

THE HOPE OF EUROPE

I

Is there any hope for Europe? We have been asking ourselves this question for years, and suddenly the first hint of an answer has appeared. Between the end of August and the beginning of September 2015, thousands of immigrants crossed Macedonia and Serbia to reach the doorstep of central Europe, which had, up until that time (being exempt from the 2013 Dublin Regulation) left Greece, Italy and Spain to go it alone, obligated as the latter were to keep within their borders the desperate refugees who managed to reach the Mediterranean coast. Only when Berlin and Vienna finally saw them up close did that fraternity that had become “the poor sister of freedom and equality” (Carlo Petrini) re-emerge from oblivion to make frequent appearances in speeches and interviews. From governments (with some exceptions) to populations (with some exceptions), a surge of solidarity arose, and in a matter of days welcoming refugees became a moral obligation and a political commitment; in Munich a group of Germans welcomed a train of asylum-seekers by singing the *Ode to Joy*. On 10 September *la Repubblica* and a dozen more European newspapers published an important appeal, calling for a solidary and courageous EU policy:

http://www.repubblica.it/esteri/2015/09/10/news/rifugiati_appello_alla_ue_di_13_giornali_serve_c_oraggio_-122557992/

The next day, 11 September, *la Repubblica* published a letter by Matteo Renzi:

http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2015/09/11/news/l_europa_e_a_un_bivio_non_puo_piu_voltare_le_spalle_o_le_sue_ragioni_spariranno-122632224/?ref=HRER1-1

One may hope, nevertheless, that recent events constitute the first step towards awareness on the part of all Europeans, towards a rediscovery of our fundamental values, towards a plan for the future; that we Europeans begin to ask ourselves, with lucidity and honesty, what we are and what we want to be.

II

In re-examining our centuries-long history, we observe the birth of a civilisation that is arguably unparalleled in history along the edges of the Mediterranean. This civilisation would grow and develop, and finally spread throughout the old continent and into the new ones. From agriculture to law, from Beethoven to the computer, the generations that followed left to posterity creations that have won humanity’s admiration. The great Euro-Mediterranean culture, which is ours still, has given birth to writing, the city, science and philosophical thought of extraordinary richness. Since the Middle Ages the capitalistic model has surpassed all others. We have reached a level of prosperity, a standard of living and a degree of education that in past centuries would have been unimaginable.

The history of Europe is also, however, the result of an extraordinary blend of contradictory tensions.

In the Greco-Roman civilisation, the unity of Mediterranean peoples was achieved («like frogs around a pond» as Plato once put it); it is a sea that could once again become the way to a broadened identity on both shores. In the Greek *polis* and the Roman *res publica*, the concept of “State” took shape and the “citizen” was created. Roman legal science produced a crossbred culture, capable of preserving the essence (language and art, religion and customs) of the thousands of identities that composed it, sublimating them through the integration (perhaps the sole case in history) of the local ruling classes, all the way to the apex of the political mosaic.

From contemplation of the universe and reflection on the human condition were born such grandiose systems of thought as Platonism and Aristotelianism, and life models like stoicism and Epicureanism. Greco-Roman thought found in human kind its point of reference, thereby giving birth to a humanism that was able to put the search for human mystery at the centre of an inquiry that continued almost uninterrupted, from the “12th century Renaissance” through the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

Having absorbed new values and contents from eastern Mediterranean cultures, the classical world then underwent a profound transformation. The three Abrahamic religions – Judaism, Christianity and Islam – widely propagated throughout the continents the belief in one God, who uniformly loves the powerful and the poor, the simple and the learned, all of whom have equal value and share the same destiny.

If the intellectualism of classical thought was lacking any real momentum, its *philanthropía*, now expressed as “love thy neighbour”, was far more stimulated by Christianity, which passed every form of charity through the filter of Christ and implicitly promised a reward to come for those who followed its precepts. In contrast to the aristocratic nature of stoicism, Christianity addressed common people who needed hope above all and brought a message that was much more easily understood and accepted.

III

The Christian faith had thus triumphed thanks to the favourable terrain it had found in Greco-Roman society, with its sister faith Judaism long by its side, albeit in the shadows and subjected to continual abuse. In the 7th century, Islam was beginning its rise on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, from where it spread into Spain and Sicily, thereby coming into direct contact with Christian Europe. The latter, in turn, was progressively subsuming the Germanic populations and, by moving its axis further north, with the empire of Charlemagne, it began to form the embryo of modern Europe. The relationship that formed between the two worlds, Christian and Muslim, was one of rich and fruitful exchange, but was also marked by strong contrasts and deep misunderstanding, in large part the result of each side’s nearly complete ignorance of the other religion – an ignorance that has persisted until today and has now become part of the emergency that we will have to face for decades.

As historical paradox would have it, the Christianisation of Europe went hand-in-hand with its economic and cultural impoverishment until the 12th century, when classical heritage could be recovered. This development was due, in fact, to the contribution of Islamic culture, which had since the 7th century (when the condition of Western Europe was reaching its lowest point) blossomed into a great civilisation, whose arts and sciences were inherited first from Romanic-Gothic culture, and subsequently from Renaissance humanism and the Enlightenment.

During the “Renaissance” of the 12th century, with a return to Latin classics and an openness to Aristotelianism mediated by Arab thinkers, man’s intrinsic value – conceived of in both his relation to the transcendental and in his rational nature, within the context of a renewed and positive vision of Nature – became the core of the European culture’s reflections. A true humanism, it examined the formation of the individual in the quest for authenticity, both in action and in spirit. At the same time, within the feudal courts, an ideal of humanity was being elaborated, modelled on the royal figure and called “courtly” in a much deeper sense (knowledge, justice, moderation, high-mindedness) than what is commonly intended: it is the ideal that endures in Baldassar Castiglione’s *The Book of the Courtier* and which continued to persist in the ruling elites (aristocracy, bourgeoisie) who would confront one another in the modern age. In order to understand the complexity of the phenomenon and to avoid reasoning in terms of airtight compartments, it is sufficient to think of the blend of courtly knight and sainthood embodied by Francis of Assisi, who

conceived of and practiced the royal-courtly virtues within the framework of an extremely profound spirituality, where a love for the Creator becomes one with a love for creatures and for creation: it is the same spirit that enlivens that encyclical (by Pope *Francis*) that opens with *Laudato si'*.

In the 15th and 16th centuries, humanism was enriched by the rediscovery of Greek culture, giving new form to what the Greeks called *paideia*. It is no coincidence that the figure of Erasmus of Rotterdam (whose evangelical humanism could have perhaps healed the fracture with Luther, had the Erasmian Reginald Pole received but one more vote and been elected pope during the Conclave of 1549: one of the lost opportunities of our history) is still used today to represent the unity and the breadth of European cultural horizons. Ancient Greek history and thought contributed to perfecting the practice as much as the theory of politics: originating at the bottom of the political hierarchy, the experience of the free Communes was enriched by the model of the Greek *polis* (though Aristotle's *Politics* was already well known to Dante and Saint Thomas of Aquinas); from the 16th century on, the idea of citizenship and political liberty increasingly blended the two traditions, medieval and classical, especially in the countries that participated in the Reformation.

It was from this background of diverse tradition that the Age of Enlightenment emerged. The conflict between the Catholic Church and the Enlightenment originated not from the lofty goals proposed by the French Revolution – *liberté, égalité and fraternité* – which are also espoused by Christianity, but rather from the means employed by the two systems to achieve them: human kind and God.

Shaped at its very source by the teachings of Saint Paul, Christianity had soon associated itself with power, to which it attributed a divine will – «all power comes from God», *omnis potestas a Deo* – and developed the idea of a sovereignty «by the grace of God», of divine origin, devoid of responsibility. Furthermore, not only had the Catholic Church long maintained its material power, but it had also claimed to exercise dominion over consciences. When the Illuminists challenged this, calling upon reason, they did so in the name of a return to those civic values that had been the signature of the medieval communes and the *polis* of antiquity and were now being rediscovered.

The illuminist culture thus became the cornerstone of modern democratic societies. It inspired numerous other conquests of the mind: the abolition of torture and the death penalty, the recognition of equality between men and women, the welfare state and, not least, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

But there is another gift, in part destructive, which in its other “soul” Christianity has given to Europe and to the world. We are referring not only to the religious wars, which did not end in the 17th century but have been resurrected even in our own day in the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland and among Catholics, Orthodox and Muslims in Bosnia. Nor are we talking only about the struggles with Islam (keeping in mind that neither the Crusades nor the resistance to the Ottoman advance impeded trade, exchange or even alliances). A certain version of Christianity bequeathed to the Enlightenment the notion of the power of artifice and transcendence: not surrendering to the laws of nature because man is not “only nature”. The Pauline-Augustinian tradition regained strength particularly in the Calvinist-puritan version of Christianity, giving rise to the association of “flesh” with “evil”, which led to the sometimes-merciless impulse to render the existent artificial. Confirmation of divine predestination was sought through evidence of an economic affirmation, which tended, however, to become an end in itself. This revolution of thought accelerated the economy and the industrial revolution, but it led to a gradual affirmation of “having” over “being”, once again putting the centrality of man in jeopardy, and demanded an extreme subjugation of nature.

The individualism that characterises modernity has therefore produced at once respect for individual rights and an economy that is increasingly dominated by the goal of individual profit.

This has resulted in great economic progress, but has also engendered greater inequality and injustice and a serious weakening of community, associative and family ties. *Individualism* is becoming ever more synonymous with *egoism*.

From the contrast between these diverse legacies originate our countless contradictions. We have explored the entire world, discovering new lands; we have established contact with peoples we were unaware of and who were unaware of us. Navigation, agriculture and finally industry have permitted us to dominate the forces of nature and continually create new wealth. Our science and technology have spread throughout the world, changing it profoundly. For quite some time we were the rulers of the world. Economically and culturally speaking, we conquered and we continue to occupy a preeminent position. But, as Carlo Maria Cipolla reminds us, to the sails were added cannons... And exploration turned into conquest.

Today it is acknowledged that the discovery of new worlds in the 15th and 16th centuries was due to reckless adventurers who – emulators of the ancient Vikings, seafarers, predators and merchants – set out across the oceans, not in thirst of knowledge but in thirst of gain. The price for gold, silver, spices and raw materials was the blood shed in countless massacres, often under the guise of religious motivations: even back then we told ourselves that we were “bringing civilisation” and “truth” to savage and barbarian populations and that the massacres were necessary “for their good”. Colonisation and exploitation led to the genocide of the *Índios* in South America; later, in order to repopulate, we resorted to the African slave trade, thanks to which plantations of sugarcane, cotton and cocoa thrived...

Could it have gone differently? Other options were cast aside, because they were neither as easy nor as lucrative: albeit on the wave of conquest, Bartolomé de las Casas’ *Leyes Nuevas* or the Jesuit action in India, China and South America (with the creation of the indigenous *reducciones* from Ecuador to Bolivia to Paraguay – the same territories chosen, incidentally, by Pope Francis for his last visit; and let us not forget the heroic defence of the Guaraní between 1750 and 1756) indicated alternative paths to a more just society, to a “colonialism with a human face”. But the Portuguese and the Spanish could not or would not allow themselves that human face, nor did the Dutch or the English even consider it and thus succeeded in imposing their ruthless brand of capitalism. Another missed opportunity.

Some of the major figures in Christian history therefore appear to share the burden of responsibility for authentic genocides. Like the Catholics in South America, the puritan founders of the United States started early on to “liberate” their territories through a gradual and systematic genocide: whether explicitly planned or cloaked in confused religious motives, the result was the annihilation of the natives.

Likewise, between the 18th and 19th centuries European nations (France and Great Britain in particular) were taking possession of Africa and parts of Asia – by carrying out brutal massacres, needless to say –and were creating imperial colonies that lasted until between 1945 and 1960.

IV

Is it an unconscious sense of guilt that creates the deep uneasiness that has been plaguing Europe for so long? Starting at the beginning of the 20th century and the World War I, the keenest minds began to recognize our “heart of darkness” and to understand the violence from which our grand economic and cultural development has benefitted. The lacerations had grown and become congenital. Finally, between 1914 and 1945, we massacred each other in the “second Thirty Years War” (or the “European civil war”), the result of the myth, as well as the actual formation, of nation states (which happened at a watershed in history, when other solutions were still possible: here again the wrong track was taken); we witnessed in the heart of our very civilised continent the birth

of a genocide that rewarded the aberrations of a secular anti-Jewish tradition, bred in Europe and shared even by enlightened minds; and in Hiroshima and Nagasaki one of our great scientific discoveries opened the Pandora's box of atomic threat.

It took all of this for Europeans to understand the folly of war and to decide to transform mutual rivalry into friendship, renouncing at least in intention that poisoned gift of 18th and 19th century culture that is nationalistic spirit: the choice of Strasbourg, a city long the source of contention between France and Germany, as the first seat of the European Parliament stands as a symbol of this goodwill. It took all of this to establish this long period of peace that we are still enjoying today, laying the foundations for a united and diverse Europe.

Nevertheless, for years now the construction of the communal building has been biding time and struggling to define its own outlook. We seem to have run out of ideas; the ones that we do have remain hidden; the voice of intellectuals is becoming weaker and weaker, it seems that there is no longer anyone capable of imagining a society for the future; the arts, withdrawn into themselves, are impoverished, the ideals are drying up. Europe is afraid.

Since 1914 our pride has certainly suffered terrible blows. The economy, having recovered after 1945, is still one of the strongest on the international stage, but the awareness of our role in the world is becoming increasingly irresolute and confused. The world of ex-colonies and exploited countries has experienced an awakening that has not only resulted in their independence, but has also called them to our attention as an emerging reality, one that we can no longer ignore. And that contrast between wealth and poverty that characterised the tumultuous development of capitalism, attenuated within European borders after 1945 enough to guarantee the working classes an acceptable standard of living, is now re-emerging, exacerbated by what seems to be becoming one of our most significant problems: the growing divide between rich countries and poor countries, between the 20% of the population that consumes 80% of the planetary resources and the 80% who are left with the crumbs of hunger, misery and disease.

We have been and are still great creators and great predators.

V

Europe is afraid of its present in part because it is afraid of its past. It revels in the glory of its classical, Christian, Enlightenment roots but leaves in the shadows the barbaric ones, from which the European ruling class from the Middle Ages until the 18th century was born, with the warrior aristocracy. It exalts its own culture but represses the dark side. It looks in the mirror of the economic model that it has created, but keeps silent on how many have paid and are paying the price for it. Thus it is acknowledged that our predecessors built their civilisation by committing heinous crimes, but – it is said – we are not guilty. Why is it that the rest of the world – first and foremost Islamic fanatics – hates us so profoundly? Today's Europe knows nothing of fanaticism and violence; it is the realm of tolerance, where the motto of the French Revolution *liberté, égalité, fraternité* finds full actualisation. This is what we have to offer the world. Why, then, does the world hate our freedom and tolerance so much?

Indeed, but what became of *fraternité*? We are barely beginning to rediscover it. Mostly, we have to be “competitive”, better yet “cynical”, “harsh” and capable of “hurting” (as sports reporters remind us in their coarse language). Or else (perhaps in the name of a rarely practiced *égalité*) support the rights of the individual: of an individual, however, that is increasingly focused on his/her own selfish interests. *Liberté* though, that, we cling tightly to: freedom of thought and of speech, but even freedom to enjoy, to consume, to overpower, to assault, to offend. Which virtues do we display towards other peoples? First slavery and colonialism, now an exploitation that is nothing more than an extension of colonialism through different means. The prosperity of the average

European is built *to this day* on the plundering of the resources of Asian, African and Latin American peoples and on their oppression at the hands of corrupt regimes that are complicit with the advanced West. With what fraternity, what liberty, what equality have we treated them?

No, they do not hate us because we are free and tolerant. They hate us because we portray as liberty and progress a reality that is born of injustice and is yet today based on injustice and amorality; a reality, furthermore, that by proposing our models of consumption and selfish hedonism, tends to commercialise people and destroy spirituality and morals, thereby corrupting the values on which thousand-year-old civilisations are founded (such as, incidentally, the Islamic culture). The arrogance is despicable, but even more despicable is the hypocrisy in which it is cloaked.

This is why Europe is afraid of its future. It has taken the liberty of disregarding or scorning more than half of the world, and now it must watch it take centre stage, now in the form of new powers (China, India), now with the face of the *damnés de la terre* and the *forçats de la faim* ('the damned of the earth and slaves to hunger'), who defy the sea in unseaworthy boats, in search not of silver and gold, but of a less wretched existence, and to escape epidemics, starvation and war. They are our guilty conscience (the visible one, that is; the invisible one is lying at the bottom of the Strait of Sicily).

The southern shore of the Mediterranean has been simmering for decades. In the face of this, which is truly *mare nostrum*, we have never been capable of adopting an initiative designed to promote freedom and equality, justice and peace among our neighbours, to act in order that *mare nostrum* does not become "a deep grave" (Hans Küng).

In redrawing the Middle East after the fall of the Ottoman Empire, European powers performed an about-face that Arabs have not forgotten. The reawakening of their nation was encouraged by Great Britain through the promise of the creation of a great independent Arab kingdom. Instead, after 1920 Syria and Lebanon ended up under French mandate, while Great Britain added Iraq (a wholly artificial entity), Transjordan and Palestine to their mandate over Egypt. Insult was added to injury in the form of exploitation, which was continued by Europeans and Americans even after the countries had gained their independence.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict added fuel to the fire, becoming a hotbed of fanatical hatred in the Middle East: a hotbed that we ourselves helped to create by sending to Palestine, which was already inhabited by Arab-Muslim populations, the surviving members of that people whose extermination had been planned in the very heart of Europe. But to confront this fundamental problem, Europe has done very little, choosing instead to trust the attempts of its American ally, without noticing that the fate of the entire Mediterranean world is at stake.

Europe is now constantly inert. On the economic front it has progressed to the point of giving itself a single currency and a Central Bank; and there it has stopped. Economically powerful, it tries to defend its wealth while entirely forgetting its function and the responsibility that it has to the rest of the world, both of which come from its own culture. We live in a cocoon, focusing only on ourselves, on our national (or regional) and personal egotism. It is said that we are a Godless Europe; well, that is not entirely true: we are in constant adoration of the god called money. We have left behind or perverted the ideals that we started from.

For many years we have delegated to the United States of America every initiative in an area that should be at the heart of our action and that – formed as it is on both shores of the territory of the Roman Empire – is itself at the root of Europe. In 2011, when the "Arab Springs" erupted, Europe made no move: the major preoccupation that emerged at the time concerned the influx of refugees and its potential bearing on our economy. Thus to the list of destabilised countries was added an entire continent, whose children, offspring of those who had escaped raids and deportation, risk

their lives fleeing to us in search of safe haven and in hopes of a decent life. A problem which has imposed the necessity of stop-gap measures (often opposed) for a constant emergency, such as the receiving and distribution of refugees among all the European nations, but which must be confronted in a broader perspective that goes beyond cost-control or fighting smugglers. As with all epochal events, the flow will continue inexorably until the economic relations between an increasingly rich North and an increasingly poor South begin to balance out.

VI

“Let us unite, let us love one another. Unity and love reveal the ways of the Lord to the people”

These words will elicit condescending smiles, and yet they are part of the Italian national anthem. Its author, Goffredo Mameli, believed in them. It is true that he started off with “Italy has awoken”: what would he have to say today about a sleepy and indolent Europe? What would Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi say, they who understood as early as 1941, interned at Ventotene, how a united Europe, held together by principles of peace, justice and liberty, should have been built on top of the rubble? What would the founding fathers like Adenauer, De Gasperi and Schuman say? They too believed, and their ideals were consecrated by the choice of the *Ode to Joy* as symbol of the united Europe, which Mameli too would have identified with. But we have never gone beyond this formal homage, and to this day, aside from the episode in Munich, upon hearing the anthem or seeing the twelve-starred flag very few Europeans are moved, whereas the stadiums cheer, waving flags and singing exclusively national anthems.

In the Manifesto of Ventotene, we read: «The question which must first be resolved, and if it is not then any other progress made up to that point is mere appearance, is that of the abolition of the division of Europe into national, sovereign states [...]. The European federation is the single conceivable guarantee that relationships with American and Asiatic peoples can exist on the basis of peace and cooperation; this while awaiting a more distant future, when the political unity of the entire globe becomes a possibility». (Today we would also mention the peoples of Africa, but the message remains unchanged).

Herein, however, lies the real difficulty with an ideal path yet to be completed. Europe cannot be an exclusively geographical expression. It will have to rise to a spiritual region: in the place where its principles are respected, there will Europe live. That is how it will survive. Or it will not survive at all.

Consider one of the symbols of Rome, the Pantheon: «a round temple in which all of the divinities of the empire are equally recognised and have equal rights» (Margherita Guarducci). Thus, all people will have to be allowed to preach anything they like, if one is a “citizen” not only politically, but also ethically speaking. And we will have to return to humanistic, Enlightenment, Christian *philantropía*.

Coming to the present, why not follow scientific research’s model of the world, that is, the factor that perhaps more than any other shaped modern Europe? From Copernicus to Kepler, from Galileo to Newton to Gauss, scientists have always corresponded, conversed and discussed with one another, they have favoured cooperation over competition, without erecting nationalistic, egotistical or economical barriers. A useful example can be found in some of the few truly functioning European institutions: CERN, the European organisation for nuclear research, or European Space Agency. The spectacular results that they obtain have no nationality, but rather are the fruit of collective effort. We could adopt as our emblem the great Bernoulli family, Huguenot refugees who fled Anversa for Basilea and were for many generations mathematicians and scientists of genius admired and respected throughout the continent.

There are barriers no less tenacious than national egotism that nevertheless resist. “Multi-speed Europe” is a reality, and it originates from unreconciled cultural models. Just as the United States was divided during the Civil War along the Mason-Dixon Line, which separated the puritan, industrial culture of the North from the plantations and slavery of the South, Europe is still divided on “inflexible” rules of an economy whose roots are markedly protestant. On the surface it is merely an economic distinction, but it is rooted in the ideology of predestination. Which nonetheless can perhaps be tamed. If in spite of everything the USA was able to create and sustain a solid federation, why should Europe not be up to the task?

VII

The predominance of the economy’s role (and in particular of a decidedly liberalist economy, in which profit is increasingly becoming a value in and of itself) threatens to destroy what little remains of the solidarity between nations that would like to establish brotherhood. The case of Greece has laid bare the weakness of what today is called Union but which in the past was called the European Community. The spirit of community was completely absent in negotiations that were of an exclusively economic nature between creditor states (and banks) and a state whose debt was impossible to pay. Among the 28 states that still maintain full sovereignty, it is survival of the fittest, no matter whether the impoverishment and humiliation (or submission?) of an entire people is the price to pay. Would all of this be conceivable in the context of an authentic federation?

Let us imagine that Saxony, Carinthia, Sicily or Bretagne were heavily in debt: would it be thinkable to threaten them with expulsion from their respective countries? Or exclude them from our currency? And is it so unreasonable, inversely, to think of Greece, Portugal or Ireland as *Landër* of a single nation, the long dreamed-of United States of Europe that is still so far from becoming a reality?

But the horizon needs to be broadened starting now. The injustices and inequalities that separate the social classes and the sovereign states of Europe harshly divide the well-to-do Europe from an Arab world that, halfway between progress and underdevelopment, often falls prey to violent upheavals. It is essential to act on many different levels: not only by fighting ISIS and other forms of fanaticism, but also through an economic initiative that is one not of domination but rather of cooperation; a political initiative that from Syria to the Maghreb helps those countries to build states and models of coexistence and development in which those values that are part of our heritage, which we proudly proclaim but too often have betrayed, are affirmed; and not least, a cultural initiative to make up for a thousand years of lost time and reach a mutual understanding and awareness between the Islamic and Christian-Enlightenment cultures. This means involving institutions, families, schools and mass media in a long-term cultural and educational effort. Spreading Islamic culture in Europe and European culture in Arab countries is much more than the “tolerance” we are so proud of: it is the search for knowledge of the other, for respect, for understanding, without which there can be neither coexistence nor cooperation, only mutual isolation and unfamiliarity, even within a democratic state. In the ring that circles the Mediterranean, there must be no more dominators and dominated, only companions at the table.

Only on this foundation can the causes, of which ISIS and Jihadism on the one hand, and mass migrations on the other, are but the symptoms, be gradually eliminated. These emergencies must be faced immediately and assiduously, but they remind us that this is only the first step.

The same thing must be said about African peoples, they, too, being largely of Muslim faith, but of sub-Saharan origins. Mutual awareness must go hand-in-hand with the fight against the ruthless exploitation that Africa has been subjected to from colonial times to the present. To quote Matteo Renzi, «Africa is the heart of our future...it is the source of a new hope for those who believe in the ideals of a global world».

This, however, would entail a radical re-examination of our economy. Obviously it is not a question of extending to poor countries our model of consumer capitalism that is already on its way to destroying the planet. It is a matter of directing our efforts towards an economy of cooperation, “fair trade”, which ensures a dignified life for all peoples. Let us keep in mind that Earth’s resources are not inexhaustible and that waste must be drastically reduced, following a sustainable economy. We must find reconciliation with the peoples whom we have overpowered and exploited, but also with nature, which we have blindly plundered under the illusion of unlimited expansion. No longer, therefore, the primacy of quantity (growth, maximising profits) but of quality (creativity in pursuing a balanced use of resources).

Restoration of balance between peoples, reconciliation between humankind and nature. We must not hide from the fact that in order to achieve this goal the developed world (thus Europe) will have to profoundly rethink its lifestyle, the means and ratios of production and consumption. The superfluous, the scraps, the waste, the useless consumption will have to make way for reuse, “mending” (the *rammendo* of Renzo Piano), equity in giving and having, balance in constructing and salvaging. Wealthy (and squandering) countries must begin to accept the necessity of downscaling. This is the spectre that is haunting Europe. Few see it, but all are afraid of it. It is a matter of taking uncharted paths, with all the courage that requires.

With a view to this, we must re-propose a humanism that focuses more on being than on having, that promotes human relations, aspiring not to that good servant and terrible master that is the market, but rather to moral, intellectual and spiritual development; that puts the depth of knowledge and awareness before technical skills; that sets fairness and truth above utility; that rediscovers the joy of contemplating what is good and beautiful, even if it does not generate profit. Only thus will it be possible for Europe to practise the lost *fraternité*, both within its own borders and toward other nations.

Let us try to imagine a continent that prospers in peace, justice and moderation, rediscovering the free riches that are at the foundation of human relationships: *love, laughter, caring and sharing*. Having fewer products to consume and greater joy to savour. Recognizing that (as the wise old saying goes) «less is more». And if we add to that an awareness of the lofty values that we can represent as well as a commitment to defending them, if we are capable of exporting them through example rather than force or exploitation, then Europe will rediscover its soul.

This is its true hope. This is its mission. A long road, but one that is possible.