of Jesus

<sup>25</sup> Cf. The Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, *Doctrinal Note on Some Questions Regarding the Participation of Catholics in Political Life*, cit., n. 4.

<sup>26</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to the Christian Democrat International*, 22 September 2012, available at [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Christ, who is present and alive in the Community of the faithful, «has loved us first and continues to do so; we too, then, can respond with love».

The commandment of love is not then an absurdity nor a utopia: it has finally become possible in Jesus Christ. It is therefore to the God of Jesus Christ that the baptized person can address the prayer for the «docile heart» which is necessary for a real political commitment, with the certainty that, just like that of Solomon, even his request will be granted. The new central role of Catholics in politics, nowadays a much discussed topic whose urgency we can now fully understand, must indeed start from the prayer of Solomon. If we think about it, only this could be the starting point for a new springtime in the life of our democratic institutions<sup>28</sup>.

We must then humbly ask the Lord to give us all the faith and confidence, to help us believe that our daily testimony and effort turned into civil conscience and commitment can really change the present and offer a future. It is necessary to have the optimism described by D. Bonhoeffer, which knows how to look beyond the present, has the force to hope when others resign themselves. Optimism is a force that does not leave the future to opponents, but claims it for itself<sup>29</sup>.

#### 4. Towards a new generation of committed laity

Christians, as mentioned in the Conciliar documents, must fulfill the decisive role of promoting a new way to development. Also for this reason, we must understand and put into practice Pope Benedict XVI's aspiration (Cagliari, 7 September 2008),

<sup>28</sup> See Bilotti E., *Il contributo della Chiesa per uscire dalla crisi della politica*, at [www.benecomune.net](http://www.benecomune.net), 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Pajno A., *La dimensione pubblica della fede tra coscienza religiosa e coscienza civile*, at [www.astrid-online.it](http://www.astrid-online.it), 41.

proposed in different occasion also by the Permanent Council of the CEI, to see a new generation of committed lay Christians who can seek a sustainable development with competence and responsibility.

We are called to recreate the conditions for a new season of political and civil commitment of the lay people, who at the same time need to show a more mature and responsible presence in public life, starting precisely from the love for the territory in which their journey to holiness takes place. This good fatigue will enable them to operate those honorable syntheses and that mediation between professed principles and the contemporary context, indispensable for an adult and conscious faith.

This new «participation code» is today recommended as a matter of urgency for Christian testimony. «Man's earthly activity – *Caritas in veritate warns us* (n. 7) –, when inspired and sustained by charity, contributes to the building of the universal *city of God*, which is the goal of the history of the human family»<sup>30</sup>.

According to the Conciliar and Post-Conciliar reflections on the nature and mission of the Church, the Christian community lives, proclaims, celebrates and witnesses, through time and in different contexts, the totality of the *caritas Christi*, in its many and related dimensions.

It lives Christ's great love by means of a ministry of global diakonia that benefits the man, the human family and the cosmos, performing and programming it as a new evangelization of society. This testimony requires the development of an anthropology according to which a person's freedom is not radical, unconditional, indifferent to the true, the good and God, but is a freedom chosen as freedom for the true, the good and God; for the communion and the care of the other, on the basis of a universal desire for love

<sup>30</sup> Mazzocchio F., *L'impegno di speranza dei cattolici*, available at [www.benecomune.net](http://www.benecomune.net), 2010.

as the principle of natural moral law which governs men's actions. «Persona» means not only being in itself, but also being-for<sup>31</sup>.

The «beginning» of the life offered by Christ to all and seeded along the paths carved out by history must correspond to the organization and actuation of an evangelization of society having as its essential element the social doctrine of the Church. By means of this last one, the Church proclaims the truth of Christ's love in the society: all men, recipients of God's love, are «subjects of charity, they are called to make themselves instruments of grace, so as to pour forth God's charity and to weave networks of charity» (*Caritas in Veritate*, 5)<sup>32</sup>.

## 5. Pope Francis's renewal

In these times, afflicted by the outbreak of fundamentalisms, the humanism of the social doctrine of the Church requires a renewal. The expressions «new humanism» and «plenary humanism» recur insistently in the magisterium of the Catholic Church, which sees the «new man» in Christ. Already Paul VI, in *Populorum progressio*, warned that «if development calls for an ever-growing number of technical experts, even more necessary still is the deep thought and reflection of wise men in search of a new humanism, one which will enable our contemporaries to find themselves»<sup>33</sup>. Also Pope Francis has proposed, addressing the European Parliament in Strasbourg<sup>34</sup>, something new that should come as a «revival», especially in reference to Europe.

This is indeed a new humanism, which goes beyond the

<sup>31</sup> See Toso M., Una nuova evangelizzazione del sociale, in L'Osservatore Romano, 31 marzo 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio*, AAS 20 (1967).

<sup>34</sup> Address of Pope Francis to the European Parliament, Strasbourg, France, Tuesday, 25 November 2014.



theocentric kind of the Middle Ages, the anthropocentric one of the Enlightenment, the technological one of the digital age (with escapes toward the overcoming of man in an unlikely post-humanism), and which also moves beyond the *Humanisme intégral* that in 1936 Jacques Maritain proposed as an ideal against liberalism, Marxism, fascism.

It was no coincidence that the National Ecclesial Convention of Florence of last year reminded us of Heidegger's famous text: «No other epoch has accumulated so great and so varied a store of knowledge concerning man as the present one. No other epoch has succeeded in presenting its knowledge of man so forcibly and so captivately as ours, and no other has succeeded in making this knowledge so quickly and so easily accessible. But also, no epoch is less sure of its knowledge of what man is than the present one. In no other epoch has man appeared so mysterious as in ours»<sup>35</sup>.

This means being willing to hold again Diogenes's lantern, which follows the historical paths carved out by the connection between identity, in its extraordinary coloring, form, intonation, and the mission (of the Church): even throughout the changes of mentality and of socio-political structures, the Church has always paid constant attention to the promotion of peace and the encounter between peoples, to support and protect the Community of the faithful; to accept the dialog and the challenges of cultural systems which can sometimes be distant from the Evangelical precepts.

Also the reflection on the dialog between the Church and democracies, from its beginning to the modern times, is today fruitful. The main ideas that stem from it are: the capacity of the Church to become aware of the change through history and act accordingly in order to always modernize her evange-

<sup>35</sup> Heidegger M., *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*, Silva, Genoa, 1962, p. 275.

lizing mission; the analysis and the identification of the practical aspects of the interpretation of such change: interreligious dialog, cultural dialog, political and diplomatic actions in favor of peace and the encounter between peoples; the critical analysis of the forms of self-awareness of the change in the life of Christians and the Church, historical agent in constant evolution but always congruent with the values of the Gospel.

The dialog and the acceptance of the challenges posed by the cultural systems, which are sometimes distant from the Evangelical precepts, are now part of Pope Francis's mission. In the background, there is the need to be anchored to common principles and shared canons, but through the method of integration and especially inclusion (these are the behaviors and lifestyles recommended by Pope Francis in the Encyclical *Laudato Si*).

Such topic also raises the issue of the education emergency. Although there is not an ideal educational model which is «unique and universal», the classical concept of education consists in «shaping» the entire human personality in all its aspects, affective, cognitive and ethical-symbolic, and, therefore, it is legitimate to consider lifelong learning a constitutive dimension of experience itself.

In the new historical, pedagogical and social perspective, education and, consequently, inclusion are of fundamental interest, because aimed at the enhancement and the growth of the person and of society and because they are inspired by the principles enshrined in the Constitution (from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to the international conventions on the rights of the childhood and adolescence).

From a theoretical and educational point of view, *integration* and *inclusion* are not synonyms and are based on the evolutionary logic of the cultural and socio-political system, taking into account that, above all, the paradigm of *inclusion* represents the possibility of knowing how to respond adequately to all students' educational and existential needs, as *differences* are a source of human, spiritual, and cultural richness and not a problem to be solved.



This volume collects some of the lessons held on the occasion of the second edition of the School of Political Education promoted by the De Gasperi Foundation in collaboration with the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies and the Amaro da Costa Institute.

The purpose of the school and the volume - which gathers the views expressed by the lecturers during the debate - is to inspire further discussion on some of the main topics on the agenda and, above all, to contribute to the formation of the new leaders and to the rediscovery of the role of politics in the destiny of both Italy and Europe.

Such training course, with its three sessions in Turin, Lisbon and Rome, addressed the different aspects of the global crisis, from an anthropological point of view and from a political, social and economic perspective, in order to reevaluate the values of the Christian democratic tradition and favor the birth of a new humanism.

**De Gasperi Foundation** was founded in 1982 to promote the vision and the example of Alcide De Gasperi, the founding father of both the Italian Republic and the European Union. By means of its cultural initiatives, the Foundation aims at contributing to the development of democracy within the European Union, as the process of European integration is regarded as a powerful tool to embark on a new period of prosperity.

**The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies** was established in 2007 as the political foundation and official think tank of the European People's Party (EPP). The Martens Centre has four main goals: advancing centre-right thought, contributing to the formulation of EU and national policies, serving as a framework for national political foundations and academics and stimulating public debate about the EU. It promotes a pan-European mind-set based on centre-right, Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.

**The IDL-Instituto Amaro da Costa** is an independent political association founded in 1975. IDL aims to serve Portuguese leaders and citizens interested in enhancing their understanding of the past and appreciating present challenges through research and education on cultural, social, economic and political phenomena that influence the free exercise of democracy in Portugal – notably those related to Christian democracy. After the death of Adelino Amaro da Costa in 1980, IDL took on the name of the co-founder of the Portuguese democratic regime and since then has widened its activities to the promotion of his legacy.