

Third Session

REGIONAL REPORTS – PART II: EAST AND WEST EUROPE

FAMILY AS A VICTIM OF A DELUDED SEARCH FOR PARADISE ON EARTH: FROM THE CENTRAL PLANNING HAPPINESS TO SELF-DECEPTION OF THE MARKET SYSTEM

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*There is no more important prerequisite to clear thinking
in regards to economics itself than is recognition
of its limited place among human interests at large.
(Frank H. Knight)*

1. INTRODUCTION

First of all I would like express my deep gratitude to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences for the invitation to participate in this outstanding event, to Professor Stefano Zamagni from Bologna University (Italy) for his longtime friendly scientific support, to Josef Zeman, Director of the 'National Centre for the Family' (Brno-Czech Rep.) for his helpful comments, and to my friend Luděk Rychetník of Reading University (UK) for his help with the preparation of the English version of this paper.

In its 'Green book', the European Commission (EC) (KOM, 2005, 94, Brussels March 16, 2005) has faced the population decline and the phenomenon of 'vanishing youth' and dealt with the problem of a new solidarity among generations. By 2050 the predicted deficit of 'vanishing' children (0-14), teenagers and young adults (15-24, 25-39) will exceed 50 million persons (ie. the population is expected to decrease by this number). The situation of the New Members and Candidate Countries is even worse – with one exception – Turkey, where the population is expected to increase by 19 million (ie. by 25%). The problem of 'vanishing youth' concerns both the 'Western and Eastern lung' of (post) Christian Europe.

Europeans have *de facto* less children than they want to have (when asked about their 'ideal number' of children). Why has Europe have lost its

'demographic engine'? EC faces the demographic crisis by a range of actions: by education, active employment policies, using structural funds. No doubt all the approaches are important, nevertheless the roots are deeper. I believe, that the illness has economic and cultural causes. Moreover, the specific 'agency of history' in post-socialist European countries may help us better to understand that, at the deepest level of explanation, we may find atheism. It may also provide a key to the understanding the 'paradox of youth' of today: the present 'cult of youth' coincides with young and children vanishing from our life (When I visited Ireland for the first time in early 1990s I was impressed by the numbers of omnipresent children. Now the decline is striking even there).

In post-communist countries the change came faster and more forcefully: The 'gerontocracy' of the past was replaced by wide opportunities for young generation. The old-fashioned principle of seniority and the former respect to elders was replaced by respect for the youths. Successful 'young adults' are typical figures of postcommunism. A prototype businessman and a 'rich nouveau' of our times (including a 'winner' in the shadow and black economy) is a young man. Nevertheless this 'new generation' suffers with a deep value conflict: a natural human urge to have children has to compete with money-making and it is the latter which is winning.

A few words may be useful about the circumstances under which my report was prepared. At the time of writing neither a 'Introductory lecture' to the Plenary Session nor 'Background Papers' were available. Further, my report is based predominantly on the Czechoslovak and later Czech experience, though demographic data about all post-socialist countries of Central and East Europe were available and used. Hence comments and amendments, based on other countries experience, are needed and welcomed.

An accelerated institutional change, including its cultural consequences, in Eastern Europe ask people to learn fast. Views and attitudes of peer groups are more important now than experience of parents and grandparents. Family in the traditional society had an implicit goal to raise a decent young man or woman ready to accept the obligations of adulthood. It is different now: what is required is to compete and have success. The whole system of social values is changing. A prevailing illusion, that a life is entertainment and an opportunity to become rich, is incompatible with the responsibility of parenthood. A young woman in her twenties feels unable to bear the responsibility of having a child in our complex and uncertain world. The old anchor of tradition is lost, a new model of family has not been found yet.

1.1. *A Non-Obligatory Personal Note*

I was born in a Moravian village in 1944 to the father 41 and the mother 38; my parents had 6 children already, the youngest Mary was 10 at that time. Two years after me (1946) another sister Radmila came. Hence, we were eight. For my parents the decision to accept a conceived child was not a result of 'rational calculation'. Thanks to the 'irrational behaviour' of my parents I had my chance. After having reached sixties I am more and more profoundly grateful to God and my parents for this chance, and I feel the obligation to preach about and insist on a limited place of economic calculation 'among human interests at large' (Knight). We children had to work in the garden and a small field; the older children quite naturally took care for us younger: but all this didn't 'justify' our existence in the eyes of our parents. We were poor – how grateful I am for this modest style of life in my childhood! My father was convinced that he was rich just by having eight children. He understood that bread is not the only life necessity: all five sons learned to play violin. Both parents had no doubts that Christian education was necessary for me (this was the time of Communist dictatorship and its anti-religion drive); they were (both!) forced every year to sign a new application to the director of the elementary school declaring 'We wish our son to attend religious education'. Before Stalin's death in 1953, the whole class at our village school, without any exception, was prepared to receive the first communion in the local church of Saint Margaret...

Only a few years later, social atmosphere changed dramatically. 'The socialist industrialization' and 'collectivisation of the countryside' led to growing economic activity of women and caused that children were becoming rare... I remember my mother unable to understand a puzzle that 'they do not want children now!'. Only later I fully realised her consternation: the discussion was about induced abortions.

2. A SKETCH OF THE STORY ABOUT A COEXISTENCE FAMILY-FIRM

The etymology of 'Oikos nomikos' shows that terms of 'economics of family' and even 'institutional economics' are *de facto* pleonasms. 'Oikonomikos' provides rules of sound governance of the household. In our modern 'imperial economic theory' we do not understand it this way: 'firm' and 'family' are methodologically separated from each other, and 'rules' and 'calculations' met again only recently. For millennia, in the Old and New Testaments and Psalm's tradition sound rules of family life coincided with

rules of governance and household management. This applies also for a pre-scientific period of 'economics'. Only starting from Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* onwards, we can trace a split between 'family' and 'business'. Adam Smith (and William Petty before him) were seeking the source of wealth 'outside family', in the division of labour and cooperation, in the market. According to Max Weber it was 'occidental rationality' and 'protestant ethics' that provided an explanation for the fascinating social and economic dynamism of market system. But, only a few decades after Weber (1942) Joseph Schumpeter wrote about capitalism's tendency to decay. Apart from a crisis of 'corporate governance' (in today language) or perplexities in the 'operationalization of property rights' he found another, even more important 'intrinsic cause' of this decay, i.e. a desintegration of family.

The main 'desintegrating force' is this very 'occidental rationality', individualistic economic calculation of costs in private family life. The spouses cannot omit the personal burden of family's ties in general, and of parenthood in particular, from the equation. The willingness to accept it is in conflict with the omnipresent spirit of utilitarianism and the temptations of more and more diversified and attractive pleasures that the market offers. Moreover, children do not represent 'economic assets' any more. Rather they are investment whose 'repayment period' is too long. Schumpeter was aware that this 'balance sheet' of costs and profits/joys of children is surely incomplete and perhaps even principally wrong, but this awareness could not change his conclusion that 'capitalism creates a critical frame of mind which, after having destroyed the moral authority of so many other institutions, in the end turns against its own'.

Another few decades after Schumpeter, Tibor Scitovsky came with his diagnosis of 'joyless economy' and with an analysis of human desires 'on the frontiers of economics'. At the same time Gary Becker provided a perfect economic analysis of the family in his 'Treatise', explaining what Scitovsky had described. In turn, Robert Easterlin pointed to a paradox that western families were richer but not happier on average. Joseph Schumpeter's prophecy about the decay of the institution of family was presented as a 'description' of American reality by Scitovsky, and as 'positive science' by Becker, and even in the form of 'foolish rationality' (Amartya Sen) of 'economic man'. Ten years ago, professor of M.I.T. Lester C. Thurow, wrote in his *Future of Capitalism*: 'Competitive individualism is growing at the expense of "family solidarity". The "I" consumption culture drives out the "we" investment culture ... Changes within capitalism are making the family and the market less and less compatible' (Thurow, 1996, chapter 'Economic via-

bility of the family', pp. 31-34. Finally, Robert E. Lane, 2000) included family crisis into his list of 'negative components' of happiness in market democracies (sub-chapter 'The Triumph of the Market over the Family', p. 113 ff.).

The word 'Triumph' appears in sub-titles of books: a triumph of 'American materialism' (James Twitchell, 1999), a triumph of capitalism in the 'West' (de Soto, 2001). But what triumph and at what price? The title of Twitchell's book is simply a blasphemy and an idolatry of consumption: 'you are what you buy'!? The price for the slavery of consumption is 'vanishing youth', eroded family solidarity, lost happiness of natural joy of children and a 'runaway world' (Giddens). Turbulences of our age are a consequence of our obsession with money. Ulrich Beck sees our age of turbulence as the 'risk society'. Nevertheless the roots of our difficulties are not new: obsession with money is *nihil novi sub sole*: 'People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap, and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs' (St. Paul, 1 Timothy 6, 9-10). What is really new is the expansion of this line of thinking into nearly all spheres of life.

3. 'THE NATURE OF HOUSEHOLD': COMPETITION BETWEEN FAMILY AND THE MARKET

Robert Lane's 'triumph of the market over the family' is a journalist licence, but it has close parallel in institutional economics. Ronald Coase (well known for his 'Nature of the Firm', 1937), has explained that a 'frontier' between an 'organization' and the 'market' results from a competition as well; returns to scale and transaction costs, tied with the specificity of assets, matter in the evaluation of these alternatives. Coase's ingenious idea forms the basis of the modern theory of 'vertical integration' (Williamson, 1985). The winners in this competition on global markets are transnational corporations. Asymmetry of information and the 'principal-agent' problem explain the erosion of corporate governance, which results into a tendency to mega-mergers. It is one of signs to global turbulence.

However I would like to point to a different aspect of the same logic: a competition between 'family as economic agent' (Zamagni, 2005) and the 'market'. As regards the 'family as economic agent', the same principle of Ronald Coase has opposite consequences: while corporations tend to mergers or takeovers, the competition between 'family' and 'market' makes household economy smaller. Markets have been, step by step, 'cutting slices' of

informal economic activities of the family for millenia. 'Returns to scale' in the textile and clothing industries eliminated 'home made' wear. 'Home made' bread and pastries, food, beverages of our mothers and grandmothers belong to the 'lost world' being replaced by ready made meals and semiproducts. Growing economic activities of women 'out of the family' led to a need and, later, to the necessity of buying child-caring services at the market (namely nurseries from the early age). The latest evolutionary period of eroded family has brought even a market 'production of children' (Becker): global labour markets provide the western 'economically triumphant' civilization with labor force which is lacking, via migration from other parts of the globe.

The 'vertical desintegration' of family is especially 'efficient' for people with 'highly specific human capital assets'. Considering the 'opportunity costs', children are too expensive, official 'marriage contract' too risky, hence childless and cohabitating couples are 'more efficient'. The last stage of the vertical desintegration of family is society of 'singles': family has become an 'empty set'. This is the very triumph of the market over the family...

Market has an inner tendency to impose instrumental, utilitarian attitudes to relations among people – even within the family: between wives and husbands, grandparents, children. This is not a criticism of the market in general; what I would like to stress is that it becomes a problem when market relations expand far beyond the moral limits of market. Utilitarianism has to have its unsourmountable limits, otherwise it leads to a desacralization of values: there are moral imperatives, there are Commandments – Divine rules of conduct. Without these moral limits, 'self-interest' is profoundly destructive. This too is *nihil novi sub sole*. Young Karl Marx discovered it in his very emotionally written *Economic-Philosophical Manuscripts*. It was just this 'animal' greed that led young Marx to argue against capitalism as an *advocatus diaboli* and become a false prophet of a new Paradise of Communism.

I am very well aware that there is also an opposite line of explanations 'from the left' of the family crisis, the rise of induced abortions, and of the inter-generational break and a loss intergenerational solidarity. It was revealed in cultural and spiritual shifts such as the 'cultural revolution of 1968' in Western Europe, or the 'sexual revolution' of the hippies movement in the USA, or the beginnings of radical feminism, homosexuality movements... Sure, I do not intend to raise doubts about dangers from the left – we have our own experience from the past.

The next point of my paper stems from our unfortunate historical experience with social experiments based on marxism. Nevertheless con-

temporary promises of Paradise on Earth ('Paradise now!') are based in radical liberal economic thinking, rather than in the discredited philosophy of socialism. My profession is economics, hence I feel my duty to contribute to an explanation of dangers 'from the right'. I would argue, that both radical liberalism and neo-marxism seem to have common philosophical and theological roots. These roots return us back in the history of Western thinking. Both these fronts are hostile to Christianity, they are complementary and need each other, and they are ready to 'collaborate' against the Christian concept of family. This is our Czech experience and such was the scandalous case of a coup against Professor Rocco Buttiglione in the EU Parliament. The 'new ideology of evil' is deeply rooted in the history of Western civilisation and the virulence of communism, attacking it for several decades, testifies for this proposition.

4. 'ECONOMY AS ONE GIANT WORKSHOP-HOUSEHOLD' – A BLIND ALLEY OF KARL MARX

Karl Marx's idea of communism was very simple: whole economy to be organized as one workshop and one household. Because of such total vertical integration, market was supposed to disappear from the economy. This simple but excessively ambitious idea had to have rational 'scientific' reasons but it generated enormous irrationality (Mlčoch, 2005). The planners of happiness for one huge household had to accept a 'socialist market', under which a reverse control pyramid emerged and demonstrated the power of the people at the bottom of a closed planning and information hierarchy. We – company planners (I was working as one of them during my 18 years lasting unwanted 'sabbatical') – were not powerless. Moreover, central planning of 'labor force' had to face millions of families-households, who were determined to make their own life decisions. Rational behavior within an irrational system inevitably produced absurd results. Nevertheless, the old institution of family turned out to be more resistant *vis-a-vis* to communist utopian ideology than the institution of private property, the churches and civil society. An influential Czech sociologist, Professor Ivo Možný, even came up with a paradoxical theory: 'Marxist socialism intended to "occupy" the family but, in the end, families occupied the whole economic system' (A typical socialist 'proverb' or perhaps ethical maxim of that time was: 'Who does not steal, from the state – L.M., is robbing his own family').

Nevertheless 'socialist families', massaged by the ideology of 'historical materialism', though remaining sceptical, inevitably succumbed to the temptations of 'practical materialism'. That happened in spite of the fact that 'really existing socialism' (of Brezhnev, Kadar, Husak...) was a less successful version of western capitalist materialism. The 'one socialist workshop' turned out to be overwhelmingly less efficient in producing consumer goods than western capitalism. Comparative economics of 'one household', in relation to the individualistic western 'economics of family' or 'new home economics' was rare. This is perhaps a reason of the 'puzzle' that the totalitarian system had paradoxically preserved some traditional demographic conduct. 'Repressive regime would hardly tolerate ... individual autonomy and tolerance of individual behaviour /value shifts that were ... the cause of a new demographic behaviour in the western European countries' (Phillipov, D., Dorbritz, J., 2003, p. 154). 'Socialist industrialization' used to be interpreted as a communist version of modernization; but as regards the family life, the totalitarian regime kept some prudish features of traditional society.

I am not prepared to present a comprehensive comparative analysis of household and family conduct here. But I can provide several examples at least:

a) Churches were oppressed by communists (esp. in Czechoslovakia), hence weddings in the church were not desirable. The totalitarian regime tried to substitute them by 'municipality weddings'. The church ceremony was substituted by a state ceremony, early first marriages remained common and cohabiting (unmarried) couples remained rare.

b) T. Scitovsky argued that economic growth in the West after the Second World War had been based not only on the accumulation of capital, but also on the growing economic activity of women. The same was true for the East and the ideology of 'equality of women' was even more 'successful' there. Socialist Czechoslovakia proudly displayed the highest rate of women employment in the world! 'Desire for economic independence..., greater sexual freedom..., new, cheaper, safer and more convenient methods of contraception' (Scitovsky, 1984), all this we are able to match in Eastern Socialist Europe, perhaps with some time delay only.

c) Central planning of 'one household' had to react on the growing employment of women and their economic activities 'out of family'. Hence, the central, regional and even company planners tried to build and organize child care arrangement for children, nurseries, kindergartens, school arrangements, group care centers. Housing estate – and urban expansion-planning had some special features: panel houses built for one generation. The latter survived till our time nevertheless and produced inter-genera-

tional breaks. Three decades later, kindergartens had to be rebuilt to centres for retired people. The tendency of 'the family's lesser willingness to house and take care of parents and elderly relatives', observed by Tibor Scitovsky in USA, was typical for my country too. A 'black humor' definition of state houses for elderly and retired people as a 'kind of children's revenge for nurseries and kindergartens' reflected this phenomenon.

d) In the fifties, socialist population planning accepted hospitalized induced abortions as an acceptable solution to unwanted pregnancies. The abortion legislation included 'social regulation': women had to apply 'for abortion' and special 'abortion commissions' evaluated social, economic and personal conditions of families and tried to balance the expected demand of future labor market against individual family situation. The number of children in the family was noted, as 'society' had its idea about 'the optimal number of children'. As a consequence, Christian families had been pressed to undergo abortions of fourth or fifth child. On the other hand, other families were forced – by the authority of law – to keep conceived but unwanted children. An excellent research team of the Czech psychologists undertook a unique longitudinal research of the mental health of adults born of unwanted pregnancies (see Kubicka, L., Roth, Z., Dytrych, Z., Matejcek, Z., David, H.P., 2002, and David, H.P. Dytrych, Z., Matejcek, Z., 2003). The research concluded that an unwanted pregnancy increased the risk of poor mental health in adulthood (It needs to be added that the research findings were often misused to 'justify' induced abortions).

Pro-family and pro-children policies contrasted with the practice of abortions. On the one hand, the state provided social provisions for children, payed the 'maternal holiday' to mothers, subsidised clothing, shoes and food for children; on the other hand, the same state permitted, organized and payed abortions. This absurd conduct of a 'free man, who had taken his fate into his own hands' culminated during so called 'normalization' after the military suppression of the Prague's Spring, i.e. in 70s and 80s. Policies supporting material conditions of families with children were relatively successful in the sense of 'quantitative demography'. The generation of 'President Husak children' arrived into a population active age recently and generated a temporary wave of newly born babies. This first population wave of 1970s was a reflection of both the political and social oppression and the economic 'motivation schemes' of the time. The 'success' was only temporary nevertheless. It preceded a baby boom of a 40% natality rise in four years. However, the central planning system failed to respond. The capacity of kindergartens, schools etc. remained inadequate.

On the other hand, the former socialist Czechoslovakia, with its 15 millions inhabitants, had about 100.000 induced abortions a year (in the socialist Romania and the republics of the former USSR the frequency of this 'horrendous crime', Compendium, article 233, was 3-4 times greater; these countries of the 'camp of peace and socialism' suffered the highest rate of abortions in the world). The Czechoslovak ratio of 1:1 approximately between born children and children killed in the wombs of their mothers has remained a nightmare, a horrifying testimony of the time.

5. POST-SOCIALIST FAMILY IN TRANSITION: CONSEQUENCES FOR THE POPULATION

Now, fifteen years after the Velvet revolution, Czechs have succumbed to self-deceptions of the market economy and the situation in other post-socialist countries is similar. We seek happiness where it is impossible to find it: in consumerism. The former illusion of 'Communist Paradise' failed, being replaced by a new one, by an idolatry of the market and by an obsession by money, as a universal mean of fulfilling our desires. A philosophy of 'catching-up' our richer neighbours in the EU dominates: we are fascinated with growth of GDP and consumption. The purchasing power of consumers in the ten new EU members differs considerably, but, on the whole, is substantially – i.e 5 times lower – than eg. Germany. The candidate countries and post USSR states, remaining beyond the frontiers of the 'Promised land' of the West, still have 4-10 – times lower standard of living (see Table 1).

Registered unemployment in Central and Eastern Europe also differs (15% on average at 2000) but, on the whole, it is a more painful social illness than in the West. Especially in some Balkan states, it reaches 20-30%, partly being a consequence of the wars. Only Czech Republic, Hungary and the Baltic states have the levels of unemployment comparable to the former fifteen EU member states. The post-USSR states show relatively low official numbers of registered unemployment, but its great part remains unregistered and hidden. Also under-employment is frequent in the region. According to some estimates, during 15 years since the fall of Communism, the rate of absolute poverty in 18 countries of the former USSR and east part of Europe radically increased (12 times!!!) and in some countries, more than 40% of population live in absolute poverty: the total number reaches 160 million inhabitants in this region!!! (see 'Economie et finance solidaires: Chimere ou nouveau défi?', Geneva, *Finance&Common Good*, 20, Autumn 2004).

In spite of a different historical development in Central and East Europe, and, consequently, differing systems of accepted values, policies and social provisions, the main 'generational issues' of Professor Donati and his conclusion that 'in many countries it becomes apparent that children and younger generations appear as *victims* of adults and older generations under many social, economic and cultural respects' (Donati, 2002), are fully valid also for the family in 'post-socialist' countries. I would add little to this deep sociological insight; I would only like to stress that we – both in the West and the East – are responsible for taking a wrong direction and searching for paradise on earth, either in Marx's Communism or in a self-deception of the capitalist market system. What we really owe to our children and grandchildren is a clear message that wealth does not lead to happiness, that wealth can even become an obstacle for our very happiness. I very well realise that this proposition can be seen as controversial (especially in the context of the idea of post-materialistic society by R. Inglehart). But I really do not believe that it is necessary to pass through a period of 'affluent society' on the way to a new orientation towards a voluntarily modest style of life. What is the truth, our declared wants and post socialist temptations to 'consumerism' are higher than in the West.

Table 2 in the Statistical Annex demonstrates that a majority of former socialist countries in the Central and East Europe shows even a worse total fertility rates than the EU 15 (1,21:1,5). Only Albania is an exception: the cultural difference from the rest appears to be strong. At a first glance there seems to be a systematic difference in total fertility rates between the 'West' and the 'East' of Europe. Philipov and Dorbritz (2003) discuss potential factors, such as a differing rate of preservation of cultural traditions, residual effects of former population policies, 'shock therapy' and the fall of incomes during the transition. The rise of unemployment and related impoverishment put many people 'in a position to think more of their own survival than of creating a family or having a baby... For some people, particularly in the better-off countries, income did not fall drastically but they feel the burden of relative deprivation, in that income is insufficient to ensure satisfying needs. In either case people will postpone or reject irreversible events such as marriage and births' (Philipov-Dorbritz, *op. cit.*, p. 158).

We may conclude that rapid social and economic change of our times has its negative impact on population conduct, different from the past, but perhaps even more intensive. When the transition eliminated some negative influences of the old regime, it brought new ones in their turn. Induced abortions are a typical example: new abortion legislation is liberal, but public awareness of the dangers is better than before. Hence, the rates of

induced abortion are falling down in the Central and East Europe. On the other hand, some new methods of contraception are mini-abortions *de facto*, though they are not recorded as such. What is sure that fertility declines.

'The fall in the birth rates has led to accelerated ageing amongst the population, although in comparison with western, northern or southern Europe the populations are still younger on average'. ... 'The (old) growth in population numbers based on high birth surpluses has reversed into negative trends ... the population number is falling in the majority of countries' (Philipov-Dorbritz, *op. cit.*, p. 187). The main demographic consequence of economic transition in the countries of Central and East Europe is the growth of the elderly population groups as compared with that of children and young people. The post-socialist restoration of capitalism has revealed an erosion of family as described in section 3 above: young Marx's criticism of capitalist alienation appears to have found a historical verification. Our experience indicates that this this way is a blind allee.

Nevertheless a question 'what to do?' remains.

6. 'BOURGEOIS FAMILY' AT A CROSSROAD: NEO-CONSERVATISM VS. 'ECONOMY OF COMMUNION'

A today 'turbo-capitalism' has come to a crossroad: a new equilibrium between the excess capital on the West (North) and the excess of labor force on the East (South) has to be found. The priority of labour over capital and a relationship of complementarity between work and capital remain at the heart of the Social doctrine of the church (see Compendium articles 276-280): nevertheless – how to realise this *maxim* in this turbulent age? Capital generation of top 50 European banks at the end of 2003 showed a substantial excess capital (55-65 billions of EUR) and the excess capital expected to appear in the balance sheet of these banks at the end of 2006 is three times higher (150-210 billions of EUR). (Data from Bloomberg, Datastream, World Market Monitor). If compared to 160 million of the post-USSR and East Europe's inhabitants in the situation of absolut poverty we come to the ratio of about 1000 EUR per capita. This would be a too modest sum in the West, but it may make a sufficient eventual 'micro-credit' for a small businesses, or other investment into 'human capital' in the East. Nevertheless, how to bring about this 'complementarity'?

Professor Mary Ann Glendon ('A New Role for the Family in the State', in: *Intergenerational Solidarity*, Malinvaud, E., ed., 2002) clearly shows 'the

gravity of the situation in which we find ourselves' and points to 'certain dilemmas that arise when one tries to imagine how this vision of better arrangement might be brought to life'. In spite of many obstacles that professor Glandon analyses she believes that a 'downward cycle could be reversed'. Her optimism arises from the Tocqueville thought that – even in times of agnosticism – 'statesmen and philosophers could habituate citizens to think of the future and they would bring them little by little and without their noticing it toward religious beliefs'.

The crossroad of the bourgeois family in today's situation 'after socialism' has two ways out, both leading towards 'religious beliefs'. We must realise that the newly restored capitalism failed already once here! The first way would be an attempt to restore an old institution of family on the lines of neo-conservative thought. The 'hemisphere of liberty' (Michael Novak) urgently needs more virtues, and virtues 'are produced' within families. Nevertheless the question is: 'what virtues'. The neoconservative solution would represent an attempt clearly to separate the institution of family as a sphere of love, reciprocity and solidarity, and that of a 'corporation', as a sphere of calculation, equivalence and rationality. The demographic situation in the USA, today and the forecasted population growth in the future, are more favourable than in the EU. This does not seem to confirm our intuition that dichotomic separation or schizophrenia of we-rationality 'at home' and me-rationality in the market cannot support healthy society. (See also Zamagni's 'very difficult union of happiness and individualism', Zamagni, 2005). Still, even in the USA, there are some symptoms of inter-generational crisis. In spite of this, in some post-communist countries, there are think-tanks that base their hopes on neo-conservatism of the American variety. (There is one not only in Poland, another one, 'Civic Institute', Občanský institut, in Prague, operates even in the atheistic Czech Republic).

The other Christian way out from the family crisis is completely different. It starts from an awareness that what we really need are not only virtues necessary for the production of 'goods' and 'positional goods'. We urgently need to foster virtues producing 'relational goods' and 'relations of unity'. A vision of the family renewed in Christ is closely tied to the extension of a 'broader family' to business. This is an attempt to return to the original union of family-household and firm-enterprise. The 'Economy of Communion', born within the Focolare Movement, is a good example of this spiritual initiative, though occasionally, one finds successful 'case studies' in other cultural contexts. A family brewery 'Eger' in Bavaria (Germany) is a such an example of a prosperous firm, which is friendly to families and children. Unfortunately, I was unable to find a similar success story in my own country (Czech Republic).

One way or another, we have to accept that these Christian attempts to face the family crisis are, and perhaps will remain, outnumbered in our region. Nevertheless they offer a chance. Even in the most atheistic post-socialist country the 'Vision of the Development of the Czech Republic to 2015' (see Potucek, M., 2001) mentions that – in spite of the population decline – there is a minority of Christian families in the country, which are ready to accept more babies and offer hope. This remark (found in a scientific, 'religious values free' Vision) suggests that the phenomenon of 'vanishing youth' has more subjective than objective, economic causes. It is a conversion of hearts what we need, not another drive for growth. Since growth cannot increase subjective happiness in rich countries, we still have a chance to find happiness as an by-product of our care for our neighbours (S. Zamagni), and for our children and grandchildren. There is an urgent need for us, economists, to recast our science. The imperial economic science is unable to solve social problems we face. 'The more people accept the neo-classical paradigm as a guide for their behavior, the more their ability to sustain a market economy is undermined' (Etzioni, 1988). This final proposition of the Amitai Etzioni's book 'toward a new economics' is valid as a general proposition, nevertheless his warning is especially topical for our family life.

7. STATISTICAL ANNEXES: CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPE COMPARED TO THE WEST

TABLE 1. PER CAPITA PURCHASING POWER: INDEX VALUES (GERMANY 1998=100).

Index	Country	Index	Country
67	Slovenia	21	Bulgaria
51	Czech Republic	19	Macedonia
47	Hungary	19	F.R. Yugoslavia
40	Slovak Republic	18	Russian Federation
38	Poland	17	Belarus
29	Lithuania	14	Bosnia and Herzegovina
28	Estonia	12	Ukraine
28	Croatia	11	Albania
24	Romania	09	Moldova
22	Latvia	22	Central and East Europe

Source: Gfk AG, Regionalforschung (EBM 1998-Europäische Basismarktdaten and OBM 1998 – Osteuropa-Basismarktdaten), quotation from Philipov, D., Dorbritz, J., 2003, p. 59). Average my own calculation.

TABLE 2. TOTAL FERTILITY: CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPE COMPARED TO THE EU 15. CHILDREN BORN PER WOMAN AT THE START OF 3rd MILLENIUM.

EU 15		Central and East Europe	
Irland	1,9	Albania	2,27
Denemark	1,8	Croatia	1,70
Netherland	1,7	F.R. Yugoslavia	1,55
Luxemburg	1,7	Azerbaijan	1,51
Finland	1,7	Macedonia	1,48
UK	1,7	Moldova	1,40
France	1,7	Georgia	1,39
Portugal	1,5	Romania	1,32
Sweden	1,5	Bosnia-Herzeg.	1,30
Belgium	1,5	Slovak Rep.	1,28
Deutschland	1,4	Poland	1,26
Austria	1,3	Hungary	1,20
Greece	1,3	Estonia	1,20
Italy	1,2	Lithuania	1,20
Espagna	1,2	Belarus	1,20
		Czech Rep.	1,16
		Russian Fed.	1,14
		Slovenia	1,14
		Armenia	1,10
		Bulgaria	1,10
		Ukraine	1,10
		Latvia	1,10
EU 15	1,5	Central and East Europe	1,21

Sources: Raga Gil, J.T., 'A New Shape for the Welfare State', in: Malinvaud, E., ed., *op. cit.*, Table 1; Philipov, D., Dorbritz, J., 2003, p. 181, plus my own calculations.

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THE FAMILY IN THE PERIOD OF POLITICAL TRANSFORMATION (COMMENTARY TO L. MLČOCH'S PAPER)

HANNA SUCHOCKA

During the second half of the 20th century, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe twice underwent major economic, cultural and moral changes. Longer than in Western Europe, in Eastern Europe there persisted the model of a homogenous, traditional and familiar family, meaning a large, multi-generational rural family which doubled as an economic community and a living community. Although certain changes had already begun appearing in the 1930s, in general that type of family had lasted up till the Second World War. The war's end and the change of the political situation brought about an essential change in the structure of society. That was largely influenced by industrialisation and the attendant mass migrations from countryside to urban areas. That in itself brings about changes in the family model. The large multi-generational family began evolving into a small two-generational one.¹

The changes also characteristic of Western Europe (in connection with 19th-century industrialisation) in Eastern Europe were augmented by additional factors stemming from the ideologisation of the state which left their imprint on the family model. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe were subjected to an experiment based on completely different fundamentals than those on which Europe's traditional societies had developed. Above all, the principles of individual freedom and the significance of the human person were negated. In their place, the ideology of collectivism was introduced which was to have basic consequences for the way the family was regarded. Collectivism essentially pertained to the economic system and meant the liquidation of private ownership and basing the economy on

¹ K. Slany, *Modele życia rodzinnego (Models of Family Life)* in *Znak* 2005, no. 2, pp. 29-31.

a system of social or collective ownership. But it also brought about significant consequences in the realm of mores and culture as well as the functioning of the family.

Small groups, including families, ceased being responsible for their fate. Nationalisation was consistently carried out, small farms and enterprises were liquidated and things were transformed into one, great state enterprise. The state came to own everything, both as the sole employer as well as effectively the only organiser of people's free time. That also found its legal expression in the elimination of the freedom to associate. The state also distributed flats thereby leaving no room for individual initiative. Such a system had serious implications for the functioning of the family.

During the first years of the communist state's existence, there also developed a specific ideology concerning the family. The traditional family was presented as a bourgeois relic, as it was called. Such an ideology was indispensable for the new authorities to achieve their objectives. A family strong in tradition constituted a threat to the new type of state. While forcibly imposing its new ideology, the state feared the influence of the family in the realm of shaping and educating the young. Hence the entire educational system was nationalised and subordinated to a single ideology.

Working arrangements changed significantly. Paradoxically the communist system imposed what women in the West had been fighting for. It imposed universal employment for women. But that was not to be a woman's free choice. Wages were set at such a low level that the work of a single wage-earner (the husband) was unable to support the family. Such large-scale employment on the part of women necessitated the creation of state nurseries and day-care centres (which Mlčoch has written about). From its earliest years, practically from infancy, the child was away from home. (To this day I can recall mothers leading their bleary-eyed, crying children into a tram in winter at 6 AM (privately owned cars were a rarity back then) to take them to a day-care centre). That made a permanent imprint on the child. Deprived of warmth and love, the child was subjected to the rigours of a day-care centre rather than being reared in its mother's presence.

That model was forcibly implemented, imposed from above and was not, at least in many cases, based upon a woman's conscious choice. At the same time, the conviction was engrained that only a woman working outside the home was performing a valuable task. It was then that the large-scale deprecation of housework as well as of the home and family was begun, and that has made an imprint on the way the role of women and housework is perceived to this day.

The results of that policy varied and produced different effects in individual countries. To some extent, the Church was able to offset such drastic deprecation of housework performed by women. It must be remembered, however, that the Church itself was oppressed.

In particular, the role it performed in society was subjected to indoctrination. The widely promoted view was that the Church's role was in decline in modern society. Its influence in various countries was unusually restricted.

Without a doubt, the Church in Poland did retain a good deal of its sovereignty, largely thanks to the strength and wisdom of Cardinal Wyszyński. But, in many circles, state propaganda did succeed in undermining the credibility of Church teaching. Although Polish society constantly declared itself to be 90 percent Catholic, state propaganda did have an effect. This was particularly the case as regards issues connected with abortion and what was called planned parenthood, as well as easy divorces which only through the will of the state were quickly introduced into the civil code.

One of the elements of communist ideology was the concept of 'conscious maternity'. The concept of 'conscious maternity' was based on the total permissibility of abortion. In the communist countries, abortion effectively became a normal contraceptive technique. Owing to backwardness and limited access to modern contraceptives as well as a lack of education, that was the 'simplest' method of birth control, and one financed by the state to boot. The Church's voice was unable to penetrate even in a country such as Poland. And also in Poland a law was passed making abortion widely available (1957). That law remained in force for about 40 years. What is more, it won social acceptance. Women accepted abortion. What was known as the new intelligentsia, educated under communism and usually coming from large peasant and worker families, accepted that model of family planning, regarding it as more convenient and more in tune with modern requirements. Women having many children were subjected to social ostracism. They were ridiculed and frowned upon by their superiors at work. That, of course, put them under pressure to conform to the model imposed from above.

In that context, an important observation can be made. Although the Soviet bloc of that era was completely isolated from Western influence as regards its economic system, one may observe that certain processes affecting the family model appeared to run parallel. They even included similar slogans advocating liberation from the bourgeois family model. The difference was that those processes were taking place on the basis of completely opposite ideological concepts. In the West, those were grass-roots movements

based on guaranteed freedom of choice. In a socialist state, they developed not on the basis of freedom of choice but were rooted in the subordination of the individual and family to the state; (as well as in the state's take-over, in some extent, of functions traditionally belonging to the family).

In other words, while living behind the iron curtain, we were far from Europe in the sense of positive economic and technical progress. But, probably without fully realising it, we caught up to Europe in the negative sense of limiting the number of births and restricting the role of the family in society.

Such a policy produced concrete results, and a visible decline in the number of births ensued. Immediately after the war Poland experienced a baby boom. But the years that followed brought about a significant decline in the birth rate. As a result of the post-war baby boom, in the early 1960s the well-known slogan 'a thousand schools for Poland's 1,000th birthday' (in 1966) was launched. It soon turned out, however, that classrooms were growing empty, and the school buildings had to be used for other purposes. A characteristic thing was that similar tendencies were observed in all the communist states. Being a Catholic, or rather declaring oneself a Catholic, did not essentially deter the mentality of the new homo sovieticus from having abortions. In that situation, Cardinal Wyszyński made exceptionally dramatic appeals. But those appeals did not reach society on a mass scale.

Nevertheless, in states where the role of the Church was strong, already in the communist period a grass-roots movement emerged in the parishes which was to modify general pro-abortion attitudes. The first right-to-life movements attached to the Church and independent of the state sprang up. They did not significantly affect Poland's demographics, but they did encourage reflection and spread basic knowledge about the Church's teachings on defending human life. Advice and assistance centres for pregnant mothers were set up. They received assistance to discourage them having abortions.

At the start of the 1970s, the authorities also realised the effects of their policies and how they were depopulating the country. Hence a number of new solutions were introduced – benefits for mothers giving birth, especially extremely long, paid maternity leaves. That failed to produce any radical improvement in the demographic situation, because attitudinal changes had already taken place in the mentality of women who by and large came to reject the large-family model.

Again we are touching upon one of the paradoxes of the communist system, particularly in Poland. Despite such a policy deprecating the role of the family, the family has nevertheless survived. And, thanks to the Church's strong tradition, it has retained as a nearly society-wide norm christening,

marriages and First Holy Communion, celebrated in a family and religious way. That certainly set Polish society apart from that of other communist states. Paradoxically, for a society that was poor, plagued by housing difficulties and deprived of access to the civilisation of consumption the easiest solution was the gather together in the family. To some extent, therefore, the family had retained its social functions out of necessity.

The societies of Central Europe were subjected to other significant reevaluation in the final decade of the 20th century as a result of the process of political transformation. The change of system in the post-communist countries brought about not only economic and political changes but above all social changes producing significant consequences in society's mentality.

It should be emphasised that transformation was a necessity. It meant a reversion to the principles on which the functioning of democratic societies is based. Above all, it meant a return to freedom, to the individual, to the human person as a central value. By the same token, it meant moving away from collectivism and a centrally steered distribution system towards a market economy. But a process of such fundamental change was not without its side-effects.

Toppling the existing system also meant destroying everything that provided a sense of security and stemmed from the omnipresent socialist state which extended its 'care' to everyone and to all fields of human endeavour. Now the state had ceased organising life's time, pace and rhythm.

Exceptionally painful negative consequences, especially the scope of unemployment were something completely new. They also affected relations within the family. Unemployed parents, especially jobless fathers, lost authority in the eyes of their children. The necessity of liquidating obsolete state workplaces affected women first and foremost. They returned home as losers with a sense of defeat. They did not undertake the role of a mother managing a household by choice but as a result of rejection. Deprived of their jobs, they were not accepted in the role of housewives either by themselves or by others.

The media promoted and to this day continue to promote the view that housework is something second-rate. Recently one of the more serious Polish weeklies ran a report on the situation of women in the home where in harsh terms it is stated that 'the politicians ruling today and invoking the teachings of the Church would prefer to herd women back into the home.' The word 'herd' has an exceptionally pejorative connotation suggesting that such a woman is close to being a social outcast. That does not help to change the way people think.

The transformation period was also connected with the rejection of traditional bans. In that area it turned out that the authority of the Church, which had been so great in the communist period and had helped to preserve the values of freedom in society, was not perhaps totally rejected but to a large extent ignored. Although the ethical catalogue based on the Church's social teaching was widely discussed during that first pioneering period of the transformation, it did not constitute the basic foundation of the new social relations in a society that was in the main Catholic.

The post-communist societies wanted to catch up with the Western states in a short space of time and embarked on the pursuit of an ambiguously defined freedom not firmly rooted in values.

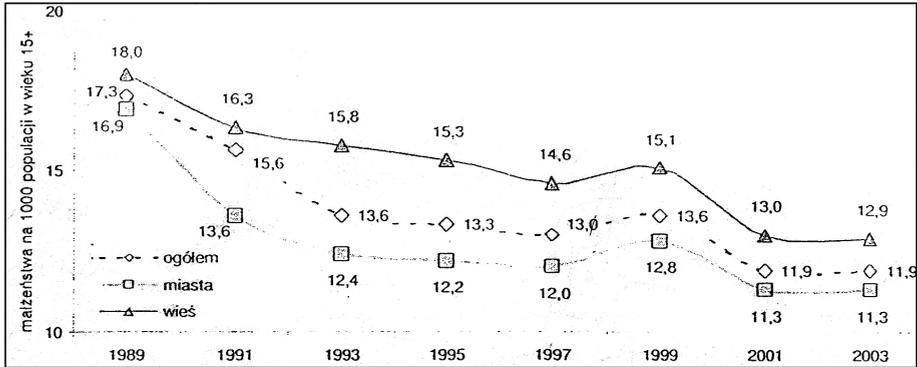
It would appear that the most negative consequences were caused by confusion in the realm of fundamental values. That especially affected the family and young people. Amid the opening that occurred, when the iron curtain collapsed and broad access to Western cultural patterns was obtained, the model of the family or human relationships presented in the Western media were erroneously perceived as the desirable, modern family model. Those family bonds that had survived communism began breaking down, Freedom was also perceived as liberation from the family. The family, especially children, started being regarded as a burden to those pursuing a career. The process of economic change as well as adapting the economies of post-communist states to the world's developed economies proceeded at a far slower pace than the adoption and emulation of Western lifestyles with all their negative traits. That was the result of several different factors.

One can agree with Mlčoch that the drive to get rich quick made a significant imprint on things. The civilisation of consumption, promoted by advertisers, indoctrinated people into believing that the acquisition of this or that product would fulfil all their expectations. The domination of the consumer civilisation to a considerable extent ensured the victory of the culture of having over the culture of being. The drive to possess everything as soon as possible replaced the positive principle of traditional entrepreneurship – of gradually getting ahead. In place of the toppled system of values a new one started to be built – a seemingly modern one in tune with world-wide trends.

The family and traditional values became something that did not fully fit this new vision of freedom.

Studies conducted in Poland since 1989 have shown a permanent decline in the fertility rate. The number of contracted marriages has

TABLE 1. NUMBER OF CONTRACTING MARRIAGES.



declined considerably (Table 1), and divorces have been on the upswing (Table 2). As a result, the structure of households began to change. One-family households dominated, but the number of non-family households began increasing, accounting for 26.4 percent in 2002.²

Young people, who are always interested in what is new and shocking, were subject to negative influence and risked making the wrong choices in life.

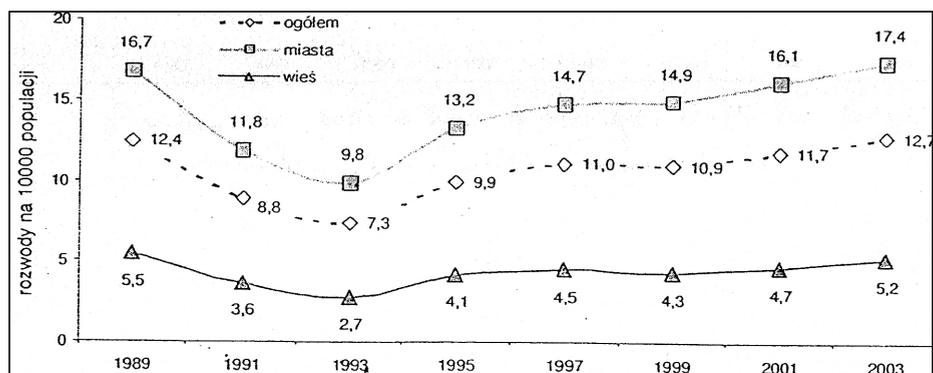
Worth quoting is a rather original description of the younger generation provided by one of its members: 'Today's young people are infected with the ideology of pleasure, and common sense has lost its moral basis – I am the only one that counts. Today's youth try to use alcohol, drugs and sex to compensate for the lack of feelings and love they did not receive from their parents – I am the only one that counts. The present generation is characterised by an attitude of insensitivity, irresponsibility and lack of empathy – I am the only one that counts'.³

Such a description of young people appears exceptionally pessimistic and tragic. But we ourselves have ended up in the trap of our own choosing. On the one hand, we sought 'liberation' from traditional family dependencies and ties. On the other hand, that liberty has created a sense of emptiness, confusion and rootlessness.

² J. Józwiak, Families and families households, Report. 2.

³ M. Minkowitsch, Rodzina i młodzież w dzisiejszym świecie (The family and youth in today's world) in Rodzina wspólnotą szczęścia (International Family Congress, Lublin 23-25 April 2004), Lublin 2005, p. 179.

TABLE 2. NUMBER OF DIVORCES.



The danger of such a simplistic perception of modernity and freedom causing irreversibly negative consequences to the social structure was forcefully accentuated by John Paul II during his first pilgrimage to democratic Poland in 1991. He focused on the Ten Commandments and in particular recalled the role of the family and the right to life. The words of John Paul II were rather harsh: 'Our century is an age encumbered by the death of millions of innocent people. (...) To that vast burial ground of victims of human cruelty in our century is added the huge cemetery of the unborn'. And he posed the question: is there any human assembly or any parliament that has got the right to legalise the murder of an innocent and defenceless human being?'.⁴

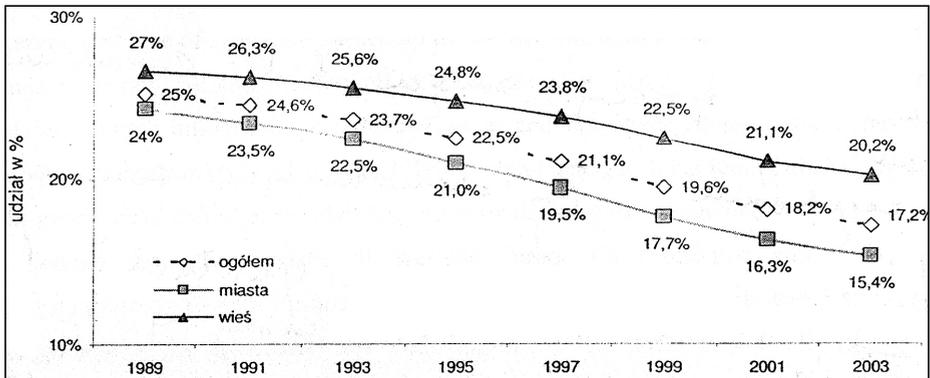
He recalled that the new society must be built on the durable foundations of values. The surprising thing was that a society so attached to the Holy Father, so ready to follow him in his pilgrimages and so attentive to his words when a certain 'political programme' was being voiced (such as his 1979 appeal to transcend the boundaries of systems), this time did not take up the challenge. What is more, society did not understand those words, critically evaluated them and found them too conservative for the contemporary world. That only showed the scope of moral confusion, the extent of confusion existing within the value system. It may be said that the long-standing communist indoctrination regarding the role of the family

⁴ Giovanni Paolo II, Omelia della messa celebrata nell'aeroporto militare di Radom, 4 giugno 1991, in: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo II*, XIV, 1, 1991, p. 1470.

and birth limitation was overlapped by new tendencies of erroneously conceived liberalism perceived as unrestricted freedom and the domination of the right to choose over the right to life.

But those words of the Holy Father did get taken up by a group of MPs with Christian roots who prepared draft legislation significantly restricting abortions. In 1993, the law was passed over numerous protests. It should be noted, however, that it has remained in force to this day, in spite of numerous attempts to change it. How has it influenced things? In statistical terms, the number of abortions have declined. But the issue of an underground abortion circuit remains an open question. Despite so restrictive a law, since 1989 the share of people in the 0-14 age group in Poland's

TABLE 3. NUMBER OF POPULATION IN THE AGE 0-14 IN TOTAL NUMBER OF POLISH POPULATION.



overall population has been declining (Table 3). As is often emphasised, one of the basic reasons for that situation is the growing cost of supporting and rearing a child. However, I believe that to be only part of the truth.

In the present situation, one can observe two, in some sense opposite tendencies coexisting side by side. On the one hand there is the syndrome of erroneously perceived modernity, informal relationships, frequent divorces and new post-divorce marriages which face children with having two fathers (their biological one and their mother's current partner) or two mothers in the family. On the other hand, the gradual reevaluation of such attitudes may be detected. Many young, well-educated women consciously decide to return in some sense to the traditional family model, to

have children and be with them during their early childhood. That, of course, is connected to the growing affluence of certain social groups. So far, this has been a rather limited development affecting only a small, statistically inscrutable percentage of women. Such behaviour nevertheless marks an attempt to break down a certain stereotype about a woman's work in the family. It is difficult to speak of any clear tendency. But certain symptoms may already be detected, and perhaps in future those positive examples may become a model to be emulated. That is nevertheless a very slow process, if indeed it actually becomes a process and not only a short-lived syndrome.

For certain changes to take place, it is necessary for many conditions to be fulfilled. That requires first of all a change in the long-standing way the women's role at home has been perceived. Housework continues to be presented in a negative light. The latest studies show that as many of 55 percent of all adult women work in the home (app. 6 million), but not on the basis of free choice but out of necessity. Attitudes in which such a choice is a woman's conscious and desired decision should be promoted.

A key factor is a change of mentality. Also necessary is something many governments have been grappling with: finding solutions to raise the esteem of housework by means of appropriate social benefits guaranteed by law. It is extremely important to find solutions that are commensurate with the situation of the state and do not evoke reactions opposite of what is intended. One cannot apply the same solutions used under certain conditions by the communist state, when the state as the sole employer could enact whatever norms served its purposes. Today it is difficult to enact legislation obliging private employers to keep the jobs of women on maternity leave available to them when they return to work. But an entire differentiated system of measures can be envisaged such as longer maternity leaves, counting

housework towards old-age pensions, flexible working time and tax incentives that will make it worth an employer's while to employ women following maternity leaves.

And that should be the aim of long-range social policy.

In this context, the views of the same young person who had so pessimistically described young people may be cited. He also believes 'today's young people to be a generation that, because of the consequences of the 1960s and '70s, deeply understand the value of family and what it means to grow up in a durable and stable family. Today's youth understand the significance of family, because they've got more experience than previous gen-

erations – and there is still hope. Young people are the hope, so there is still hope for the family’.

That is attested to by emerging youth organisations which are arduously changing the image of the family from the ground up. They want to re-create the traditional family in a modernised version based on the principle of collaborating spouses. When listening to the voice of the younger generation, perhaps we should agree with those who maintain that, following the various shocks caused by rapid civilisational change, the family always reverts to equilibrium.

THE YOUNG GENERATION AS A HOPE?

BEDŘICH VYMĚTALÍK

The report of Professor Mlčoch is focussed on the principal danger threatening the intergeneration solidarity. It consists in the fact that 'hunting' for money and a cult of consumption lead to an erosion of the family solidarity and that on the other hand those who are interested to create some effective solidary family often have no needed economic conditions to be able to realise their desire. As Professor Mlčoch says we owe to our children and grandchildren a clear message that the richness itself is not sufficient for being happy – in some cases it may even hinder them from their real happiness.

The following problem remains how to achieve that this message would be accepted. Is the middle age generation (i.e. the generation of potential parents) because of its own passed experiences able at all to realise such a message? If not – what could be an adequate answer?

This is just a circle of questions where I shall try to focus my comment.

The intergeneration relations in post-communist countries are necessarily influenced by the fact that each generation was living for a long time period in different political and economic conditions and that such a reaction to them is needed which would correspond to appropriate different attitudes and opinions.

Moreover in the Czech Republic it was in 1968 the occupation of its territory by the military forces of the so-called Warsaw Pact (in practice of the USSR) and the following moral marasmus of the Czech society which were influencing the attitudes and behaviour of the citizens.

In this situation the people of today's middle age generation were for twenty years forming their ideas, priorities, life habits – simply their whole living standard which was after the fall of communism in 1989 adapted to the new situation on the basis of their own experiences.

On the other hand the youngest generation of nowadays has been living in new conditions. Children born in 1989 – when the communist system felt

down – are now 17 years old and they are unable to imagine the previous ways of living known under the name of the real socialism. They are confronted with a new life style (connected with a higher living standard of economically developed countries and presented as an appropriate, convenient and desirable one) as well as with the living standard of the generation of their parents stigmatised by the social transformation after the fall of socialism. On the basis of such a confrontation many young people are forming their own views and attitudes, in many respects different from those of their parents. Moreover the young people continue to become a more important factor as consumers and therefore they are objects of interest for various marketing researches – investigating actual trends of their life style and naturally trying to influence them. Young people are becoming an important and perspective consumers group. Therefore transnational corporations are permanently searching ‘cool trends’ and everything by means of what is it possible to attract the interest of young people. The market oriented to the youth is hectically expanding. The same fever starts to manifest itself also in the whole sphere of culture. The world of the youth culture is getting into a state named by the sociologists Robert Goldman and Stephen Papsen as a regulated development (citation from the book of Naomi Klein *Without the Logo*, p. 66, issued by Picador in New York 2002, Czech translation Pavel Kaas). A well premeditated publicity is influencing the youth more significantly.

Of course, the middle age generation is also influenced. Whereas for young people advertisements are offered as an allurements for which they can make a free decision without any ballast of thinking inherited from the past, the middle age generation is accepting these advertisements rather as a way to get free from any limitation of the previous regime. This way permits and somewhat justifies to enforce the own egoistic profit.

The decisive influence on creating attitudes of today’s middle age generation was undoubtedly the occupation of the country in 1968. It has – with using the force – stopped any tendency to democratisation which appeared in connection with some political liberalisation in the USSR, in half-hearted attempts accepted also by a part of communist politicians formulating the so-called socialism with the human face. This idea became so popular that a danger arose that communist politicians of this new orientation would achieve the support of majority at the coming congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. Such a development was unacceptable for Moscow. Therefore under the pretext of the starting counter-revolution and of the necessity to defend achievements of the socialism the mil-

itary units of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia in the night on August 21, 1968.

They did not find any shooting counterrevolutionaries nor any disruption, only shocked citizens who in their absolute majority were protesting against the occupation by petitions, demonstrations etc. The Czechoslovak army which had to defend the republic against the potential threaten of imperialists and for such a case had to its disposal a secret network of transmitters used this network also to protest against the occupation. Only after several days the occupants happened to discover and destroy that network.

A new period of the so-called normalisation started – a period of disappointment and moral marasmus. A so-called healthy core of the communist party was formed, political screening started, people who were considered to support or approve the ‘counter-revolution’ were expelled from the communist party and dismissed from their work. New office-hunters appeared with an apparent effort to use the possibility to enter into ‘hot’ positions. I am presenting these facts on the basis of my personal experiences. In 1968 I was 40 years old. The worst fact was that mutual confidence among people disappeared. The hitherto friends changed their behaviour, taking different attitudes. Sometimes they even were fearing about what would do their former friends.

The newly formed political power did not yet start with penal recourses or with open restraints – as many people feared – but it was showing unambiguously that instead of the socialism with human face the so-called real socialism should be accepted with its moral marasmus and that this orientation should be irreversible. A new period of a legitimate hypocrisy begun using completely different languages in the separated private and public spheres. People according to their experiences preferred privacy taking care mainly for themselves. Activities as ‘do-it-yourself’, gardening, keeping weekend cottage etc. have become very popular.

The fight against religion achieved some moderated forms – it was no more considered as too actual. People knew that the fact to inscribe their children to the voluntary school lessons of religion would be connected with a risk that later any access to a higher education to those children would be refused. Parents did not want to bear such risks, by the way after many decades of communism these parents already did not know too much about the religion. And thus – in contrary to Poland – the religion in Czechoslovakia had no more any significant role in the social consciousness.

At the same time an intrinsic destruction of communism took place. Later its end was signalled by the fall of the Berlin wall, in Czechoslovakia

by the officially approved meeting and procession of students commemorating 50 years from the events of November 17, 1939 when nazi occupants closed Czech universities. Then a provoked conflict with police followed during which one student was reported to be killed. In fact this 'student' was a member of the State security who simulated to be killed to incite an indignation of citizens. It was evident that the communists had in their plans to transmit the power and that they were prepared for it. This can be documented also by the fact that many of them were rapidly leaving their communist party giving back their party membership cards and joining the newly formed political structures. Using their connections these people were able to be incorporated into these structures in a very organic way in a short time.

The new political power enthroned quickly and openly new concepts and new slogans with the task to show the only right way how to achieve the welfare of the developed Western countries which in the previous years of the old regime for many of them appeared as that of their dreams. They were slogans about the market economics without any attribute, about the liberty (where the Man is a Law for himself and has not to be limited by anybody), about money to be 'only' on the first place, about the non-existence of the so-called dirty money. According to these aspects the law or even ethics were only delaying the transformation of the society towards a clear future. It was the ruthless own profit and unlimited liberty which were emphasised as the main motto of the welfare. Many documents can be found in the press of that time.

The absolute majority of population was persuaded that enforcing the new complete liberty of every single citizen – in connection with a free influence of the market – would open the way to a free and prosperous society in a very short time. This ample confidence made it possible to seek an enemy of the liberty even in the Catholic church that insisted in refusing to permit any single man to do everything according to his wishes without any respect to others and without any respect to the God. Thus the man appeared as being endangered in his absolute liberty. A lapidary expression of such a meaning was a comment in the broadcasting relation of June 15, 1993: 'All religions in the world demand devotion and obedience what is very difficult to bear after 40 years of totality. Therefore the number of believers is decreasing'.

Another paradox is occurring. The same Church – under the communist system considered as one among a few flag-bearers of liberty – is now being accused for disfavouring any liberty.

These opinions were helping more or less to open a space for behaviour models which have been later applied in the privatisation process and which also have led to the moral relativism (nowadays promoted in the developed countries) more acceptable in our country than in the West where citizens have passed a period of constantly accepted values conserving a series of behaviour models from those times.

Our society of those times – really drunken by the ideas about an unlimited liberty for everybody – in the absolute majority lost any interest for spiritual and moral values. Political representatives of that time openly refused any effort to punish thieving of property as a groundless criminalisation of entrepreneurs defending transformation of the society. By this way such attitudes have been created step-by-step. Lack of repaying debts, robbing of poor people, frauds, lack of keeping given words started to be considered as a standard behaviour that can be either applied or criticised but in practice with but a small chance to be changed. Cases with dubiously acquired richness seemed to justify unfairness as a standard way of behaviour.

When some information upon criminality has been reported the most striking cases either were getting almost lost or only nowadays – after decades of years – are being treated before tribunals; the main lawbreakers are living comfortably abroad in countries from where their extradition to our republic is impossible.

Even though today our society is already seeking generally acceptable sources of authority and the period of ‘a predatory privatisation’ is over, nevertheless the so-called normalisation in the years 1968-1989 and the following ‘capitalist’ transformation (without any rule when possible) resulted in the ideas, thinking and acting of the today’s middle age generation. It has helped to create the life standard characteristic features of which can be expressed as follows:

1. *spiritual emptiness* accompanied by a programmed nihilism considering this emptiness as a natural environment of the man;

2. *seeking of enjoyments à tout prix* in a hope that the right one will be found; in other words: an effort to enjoy the life even though it is not clear how to do it;

3. *cult of consumption* which has to replace traditional religious liaisons (Professor Mlčoch makes to this an appropriate comment that ‘a price for the slavery of consumption is “vanishing youth”, eroded family solidarity, lost happiness and a “running world” of natural joy from children’);

4. *accepting of egoistic profit* without any respect to others as the basic standard of behaviour;

5. *general weakening of traditional moral norms* substantiated by the liberty of the Man; as one of the amusers very clearly declared in the TV: nowadays all taboos have fallen;

6. *decaying consciousness of law* – a result of separating the law from the justice in the ideology of the communist regime as well as in the following period in attitudes of post-November politicians;

7. *passivity towards evil* or even accepting the evil culture, gradual loss of ability to discern between the good and the evil; a dubious role is played by the *media* which in an effort to achieve high publicity are presenting more and more perversities and this vicious circle seems to be infinite. It is *de facto* a defence of evil promoting when it is explained that also such kind of relations is showing the reality of life and that children should learn to make a cognition of this reality and then to make their own decision what is right. It is true that in the old tales the evil was also present. But in those tales it was always the good to which the final victory belonged. Today the victory is on the side of the evil. And thus the criminality is growing – supported among others also by the news published in the media about the unpunished crimes or even about setting lawbreakers of extremely heavy crimes free for the reason that the tribunal was able to negotiate this case only after 10 years and that a punishment by depriving liberty today would miss any ‘educational’ sense.

The present rather extended views can be perhaps characterised by an article published in the Czech daily newspaper *Lidové noviny* on December 30, 2005. The economist Jiří Kinkor was commenting the prestigious American weekly *Time* that evaluated Bill and Melinda Gates as personalities of the year for their extreme charity activities for which they spend huge sums of money. In the opinion of Kinkor Gates merits to be appreciated for material values he created and not for charity which in fact is just a reaction to somebody’s incapability or impotency. He should have been evaluated for earning money and not for giving it up. Emphasising charity is said to be an expression for the misunderstood morality of our world. Let us add that today for many people an honest work or ethical entrepreneurial activities start to be considered as a useless effort when according to all experiences it is far better and more rapid to make money by dishonest ways.

Of course the presented views and attitudes are not characteristic for the whole society. A not small part of the population exists as well that does not consider the egoistic profit as a basic standard of behaviour and seeks also other values covering among others ‘verity and liberty, altruism and sacrifice,

solidarity, friendship and compassion' (Archbishop of Lublin Josef Lycinski: *Let us be custodians of daybreak*, published in Czech, Perspektivy Nr. 3/2005).

Question rather remains who and how should contribute to make these values accepted in a broader way by the society and eventually what can be today expected in this matter from the young generation whose majority has already spent the whole life in democracy.

Lot of research has been made in our country concerning attitudes of young people. The results confirm that nowadays young people accept as a reality the life style oriented only to their own egoistic profit and that they make their own conclusions from it. The growing economics of the last years provides an incentive to these optimistic attitudes in them. The family influence is being further diminished whereas the group of equals in age continues to have the key importance. An orientation of the young man in the future often depends on that group where this man becomes to be a member – either Mafia or democratic orientation (Matoušek, Kroftová: *Mládež a delikvence*, Portál 2003, pp. 81-84). Nowadays media are offering more and more such behaviour models which a few years ago were considered as immoral and inadmissible – even in the atheistic communist regime. The negative influence of media on the growing criminality is considered today as indubitable. The criminality of the youth is growing as well. In the last decade of the 20-th century the portion of children and juveniles on the total number of all delinquents in the Czech Republic grew from 13 % to 20 % (Matoušek, Kroftová, pp. 100-108, 145-148). A new phenomenon is a striking growing criminality of children from the middle class and also the increased number of criminal activities of young people from the best situated social strata appears as a special surprise (*ibid.* p. 41).

On the other hand the school is becoming a poorly trustworthy institution. The research of the agency Median (1997) reported only 51 % of the inquired 910 young people as feeling a confidence to the teacher in the school.

According to the inquiry of the Pedagogic faculty of the Charles University in Prague – realised in 2005 among the 15 years old pupils – nowadays young people are oriented mostly to themselves. They consider their own success and independence as the most important fact – neglecting how many friends they have. They are socially simple and impertinent. In the course of examinations they almost do not prompt their colleagues being indifferent to their bad marks. In majority they have no idea what a profession they would like to do in their future life; they only know that they will have to hardly work if they want to be successful (the article 'Co

chci dělat? Nevím, ale budu nejlepší *What want I to do? I do not know but I shall be the best one'* – Lidové noviny, August 19, 2005).

The results of inquiry among young people from Central Europe in the age between 17-27 years organised by the editing house Reader's Digest are very interesting. In comparison with young people from Hungary, Poland and Rumania the young Czechs are more self-attentive and egoistic. They are also more self-confident in report to their own future. They do not fear not to be able to enforce themselves. In their views unemployment is a problem but they think they will be able to earn their living. They accentuate more the education and therefore they believe to find a well paid work. The founding of their own family seems to be a subsidiary secondary matter.

Their priorities differing from people of the equal age in neighbouring countries are shown in the following table.

For what am I ashamed in my country?

Czech Republic	1. Politicians	2. Criminality	3. Bad human character
Hungary	1. Foreigners do not like us	2. Low standard of life	3. Small possibility to enforce one self
Poland	1. Unemployment	2. Corruption	3. Poverty
Rumania	1. Corruption	2. Criminals	3. Poverty

For what am I proud?

Czech Republic	1. Successes in the sport	2. History of the country	3. Good human character
Hungary	1. I am born as Hungarian	2. History of the country	3. The language
Poland	1. Traditions*	2. History of the country	3. Traditions*
Rumania	1. Beautiful country	2. History of the country	3. Traditions

Source: Lidové noviny, October 26, 2005.

* Evidently the printer's error.

If more than a half of young Czech people expressed in the inquiry they are mostly ashamed of their politicians, presenting criminality at the second place and a bad human character at the third one then it is possible to deduce that their evaluating orientation is not so completely indifferent in the moral way and that some possible further positive shifting in this area can be expected.

Furthermore in accordance with other researches the young people in the Czech Republic do not form any monolithic group. Jiří Zajac in the weekly *Katolický týdeník* Nr. 2/2006 refers that young people oriented to effectiveness and personal success make a strong part of the youth but that besides that in average 25 % of them are oriented to relations and grouping and 15 % to the protection of the Nature and a healthy life style. 'Many people among them are really sensible to the spiritual life, emphasising relations and knowledge, service and responsibility, love and verity'.

The ability to become enthusiastic for something great, openness, desire for verity, uncompromising – that all remains in the nature of the youth. That all can be evaluated as a positive phenomenon giving a hope that just the young generation can introduce to the society new values able to replace the present spiritual emptiness.

The president of the Czech Christian Academy – the Catholic priest Professor Tomáš Halík (working in the pastorship among the university students) in one of his published interviews mentioned very explicitly: 'I do not see any other hope than the hope in the younger generation which will perhaps bring a new spirit and new values' (*Lidové noviny*, December 31, 2005).

When the intergeneration solidarity should be considered as until now (i.e. the parents have to take care to incorporate their children into the society as well as possible with taking over the values and standards of life of the middle aged generation) then such a one-sided solidarity is harmful and even dangerous for the life of future generations.

The support for creating a life standard of the up-to-date young generation should be a very important component of the intergeneration solidarity. It should correspond to real needs of this generation, based on spiritual values and on the effort to achieve a dignified human life for everybody. The forming of such a life style needs to get at first the appropriate interest of today's young generation providing a help and co-operation of that part of the adult generation which will be able to understand such a necessity.

This is not any utopia far from any reality. If the sociological researches bring to the attention the significant influence of the so-called peer-ship groups on creating life attitudes of young people then a support to create

such groups of equal age can be the first step also for creating a new life style which would correspond to the needs and interests of young people practising mutual understanding, solidarity and other positive human properties.

They are many such informal groups of equal age. They even brought a significant support to priests in the period of the communist regime with lack of other possibilities for spiritual activities. Today they can be supported by already existing or newly established non profit organisations of young people with commonly profitable aims. They can be supported by those families that have not yet lost the interest for fulfilling their functions. Their activities can be enforced by creating networks of organisations of young people with the aim to enforce their common interests.

In 2005 altogether 32 nonprofit organisations (NGO) in the Czech Republic have made an agreement to co-operate in order to strengthen the social dialogue. As an analogy it might be possible to create an analogous network of juvenile organisations or to incorporate them into the existing network. A Christian broadcasting already exists in our country and a Christian TV is expected to be officially authorised. Not yet applied and exhausted possibilities for young people are shown by the internet. A possibility to establish a foundation supporting these ideas still exists.

The following question still remains: a needed number of young people should be registered who will be ready and willing to do such activities. In the positive case a real response can be found to the message of Professor Mlčoch that the richness itself is not sufficient for being happy.

WHAT DOES SOLIDARITY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE REQUIRE?

*West Europe Report**

JOSÉ T. RAGA

Children and young people do not constitute a mere anecdote in the historical framework in which this stage of their lives is set. They represent the nucleus on which the society of the future is to be constructed. Therefore one cannot reflect on youth without first considering the function it is called upon to carry out within our society.

This complexity of the vital stage comprised by childhood, and more particularly youth, is what makes the study of it all the more attractive. At the same time however it is also what necessitates a particularly rigorous commitment in terms of the analysis required to identify the parameters for improvement and the involvement of society as a whole in this task; a task which, through the challenge of youth, of all youth and any youth in particular; of each and every young person, must be accepted for the good of the entire human family.

As against other moments in the life of men, characterised by the visible presence of duties and responsibilities, the period of youth, whilst not bereft of these, given that they are abundant both in variety and intensity, is one in which said responsibilities are less obvious. Hence the risk of drifting through these responsibilities without understanding the call to each

*I am very grateful to Prof. E. Malinvaud (I.N.S.E.E. Département de la Recherche) for his outstanding detailed written comments to an earlier version of this paper; gratefulness I want to extend to Prof. V. Possenti (Univ. ca' Foscari – Venezia) for his most illustrative written discussion paper. Also I wish to thank Professors G.-F. Dumont (Univ. Paris-Sorbonne), P. Donati (Univ. of Bologna), and J.J. Llach, for their most helpful discussions and ideas, favouring the improvement of this contribution. Any responsibility for errors and misunderstandings are exclusively the author's.

young person to play a leading role on the stage on which he, perhaps sub-consciously, finds himself.

From this it can be deduced that, unlike adult men or women who are conscious of the necessity to attend to their own self-development, that of their family, to their work and to the community to which they belong etc., it is not unusual for young people to live each day as an isolated unit, with objectives confined to twenty – four hour periods and therefore strangers to the fact that each moment is a link and an opportunity to develop a project spanning the entire lifetime of a person. The risk resulting from the inability to perceive duties and responsibilities leads, on occasion, to abandonment, an ephemeral lifestyle bereft of substance or permanence and ultimately to a negation of one's self.

It is here, in this absence of light produced by a diversity of circumstances, that the attitude of solidarity within those who observe reality from other perspectives, mainly, though not exclusively, adults, can help to dissipate the darkness and correct errors for the good of the young person and ultimately for the good of society as a whole.

But the desire to improve society through the improvement of our youth, which leads us to concentrate on the difficulties and problems of youth throughout these pages, must not, due to unintentional generalisation, cloud the fact that there are young people who do not fall into this troubled pattern.

It is clear, and let there be no doubt whatsoever on this point, that in the face of the risks we have outlined and the attitudes that can derive from them, there are young people who are well aware of their role in society and assume it courageously, even at times and in situations that are anything but easy. Young people who bravely lead their lives within a project of admirable greatness that deep inside them is perfected for the better service of others. Young people who create hope in the seed they sow and are called upon to provide great fruit for the good of humanity. Young people who represent a stimulus and a warning for the adult generation in the claim for solidarity for those who most need it.

Youth, Architect of the Future Society

Although in their minds and in their actions *today* is very much present – and perhaps this is part of the natural order of things – to speak of youth is to speak of *tomorrow*, so much so that the society of the future is determined by the youth of today. Their values, their habits, their behaviour and their preferences will be the ones that will finally construct and profile the

what and the *how* of our future society. Hence the importance of a healthy human youth committed to the community to which they belong from the first moments of the development of the person: from babyhood.

Pope John Paul II, expressed it in these terms:

I wish to express the joy that we all find in children, the springtime of life, the anticipation of the future history of each of our present earthly homelands. No country on earth, no political system can think of its own future otherwise than through the image of these new generations that will receive from their parents the manifold heritage of values, duties and aspirations of the nation to which they belong and of the whole human family.¹

The future society is none other than the result of the legacy that the youth of today is capable of administering and transmitting. Chance alone does not configure a fraternal society or a violent one, a cultured society or an ignorant community, a society of abundance or one of scarcity, a society in which man occupies the place of relevance that has always been reserved for him by Creation or, on the contrary, a society in which man lives within a framework of humiliation, enslaved by a material world which should serve him, but which, in a certain manner, obliges him to render service to it. It is certainly true that in the case of man, and also in the case that is of special interest to us here, that of youth, there is a confluence of two worlds, the material and the spiritual. This represents a fusion that should take place in an environment of harmony rather than one of confusion. In the same way that in the human person body and spirit co-exist in harmony, his needs and the goods necessary to satisfy them must also observe this harmonious order which tends towards self-fulfilment.

Therefore, the fondly remembered Pontiff observed that,

When we say that the future belongs to you, we are thinking in categories of human impermanence, which is always a journey towards the future. When we say that the future depends on you, we are thinking in ethical categories, according to the demands of moral responsibility, which requires us to attribute to man as a person-and to the communities and societies which are made up of persons-the fundamental value of human acts, resolves, undertaking and intentions.²

¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (Rome, 22 November 1981), n. 26.

² John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dilecti amici* of pope John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of International Youth Year (Rome, 31 March 1985), n. 1.

A sense of belonging of the results in the first case, as opposed to the demand for subjecting one's needs to the greater good of society in the second.

And when we observe the youth of today, we are simply contemplating the society of tomorrow. A youth that is, by nature, restless, longing, demanding, continually claiming greater justice in the world and greater solidarity amongst the peoples making up the integral components of a unique community: the human family.

Therefore, from the perspective of adults, one cannot speak of responsibility to the community if at the same time we fail to assume our responsibility to young people. In the same way, solidarity with youth achieves its fullest expression and ultimate aim in the form of solidarity with society. This essential union between the youth of today and the society of tomorrow is what drives us, in a sense of solidarity, to transmit all types of elements, spiritual and material, which provide young people with a solid grounding for their development within the community and for the task of social transformation in the interests of a better society.

We are ultimately speaking about those 'healthy principles' of which the Holy Father spoke in his Letter on the occasion of International Youth Year:

... it is my hope that your youth will provide you with a sturdy basis of sound principles, that your conscience will attain in these years of your youth that mature clear-sightedness that during your whole lives will enable each one of you to remain always a 'person of conscience', a 'person of principles', a 'person who inspires trust', in other words, a person who is credible. The moral personality formed in this way constitutes the most important contribution that you can make to life in the community, to the family, to society, to professional activity and also to cultural and political activity...³

this is the type of young person who can offer society what it expects of him: a project of reform in which the greatness of the human being is reaffirmed, in both his singular and community dimension, at the same time as the prevalence of spiritual things over material things.

To endow the youth with such a robust base and thereby enable them to better serve society is the task to which the adults of today must be committed, convinced that with the mature transparency of which the Pope spoke and with the help of God, it can be achieved with tenacity and

³ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dilecti amici* of pope John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of International Youth Year (Rome, 31 March 1985), n. 7.

effort. An objective of such transcendence cannot be left to the spontaneous order of things.

Nobody can fail to be aware that youth is both heir and artifice at the same time. Heir to the legacy bequeathed by the previous generation and artifice of life itself and the life of future generations. This dual role is the source, within the young person, of a sense of responsibility, a responsibility that looks to the task that it must carry out as architect of future generations. In this task he must bear in mind the master's evaluation of the behaviour of his servants on returning from abroad. He should aspire to be the good and trustworthy servant⁴ who diligently administers the 'talents' he has received, aware of their scarcity and the hopes placed in them by future generations, his own generation and by he himself.

Youth, considered in those terms, constitutes the hope for a better society, a society that begins to be constructed in childhood and of which the greatest fruits can be expected.

In you [young people] there is hope, for you belong to the future, just as the future belongs to you. For hope is always linked to the future; it is the expectation of 'future good things'. As a Christian virtue, it is linked to the expectation of those eternal good things which God has promised to man in Jesus Christ. And at the same time, this hope, as both a Christian and a human virtue, is the expectation of the good things which man will build, using the talents given him by Providence.⁵

This hope, inextricably linked to the responsibility to which we have alluded, takes shape in the objective of not merely transmitting to future generations a world in the same conditions in which it has been received but rather the placing of all their desire and wisdom in leaving a better world than that bequeathed to them. A better world in material terms but also a better world in immaterial and spiritual terms. A better world in terms of standard of living, welfare and sustainability but with the same demands for sociability, fraternity and solidarity with those most in need. The Pope himself expressed it for us with the greatest of clarity: '...humanity today must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future

⁴ *Vide Mt 25, 14-30*

⁵ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dilecti amici* of pope John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of International Youth Year (Rome, 31 March 1985), n. 1. [What it is said into brackets corresponds to author].

generations'.⁶ An appeal that might well be interpreted as a denouncement when we contemplate the disordered use of the resources that nature has placed at the disposition of mankind, of all mankind, without geographical or temporal limitations, be it from here or from there, the mankind of today or the mankind of always, for all mankind forms part of the single and unique human family.

Youth is the appropriate period for the achievement of these objectives. It is in this stage of life that one can best aspire to achieving such great objectives with optimum freshness of spirit and intensity of purpose. This applies even to those objectives that might appear to be out of reach. It is a period of great fertility which allied to the energy characteristic of youth, enables the greatest of harvests to be reaped both for the young person himself and for those who join with him in the quest to build a better society.

John Paul II, an expert in humanity, and even more so in young people, said:

There are however reasons-and they are also objective reasons-for thinking of youth as a special treasure that a person experiences at this particular period of his or her life. It is a period which is certainly distinguished from the period of childhood (it is precisely the time when one leaves the years of childhood), just as it is also distinguished from the period of full maturity. For the period of youth is the time of a particularly intense discovery of the human 'I' and of the properties and capacities connected with it. Before the inner gaze of the developing personality of the young man or woman, there is gradually and successively revealed that specific and in a sense unique and unrepeatable potentiality of a concrete humanity, in which there is as it were inscribed the whole plan of future life. Life presents itself as the carrying-out of that plan: as 'self-fulfilment'.⁷

And it is within this project that he finds the perfect mechanism for the young person's work to create the future society.

The Definition of the Problem

Before entering into the specific consideration of the purpose of this analysis, it is first necessary to lay down a basic principle, a condition essen-

⁶ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus* (Rome, 1 May 1991), n. 37.

⁷ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dilecti amici* of Pope John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of International Youth Year (Rome, 31 March 1985), n. 3.

tial to the reconciliation of what we have already said and the arguments we shall go on to outline hereinafter. This principle boils down to a conscious and firm acceptance of the fact that future society depends on the youth of the present and what they are capable of constructing within this society.

If we accept this as an irrefutable principle tantamount to saying that the historical development of a society is a product of neither luck nor forces external to its own dynamism, but rather that it finds in its own bosom the *raison d'être* of progress or decline, then the aims of this study are completely justified: the responsibility of the adult generation in the formation of the young, or what amounts to the same thing, how important is the virtue of the solidarity of the former with the latter.

As a starting point, it is worth reminding ourselves of one of the incontrovertible principles of law: '*nemo dat quae non habet*', i.e., '*nobody gives what he does not possess*'. This, applied to the object of our study, leads us to affirm that we cannot expect conduct or attitudes from our youth, on the road to this social construction or reform, if they have not received from the adult generation, be it directly or in the form of the opportunity to work them out for themselves, the parameters that are both significant and useful for the task they have undertaken as authors of the future society.

Even at the risk of being criticised for resorting to an economics type argumentation, it seems eloquent to me to take the matter, albeit in a somewhat contrived manner, to what can be learned from a production function. Naturally, we are in no sense suggesting an equivalence between the make up of man, the most sublime being in creation, the only being loved by God for himself, with all his unimaginable complexity and the production of goods and services, something extremely simple despite the complexity with which it is frequently presented.

What we are trying to say is that ultimately the social nature of man and his capacity to live within the human family is determined by diverse *inputs* of different types, which endow him with capabilities, which go to make up what is known as 'human capital' in the widest sense. These capabilities enable him to produce the output expected by the future society to which he regards himself as a creditor.

If we might be permitted to continue along the lines of this methodology, we would affirm that the expected social output, i.e., the construction, at least as an objective, of a better future society is a function of the youth of today, called upon to build it, their attributes, attitudes, knowledge, preferences and ultimately their capacities, abilities and commitment to this mission.

To express it in another way:

$$S_{t_n} = f \left(Y_{t_0 \rightarrow n}^{th} \right) \quad [1]$$

That is to say, that society in the year (n), a random year in the future, expressed by (S_{t_n}) is a function of the youth (Y^{th}) that exists between the year of origin and the year (n), ($t_0 \rightarrow n$), the year in which they reach maturity and begin to see their influence in the social configuration of the society of which they are now adult members.

Of course it is not necessary to say that this youth (Y^{th}) is not a simple corporeal object, nor merely an animated being. We are speaking of a human person, with the potential, the knowledge, the abilities, the will and the liberty inherent to his dignity to choose between the diverse ways of doing good and thereby improving society. Therefore we argue that (Y^{th}), in [1] is the *input* on which the productive *output* depends, the future society (S_{t_n}), the society which will be conformed by that youth in the year (n).

The period of youth, which encompasses the time between the year zero and the year (n), is a period of formation during which the young person develops his knowledge and aptitudes as well as the attitudes and behaviour which will give rise to his definitive contribution to the configuration of society. To this end, the young person avails of all at his disposal, of all that surrounds him, be it positive or negative and in the case of the latter distancing himself from the objective in which society had placed its hope.

Using the magisterial scheme designed by Carl Menger⁸ to determine the value of manufactured goods, distinguishing between orders of goods according to their proximity to the end user, we could say that the young person, who is now in a position to configure the ultimate good, that of 'society', uses goods of a superior order with the object of endowing him with the attributes, ultimately the configuration of (Y^{th}) in year (n) to achieve their final aim, the contribution to (S).

These new *inputs* which go to make up the process of the formation of (Y^{th}) are very numerous and diverse in nature. There are inputs of an economic nature, and others of a social character. Some are static while others are dynamic in profile; some are easy to measure due to their quantitative

⁸ Vide Carl Menger "Grundsätze der Volkswirtschaftslehre" (1871). There is a version in English language under the title of *Principles of Economics*, with an introduction of Frank H. Knight; Glencoe, Illinois: Free Press, 1950. Under the same title, there is another one with an introduction of F.A. Hayek (New Cork; New Cork University Press, 1981).

nature whereas others barely lend themselves to estimation due to their intangibility; some are unchangeable over time and in different social nuclei while others, due to their relationship with specific values are subordinate to the moral schemes within which a determined society lives or wishes to live.

Allow us to select those variables which we consider to be most significant for this proposed objective of formation and maturity of (Y^{th}), over a time period ($t_{0 \rightarrow n}$), which will enable the youth to have a decisive influence over the configuration of the future society (S_n). We are, of course aware that these are but a few of those to be found on the stage upon which the young person finds himself throughout the formative period. In addition, some variables, though positive in principle can become negative in situations where they are surplus to needs and others while exemplary in certain situations become instruments of elusion in others.

Our selection leads us to:

$$Y_n^{th} = f [PIB_{pc}, (\frac{U}{L_f})_{0 \rightarrow n}, (\frac{C}{PIB})_{0 \rightarrow n}, \delta Env_{0 \rightarrow n}, (\frac{Y^{th}}{T_p})_n, (F_S)_n, E_{0 \rightarrow n}, S_{B_n}] \quad [2]$$

The youth in year (n), is the result of a cumulative process (\pm) of magnitudes and experiences of effective formation over the time period encompassing the years ($0 \rightarrow n$), and this changes the conditions of origin, leading them to the moment of destiny for social reform. Let us look at the variables outlined, some of them the aggregate result of others, and their more than probable influence on the formation of young people to which we have been referring.

The Economic Situation of the Community

The first variable in [2] refers to the Gross Domestic Product *per capita* of the country in which the person grows up and develops. This magnitude is not taken as static, at a given point in time. Rather, its final value and therefore its capacity to influence youth, is in accordance with the rate at which the economy grows, starting from the year (0). Therefore, the variable under consideration (GDP), would be that which corresponds to:

$$PIB_{pc_0} \left(1 + \frac{\delta PIB_{pc}}{PIB_{pc}} \right)^n \quad [3]$$

The resources available in the economic scenario in which the youth is born and raised from the year of origin (0) until the end of his formation process, year (n); and this as a cumulative average rate for each annual period.

The effect of the variable, both in terms of its value at origin and in its annual growth, can be diverse according to the influence on the subject of variables that we shall examine presently. It seems obvious that precarious living conditions within a community awaken certain virtues such as: unselfishness, solidarity, the desire to share what little is available, whereas opulence can lead to selfishness and a failure to consider the necessities of those most in need.

Due to the scope of the study, restricted to western European countries, I will concentrate on these particular countries hereinafter. A high value at origin accompanied by a high growth rate, allows the population to be free of anxiety with respect to subsistence and even free of worries about the future. This might well leave a margin for the development of values essential to life in community or simply to the care of one's own character. Reality, however, demonstrates the relative predominance of the vices of wealth, a distancing from austerity, from the rational use of goods and disdain for those who seek help on a daily basis.

These are the words of Paul VI:

Today it is most important for people to understand and appreciate that the social question ties all men together, in every part of the world... The hungry nations of the world cry out to the peoples blessed with abundance. And the Church, cut to the quick by this cry, asks each and every man to hear his brother's plea and answer it lovingly.⁹

In the same vein, John XXIII raised his voice to point out that

As we know from experience, men frequently differ widely in knowledge, virtue, intelligence and wealth... such men have a greater share in the common responsibility to help others to reach perfection by their mutual efforts.¹⁰

And what is said of individuals is also applicable to countries and continents.

It seems, therefore, that what should be an instrument of liberation from material worries, serving to offer space for the virtue of generosity, in fact acts as a stimulus for avarice and the accumulation of material goods where man fails to dominate but rather is dominated by those goods. He becomes enslaved and suffocated by the voracity of *having*, and forgets

⁹ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio* (Rome, 26 March 1967), n. 3.

¹⁰ John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Pacem in terris* (Rome, 11 April 1963), n. 87.

about the *being*. When man is worth more because of what he *is* than because of what he *has*.

It is hardly necessary to spend time demonstrating that the peoples of Western Europe do not suffer a precarious economic situation or that their most pressing needs are satisfied, at least in a macroeconomic dimension. Obviously, we cannot fail to recognise that in the opulent countries of Western Europe, there are spaces of poverty that only serve to denounce the insensitivity of abundance to necessity. It would be unfair, however, not to mention the fact that the lowest GDP_{pc} in the region (Malta, with 16.000€, and the second-lowest, Portugal with 16.600€) are fifty times greater than those of many of the countries of sub-saharan Africa and that the country with the highest income of the European economies (Luxembourg, with 53.900€), is approximately one hundred and sixty five times greater.¹¹

Along with this, and apart from certain exceptions which generally coincide with lower income countries outside the scope of our study, Gross Domestic Product growth rates in real terms are more than sufficient, as can be seen from Table and Figure I, to continue guaranteeing indices of economic abundance that will permit Europeans to live without the anxiety created by uncertain economic horizons.

Therefore, it becomes unnecessary to mention the problems of poverty in Western Europe and even more so when we consider the millions who lack even the most basic goods in other regions of our world. In contrast, and precisely in those countries which apparently have everything at their disposal, it is important to point to the existence of, above all, though not exclusively, in the young population, a problem of no lesser importance: a life devoted to materialism, a kind of adoration of economic field, an aspiration focused on the joy of possession, the pleasure of accumulation, in the competitive emulation of he who has more and can do more...

For the Church's social doctrine, the economy 'is only one aspect and one dimension of the whole of human activity. If economic life is absolutized, if the production and consumption of goods become the centre of social life and society's only value, nor subject to any other value, the reason is to be found not so much in the economic system itself as in the fact that the entire socio-cultural system, by ignoring

¹¹ The data of GDP_{pc} correspond to the forecast for 2005, expressed in terms of PPS (Purchasing Power Standards), in order to avoid the influence of price level differences between countries.

the ethical and religious dimension, has been weakened, and ends up limiting itself to the production of goods and services alone' (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, n. 39).¹²

It is in this ignorance of the ethical dimension where resides the problem affecting youth, and not only youth, in the countries with the highest economic levels, where situations of economic wealth are contrasted with those of great human poverty.

Work and Unemployment

Work is a fundamental right and a good for mankind, a useful good, worthy of man because it is an appropriate way for him to give expression to and enhance his human dignity. The Church teaches the value of work not only because it is always something that belongs to the person but also because of its nature as something necessary. Work is needed to form and maintain a family, to have a right to property, to contribute to the common good of the human family.¹³

Therefore, when the subject cannot exercise this fundamental right and lives within high unemployment levels, the consequences are grave. These consequences do not merely relate to the area of work but influence the entire configuration of the personality, significantly damaging self-esteem and casting a shadow on the role that corresponds to the person within society.

In effect, just as the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church reminds us,

The high level of unemployment, the presence of obsolete educational systems and of persistent difficulties in gaining access to professional formation and the job market represent, specially for many young people, a huge obstacle on the road to human and professional fulfilment. In fact, those who are unemployed or underemployed suffer the profound negative consequences that such a situation creates in a personality and they run the risk of being marginalized within society, of becoming victims of social exclusion (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, n. 2436).¹⁴

¹² Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Città del Vaticano, 2005), n. 375.

¹³ *Ibid.*, n. 287.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 289.

One of the greatest challenges facing humanity in recent decades, and also in the developed countries of Western Europe, is that of gearing economic activity to the creation, with ever-greater conviction and efficiency, of the employment opportunities to enable the youth and the future society to find, without difficulty, the way in which to be useful to society, the manner in which to channel their personal and professional qualities for the common good, the way in which they can participate in the work of the Creation and feel themselves a inseparable part of their community and of the entire human family.

The unemployment rates, as can be seen from Table and Figure II, are in the range of ten percent in most of the countries falling within the scope of this study. The fact that they have been higher in the not too distant past obliges some reflection on the causes of this social ill as well as the taking of measures to improve access to employment in future generations.

The education and formation of the young is, without doubt, one of the greatest assets in the development of their personal and social attributes. It enables them, in an autonomous way, to be capable of living in a changing economic frame with unpredictable future consequences. This can take the form of a scientific and technical education in accordance with the demands of the modern age but should not neglect the human formation to which they will need to have recourse in moments of difficulty.

This human formation is what enables the youth of today, perhaps faced by the difficulties of tomorrow, to contemplate his work as an essential expression of himself and see it as the feature which truly gives value to work, irrespective of the objective value of his present or potential productive participation. It is this subjectivity which distances and differentiates work from each and every other of the inputs of the production process. In other words, it is the inherent dignity of the person that lends dignity to human work, distinguishes it from all goods or commodities and prevents it from being an object of transaction in the same manner as occurs with goods and services of whatever kind.

For reasons of its enormous influence on the subject and the consequences it holds for him, the unemployment rate $(\frac{U}{T})_{0 \rightarrow n}$, as it appears in [2], is not a simple statistical detail for the purposes of contrasting the unemployed population with the working population. Behind that statistics lies dissatisfaction, difficulties in the creation of a family, difficulties in the satisfaction of needs, insecurity and lack of confidence with respect to the future.

As we have seen in times of high unemployment, the young person who lives within this horrendous social situation has a sceptical view of his own educational and formative processes. His scepticism leads to a positivism rooted in the staunchest materialism, and he forgets the subjective dimension and the transmission of dignity that the person gives to work irrespective of the economic value the market confers on the particular effort of the worker and its contribution to productive economic activity.

If it is indeed the case that a high unemployment rate in the life of a person called upon to fulfil a function in society, considered in terms of its aggregate influence, generates these undesirable effects in the formative processes of the young, by causing them to concentrate on the extremely short term – possibility of a job today but ephemeral – to renounce a more profound and wider formation with long term effects. The effects are even more devastating when unemployment is an integral part of the family life into which he is born and grows up.

About 16.5 percent of children under the age of eighteen in the United Kingdom live in households in which all the members are unemployed, while the figure for Germany and Belgium is 12.9%. In Ireland 12% of the young population live in these circumstances and even in Luxembourg, with the lowest levels of unemployment, 3% of children and young people under eighteen live in households where all the members are unemployed (see Table and Figure III). This presents a scenario in which the horror of unemployment starts to be experienced at a very early age, influencing, as is to be expected, the behaviour of young people, their expectations, their values and of course fostering within them the priority of satisfying the most immediate needs, renouncing formation and often leading them down the criminal path to total exclusion from society.

It seems unnecessary to refer here to the employment of minors, given that, at least in Western European countries, cases of this nature tend to be the exception. This phenomenon, apart from legal, political and economic considerations, also gives rise to problems of a moral nature. Moral problem at the individual level of the person who hires and at a social level when the entire community, national or international chooses to ignore it and allow matters to continue as they are. Not even the necessity that the family of these children and adolescents may have in economic terms serves to mitigate the gravity of the problem facing society when, on the one hand the work of a person under exploitation, a person not yet formed – not even physically – for the task to be carried out, and on the other hand this person is denied the opportunity for intellectual and human formation and

the obtaining of professional qualifications which would later allow him to be more useful to society.

These types of jobs are, as the Social Doctrine of the Church points out, a symbol of violence to which nobody can be indifferent.

Child labour, in its intolerable forms, constitutes a kind of violence that is less obvious than others but it is not for this reason any less terrible. This is a violence that, beyond all political, economic and legal implications, remains essentially a moral problem. Pope Leo XIII issued the warning: 'in regard to children, great care should be taken not to place them in workshops and factories until their bodies and minds are sufficiently developed. For, just as very rough weather destroys the buds of spring, so does too early an experience of life's hard toil blight the young promise of a child's faculties, and render any true education impossible' (Leo XIII, Encyclical Letter *Rerum novarum*, n. 42). After more than a hundred years, the blight of child labour has not yet been overcome.¹⁵

Work, with the stamp of dignity lent to it by virtue of the fact that it is an act of the person, who in turn is vested with dignity because he has been created in the image and likeness of the Creator, unites two relevant elements. On the one hand, by working, man becomes a participant in the work of the Creation itself, forming a part of the order that the Father has invested in him and cooperating in its perpetuation. Moreover, through work, man has the opportunity to realise his vocation and exercise the natural right to form a family and through it render service to the community. This is why work has long been a matter of preoccupation for the Church in accordance with the message of the Gospel.

Consumption and its Corrupt Form, Consumerism

In the strict sense, it is the act through which the subject satisfies his daily needs by means of perishable goods, including in this category those which are consumed in a single use at a given time and those others known as durable consumer goods, the use of which is over a reasonably long period of time.

Therefore, consumption is an act arising from necessity and it is this necessity which gives it legitimacy. This is what causes the subject to devote part of his income to the acquisition of those goods which, due to their util-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 296.

ity and compatibility with his necessities, are capable of giving him satisfaction in the most efficient manner possible.

In this sense, and in the most intimate scenario of the sentiments of the subject are to be found the explanations for the feelings of wellbeing or discomfort, of sacrifice or enjoyment, of complacency or indignation. There is a struggle for a balance between two antagonistic forces: on the one hand, the utility which the act of consumption gives to the subject and on the other, the sacrifice of the subject, also in terms of utility, resulting from having to pay with some of his disposable income in order to acquire the good he considers to be useful. This sacrifice is represented by the utility of the good that he has had to renounce in order to have access to the good he has chosen.

Hence, the subject is presented with a wide range of goods, all capable to a greater or lesser degree of offering utility. These goods are set against an infinite catalogue of needs, which is restricted by the means available to the subject in terms of his income. The subject attempts to find the perfect combination in terms of optimum utility, taking into account the needs he would prefer to satisfy and the real limitations imposed by his disposable income. This is the maximalist behaviour present in the conduct of all economic subjects and it is a consequence of the scarcity of resources at the origin, in nature itself.

Whether the goods are tangible or not is of no importance. Any good or service has some capacity to offer utility insofar as it is capable of satisfying a need, whether these needs be related to the subsistence of the individual in the biological sense or a reflection of cultural, artistic or even spiritual aspirations. And here we are restricting our analysis to what we might call legitimate needs, those which are compatible with the dignity of the person. There are also goods available in the market to satisfy illicit needs, those which humiliate the human being and enslave him.

In the words of L.v. Mises,

It is arbitrary to consider only the satisfaction of the body's physiological needs as 'natural' and therefore 'rational' and everything else as 'artificial' and therefore 'irrational'. It is the characteristic feature of human nature that man seeks not only food, shelter, and cohabitation like all other animals, but he aims also at other kinds of satisfaction. Man has specifically human desires and needs which we may call 'higher' than those which he has in common with the other mammals.¹⁶

From what we have said, it can be concluded that consumption is a

¹⁶ Ludwig von Mises, *Human Action. A Treatise on Economics*, William Hodge and Company Limited (London-Edinburgh-Glasgow, 1949), pp. 19-20.

function of the disposable income of the subject. Therefore, at higher levels of income it is logical to expect higher levels of consumption, though it is true that the level of consumption does not increase in the same proportion to increases in income. Large increases in income levels give rise to lower increases in consumption, thereby allowing to the presence of savings which serve to finance investment goods or to provide for, inside of the consumption unit, unforeseen needs which might arise at any time, be it in present or future generations.

The economic subject constantly moves in this area of doubt, in this uncertainty. In the words of C. Menger,

The circumstance that it is uncertain whether a need for a good will be felt during the period of our plans does not, therefore, exclude the possibility that we will provide for its eventual satisfaction, and hence does not cause the reality of our requirements for goods necessary to satisfied such needs to be in question. On the contrary, men provide in advance, and as far as their means permit, for the eventual satisfaction of these needs also, and include the goods necessary for their satisfaction in their calculations whenever they determine their requirements as a whole.¹⁷

The Austrian author himself adds that,

But the further civilization advances, and the more men come to depend upon procuring the goods necessary for the satisfaction of their needs by a long process of production, the more compelling becomes the necessity of arranging in advance for the satisfaction of their needs – that is, of providing their requirements for future time periods.

Even an Australian savage does not postpone hunting until he actually experiences hunger. Nor does he postpone building his shelter until inclement weather has begun and he is already exposed to its harmful effects. But men in civilized societies alone among economizing individuals plan for the satisfaction of their needs, not for a short period only, but for much longer periods of time. Civilized men strive to ensure the satisfaction of their needs for many years to come, Indeed, they not only plan for their entire lives, but as a rule, extend their plans still further in their concern that even their descendants shall not lack means for the satisfaction of their needs.¹⁸

¹⁷ Carl Menger, *Principles of Economics*, the Free Press (Glencoe, Illinois, 1950), p. 82.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 78-79.

This goal to have savings to cover unforeseen needs or to alleviate scarcity in the next generation, is also viewed as a legitimate desire of the human person. It is true that this requires moderation in consumption, and the ordering of needs in order to satisfy the most pressing needs and postpone those of lesser relevance. At the end of the day, the creation of savings generates utility, in the way that it eliminates worry in the face of risk, making life more serene, both economically and from a social perspective.

Consumption, from an anthropological perspective, is not a mere biological fact. Nor is it a simple economic measurement. Although recognising the existence of doctrinal theories in conflict with this view, economic theory has adopted as a dominant opinion that which is known as 'the sovereignty of the consumer'. This opinion holds that the consumer has the capacity to decide the route taken by economic activity, both in terms of his primary choice with respect to the consumption/saving dilemma and in terms of the goods he chooses to consume. Let us not forget that no production process exists which does not have the act of consumption as its ultimate objective.

Purchasing power must be used in the context of the moral demands of justice and solidarity, and in that of precise social responsibilities. One must never forget 'the duty of charity ..., that is, the duty to give from one's "abundance", and sometimes even out of one's needs, in order to provide what is essential for the life of a poor person' (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, n. 36). This responsibility gives to consumers the possibility, thanks to the wider circulation of information, of directing the behaviour of producers, through preferences – individual and collective – given to the products of certain companies rather than to those of others, taking into account not only the price and quality of what is being purchased but also the presence of correct working conditions in the company as well as the level of protection of the natural environment in which it operates.¹⁹

Therefore, moral discernment is required when faced with decisions about saving and consuming or with respect to what goods to consume. There is a growing tendency towards an atmosphere in which such discernment is not even established with respect to income. Often, families run up debts, not to cover basic needs but rather to enjoy goods and services of a

¹⁹ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Città del Vaticano, 2005), n. 359.

superfluous nature, thereby incurring hardship in order to pay back the loans entered into. Man finds himself on a helter-skelter of consumption, blinded by what goods can offer him and the degree to which they subordinate and debase him. A scenario of materialism before which the adult subject, and even more so the young person without orientation, succumbs to a consumerist ritual in which social emulation plays a substantial role.

The young person learns, within the family atmosphere itself, that one consumes not for the purpose of satisfying primary needs, but because others, neighbours and friends are consuming, albeit without reason, something to which he is attracted and unwilling to forego. In the act of consumption, the consumer exercises his mind and his rationality whereas in consumerism he finds himself bereft of discernment.

It is true that present-day trade, along with the noble function of adapting goods to needs, of connecting the production process to the consumer, also attempts to do a little more than simply this. In an attempt to awaken non-existent needs, to attract the weak of will to the consumption of superfluous goods, it develops, aided and abetted by modern technology, a multitude of advertising instruments which serve to eliminate reflection on the benefits and desirability of the good on offer.

People lacking in formation, especially but not exclusively young people, are irredeemably attracted to consumption and thus, their liberty and capacity to choose is eliminated. It is the culture of goods for the sake of goods, their unshackled accumulation, having more and more regardless of the need for the particular good and the suppression of the act of decision that characterises the discerning man.

The Social Doctrine of the Church offers light in the midst of all this obscurity.

The phenomenon of consumerism maintains a persistent orientation towards 'having' rather than 'being'. This confuses the 'criteria for correctly distinguishing new and higher forms of satisfying human needs from artificial new needs which hinder the formation of a mature personality' (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, n. 36). To counteract this phenomenon it is necessary to create 'life styles in which the quest for truth, beauty, goodness and communion with others for the sake of the common growth are the factor which determine consumer choices, savings and investments' (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, n. 36). It is undeniable that ways of life are significantly influenced by different social contexts, for this reason the cultural challenge that consumerism

poses today must be met with greater resolve, above all in consideration of future generations, who risk having to live in a natural environment that has been pillaged by an excessive and disordered consumerism (John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus*, n. 37).²⁰

From Table and Figure IV, one can appreciate the high level of consumption in the majority of western European countries, that one that in [2] we define as $(\frac{C}{GDP})_{0 \rightarrow n}$. Obviously, at lower income levels the percentage of consumption is higher, as we pointed out earlier, but to observe high income countries with a volume of consumption that will soon exceed eighty percent, is indicative of societies immersed in high consumption and the lack of discernment in the decision to consume.

The problem does not end here, however. On the one hand, high consumption diminishes saving capacity and with it the practice of charity which is displaced by the triumph of materialistic and irrational hedonism. And on the other hand, producing in the quantities demanded by such high consumption leads to the consumption of the natural resources, many of them unrenowable, which the Creation places in our hands for the good of all humanity, present and future and irrespective of where the person is located.

John Paul II affirmed that

In his desire to have and to enjoy rather than to be and to grow, man consumes the resources of the earth and his own life in an excessive and disordered way. At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day... In all this, one notes first the poverty or narrowness of man's outlook, motivated as he is by a desire to possess things rather than to relate them to the truth, and lacking that disinterested, unselfish and aesthetic attitude that is born of wonder in the presence of being and of the beauty which enables one to see in visible things the message of the invisible God who created them. In this regard, humanity today must be conscious of its duties and obligations towards future generations.²¹

A responsibility that cannot be avoided, and from which different conduct must emanate, behaviour that is respectful of man and his attributes, of all humanity and the means given to us by God for the good of all, without exclusion. The great service that we can offer to future generations is to show them the correct path to take as consumers of goods and services.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 360.

²¹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus* (Rome, 1 May 1991), n. 37.

And what we have said with respect to excess consumption in relation to individuals and families is also applicable to the public sector. For a long period of its existence, the public sector has incurred expenses beyond its means and it has yet to liberate itself fully from this tendency. Frequently, these expenses have not come from productive investments which would serve to generate future income. On the contrary they are often consumerist expenses aimed at satisfying the electorate of the moment in a quest for votes and confidence.

This volume of spending, in excess of income, gave rise to large budget deficits which were initially financed by public debt, that would have to be paid by the future generations who were present when it fell due. In this way, the present generation enjoyed goods beyond the means available to it, whereas the future generation was obliged to make sacrifices in order to amortise the debt payable at a given time.²² The Social Doctrine of the Church has clearly defined the illicitness of making future generations bear the burden of the excess consumption of the present generation. This can clearly be seen where it says:

Solidarity between generations requires that global planning take place according to the principle of the universal destination of goods, which makes it morally illicit and economically counterproductive to burden future generations with the costs involved: morally illicit because it would mean avoiding one's own responsibilities; economically counterproductive because correcting failures is more expensive than preventing them.²³

The Environment at the Service of the Mankind

When we employ the variable $\delta Env_{0 \rightarrow n}$ in [2], we are aware that this alteration in the environment can be positive or negative depending on man's activity. Human life in itself, its subsistence and development, implies a negative effect on the environment, given that the consumption of goods by humanity brings with it, of necessity, the consumption of resources, some of

²² Vide José T. Raga, 'A New Shape for the Welfare State', in: E. Malinvaud (ed.) *Intergenerational Solidarity*, Proceedings of the Eighth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, 8-13 April, 2002, The Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, (Vatican City, 2002), pp. 209-247 and the appendix of Tables and Figures, pp. X-XIV.

²³ Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana (Città del Vaticano, 2005), n. 367.

which are not renewable. On the other hand, this same human life, endowed as it is with intelligence and potential, is capable of inverting the order of asseveration, and of offering new horizons which serve to enrich the natural environment. In this way the negative effects of consumption are more than compensated for by the positive effects of man's contributions to the environment. And all this takes place in the course of the time period corresponding to the present generation, i.e., the period (0→n).

Let us remind ourselves of the fact that our objective is not simply to leave a world in the same condition as that in which we received it, but, in the same way as the generation which preceded us, to achieve for the future something better than that left to us. This objective, in term of the environment, requires rationality, moderation and effort in order to find the most suitable forms of solidarity with the human family. Far from an environmentalism without an anthropological base, in which man is subordinate to nature, we are conscious of the fact that nature is at the service of man. Man, is designated by the Creation to dominate and cultivate nature, but this, in no way authorises him to assume ownership of it, and deny its enjoyment to those who like himself are the beneficiaries of its fruits.

Each and every man is none other than an administrator of the goods entrusted to him by God. Hence the necessity for austerity in the use of natural resources and the avoidance of waste on the one hand, and on the other, the commitment to improve by means of new discoveries and new methods, resources which, although at the disposal of man in the past, were unknown in those times and which through the efforts of the present generation contribute to the future community.

A Community Framework for the Growth of the Youth

In the same way that society is enriched by the complementary qualities of the sexes, – masculinity and femininity form a complementary unit that goes to make up the embryo of social growth – one can appreciate within the heart of society, the complementary nature of the relationship between generations. From the confluence of the generations, internal growth blossoms spontaneously in the form of experiences, transmission of values, and attitudes in the face of social situations. All in all, this represents an improvement in the capacity to live together and conform a true human community.

Therefore, the community as a whole is made up of a series of sub-groups, some according to age, which in turn intersect with other sub-

groups according to sex. Each sub-group has its own experiences of a horizontal nature, which in turn acquire new characteristics at every intersection, according to their determining characters. Young boys and girls have a horizontal relationship between them, apart from their differentiation, and both, at the same time, – the youth in general – have a vertical relationship with the sub-groups of adult and the older generation, again from the perspective of their differentiation by sex.

Life at the heart of each sub-group is enriched by the relationship between its members in the constant living, participating and cooperating for their common purpose. In the same way, each sub-group, in conjunction with the others, configures the community as a whole. Each sub-group is vital to the configuration of the community in the same way that each element of the sub-group is vital to the configuration of that sub-group as a body destined to form part of the entity known as society.

Each element, regardless of the sub-group under consideration, is significant to the social education of the group, whilst the sub-group, in the first instance, and the community, in the second, are essential to the education of each single element. What we are trying to say is that, one cannot imagine a sub-group of young people isolated from the sub-group of adults or senior citizens, and nor can one imagine young people isolated without the elements necessary for the creation of their corresponding sub-group. Young people isolated as single elements would configure an empty and worthless group in terms of creating the community as a whole. In the same way, a sub-group of young people with no relationship with adult and senior citizen sub-groups would constitute a disjointed sub-group and therefore be worthless in terms of the creation of a community.

In other words, everybody needs everybody and everyone is needed by everyone. A society without young people is inconceivable and so too is a young person without young people. Their lives would present shortcomings resulting in a lack of creative harmony in the social group itself.

Therefore, it is worth considering whether, at this point in time, in the countries of Western Europe, it is possible to assure this inter-relationship between the different sub-groups that we have described or even more importantly, if it is possible to guarantee the spontaneous configuration of a sub-group of young people which, as such, is destined to be the embryo of the future society.

John Paul II issued a warning on the occasion of the centenary of the *Rerum novarum*, which cannot be ignored:

In addition to the irrational destruction of the natural environment – we already referred to –, we must also mention the more

serious destruction of the *human environment*, something which is by no means receiving the attention it deserves. Although people are rightly worried... about preserving the natural habitats of the various animal species threatened with extinction... too little effort is made to *safeguard the moral conditions for an authentic 'human ecology'*. Not only has God given the earth to man... but man too is God's gift to man...

Man receives from God his essential dignity and with it the capacity to transcend every social order so as to move towards truth and goodness. But he is also conditioned by the social structure in which he lives, by the education he has received and by his environment. These elements can either help or hinder his living in accordance with the truth...²⁴

Therefore, we shall rephrase the question: Do present-day society, the education received by the youth of today, the atmosphere in which the young person grows up, constitute the elements which will serve to facilitate living in truth and produce growth in the community? Furthermore, is the society of today sure of its future survival or is it in danger of extinction in the same way as some of the natural species?

In the function that appears in [2], a variable $(\frac{Y^{th}}{T_p})_n$ is identified which configures the sub-group youth (Y^{th}) in the community group (T_p) – total population – in the year (n), expressed in relative terms with respect to the community. Youth, considered in this manner, needs to have an entity and to carry weight in society for the purpose of two specific missions: the first being to ensure the survival of the community itself and the other being to guarantee that the sub-group as such is, and exists as, a truly young element, thereby ensuring the wealth of the horizontal interaction produced within the sub-group itself. If this were not to be the case it would signify youth in a vertical relationship with adult and senior citizen sub-groups, but with a gap in its formation that can only be filled by means of the conviviality within the specific social group to which it belongs.

In Table V and in its corresponding Figure of the appendix, one can observe the evolution of youth with respect to the total population for the different western European countries. The values contained therein cannot but remind us of the words that we have already quoted from John Paul II's

²⁴ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus* (Rome, 1 May 1991), n. 38. The expression into dash, corresponds to the author of the paper.

encyclical *Centesimus annus*, in reference to human ecology. The data in the table might cast doubt on the capacity of youth to live as such, i.e., to live in an environment with other young people with whom they can exchange experiences, opinions and contribute to the cultural development of a society under construction.

In the last ten years, the period under consideration, in all Western European countries with the exception of Denmark, the percentage of young people with respect to the total population has diminished. In some cases, such as those of Ireland, Portugal, Spain and Italy, the decrease is alarming, even if Ireland is second only to Iceland as the country with the highest percentage of young people in the year 2004. Italy, in contrast, presents the lowest percentage of young people in the same year. Taking young people as those between the ages of zero and twenty four, the value is 24.8% of the total population. Given an average life expectancy of approximately eighty years, this figure should not be less than thirty five percent of the total population.

On breaking down the figure into two age sectors, the situation becomes even more worrying. The greatest decrease is to be observed in young people from zero to fourteen years old. This means that, unless there is a change in the fertility rate in the immediate future, or one of the other parameters that we shall examine below, the values of this table for the year 2015 or 2120, present us with an aged society in which one would have to cast doubt on the capacity of youth itself to be young. In other words, we would be approaching a situation which we have previously described as the empty sub-group, in which the elements would be non-existent, at least in the social sense.

This variable $\left(\frac{Y^{\text{th}}}{T_p}\right)_n$ which acts as an independent variable in [2], is, in turn, a function of a series of variables, from which we have selected those which, in our opinion, are the most significant. Thus,

$$\left(\frac{Y^{\text{th}}}{T_p}\right)_n = f [L_{ex}, (F_r, Cc_r, Im_r)_{0 \rightarrow n}] \quad [4]$$

This is to say that the weight carried by youth in society at any given time depends upon, first of all, human life expectancy (L_{ex}), given that, in *coeteris paribus* conditions, for a determined fertility, a prolongation of life expectancy – better health conditions, better diet, better environment, etc. – supposes a reduction in the ratio of young people to the total population, unless we change the temporal variable representing the concept of ‘youth’, which here we have taken to be $(0 \rightarrow n)$, with (n) being the age in which maturity is reached and adulthood begins.

It is hardly necessary to say that life expectancy in Western European countries is in accordance with its degree of development, i.e., very high and growing for the ten-year period under consideration, 1994 to 2004. Worthy of mention in the upper limit are the cases of France and Spain, with a life expectancy for women of 83.8 years, in 2004. The lowest life expectancy in the same year and for the same sex corresponds to Denmark, at 79.9. In men, for the same year, the highest life expectancy rate belongs to Iceland, at 79.2 and the lowest to Portugal at 74.2 years.

This data is good in itself and reflects a degree of health and physical wellbeing which could not be more encouraging. This is particularly so if we look at the depressing data to be found in the developing and clearly underdeveloped countries. However, for the purposes of our study, it is necessary to examine the relationship between the data we have just outlined with the data related to the arrival of new members to the nucleus of the society to which the life expectancy figures correspond.

This is why the second variable in [4], is the fertility rate $(F_r)_{0 \rightarrow n}$. By fertility rate, we understand the average number of live children born to a woman throughout her life, taking into account fertility rates by age, in a given year. The fertility rate is what allows us to endow a population with its youngest segment, with the arrival, each year, of those actually born in the period.

From what can be deduced from Table and Figure VII, and unless the growth observed in certain countries in the last five years continues and also occurs in the remaining countries under consideration, the future of young people in the countries of Western Europe could not be more uncertain. John Paul II, in reference to the demographic problems of the developing countries in the south, affirmed that,

... in the northern hemisphere the nature of this problem is reversed: here, the cause for concern is the drop in the birthrate, with repercussions on the aging of the population, unable even to renew itself biologically.²⁵

Rates of 1.20 children per woman, such as that of Spain in 1999, cast doubt on the very survival of the population. It could be said that we worry about, and quite correctly so, the conservation of species in danger of extinction while we seem not to be worried about the decline in numbers undergone by the human race.

²⁵ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (Rome, 30 December 1987), n. 25.

The rates are very low in general, but one can observe that in the course of the ten years under consideration, the situation has improved, albeit not very significantly, in some countries, with respect to the low rates of 1994 and the even lower ones of 1999. The fertility rate has increased in Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, The Netherlands and Spain, while the negative trend has continued in the rest of the countries studied. Even so, in the year 2004, Greece is at the bottom of the table, with a rate of 1.29, followed by Spain at 1.32. The highest rate is that of Iceland at 2.03, followed by Ireland with a rate of 1.99.

In this way, we are configuring a society with few young people, living within a relatively large number of adults, old people and very old people. This reduces the degree of communication and horizontal learning which would be afforded by a young population, rich in diversity and capable of learning and being instructed in the ways and manners of conviviality and respect for such diversity.

It is worth addressing the question as to why there is such low fertility in Western European countries and indeed there are a number of reasons behind it. One of them, and perhaps the most significant is the planning of births or the desire to postpone and reduce the number of births in the family. The use of contraceptive methods, such as sterilisation, hormonal treatments, intrauterine devices, spermicides, condoms, etc. are indicative of how the selfishness of being human can act against humanity.

Worthy of our attention also is the fact that, in... the richer countries... excessive prosperity and the consumer mentality, paradoxically joined to a certain anguish and uncertainty about the future, deprive married couples of the generosity and courage needed for raising up new human life: thus life is often perceived not as a blessing, but as a danger from which to defend oneself.²⁶

Although we do not have at our disposal homogeneous data for the same years in different countries, we have decided to show in Table and Figure VIII the rate of use of contraceptive methods in the years mentioned for the countries in the study. Here we are looking at the third variable in [4], i.e., $(Cc_r)_{0 \rightarrow n}$. The rate as a percentage is calculated with respect to married women of between 15 and 45 years old, whether they themselves have used the contraceptive method or contraception has been practised by the men with whom they live.

²⁶ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (Rome, 22 November 1981), n. 6.

The highest rate is to be found in the United Kingdom, 81%, followed by Switzerland at 78% and the lowest rates correspond to Portugal and Italy, with rates of 33% and 39% respectively. It cannot be ignored that contraception signifies the voluntary restriction of the reproductive capacity of humanity itself, aside from the moral evaluation.

If both the life expectancy rate and the fertility rate contribute positively to the good of the community, and if the latter were high it would contribute decisively to the good of the youth in terms of its own process of youth formation, contraception deliberately restricts these possibilities in the same way that infant mortality does so involuntarily.

The latter, infant mortality ($Im_r)_{0 \rightarrow n}$, is the last of the variables we have studied in [4] as determinants of the weight carried by the youth within the community, given its importance in terms of the overall population. Table and Figure IX shows the infant mortality rates expressed as the number of children who die before reaching the age of one, per thousand live-born children. Obviously, as in the case with life expectancy, the rates are indicative of the degree to which countries are developed and their advances in the field of medical care.

The rates in all the countries improve during the course of the ten year period analysed, with Liechtenstein, at 2.7 per thousand having the lowest mortality rate, followed by Iceland, 2.8 per thousand. The highest mortality rates are to be found in Malta, with a rate of 5.9 per thousand, followed by the United Kingdom, 5.1 per thousand. All these figures correspond to the year 2004.

Up to this point, we have analysed the youth from the perspective of their presence in the community to which they belong. The importance of the youth, its participation in the global sphere of society in all its aspects and its capacity to enrich the community are elements of a social asset that cannot be ignored.

The Family, Pillar of the Youth

The man, the young person, is born and develops that most privileged of environments, in terms of its capacity to offer affection, the family. From the moment he is born, he is not an isolated being, but rather he belongs to the human family, and more particularly to its most restricted and specific element, the family unit. Furthermore, conception itself, the moment at which his humanity begins, is not an isolated occurrence, but rather the product of love between a man and a woman who, in their matrimonial

union, form the initial cell of the family structure. Hence, the family, above all the cohesive and structured family, with its vocation of permanence and stability, is the pillar on which the young person leans during his growth and social apprenticeship.

Therefore, the family is vital to the sustaining of the community, which bases itself on its capacity for renewal through the young generations. With good reason, it been said that:

The first and fundamental structure for 'human ecology' is the family, in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person. Here we mean the *family founded on marriage*, in which the mutual gift of self by husband and wife creates an environment in which children can be born and develop their potentialities, become aware of their dignity and prepare to face their unique and individual destiny.²⁷

This is why the variable $(F_s)_{0 \rightarrow n}$ appears in [2] as a significant variable in the configuration of the youth; in both quantitative and, above all, qualitative terms. That family constitutes the foundation on which the youth shall be constructed, the youth whose mission it is to renew society. A youth aware of its uniqueness and of the responsibility that arises from it, set within the community of which it feels a part. A youth that will channel its efforts for the good of this community, the common good. As an ally, it will have that redoubtable instrument of communion called love.

But not all families can be considered equally capable of serving as a pillar for the growth of youth. Important differences exist between the structured family aspiring to permanence and based on conjugal love and matrimonial commitment and the ephemeral family, based on whimsical or fickle opportunity, in which the union entails no responsibility and even conditions that responsibility.

The right to matrimony and procreation is an inalienable right of the human person, with its roots in his very dignity. This is why,

... it is for parents to take a thorough look at the matter and decide upon the number of their children. This is an obligation they take upon themselves, before their children already born, and before the community to which they belong – following the dictates of their

²⁷ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus* (Rome, 1 May 1991), n. 39.

own consciences informed by God's law authentically interpreted, and bolstered by their trust in Him.²⁸

In this manner, the family we refer to, which appears as an independent variable in [2], is a family in which we can see the capacity to transmit a culture of love to its sons and descendents, a family with an aptitude for sociability and education in the service of its commitment to the community, a family that is an example of gratitude and unconditional striving. This family, in turn depends on a number of variables which sustain and condition it and these variables originate within the family itself. Some of these variables endow the new family with greatness and strength but there are of course those which serve to hinder and handicap it. In this respect, we venture to offer the following function:

$$(F_S)_{0 \rightarrow n} = f [(M_r)_{0 \rightarrow n}, (Ma_\alpha)_{0 \rightarrow n}, (D_r)_{0 \rightarrow n}] \quad [5]$$

To express it in other terms, the family must serve as the support for the building of the youth, i.e., the family that is active in terms of its pro-creational task and in the transmission of culture and values, is a function of a number of variables. In this case, the variables are deliberately limited owing to their importance to the institute of matrimony, and we circumscribe them to the marriage rate, age at the time of first marriage and the divorce rate. All this takes place in the period of learning of the youth which, in our opinion, continues until he reaches adulthood, though we are well aware that learning opportunities do not cease to present themselves until the last moment of life.

From its very beginning the history of humanity passes – and will do so until the end – through the family. A man enters the family through the birth which he owes to his parents, his father and mother, and at the right moment he leaves this first environment of life and love in order to pass to a new one. By 'leaving father and mother', each one of you at the same time, in a certain sense, bears them within you; you assume the manifold inheritance that has its direct beginning and source in them and in their family. In this way too, when you leave, each one of you remains: the inheritance that you receive links you permanently with those who passed it on to you

²⁸ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio* (Rome, 26 March 1967), n. 37.

and to whom you owe so much. And the individual – he and she – will continue to pass on the same inheritance.²⁹

This 'leaving father and mother', referred to by John Paul II in his letter to the youth, incarnates the symbol of the matrimonial option as the base on which to start the building of the family from which future generations will emerge. Therefore, the first variable we meet in [5] is the marriage rate, as a reflection of the social experience to which the young person looks in order to learn and take decisions in the future.

We cannot forget, as the Council observed, that:

Since the Creator of all things has established conjugal society as the beginning and basis of human society and, by His grace, has made it a great mystery in Christ and the Church (cf. *Eph.* 5:32), the apostolate of married persons and families is of unique importance for the Church and civil society.

Christian husbands and wives are co-operators in grace and witnesses of faith for each other, their children, and all others in their household. They are the first to communicate the faith to their children and to educate them by word and example for the Christian and apostolic life. They prudently help them in the choice of their vocation and carefully promote any sacred vocation which they may discern in them.³⁰

Table and Figure X, shows the number of marriages per thousand persons and its evolution over the ten-year period from 1994 to 2004 for the different western European countries. What stands out, as a general rule, is the fall in the number of marriages during the period under consideration. This decrease, in many cases is, of two points or more, signifying a reduction of one third when compared to the rate in the year of origin (1994).

The Nordic countries offer a contrast to this trend. Denmark, in particular, has a very high rate with respect to the average as do Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden. The country with the lowest rate is Belgium with 4.10 marriages per thousand people, followed by Greece with 4.20. Countries with the highest rates are led by Cyprus with 7.20, followed by Denmark and Lichtenstein with 7.00, the figure for the latter country holding a lesser significance due to its population structure.

²⁹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dilecti amici* of pope John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of International Youth Year (Rome, 31 March 1985), n. 11.

³⁰ Second Vatican Council, *Decree on the apostolate of the laity 'Apostolicam actuositatem'* (Rome, 18 November 1965), n. 11.

In the statistics, distinction is not made between second and subsequent marriages between separated partners, and those involving partners who have not been married in any previous period. For this reason, the data could lead us to the erroneous conclusion that there is a greater marital vocation in countries where the rate is higher than in those with lower rates. Consequently, it is worth using another set of data to complement those we have just seen. Amongst this complementary data is the age at which the first marriage is entered into, given that, the late age for the first marriage does not seem coherent, even when this age tends to get higher over time, if simultaneously the country in question presents a high marriage rate or indeed this rate is growing over the period considered. It is the variable that we have called $(Ma_a)_{0 \rightarrow n}$ in [5].

Table and Figure XI give the data on the average age at the time of the first marriage in the nine-year period from 1994 to 2003: we have been unable to find data for the year 2004. Contrasting Table XI with the data in Table X, we can observe some interesting information. This is the case of Denmark, as we have mentioned previously. Remember that Denmark had the second-highest marriage rate with 7.00 per thousand people, while the average age for getting married is 30.10 for women, the second-highest, and 32.30 for men, the third-highest. The case of Sweden is similar. While the marriage rate shows an increase of almost one point, representing a rise of approximately 25%, the age at the time of entering into matrimony for the first time has gone from 30.82 years old in 1994 to 32.90 in 2003, in the case of men, and from 28.45 to 30.50 in the case of women in the same years.

From this, it can be deduced, without fear of error, that matrimony takes place at an ever later age amongst young people. This hinders, amongst other things, the birth of children, in that it reduces the period of fertility within marriage. Such a conclusion is consistent with what we found on analysing the data presented in Table VII, and again may represent a threat for the survival of humanity. Furthermore, it seems that, together with this delay in entering first time into matrimony, the first marriage is often followed by further marriages. This suggests a high level of marital failure, a fact that may be linked to marrying at a later age. Such marriages often enjoy a lesser degree of generosity and the life of the couple, already mature at the time of entering into matrimony, is dominated by an atmosphere of individualism in which sharing is considered to be unimportant.

The third variable, the number of divorces per thousand persons, a variable which complements the two previous ones and is therefore expressed as a magnitude equivalent to that of marriages, is represented in [5] as

$(D_r)_{0 \rightarrow n}$. The quantitative data appears in Table XII – graphically represented in Figure XII – and is of special interest, in that it serves to confirm the argument we have been constructing in the case of Denmark. As might have been expected, Denmark has the second-highest divorce rate, at 2.9 per thousand persons, while it also has the second-highest marriage rate, the second-highest age for women entering into matrimony for the first time and the third-highest age for men.

The case of Belgium is particularly alarming. It has a marriage rate of 4.10, the lowest of all the countries studied, the divorce rate, at 3.0, is the highest while the average age for entering into matrimony for the first time is amongst the most appropriate, 27.10 years old for women and 29.20 for men.

A spontaneous question emerges from all this data. Were these young people, who now postpone entering into marriage until they are more than thirty two years old, listening to John Paul II in 1985? What significance do those words, addressed to them in a spirit of paternal benevolence, hold for them today?

To set out on the path of the married vocation means to *learn married love* day by day, year by year: love according to soul and body, love that ‘is patient, is kind, that *does not insist on its own way...* and does not rejoice at wrong’: love that ‘rejoices in the right’, love that ‘endures all things’.

It is precisely this love that you young people need if your married future is to ‘pass the test’ of the whole of life. And precisely this test is part of the very essence of the vocation which, through marriage, you intend to include in the plan of your life.³¹

Is this really the life project desired by the youth who were with the Pope in that International Youth Year? But these late marriages, rapid divorces, the alternating of successive divorces with successive marriages, represent a scenario in which love seems to be absent. Furthermore, the fact that all this occurs during the period $(0 \rightarrow n)$, in which the formative process of the future generation takes place, seems unlikely to give rise to a better society. The reality is that young people are growing up in this atmosphere, they have not familiarised themselves with good in a truly intense manner and they are incapable of appreciating its function in the future society.

³¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Letter *Dilecti amici* of pope John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of International Youth Year (Rome, 31 March 1985), n. 10.

Education, an Instrument for Human Enrichment

Education, all education, be it that which is formally administered in educational institutions or the informal education provided by the social agents, the media and, above all, the family itself, constitutes the relevant incentive for the formation of the person, above all, as a person. In some cases it is programmed and subject to a plan designed for the purpose. In others, it comes about in a spontaneous manner through the capillarity of behaviours which reach the young person and provide the ingredient that enables he who voluntarily accepts them, to build a person of solid principles, open in character and cooperative in the mission demanded by a society that aspires to be better.

Education is represented in [2] as a process in time $(E_{0 \rightarrow n})$, a variable which, like others, is dependent on other variables. We have selected what we consider to be the most significant of those other variables. Hence:

$$E_{0 \rightarrow n} = f [(Fe)_{0 \rightarrow n}, (Se)_{0 \rightarrow n}, (Fe_{ex})_{0 \rightarrow n}, (Co_e)_{0 \rightarrow n}, (Pe_{ex})_{0 \rightarrow n}] \quad [6]$$

Amongst the variables under consideration, we begin with the one that seems most significant to us, education within the family environment $(Fe)_{0 \rightarrow n}$. These are the words of the Council:

The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children. The active presence of the father is highly beneficial to their formation. The children, especially the younger among them, need the care of their mother at home. This domestic role of hers must be safely preserved, though the legitimate social progress of women should not be underrated on that account. Children should be so educated that as adults they can follow their vocation, including a religious one, with a mature sense of responsibility and can choose their state of life; if they marry, they can thereby establish their family in favourable moral, social and economic conditions.³²

³² Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (Rome, 7 December 1965), n. 52.

And furthermore,

The family is the first and fundamental school of social living: as a community of love, it finds in self-giving the law that guides it and makes it grow. The self-giving that inspires the love of husband and wife for each other is the model and norm for the self-giving that must be practiced in the relationships between brothers and sisters and the different generations living together in the family. And the communion and sharing that are part of everyday life in the home at times of joy and at times of difficulty are the most concrete and effective pedagogy for the active, responsible and fruitful inclusion of the children in the wider horizon of society.³³

This educational task has its foundation in the vocation of the spouses. By engendering a new person who, by nature is called upon to grow in wisdom and kindness, they assume the commitment of cooperating in this destiny, of educating the child in those values which enable him to lead a fully human life and prepare him appropriately for the mission entrusted to him.

Even amid the difficulties of the work of education, difficulties which are often greater today, parents must trustingly and courageously train their children in the essential values of human life. Children must grow up with a correct attitude of freedom with regard to material goods, by adopting a simple and austere life style and being fully convinced that 'man is more precious for what he is than for what he has' (Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes*, n. 35).³⁴

Nothing impedes parents from demonstrating the experiences of love and mutual commitment as a testimony to what society needs from the children who will be called upon to practice justice and charity in the future society, sharing what they have and serving those who most need them. We are conscious that in a selfish world where only what is measurable appears to have value, the educational task, above all the transmission of spiritual values, is not easy. It is precisely because of this that it is all the more necessary and meritorious.

Alongside the family, with the family and not against it, appears the education in educational centres, in the school (*Se*)_{0→n} en [6]. This is the

³³ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation *Familiaris consortio* (Rome, 22 November 1981), n. 37.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, n. 37.

programmed education carried out in an institution chosen by the parents to enable the child to receive an education that is coherent with their criteria and aspirations and thereby ensures the optimum structure of the tripod defined as: family – school – society.

In the course of the educational process, two crucial moments stand out: the beginning and the end, and the end should be, at the very least, that which, in all the countries, corresponds to the finishing of secondary education. Table and Figure XIII shows the enrolment in schools of children at the age of four as a percentage of the total number of children of the same age. As against those countries with practically one hundred percent enrolment, one can observe others in which, principally because the system does not allow for such early induction into formal education, percentages that are in the region of forty to fifty percent.

Table and Figure XIV shows a different trend, with greater homogeneity in the data for different countries with respect to school attendance for young people of eighteen. We do observe disparities which range from the highest percentage, Sweden, with 94.5% in 2003 to the lowest, Cyprus, with 28.4% or Malta with 42.8%. Well justified efforts have clearly been made to enable more young people to have access to secondary education and finish it successfully. A more cultured population gives rise to a freer, more harmonious society with a greater capacity to adapt to the social and economic conditions at a given point in time. The alternative is rigidity, the segmentation of possibilities, inequality and ultimately, social conflict with its underlying proliferation of injustice and marginalisation.

Naturally, education means expense but such expense might better be defined as investment, given that it produces a yield for society that begins with the economic effect on the family itself: something that might be described as, family educational expenses. This expense starts with the relinquishing of the income that could be earned if children of a school-going age worked. We would define this as the opportunity cost of education. The situation is dramatic in poor countries, where they find themselves obliged to obtain a wage from children at a very early stage. The educational institution is abandoned at a tender age, in those cases where children actually start.

To this opportunity cost, one has to add the direct cost of the education, even in the case of subsidised education, which represents an important aid to the educational process in terms of the means available. It often contributes to a broadening of the framework of education to include activities and subjects not included in the curriculum. This, in all

probability, is very beneficial, in terms of the human formation of the child or youth, and in certain cases decisive for the professional, family and social future of the school-going child. It is true, for instance, in the case of language learning, so important in our global world and in the need to discover, encourage and cultivate specific abilities, which make the young person better qualified for a complex professional environment, both in terms of knowledge acquired and in capacity for self-development, etc. All this is represented in the variable $(Fe_{ex})_{0 \rightarrow n}$, in [6], as outlined in Table XV and its representation in Figure XV.

It is quite true that European countries, including those of Western Europe, have a long tradition of free education, subsidised by the public sector. However, the data from this table shows us children and young people educated free of charge, with a negligible effort on the part of the families. Observe that the data is related to households consumption expenses, rather than family income. Therefore, when it is said that expenditure on education amounts to 0.1% of domestic consumption expenses in Sweden, it means of necessity, that the parents make no other commitment in terms of education. The only sacrifices are those of choosing a school, with complete freedom one supposes since if this were not the case, things would be far worse, and voting for the representatives of the public bodies responsible for educational regulation.

We are convinced that any attention paid to the superfluous desires of the child or youth would result in a cost far superior to the 2.9% of domestic consumption expenses devoted to education in Cyprus, which is the highest percentage of family educational expenses with respect to total household consumption expenses amongst the countries analysed. It is surprising that while claims are constantly being made for greater public spending on education, something to which we do not object in the least, private spending is so restricted. Increased private spending would serve to complement public spending and both would be to the benefit of the school-going child.

Another source of education for the youth is society itself with its abundant information sources, the media and the great number of practices that require underlying criteria and behaviours in the face of day to day decisions. This is represented in [6], by the variable $(Co_e)_{0 \rightarrow n}$.

Society also has structures and institutions which, in a formal way, produces messages of a pro-cultural or anti-cultural nature. These messages are launched in such an efficient manner as to penetrate the child or young person with lasting effects, both beneficial and detrimental.

The media, the printed press, in its printed paper and online forms, the audiovisual media, radio and television, the latter two above all, capture the attention of young people in a very significant way, and their messages leave such an efficient influence that education in the family and at school finds it difficult to compensate.

In more than a few Western European countries, the media, instead of informing in a truthful way, which is the primary social function of any media, is subject to political ideologies or economic interests, thereby surrendering, albeit deliberately, its freedom and neglecting its duty. Facts are frequently altered to create interpretations that serve vested interests. These interpretations manipulate those who receive them and form a society driven by opinion and, even more so, by information.

The dividing line between opinion and information is ever more subtle or, we might even venture to say, more confusing. The former has invaded the clearly defined territory which should be the domain of the latter. Given these arguments, bearing in mind the hours that children and young people spend before television screens or tuned into the radio, and the attraction both hold for the youth, far greater than that of reading or constructive conversation, one can only point to the influential capacity of such media in the formation of new generations. A capacity which is growing all the while, thereby reducing the space which originally was the domain of school and family.

To this we must add, new communication and information technologies. Indiscriminate access to the resources of internet, which although extremely valuable on many occasions, offering necessary information in a convenient way, information which might otherwise be difficult or impossible to acquire, it can be an extremely dangerous weapon in terms of vice and perversion. To allege that the regulation of these areas is a restriction of liberty simply demonstrates how freedom can be misinterpreted.

We are not saying that the media of today has not signified a great advance in terms of acquiring information, information that, was restricted in times gone by, if only because of its cost. Our argument is that this media, totally bereft of control, can be detrimental for the society it aims to serve. It will be said, and rightly so, that the control of which we speak should be exercised by the family itself and that the family should decide what is and what is not desirable for the child. It is, however, no less true to make the observation that young people easily escape this control, be it because parents are more committed to other tasks than to education, or that they do not have sufficient knowledge at their disposal to make the control effective.

But if one defends the argument that education is a social good, if the future of society depends upon it, if that future is related to formation or the educational process of the youth of today, then it seems clear that society cannot close its eyes to these cultural inflows which are constantly inoculating cultural germs and moulding the personality of the youth.

In this cultural process, society is also the responsible for education. It is the social atmosphere; it is the concept of good and evil which must be socially demonstrated in the form of conformity or rejection; it is the entire set of values which must govern a harmonious and fraternal society, with a transcendental sense of the human being, of his dignity and within it, his freedom; it is the work of the institutions and those who govern them; it is, definitively, the action of relevant persons, of those who have the functions of government, representation, administration, etc., in both public and private sectors; all of these are mirrors into which the youth looks and assumes their behaviour as being in accordance with the common good, or at very least 'normal'.

It is this cultural humus, the configuration of which involves us all, that impregnates the youth, endowing it with a way of seeing the world, of understanding it, of finding a space for its peers, for its own family, of acting in accordance with an objective that might be fraternal, presided over by love or selfish, in which the space that corresponds to each person is disputed. The latter ultimately imposes its own law: that might is right. Therefore, when the culture provided by society itself is one of selfishness and destructive competition, protests about the violence of the strongest against the weakest are inadmissible, as are those about the violence of the economically powerful against those who lack even the most basic goods.

The voice of John Paul II leads us to the following reflection:

In a society shaken and split by tensions and conflicts caused by the violent clash of various kinds of individualism and selfishness, children must be enriched not only with a sense of true justice, which alone leads to respect for the personal dignity of each individual, but also and more powerfully by a sense of true love, understood as sincere solicitude and disinterested service with regard to others, especially the poorest and those in most need.³⁵

These are the reasons why society must involve itself in the educational process and assume responsibility for the tasks implied by said involvement.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, n. 37.

Society, far from phariseisms, should establish the axiology governing its own construction and as part of this, it should value what is of priority and relegate what is incidental or contingent. Only in this way, can a path of improvement be embarked upon, beginning with the youth. In recognition of the importance of the function of all educational processes, it is essential to devote all the resources necessary to the achievement of this aim.

This said, allow us to finish the analysis of this function of education, by making reference to the last one of the variables in [6] which refers to public spending in the education of students. We are, therefore speaking of what we call formal education in the school, i.e., $(Pe_{ex})_{0 \rightarrow n}$. Thus the data is represented in Table and Figure XVI, and is expressed as a percentage of the expenditure per student, full time equivalent, with respect to gross domestic product per capita. The data here shows the expenditure per student in the educational system, including all types of institutions, as part of the gross domestic product which, ideally, should be attributed to said student.

From the table, a certain stability in the data can be observed in the sense that spending per student in absolute terms grows at the same rate as the gross domestic product per inhabitant, assuming that the total population and the student population are stable. Despite this trend, which would serve to demonstrate the rigidity of public spending in the different budgetary areas, one can highlight notable increases in a one-year period in Iceland, from 26.6% to 29.1%, Portugal, from 25.8% to 29.6, Belgium, 23.0% to 26.4% and, to a lesser degree, Sweden, from 26.0% to 28.1%.

The highest percentage devoted to education is in Cyprus, with 30.3%, followed by Portugal, with 29.8%, Austria, with 29.4%. The lowest percentages are to be found in Ireland, 17.3%, followed by Greece, 21.3%, and Malta, 22.1%.

The Family with Respect to the Public Sector

From what we have said so far, it is obvious that the family is the essential nucleus in the configuration of society. This is true, both in terms of the sustenance and survival of society in the biological sense and in its role with respect to the achievement of a better society through the education of children and the implantation of values in the community. This fact, certifiable by any analyst or observer, cannot and must not go unnoticed by the public sector (the state and the public administration), whose legitimacy depends on the achievement of the common good for society. This is the attention that the public authorities should offer to families and the chil-

dren and young people who make up those families. This is what leads us to include the very last of the variables considered ($S_B)_n$ in [2].

It is true that the family precedes the State and therefore cannot be constrained by it, but it is also true that the family serves the public task insofar as this serves the common good. Therefore, as John Paul II correctly pointed out,

...The family and society have complementary functions in defending and fostering the good of each and every human being. But society—more specifically the State—must recognize that “the family is a society in its own original right” (Second Vatican Council, Declaration on religious freedom *Dignitatis humanae*, n. 5) and so society is under a grave obligation in its relations with the family to adhere to the principle of subsidiarity.³⁶

This principle of subsidiarity implies the recognition of the family as master of its own development and it does not authorise the State to assume the functions of the family or to take ownership of the family itself. The State can only exercise this role in the absence of family activity. Therefore, the State, in recognition of this principle, should return to the family a part of the tax it pays, so that it can properly carry out its functions. Today, we are concerned particularly with subsidies aimed at the family in order to enable it to govern its own integrity and that of its children and attend to the necessities of the children in terms of the personal development required by society.

No less important is the situation when the youth population is no longer young and, transformed in an adult population (year n), has to realise its vocation, a vocation which encompasses a model of life. The impediments to this, as a consequence of a family policy that ignores the importance of the family, in itself and in terms of the community, must be addressed by the State. It must change its policy to a pro-family policy so that the deeply rooted values to be found within the family are sown and take root in future generations.

Table an Figure XVII shows us the social benefits to family and children expressed as a percentage of the total social benefits. In our opinion, it represents the support that the public sector offers to the family, in terms of its constitution, and in terms of child support, so that, along with the joy of having children and thereby enriching humanity, the economic cost of rais-

³⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 45.

ing and developing them will not be a cause of their being less wanted in a family or a society that will find in them the key to its future.

The way in which this aid is awarded differs greatly from country to country. In some countries, direct aid in the form of monetary subsidies is prevalent, while in others, such subsidies are paid in kind through the provision of those goods directly related to the child or the youth in the family environment. In other countries, they are particularly aimed at aspects which favour the formation of new families, such as housing plans for those who decide to form a family. Lastly, in more than a few countries, these benefits are implemented through fiscal credits or deductions in personal taxation. This is carried out on the form diverse taxation policies with respect to the personal income tax, etc.

Though all this aid is important in the economic sense, it is perhaps even more important in social terms because it engenders a culture in the society with respect to what is of priority in terms of the society itself and its survival. On observing these declarations of principles, the youth, above all, gain a sense of what is good and what is preferential, and they are encouraged to follow this path themselves, inspired by the fact that the community also thinks in this way. What can never be considered as aid is any instrument used for the evasion of responsibilities or to provide the confidence that, without any effort, the public sector will provide the solution to problems. Much less, when the legislative bodies, either the Parliament or the Government, promote confusion, in their decisions, for the family institution. The Council declared that:

Family and social services, especially those that provide for culture and education, should be further promoted. When all these things are being organized, vigilance is necessary to prevent the citizens from being led into a certain inactivity *vis-a-vis* society or from rejecting the burden of taking up office or from refusing to serve.³⁷

Going one step further, it is worth considering what weighting these social benefits should have with respect to total social spending. We are not unaware of the fact that there are unavoidable objectives which must be attended to with sufficient resources, but apart from these, one can hardly think of an objective more worthy of protection than that of aid to the family. The scant attention paid to these objectives in some of the countries we studied is sur-

³⁷ Second Vatican Council, Pastoral Constitution *Gaudium et spes* (Rome, 7 December 1965), n. 69.

prising. This is the case of Spain, the country that offers least aid to families, with a derisory 3.0%, followed by Italy with 4.1%. In third place comes the Netherlands with 4.9%. At the other end of the scale, Luxembourg offers greatest aid to the family, with 17.7% of total social benefits. Next comes Ireland with 16%, followed by Iceland in third place with 13.6%.

The enormous disparity of the data for the different countries shows the different degrees of sensibility with respect to the social functions entrusted as a duty to the public sector. If we also consider the visibility of the different subsidies, according to the method chosen for their implementation, and the different effects produced by them precisely because of their visibility, in addition to their amount, this sense of lack of protection that exists in some countries of Europe is not surprising. It materialises in an apparent disinterest in conjugal life, in the creation of the new family and in its enrichment through the presence of children.

The Solidarity Needed with Children and Young People

It is obvious from what we have been saying, that the young people of western Europe, with the exception of the pockets of poverty that constitute this fourth world of which John Paul II spoke, are economically endowed with goods that go beyond the satisfaction of needs and can, therefore, often be placed in the category of superfluous.

Therefore, it seems that the youth of Europe do not require a solidarity expressed in economic terms but rather a solidarity that helps them to escape from the vacuum of their existence, giving human content to a life called to greatness but mis-spent on matters of lesser importance. We have before us, and it is not our wish to fall into sterile lamentations and foolish alarmism, such poor young people that the only thing they have is economic means, and economic means in abundance.

They are young people who constitute niches in society, young people who live in isolation, without the unifying elements of commitment and affection. They are extravagant elements in a society that fails to recognise them, that does not take them into account and is not taken into account by them. This leads to the question that the adult generations must ask themselves. What does solidarity with these young people demand of us? What model of solidarity is required? There is a peculiar element that has a bearing on these questions. The poor know that they are poor and are conscious of what they need, but most young people are not conscious of their emptiness, of their sterility in terms of life in community, of their

poverty in terms of the building of a better society. These shortcomings will only be appreciated when they reach adulthood, when it is already too late. To what degree are we responsible?

John Paul II said:

In order to overcome today's widespread individualistic mentality, what is required is *a concrete commitment to solidarity and charity*, beginning in the family with the mutual support of husband and wife and the care which the different generations give to one another. In this sense the family too can be called a community of... solidarity.³⁸

So much so that if the principle of solidarity is already bankrupt within the family, we can hardly expect it to be applied by the community. It seems apparent, that those who close their eyes and hearts to those closest to them, will have greater reason to keep them closed to people not personally known to them. This is even truer when, as in this case, we do not speak of a solidarity that takes the form of providing material goods, but rather a social commitment which brings us nearer to others in order to eliminate the deficits they present as human persons, as social and, therefore, social beings, and as elements of a community. This solidarity is all-consuming, not in terms of our economy or the material goods we have at our disposal, but rather in our personal attitude, in our time, in our preoccupation, in our knowledge and in its transmission. This aspect of solidarity makes great demands in terms of dedication, generosity, sacrifice...

In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. One's neighbour is then not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. One's neighbour must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person's sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: to lay down one's life for the brethren (cf. *1 Jn* 3:16 and *Jn* 15,13).³⁹

And when we contemplate the community of men and women, ultimately when we feel the human family in its profoundest anthropological sense,

³⁸ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Centesimus annus* (Rome, 1 May 1991), n. 49.

³⁹ John Paul II, Encyclical Letter *Sollicitudo rei socialis* (Rome, 30 December 1987), n. 40.

we are all committed to everybody and therefore, nobody can be indifferent to anybody.

This is the community of interdependency in terms of relationships of which the Social Doctrine of the Church speaks:

... It is above all a question of interdependence, sensed as a system determining relationships in the contemporary world, in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, and accepted as a moral category. When interdependence becomes recognized in this way, the correlative response as a moral and social attitude, as a 'virtue', is solidarity. This then is not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.⁴⁰

The firm and enduring determination to commit oneself, is the attitude that characterises and emphasises, in the most privileged manner, the virtue of solidarity. This is the solidarity needed by young people in Europe today, at a time when, unlike in other eras, they are surrounded by an abundance of economic goods that results in an understandable scarcity of moral goods. At the end of the day, what is at stake is the common good that can only be achieved when we all truly assume responsibility for everyone. John Paul II has said, '... solidarity between generations was a natural family attitude; it also was a duty of the community'.⁴¹ And let us not forget that this solidarity encompasses all that refers to the human person, everything that makes him more human, more social and enriches his sense of community. Because we concentrate on the need for food, clothing and entertainment, along with the still vainer need to accumulate wealth and power, and because we become obsessed with the ephemeral, we often forget spiritual needs and those of an immaterial order.

Adult society is also a prisoner of the obsession with quantifying and measuring. Hence, for the adults of today, or at least for the great majority of them, in the theoretical sphere, and an even greater majority in the practical sense, what cannot be weighed and measured, simply does not exist. The only balance sheet we show of our lives is that which responds to the *how much* and not to the *what*.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 38.

⁴¹ John Paul II, *Address of John Paul II to the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences* (Vatican, 11 April 2002), n. 3.

The youth of today is asking something different of us. We ourselves feel the need to escape from the world of contradiction in which we are immersed. When, in the preceding paragraph we distinguished between theoretical and practical plans, we were referring to the enormous contradiction of many people who, while in theory defending principles of a supra-natural order, lead their lives on a purely material plane, as if the immaterial and, even more, the spiritual, were nothing but a pipe dream or an illusion.

Pope Benedict XVI, could not have been more emphatic when he addressed the youth of the world:

In vast areas of the world today there is a strange forgetfulness of God. It seems as if everything would be just the same even without him. But at the same time there is a feeling of frustration, a sense of dissatisfaction with everyone and everything.

People tend to exclaim: 'This cannot be what life is about!'. Indeed not. And so, together with forgetfulness of God there is a kind of new explosion of religion. I have no wish to discredit all the manifestations of this phenomenon. There may be sincere joy in the discovery. But to tell the truth, religion often becomes almost a consumer product. People choose what they like, and some are even able to make a profit from it. But religion sought on a 'do-it-yourself' basis cannot ultimately help us. It may be comfortable, but at times of crisis we are left to ourselves. Help people to discover the true star which points out the way to us: Jesus Christ!⁴²

This aim cannot leave us indifferent, and we suppose that the youth congregated in Cologne were not left indifferent by it either. It demands a response from us. We have to repeat in our homes and in all the places to which we have access through our respective functions in society, what some young people have heard time and time again in the Pontifical Messages. John Paul II told them:

There is a widespread culture of the ephemeral that only attaches value to whatever is pleasing or beautiful, and it would like us to believe that it is necessary to remove the cross in order to be happy. The ideal presented is one of instant success, a fast career, sexuality

⁴² Benedict XVI, Homily of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in the Eucharistic Celebration with the occasion of the XX World Youth Day (Cologne – Marienfeld, Sunday, 21 August 2005), paras. 5-7.

separated from any sense of responsibility, and ultimately, an existence centred on self affirmation, often bereft of respect for others. Open your eyes and observe well, my dear young people: this is not the road that leads to true life, but it is the path that sinks into death.⁴³

It is the summary and the conclusion of what we have called frustration. A search from the path to nowhere. Four years later, Benedict XVI would say to them: 'Absolutizing what is not absolute but relative is called totalitarianism. It does not liberate man, but takes away his dignity and enslaves him'.⁴⁴ As adults, we have to direct all our efforts to this aspect of solidarity which commits us to helping young people to distinguish between the permanent and the transitory, the substantial and the incidental, the causes that ennoble and dignify and those that humiliate and denigrate. This is our pedagogical commitment, so that the youth can start out on the different roads of life, so that they contribute to the betterment of society, so that they lead a fuller life, with greater meaning and with the security that comes from looking steadfastly to the transcendental.

Throughout the different variables that we have been analysing, as the ingredients that go to shape the youth, we have been in a position to appreciate the mistake of applying value to those things that are worthless. We must return to the beginnings, which always leads to the same question: who serves who? We must show the young people, with examples and testimony, the real scope of what pertains to the economy and where its boundaries end. We must clearly show that the economy, however important it may seem, is nothing more than a means at the service of man and his legitimate needs. We must show that austerity is a virtue while excessive consumption and waste is a vice that humiliates and clouds the true meaning of human life. We must show that spiritual values enrich and ennoble and must therefore be spread tirelessly and enthusiastically, through education and testimony, to those who are close to us and also to those who are not.

Generosity and commitment are vital to the construction of a society based on fraternity and solidarity. On the contrary, aggression, competitiveness without limits, selfishness, and exploitation of what is ours and

⁴³ John Paul II, Message of the Holy Father John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of the XVI World Youth Day (Vatican, 14 February 2001), n. 6.

⁴⁴ Benedict XVI, Address of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in the Youth Vigil on the occasion of the XX World Youth Day (Cologne – Marienfeld, Saturday, 20 August 2005), para. 21.

what belongs to others, generates a violent society that leaves no space for the human being. John Paul II told the youth that,

There is no place in your lives for selfishness or laziness. Now more than ever it is crucial that you be 'watchers of the dawn', the look-outs who announce the light of dawn and the new springtime of the Gospel of which the buds can already be seen. Humanity is in urgent need of the witness of free and courageous young people who dare to go against the tide and proclaim with vigour and enthusiasm their personal faith in God, Lord and Saviour.⁴⁵

We already know that the world is full of offers leading to an easy life, a life without commitment, a life without a future and it is here that we have the greatest opportunity to affirm our true convictions. It is precisely in going against what is widely accepted, that companionship and testimony is of greatest importance to the youth. To go against the flow means that, in a world of comfort, moderation, both in terms of use and in terms of habit, is practiced in the family environment. It means, in an almost totally utilitarian world, defending an education based on selflessness and solidarity. It means that, in a world where education is limited to the statistical data on school attendance, we adults must question ourselves about education and defend to the last an education in spiritual values, an education in which every student, as an objective of the educational process, is enriched as a person and sees himself as the nucleus of the community to which he belongs, starting with the family.

As citizens, parents and adult members of a community, *ad intra* and *ad extra* we must be demanding in terms of what is just, of what is human and of what is good for the community. We must be demanding of ourselves and of society in terms of the search for good, the good of each and every person, the common good of the community, and ultimately the common good of humanity. While any person is in need, be it materially or spiritually, we must not lose hope. On the contrary we must sow the seed to provide abundance for all and especially for those most in need.

Because of our position, our experience of life and above all our vocation, we must recognise the preoccupation of youth which moves them towards the highest ideals. We must accept their lack of conformity with injustice, with ineffectiveness and with phariseisms and we must direct all

⁴⁵ John Paul II, Message of the Holy Father John Paul II for the 18th World Youth Day, 13 April 2003 (Vatican, 8 March 2003), n. 6.

that energy so that they can satiate their legitimate aspirations and achieve a better society through social reform.

We cannot be amongst those who disappoint. Instead, we must be amongst those who accept the preoccupation and have the strength to act. John Paul II expressed his thoughts on this matter in the following terms:

It is the nature of human beings, and especially youth, to seek the Absolute, the meaning and fullness of life. Dear young people, do not be content with anything less than the highest ideals! Do not let yourselves be dispirited by those who are disillusioned with life and have grown deaf to the deepest and most authentic desires of their heart. You are right to be disappointed with hollow entertainment and passing fads, and with aiming at too little in life. If you have an ardent desire for the Lord you will steer clear of the mediocrity and conformism so widespread in our society.⁴⁶

This is the true understanding of youth and its potential. Our solidarity must be aimed in this direction. It must be a solidarity which awakens and not one which anaesthetises. It should open the path to knowledge of what is substantial. It should focus on the distinction between what is permanent and what is transitory, what is material and what is spiritual. It should be a solidarity that gives the youth security in its ideals and hope with respect to the final result of its aspirations.

Conclusions for a Task

It is opportune to remind ourselves at this point of the words of His Holiness Pope Paul VI:

Human society is sorely ill. The cause is not so much the depletion of natural resources, nor their monopolistic control by a privileged few; it is rather the weakening of brotherly ties between individuals and nations.⁴⁷

And our solidarity should be aimed precisely at curing this illness. What Paul VI says of the world is even more accentuated in the countries of Western Europe, countries where abundance has led to a selfishness unheard of at any other time in history. We have so much, that life is lived

⁴⁶ John Paul II, Message of the Holy Father John Paul II to the youth of the world on the occasion of the XVII World Youth Day, Toronto 18-28 July 2002 (Castel Gandolfo, 25 July 2001), n. 2.

⁴⁷ Paul VI, Encyclical Letter *Populorum progressio* (Rome, 26 March 1969), n. 66.

as if others, even those closest to us, do not exist. Less consideration still is given to the poor and the marginalised.

In the words of John XXIII:

It pains Us, therefore, to observe the complete indifference to the true hierarchy of values shown by so many people in the economically developed countries. Spiritual values are ignored, forgotten or denied, while the progress of science, technology and economics is pursued for its own sake, as though material well-being were the be-all and end-all of life.⁴⁸

When poverty is spoken of, responsibility is eluded with the argument that we pay our taxes and therefore, the responsibility of combating necessity lies with the State and the public administration. The eloquent text of John XXIII is forgotten:

In recent years the State and other agencies of public law have extended, and are continuing to extend... tragic situations and urgent problems of an intimate and personal nature are continually arising which the State with all its machinery is unable to remedy or assist. There will always remain, therefore, a vast field for the exercise of human sympathy and the Christian charity of individuals. We would observe, finally, that the efforts of individuals, or of groups of private citizens, are definitely more effective in promoting spiritual values than is the activity of public authority.⁴⁹

In addition, when education is spoken of, and what kind of education, we consider ourselves to be exonerated by the fact that we are paying for a school, perhaps an expensive school, thereby abrogating a right that can only correspond to parents. However, when it comes to the selection of a vocation, it is the economic aspect that awakens the sense of paternity or maternity and leads to directing the young person towards those studies and vocations which offer greatest economic benefit. Humanistic studies are avoided and preference is given to those of a technical nature, economics or experimental science, thereby reducing to an alarming degree the horizons of the young person with respect to his future.

In this culture, a culture of convenience and productivity, rather than a culture of what is good, pleasure seems to be the unique destiny governing all action. The activity, the decision related to what to do and how to do it,

⁴⁸ John XXIII, Encyclical Letter *Mater et magistra* (Rome, 15 May 1961), n. 176.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 120.

is subordinated to short-term gain. Anything standing in the way of this objective is simply removed or marginalised. An alarming example of this attitude is the decision to abort in the face of unwanted pregnancy. The forty five million crimes committed every year in the world, in which the passive subject is an unborn child, show the negligible value that life holds for a large part of the population. Meanwhile, this same population incessantly seeks a more comfortable life, with a greater abundance of material luxuries and an almost total absence of spiritual goods. And all the while, young people are growing up with this education provided by the actions of the adults whose duty it is to educate them. Can we really expect a different society, given the propositions we are offering? What can the society of today and above all, the family, do to improve such a negative environment?

What do families think of the appeal of the Popes to the youth and the references they offer to the young? Let us analyse attentively the words of Pope Benedict XVI to the young people of the Netherlands:

Dear friends, as I said to you above, if you follow Jesus, you will never feel lonely because you are part of the Church, which is a great family in which you can grow in true friendship with so many brothers and sisters in the faith scattered in every part of the world. Jesus needs you to 'renew' contemporary society. Take care to grow in the knowledge of the faith in order to be its authentic witnesses... And truly impelled by his truth and love, you will be able, together with other young people who are seeking the true meaning of life, to build a better future for all.⁵⁰

In this offering of the Church as a big family, is the Pope not highlighting the weakness of the families of so many young people who cannot find within them the companionship and the light necessary for confronting the challenge of authenticity that faces them in their lives?

The renewal of society is the great challenge facing the young and its roots can be found in the rejection of the present situation. Shortly afterwards, the Pope himself promised his proximity and his companionship on this path of ideals along which their faith in Christ leads them.

... I am close to you with my prayers. May you generously accept the call of the Lord, who holds up to you great ideals that can make your lives beautiful and full of joy. You can be certain of it: only by

⁵⁰ Benedict XVI, Message of His Holiness Benedict XVI for the First National Day of Young Catholics of the Netherlands (Vatican, 21 November 2005), paras. 12-14.

responding positively to his appeal, however demanding it may seem to you, is it possible to find happiness and peace of heart.⁵¹

Do our young people find similar companionship within their family environment? Companionship not only gives security but also prevents isolation and the anxiety that can occur in moments when succumbing to temptation seems the most acceptable solution.

This thirst for transformation is immanent in man but it is more open in the young person. It is a transformation which, because it is based on love, is capable of transforming desperation into hope, death into life, pain into satisfaction, violence into peace. Pope Benedict XVI, taking the crucifixion and its liberating capacities as a reference, addressed the young people gathered in Cologne in the following terms:

What on the outside is simply brutal violence – the Crucifixion – from within becomes an act of total self-giving love. This is the substantial transformation which was accomplished at the Last Supper and was destined to set in motion a series of transformations leading ultimately to the transformation of the world when God will be all in all (cf. *1 Cor* 15:28). In their hearts, people always and everywhere have somehow expected a change, a transformation of the world. Here now is the central act of transformation that alone can truly renew the world: violence is transformed into love, and death into life.

Since this act transmutes death into love, death as such is already conquered from within, the Resurrection is already present in it. Death is, so to speak, mortally wounded, so that it can no longer have the last word.⁵²

This is the transformation that can satiate our young people and motivate them to act in the course of a pilgrimage which starts by looking at the task to be carried out. Without becoming discouraged, they firmly place their hope in the achievement of the proposed objective, with all the strength they can find in their hearts and their commitment to others.

This path of plenitude is scattered with obstacles which, owing to the social environment in which we live and the ephemeral values for which we live, often appear to be insurmountable. This is why the young person needs the adult, someone to hold on to, to find support in, and to show him

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, para. 15.

⁵² Benedict XVI, Homily of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI in the Eucharistic Celebration with the occasion of the XX World Youth Day (Cologne – Marienfeld, Sunday, 21 August 2005), paras. 25-29.

the light, a light which is none other than the faith. He needs an adult in whom to confide, sure in the knowledge that he will not be failed and he also needs to receive companionship and understanding from that adult. It is a long road, the task is not an easy one but our solidarity with these young people can help to overcome any obstacle and ease the social burden which they will almost certainly have to carry.

Will the world of adults fix its gaze elsewhere, when the voice of youth is raised to plead for solidarity? Will we adopt the attitude of the priest and the Levite when the young person requires Samaritans?⁵³

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⁵³ *Vide Lk*, 10, 30-36.

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EDUCARE: ASPETTO FONDAMENTALE DELLA SOLIDARIETÀ CON BAMBINI E GIOVANI

VITTORIO POSSENTI

Introduzione

Se consideriamo i principali indicatori socioeconomici e sanitari (reddito pro capite, prodotto interno lordo, mortalità infantile, aumento della speranza di vita, accesso all'istruzione scolastica, indice di povertà, tasso di disoccupazione, lavoro dei minori, tutela della salute, ecc) la situazione dei paesi dell'Europa centrooccidentale presenta più luci che ombre, in specie in rapporto ad altri Paesi e regioni del globo meno fortunati. Ciò può essere un indizio che nel valutare la loro situazione complessiva occorra guardare anche in altre direzioni, quelle concernenti gli stili di vita e gli atteggiamenti fondamentali dinanzi all'esistenza. In Europa occidentale non abbiamo conosciuto come nell'Est europeo i guasti morali e sociali provocati dal comunismo, ma specifiche difficoltà legate al consumismo, al liberatarismo e alla vuotezza spirituale. Essi hanno avviato su dubbie strade la questione della vita e della famiglia: nell'opinione di molti viene prima la autorealizzazione, in specie nel lavoro, che il desiderio di fondare una famiglia e di procreare. A questi temi si collega il declino demografico con la stanchezza vitale che sembra essergli congiunta, e l'affievolirsi della tradizione in rapporto al crescere di un senso individualistico della libertà: l'orientamento generale è verso se stessi, mentre il senso dell'alterità e della comunità sembra indebolito.

Quasi scontato rilevare il peso decisivo della posizione liberale nelle nostre società, certo democratiche quanto alla forma politica, ma fortemente segnate dall'idea liberale, che punta quasi esclusivamente sull'individuo. Individualismo esacerbato e solidarietà non possono valere come armonici compagni di strada. I rapporti con gli altri sono spesso mediati da una contrattazione continua in funzione di reciproci interessi in un negoziato permanente: stiamo entrando in un'età caratterizzata dal primato del

contratto e dall'eclissi della solidarietà. L'etica utilitaristica che di norma accompagna la figura del contratto in genere ignora la solidarietà.

Bisogna riprendere ad educare, dentro e fuori la famiglia, la cui capacità educativa è in diminuzione, sebbene non possano esserle addossate eccessive responsabilità. Non di rado l'avvenire di un giovane è determinato più dal gruppo in cui capita che dall'influsso della famiglia, sebbene talvolta quest'ultimo rimanga nello sfondo e dopo vario tempo riemerge.

Nel mio commento al ricco contributo del prof. Raga che spazia in molti campi importanti, mi limiterò ad alcune considerazioni vertenti su: A) la *spinta declinante a procreare* e B) l'*educazione* quale espressione indelegabile della solidarietà coi bambini e giovani (in questa sezione è inserita una digressione sull'educazione alta).

A) STANCHEZZA VITALE E PROIEZIONE VERSO IL FUTURO

Il rapporto Raga osserva che negli ultimi dieci anni in tutti i paesi occidentali, con l'eccezione della Danimarca, la percentuale di giovani sul totale della popolazione è diminuita: si tratta di un aspetto fondamentale dello "svanire della gioventù" su cui ci soffermiamo.

A1) Rispetto al passato culture e stili di vita in Europa occidentale sono centrati maggiormente sull'adulto che sul bambino o il giovane. Una situazione che si alimenta del fatto che di bambini ne sono nati sempre meno a partire all'incirca dal 1970, sebbene qualche piccolo segnale di inversione di tendenza si stia verificando anche nei Paesi, tra cui l'Italia, che hanno subito un processo drammatico di diminuzione delle nascite: vedi tabella VII del rapporto.¹

¹ Il tema dell'attuale Plenaria come di quella del 2004 fa perno sull'assunto che gli intensi cambiamenti demografici stiano mutando i rapporti tra le generazioni: i popoli delle nazioni sviluppate come di quelle in via di sviluppo (un eufemismo in molti casi) stanno invecchiando, ma in maniera molto diversa perché i tassi di natalità, bassi in larga parte dell'occidente e forse in specie in Italia e Spagna, non lo sono in Africa, Asia, America latina. Con l'allungamento della speranza di vita, la questione della sovrappopolazione non può essere evitata nella sua globalità: essa non si presenta in Europa, che anzi è incamminata verso il declino demografico ed ha urgente bisogno di una rinascita demografica, ma è seria in quasi tutti gli altri contesti. Nel suo rapporto l'Accademica Mina M. Ramirez scrive: "Asian countries struggle with high population growth rates, chronic poverty, inadequate health care, largely underemployed work force and rapid degradation of the environment".

Uno slancio vitale declinante finisce per compromettere la proiezione verso il futuro. Non dobbiamo riscontrare una considerevole stanchezza spirituale e perfino vitale e demografica degli europei? Forse non sappiamo più guardare avanti, e il futuro crea in noi più timore che fiducia: sembriamo privi di tensione verso il domani, affaticati forse per un eccesso di storia. Abbiamo la sensazione di una società vecchia, che osa meno e si rinchioda, e talvolta rischia la paralisi demografica. La gioia così naturale di avere figli, di rispecchiarsi e proiettarsi in loro, di essere padri e madri, è alquanto debole nei nostri paesi. Il declino demografico è una spia di quanto accade in profondità nell'uomo: il soggetto, dotato di molti beni materiali, appare come smarrito nella ricerca di se stesso e di scopi. Si comincia a chiedere se non siamo entrati in una zona d'ombra e di confusione su noi stessi, che potrebbe preludere ad una fase calante, nonostante la potenza economica e politica dell'Europa.

Di temi simili ha parlato nel 2004 il card. Ratzinger, scrivendo: "con la vittoria del mondo tecnico-secolare posteuropeo, con l'universalizzazione del suo modello di vita e della sua maniera di pensare, si collega in tutto il mondo, ma specialmente nei mondi non-europei dell'Asia e dell'Africa, l'impressione che il mondo di valori dell'Europa, la sua cultura e la sua fede, ciò su cui si basa la sua identità, sia giunto alla fine e sia propriamente già uscito di scena; che adesso sia giunta l'ora dei sistemi di valori di altri mondi, dell'America pre-colombiana, dell'Islam, della mistica asiatica. A questo interiore venir meno delle forze spirituali portanti corrisponde il fatto che anche etnicamente l'Europa appare sulla via del congedo. C'è una strana mancanza di voglia di futuro. I figli, che sono il futuro, vengono visti come una minaccia per il presente; essi ci portano via qualcosa della nostra vita, così si pensa. Essi non vengono sentiti come una speranza, bensì come un limite del presente. Il confronto con l'Impero romano al tramonto si impone: esso funzionava ancora come una grande cornice storica, ma in pratica viveva già di quelli che dovevano dissolverlo, poiché esso stesso non aveva più alcuna energia vitale..."²

Per questa mentalità ha scarso significato dire col salmista: i tuoi figli come virgulti di olivo alla tua mensa. È a questo livello che l'aborto e in prospettiva di breve termine l'eutanasia sono divenuti temi centrali dell'etica politica in Europa e naturalmente dello "svanire della gioventù". Il ricorso

² 'Europa. I suoi fondamenti spirituali, ieri, oggi e domani', conferenza presso la biblioteca del Senato, sala capitolare del Chiostro della Minerva, 13 maggio 2004.

all'aborto contribuisce incisivamente al declino demografico, e in maniera serpeggiante l'eutanasia viene presentata come un servizio alla giustizia tra le generazioni, come un favore o un riguardo dell'anziano verso il giovane, o addirittura come un atto dovuto per non gravare ulteriormente sugli altri. D'altro canto l'invecchiamento della popolazione, e conseguentemente del corpo elettorale, gioca contro la politica familiare e i giovani poiché i bisogni maggiormente rappresentati sono quelli degli anziani.

A2) Il discorso pubblico europeo (e italiano) si interroga sulla stagnazione economica, sulla perdita di competitività dell'economia, sull'insicurezza dei giovani e la loro mancanza di proiezione. Ma sembra non aver la forza di uscire da stanchi schematismi ed andare alla radice del problema. È infatti normale che una popolazione che invecchia tenda a ripiegarsi, a contare sul già fatto, a salvaguardare l'acquisito piuttosto che a innovare, a proiettarsi con freschezza verso il domani, ad affrontare nuove sfide. Per quanto concerne l'Italia suggerisco che fra le cause principali delle sue difficoltà economiche e sociali stiano il declino demografico, la paura di procreare, il desiderio di rimanere su sentieri sicuri e troppe volte battuti: in una parola la renitenza a rischiare e a cercare strade nuove. Sarebbe opportuno che gli studiosi di economia valutassero più attentamente questi fattori, poiché sembra ovvio che chi invecchia è meno disposto all'avventura e all'innovazione. Ai giovani il sistema economico si rivolge come clienti, come consumatori e li assedia con mille seduzioni fra cui faticano a scegliere; raramente si rivolge a loro come portatori potenziali di innovazione e creatività. Assediati da una propaganda che li soffoca, sono condotti a dare ascolto alla Tecnica, alla cura ossessiva del corpo, a formule mantriche di facile felicità.

Andrebbe attentamente studiato l'influsso della pubblicità sulla solidarietà intergenerazionale, il contenuto dei messaggi indirizzati ai giovani e ai bambini, un contenuto molto spesso consumistico con l'invito implicito a occuparsi di sé e della propria realizzazione e non degli altri. I messaggi spesso sono indirizzati a specifici scaglioni d'età, facendo astrazione dai rapporti esistenti con le altre età/generazioni: se ci si rivolge ai giovani, gli adulti e gli anziani in genere non compaiono. È raro che i messaggi pubblicitari lascino intendere o indovinare che la società vada oltre il gruppo di riferimento per estendersi a destra e a sinistra, in alto e in basso. Oltre ad un efficace (ahimé!) messaggio antisolidaristico, la pubblicità sollecita il singolo, facendo perno sulla sua libertà di scelta, e propone stili nuovi che mettono in crisi la tradizione. L'esposizione degli adolescenti ai media

influisce sulle loro aspirazioni, indirizzandole verso una più alto desiderio di benessere e libertà individuale. La pubblicità invita a pensare se stessi come consumatori, se si hanno i mezzi, oppure come consumatori frustrati se si è poveri, non invece come cittadini. Un simile effetto potrebbe collocarsi entro una dinamica più vasta, denominata dai sociologi come “operazione di lobotomia sociale” da parte dei media, e tendente a diminuire o condizionare la memoria, il sapere critico e riferimenti più ampi.

A3) Le difficoltà di intesa tra le generazioni mette in causa la famiglia, per secoli l’istituzione centrale della solidarietà intergenerazionale, in cui la continuità fra anziani, adulti, e nipoti coinvolgeva tre generazioni e i parenti collaterali. In questo modo la famiglia contribuiva in maniera determinante alla formazione di capitale umano e sociale, preziosa eredità per il futuro. Pur rifiutando di apparire i nostalgici di una società talvolta immaginata, è indubbio che questa solidarietà si è affievolita e che la famiglia attuale tende, sia pure con consistenti eccezioni, alla forma nucleare con un ridotto rapporto interno, ed al limite verso una “società senza padre o madre” che non trova in queste figure un riferimento. In non pochi Paesi dell’Occidente una concezione individualistica della vita, e l’idea che il matrimonio sia un contratto fra adulti che spesso considerano il figlio solo un’aggiunta opzionale e quasi un ostacolo alla riuscita dei genitori, ha alterato quel sentimento di continuità fra le generazioni cui il soggetto deve molto per quanto concerne il suo destino di socializzazione e lo stesso senso della vita: nessuno in realtà cessa mai dall’essere padre o figlio.

Il matrimonio, anche quando è inteso come un impegno stabile, sembra basato assai più sulla coppia che sul rapporto di paternità o maternità. La crisi della solidarietà fra generazioni ha comportato crescenti richieste alla società nel suo insieme e allo Stato di welfare, cui si domanda di sopperire ai bisogni più vari. Forse qua e là qualcosa va cambiando in meglio, dopo decenni in cui in Occidente è accaduta la “grande distruzione” di cui ha detto Francis Fukuyama, ravvisandone l’origine nei mutamenti della cultura e dei rapporti uomo-donna.³

³ Cfr. F. Fukuyama, “Economic, Political and Cultural Consequences of Changes in Generational Relations”, in *Intergenerational Solidarity, Welfare and Human Ecology*, Proceedings of the Tenth Plenary Session of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, ed. By Mary Ann Glendon, Vatican City 2004, pp. 89-113.

B) CHE COSA SIGNIFICA EDUCARE? EDUCAZIONE E TRADIZIONE

Nella sezione intitolata *Education, an instrument for human enrichment* il rapporto del prof. Raga solleva la domanda “on the responsibility of the adult generation in the formation of the young... and on the virtue of solidarity of the former with the latter.. Do present-day society, the education received by the youth of today, the atmosphere in which the young person grows up, constitute the elements which will serve to facilitate living in truth and produce growth in the community? Part of our pedagogical commitment is that the youth can start out on the different roads of life, so that they contribute to the betterment of society, so that they lead a fuller life, with greater meaning and with the security that comes from looking steadfastly to the transcendental”.

Svolgerò alcune riflessioni sul significato dell'educare, che include l'educazione familiare, scolastica e quella che si assorbe dalla società e dai media.

B1) Che cosa significa educare? *Educare significa prendere per mano una persona e aiutarla a percepire il senso integrale della realtà*, aiutarla a fare i conti con il reale, non con sogni, siano essi alti o modesti (ad un dipresso questa era l'idea d'educazione di J.A. Jungmann, cui spesso si riferiva don Luigi Giussani). Ogni autentico processo educativo inizia con un atto di realismo, guardando le cose che sono e come sono, imparando a distinguere tra vero e falso, bene e male, giustizia e ingiustizia. Il vero educare è un processo antinichilistico, essendo il nichilismo in radice denotato dal rifiuto del principio di realtà, e dall'adesione a criteri d'irrealtà e di sogno che sembrano costitutivi di importanti aspetti della postmodernità, e che sono stati centrali nelle ideologie del Novecento. Educare a che cosa se non a diventare esseri umani, persone, a diventare effettivamente quello che già si è per essenza? L'educazione è *educazione della persona*, prima ancora che educazione civica e politica ad essere buoni cittadini, o il *dressage* a competere con l'altro come in un combattimento tra galli. Nell'educazione l'oggetto dell'educazione è il soggetto, la persona del bambino e del giovane.

Forse l'ambito più geloso e proprio per rendere operante la solidarietà dell'adulto verso bambini e giovani è la scelta educativa. L'educazione che riguarda la mente, il cuore, le capacità manuali, non può andare disgiunta dalla cura e raffinamento dei sentimenti, e da quel grande e perenne bisogno umano che è la sequela: mettersi al seguito di maestri-testimoni, di figure appassionate che appassiano e che aprono spazi di novità. Non possiamo concepire Platone senza la nostalgia sempre risorgente del suo

giovanile incontro con Socrate; non possiamo concepire il cristiano senza il desiderio di essere discepolo e di seguire il Maestro. I giovani con maggiore o minore consapevolezza ricercano figure o modelli che la società fatica a generare.

B2) *Conoscere i giovani*. Per educare abbiamo bisogno di conoscere i giovani d'oggi e di possedere un progetto educativo coerente, che tenga conto della loro situazione esistenziale e delle differenze rispetto alle generazioni precedenti. Indagini sociologiche presentano regolarmente i fondamentali valori di riferimento dei giovani europei occidentali, che risultano instabili nel senso che a distanza di pochi anni i sondaggi danno risultati variabili: lavoro, amore e affetti, sicurezza, successo, competizione, amicizia occupano volta a volta il primo posto.

Come in ogni tempo, anche ai nostri giorni i giovani vogliono essere sé stessi, desiderano affermare la propria identità, ricercano ragioni di vita. Se adeguatamente motivati, sono capaci di generosità e dedizione, ma rispetto al passato hanno meno punti di riferimento e non trovano o forse non cercano nuove appartenenze che prendano il posto di quelle di un tempo. Spiccatamente individualisti, intendono edificare la loro vita a prescindere da valori e norme ricevute, una scelta che li consegna ad una notevole carenza di radici culturali, religiose e morali. Se la generazione precedente era ancora segnata dall'influsso delle ideologie, i giovani di oggi sembrano meno soggetti ad esse (per quanto l'ideologia della libertà individuale posta sopra tutto non si possa sottovalutare). Nella loro vita prevale la dimensione affettiva e uditivo-visiva, minore è l'esercizio della ragione e della riflessione. I giovani di oggi hanno difficoltà a crescere, ad entrare nell'età adulta, ad acquisire una personalità solida: la fragilità è per loro un rischio notevole. Da alcuni decenni l'infanzia è sempre più corta, mentre si prolunga a dismisura il periodo dell'adolescenza, si da far parlare della adolescenza lunga del "giovane adulto". Come già notava H. von Balthasar 40 anni fa, i giovani nutrono paura di assumere impegni duraturi e rifuggono perciò da scelte definitive (matrimonio, scelta di un ideale assoluto, vocazione alla vita religiosa).

Nella loro situazione si rispecchia una cultura che ha perso la capacità di educare le giovani generazioni, cioè di aiutarle a "essere" di più e non solo ad "avere" di più. La scuola istruisce più o meno bene, raramente educa. Essa non è preparata a sussidiare la famiglia nell'educare, poiché non si sa più bene che cosa sia educare, e se questo sia un compito della scuola.

Un elemento di rilievo è se esista una differenza tra educazione dei ragazzi e delle ragazze. Esprimo un'opinione che andrebbe suffragata da

ricerche. Mentre in passato il maschio (bambino, ragazzo) veniva maggiormente valutato, oggi tale differenza va scomparendo quasi completamente. Anche i profili dell'educazione familiare e scolastica tendono a identificarsi per i due sessi, e lo stesso vale per i processi di socializzazione: una sorta di *unisex* forte più nell'educare e proporre valori che nel vestire. Le chances che in passato erano molto più largamente offerte al maschio che alla femmina, sono oggi più equamente divise tra i due sessi. Né sembra trasmessa una cultura in cui lo scopo principale della ragazza sia il matrimonio e la maternità.

B3) *Rilievo della tradizione*. Nel prendere per mano il giovane portandolo dinanzi all'esistenza, dobbiamo affidarci almeno in parte alla tradizione. In essa si attestano cose che sono state lungamente saggiate in rapporto col concreto, e che certo possono venire cambiate quando si mostrassero difettose, ma non a cuor leggero e neppure in base all'assunto che quanto è antico è in linea di principio falso o dubbio. La tradizione, oltre che contenuto che si tramanda, è processo, ossia l'esercizio del trasmettere ciò che costituisce il patrimonio vitale e culturale della società. Di tutto ciò che fu fatto in passato noi mangiamo il frutto, buono o cattivo che sia (Eliot).

Tagliare i rapporti con il passato è un passo decisivo verso la dis-educazione. Vi è qui un atteggiamento ideologico che pensa l'educazione come un processo che deve sempre sostituire il vecchio col nuovo, come nelle tecnologie un prodotto è subito reso obsoleto da un altro prodotto.

Nella tradizione quale nesso tra passato e presente si incontrano due categorie dell'ingiustizia storica. La prima dice: tutto ciò che non è antico diventa subito vecchio e inutile. E l'altra: ciò che non è nuovo è sempre sospetto e nemico (qualcosa del genere pensava F-A-M. Mignet sostenendo: "En temps de révolution tout ce qui est ancien est ennemi"). *Stat pro veritate Novitas* oppure *Antiquitas*? I due atteggiamenti tendono ad alternarsi nella considerazione degli uomini. Da tempo prevale il secondo. La continua produzione/distruzione di valori, il cambiamento elevato a regola fondamentale della vita, la paradossale tradizione del nuovo, ossia la tradizione di ciò che non c'è più, costituiscono il profilo del modernismo culturale attuale. Esso colpisce negativamente la "tradizione biblica", forse la massima tradizione educativa in Europa.

B4) *Il rischio educativo*. Educare è un rischio, poiché niente assicura a priori il successo dell'impresa, oggi forse più alto per la fragilità morale, psicologica, spirituale del giovane, reso timoroso dalla forte competitività sociale che emerge nelle nostre società. La sapienza educativa si impara, non è qual-

cosa che sia disponibile su comando. Educare è un rischio in specie per i genitori: pesa l'alto influsso di altre sorgenti ed agenzie, la grande dissonanza delle proposte educative, la facilità con cui il giovane è "strattonato" in tante direzioni, ma pesano pure i nostri propri deficit. Chiediamoci come ci comportiamo di fronte alla mancanza di dialogo nelle famiglie, alle difficoltà educative dopo i 12-14 anni, alla rassegnazione dinanzi allo strapotere della TV, alla solitudine degli adolescenti di fronte ai primi problemi affettivi. Non sembra possibile giustificare quell'alleggerimento dell'impegno educativo che si riscontra nella vita attuale.

Educare è una scommessa poiché l'esito è incerto e dobbiamo tenere in conto il fallimento. Esistono i fallimenti educativi, cui consegue la tentazione che il compito educativo non è per noi: una tentazione da respingere poiché si è educatori a tempo pieno; né si cessa mai di essere padre o madre.⁴ Investire nell'educazione significa riprendere con coraggio e perseveranza la fatica pedagogica dinanzi alla stupefacente fragilità del giovane. In proposito l'educatore fa esperienza del contrasto con l'ottimismo antropologico del salmo 8: "eppure l'hai fatto poco meno degli angeli, di gloria e di onore l'hai coronato". Il rischio educativo, particolarmente intenso oggi in Europa, richiede che l'educatore costantemente proponga, sperando contro ogni speranza.

B5) Educare la mente ma forse soprattutto la volontà e il desiderio. Non dobbiamo dimenticare che i singoli ed i popoli sono definiti soprattutto dall'orientamento del loro desiderare. Qui ritorna in campo col più alto diritto l'educazione, in specie quella della volontà e del desiderio come preambolo di una pedagogia delle virtù. Essa si compie lungo tutta la vita ma con particolare decisività nell'età adolescenziale e giovanile, dove non basta proporre discorsi e esperienze, pur necessari, occorre proporre modelli viventi, esemplari di vita incarnati in persone. Non di rado scegliamo alcune forme di vita e non altre, perché conosciamo solo quelle che vediamo propagate dai media, e ne ignoriamo altre. Scegliamo avendo dinanzi un ventaglio ristretto dove mancano gli esempi di modi più integri e umani di vita. Crediamo di essere liberi senza esserlo, poiché la nostra vista è miope e l'orizzonte che raggiungiamo limitato, perché ignoriamo che esistono alternative di vita diverse e più alte di quelle che ci vengono comu-

⁴ Vedi del card. Martini la *Lettera ad un educatore che si sente fallito*, in *Itinerari educativi*, Milano 1988, Seconda lettera per il programma pastorale "educare", pp. 175-178.

nemente presentate. E così il giovane, che è un essere potenziale che punta oltre se stesso, rischia di veder frustrato il desiderio, spesso deluso ma sempre rinascete, di non essere un prodotto del caso e della particolare nicchia in cui la vita l'ha posto.

B6) TV e violenza: ascoltando Popper. Chi conoscesse la realtà *solo* attraverso lo schermo televisivo sarebbe persuaso di vivere in un mondo infinitamente violento, tanto alta e superiore al reale è la concentrazione di violenza nelle trasmissioni televisive. Le statistiche avvertono che un bambino americano assiste in TV a 8.000 omicidi e 100.000 atti di violenza prima di terminare la scuola elementare, e da noi la situazione non è apprezzabilmente diversa. Si può ragionevolmente pensare che questa alluvione di violenza possa rimanere senza effetti nefasti? Che i minori non debbano esserne tutelati? È anzi documentato che, secondo una logica che sembra assurda, il quantitativo di violenza presente negli spettacoli per bambini è maggiore di quello delle trasmissioni per adulti. Un esito di tale situazione è una crescente assuefazione alla violenza, per cui ad es. l'assassinio finisce per perdere il suo carattere eccezionale e moralmente negativo per diventare qualcosa di normale, mentre si deteriora o si smarrisce la divisione tra bene e male, lecito e illecito. Sono numerosi i casi di gravi atti di violenza, i cui autori hanno dichiarato di averli appresi in TV. Tanto peggio per i bambini dunque, la cui socializzazione passa in larga misura proprio attraverso la TV. Essi la guardano non principalmente per divertirsi, ma per capire il mondo, ritenendo candidamente che il piccolo schermo sia lo specchio fedele dell'esistenza. Essi introiettano la *fiction* senza sapere che è *fiction*; ritengono che il mondo sia quello che si vede sullo schermo; ignorano i noti effetti della selezione dei messaggi, e dell'allungamento o accorciamento del tempo. Ma chi si preoccupa di loro?

K.R. Popper si è posto il problema di come diminuire e correggere l'educazione alla violenza che le TV propagandano, nello scritto "Una patente per fare tv", pubblicato nel settembre 1994 come supplemento a *Reset* nell'opuscolo *Cattiva maestra televisione*, che ospita pure un contributo di J. Condry. Egli ritiene che l'educazione alla nonviolenza sia la base fondamentale dello Stato di diritto, nato dall'idea che la soluzione dei conflitti vada cercata con la negoziazione e il dibattito, non con la forza: lo Stato di diritto resta in piedi fino a quando circola nella società una cultura condivisa di rifiuto della violenza. Se le TV contribuiscono invece *bon gré mal gré* a propagandare quest'ultima, esse minano i fondamenti stessi della condi-

zione sociale costruita con fatica e in un lungo processo. Il fatto è che le TV esercitano un potere spesso incontrollato, e questo evento costituisce un'acuta contraddizione entro le liberaldemocrazie, dove non sono tollerabili poteri sottratti ad ogni verifica. Scrive Popper: "Non ci dovrebbe essere alcun potere politico incontrollato in una democrazia. Ora è accaduto che questa televisione sia diventata un potere politico colossale, potenzialmente si potrebbe dire anche il più importante di tutti, come se fosse Dio stesso che parla. E così sarà se continueremo a consentirne l'abuso. Essa è diventata un potere troppo grande per la democrazia. Nessuna democrazia può sopravvivere se all'abuso di questo potere non si mette fine" (p. 24).

Mentre è alla portata di tutti preparare programmi scadenti e volgari, ben più impegnativo è mandare in onda qualcosa di valido, senza mascherarsi dietro la scusa secondo cui il pubblico vuole cose scadenti e volgari, e dargliele è vera democrazia. Secondo Popper, che ha in proposito una proposta da avanzare, le TV attuali non corrispondono alla vera idea di democrazia, "che è stata ed è di far crescere l'educazione generale offrendo a tutti opportunità sempre migliori". Che fare per porre un argine all'educazione dei nostri bambini alla violenza? In un primo momento Popper pensò alla censura. Adesso sostiene che coloro che sono collegati alla produzione TV debbano essere titolari di una patente ritirabile (anche a vita!), qualora si agisca in contrasto con certi principi secondo il giudizio di un'organizzazione simile a quella con cui i medici si autocontrollano.

B7) *La scuola*. In genere la scuola si occupa più di istruire che di educare e formare. Le sue difficoltà vanno collegate al più generale quadro culturale e antropologico, all'azione dei modelli culturali dominanti, riportando la perdita di prestigio dell'educazione scolastica all'universo culturale post-moderno coi suoi caratteri molteplici e difficilmente componibili: debolismo, mancanza di un centro, relativismo, divenirismo ossia l'idea che niente sta fermo e che perciò è necessario adottare l'etica provvisoria del viandante, che è appunto la strada seguita per mettere in atto una decostruzione di quanto ricevuto e di ogni dato di *common sense*. E inoltre: individualismo, affetti senza unità, tendenza a considerare scambiabile tutto con tutto, poiché niente ha valore e merita attenzione non episodica. Là dove tutto equivale a tutto, ogni idea è sostituibile con qualsiasi altra perché ogni assunto possiede pari valore, siamo al *qualunquismo pedagogico*.

È quasi impossibile educare se nella cultura diffusa nella società non esiste alcuna armonia, ma una cacofonia di idee e di stili che cercano di sopraffarsi a vicenda. È doveroso chiedersi se una parte delle difficoltà della scuo-

la non dipendano dalla schizofrenica situazione della cultura presente, che dovrebbe venire trasfusa o almeno fare da sfondo all'educare ed istruire.

B8) *La tradizione della fede.* Nel rapporto fra generazioni occupa un gran posto in ogni epoca la trasmissione delle principali credenze religiose, campo in cui il ruolo della madre è risultato nella modernità a lungo centrale e nella media superiore a quello dispiegato dall'uomo. E oggi? Oggi la famiglia offre ai figli un grembo accogliente più che contenuti, affetto più che messaggi e indicazioni normative. La trasmissione della fede nella famiglia si trova in difficoltà: talvolta si pensa che sia compito delle donne, che faticano nel compito e non si sentono adeguatamente appoggiate dal marito. Sino al XVI secolo il compito della trasmissione della fede nella famiglia interessava entrambi i genitori, quando la Riforma produsse un cambiamento notevole. Con l'assunto del carattere contrattuale e laico del matrimonio essa lo secolarizza, introducendo un mutamento nel modo di intendere i ruoli familiari e forse anche il compito religioso della famiglia.

Successivamente alla Riforma in Europa la trasmissione della fede ha incontrato gravi ostacoli nel pubblico, perché l'impeto secolarizzante del laicismo intendeva ricondurla esclusivamente al privato dove persisteva, spesso ad opera della donna, nella casa e nella famiglia. Oggi la situazione tende ad essere opposta: mentre si verifica anche in Occidente, dove il secolarismo è stato più intenso, una ripresa del ruolo pubblico della fede cristiana, questa inciampa nel privato. La sua trasmissione è in difficoltà per vari motivi, fra cui non trascurabile è quello che parte dell'universo femminile sembra guardare verso altri obiettivi.

Rimane la domanda come sia possibile edificare un nuovo rapporto di intesa fra Chiesa e donne, quel rapporto che in passato aveva consentito ad entrambe di oltrepassare la crisi della prima fase della modernità, quando la secolarizzazione avanzò ma non stravinse precisamente perché le madri "tenevano", nel senso che la trasmissione della fede trovava in esse quel cammino innestato di affetti e sentimenti che consente una trasmissione esistenziale, non qualcosa di dottrinale e meccanico. Ad una società in difficoltà a riconoscersi nella madre, dopo essere stata a lungo senza padri, è cosa sapiente riproporre il mistero esistenziale dell'essere madre.

Intermezzo sull'educazione "alta" in Europa occidentale

Alludendo all'educazione "alta" ho di mira in specie la scuola secondaria superiore e l'università, nonché le opzioni di fondo sull'uomo, la vita, la

verità elaborate e trasmesse nella società. L'insistenza della cultura liberal-democratica sulla politica quale insieme di regole e procedure può condurre a oscurare il tema classico e repubblicano delle virtù civiche, a cui occorre essere educati, se non si vuole che i soggetti cadano nel gregarismo, fuggano dalla libertà e si arrendano alle proposte banali della società mediale e altamente manipolabile. E' un fatto che gli scrittori politici contemporanei *destinano scarsissima attenzione al problema educativo*: sono filosofi, esperti di etica, economisti, politici, non pedagogisti.

Enuncio in breve la diagnosi: la *paideia* attuale è in seria crisi in conseguenza di un mutamento filosofico di prima grandezza, nel quale non sono stati più compresi né la natura dell'uomo, né quella del Bene, né colti i fini della educazione della persona. La crisi dell'educazione contemporanea sembra dipendere dal disordine della dottrina del sapere provocata dal politeismo dei valori, dalla critica delle idee di Essere e di Bene, dalla sfiducia sulle capacità metafisiche e morali della ragione. Ciò ha influito sulla condizione esistenziale dei giovani che, privati di una disciplina intellettuale, appaiono non di rado senza bussola e perciò più facilmente catturabili dalla ricerca dell'utile e del successo. Mi sembra che dovremmo essere più consapevoli delle distruzioni intellettuali avvenute nella recente storia dell'Occidente, e che si collegano all'incapacità di distinguere razionalmente ciò che sta sopra oppure sotto, ciò che vale di più o di meno: nel relativismo non è possibile rinvenire i criteri in base ai quali stabilire queste differenze. Spostando l'asse della vita dell'individuo verso la realizzazione privata dell'esistenza e ponendo la sfera pubblica solo sotto il controllo di regole e norme, il pensiero liberale ha posto le premesse perché l'educazione della persona assuma valenza ridotta nella sua politica, diversamente da Aristotele dove educazione del cittadino ed educazione dell'uomo fanno quasi tutt'uno. A petto di una esaltazione acritica della libertà, sembrano migliori le indicazioni semplici, talvolta un po' troppo empiriche ma fundamentalmente oneste, di un John Locke: "il miglioramento e l'esercizio della ragione è la massima perfezione che un uomo può raggiungere in questa vita".⁵

Nella cultura attuale che spesso subisce l'influsso del pragmatismo e del positivismo, sembra andata smarrita l'unità del progetto educativo, che comporta un'unità di fine, di metodo, di coordinamento delle facoltà del giovane. Secondo l'opuscolo *Sulla unità dell'educazione* di Antonio Rosmini, "lo spirito dell'educazione antica tendeva all'unità degli oggetti,

⁵ *Pensieri sulla educazione*, Paravia, Torino 1955, p. 135.

perché tutto riduceva, come ad un solo fine e principio, a Dio: lo spirito della educazione moderna all'opposto tende alla molteplicità degli oggetti, perché considerando le cose naturali e sensibili senza riferirle alla loro cagione primitiva, esse si disgregano e spargono fra di loro".⁶ E naturalmente senza uno sguardo unitario diventa assai più difficile formare l'uomo e rivolgerlo a considerare il servizio comune da rendere alla società. Ora la libertà di educazione non di rado diventa libertà dall'educazione alla verità: tuttavia non è possibile intraprendere un percorso formativo se non nel quadro del "principio di verità".

Orbene, due sono i principi in base ai quali è possibile assegnare unità e armonia alla *paideia* umana: la ricerca razionale del senso dell'Intero propria della filosofia, e in specie della metafisica; il riferimento teologico rivelato all'Oggetto Immenso. Ma entrambi sono tolti di mezzo dal criterio metodico di procedere lasciando da parte Dio (non si dimentichi che Dio è il punto apicale della ricerca filosofica secondo Aristotele e Tommaso). Se, come sembra, la *paideia* attuale non intende far propri quei due criteri, essa andrebbe considerata impari al compito di offrire a tutti un'educazione "liberale" o umanistico-sapientziale capace di formare la persona, evitando una prematura specializzazione del giovane. Impiego qui l'aggettivo "liberale" con le virgolette, perché viene assunto nel senso classico delle *artes liberales*, in quanto contrapposte a quelle servili, e non perciò in riferimento ai movimenti politici e alle dottrine liberali.⁷

Un'educazione "liberale" e umanistica è fortemente compressa oggi, né si tratta di creare dei piccoli ridotti in cui pochi eletti coltivino con spirito irritato o depresso le arti liberali. La grande sfida per la *paideia* contemporanea è l'educazione "liberale" per tutti, un'educazione orientata verso la sapienza, centrata sull'umanità, mirante a sviluppare negli spiriti la capacità di pensare con rettitudine e di godere della verità e della bellezza, è un'educazione alla libertà, un'educazione liberale. Ogni essere umano ha diritto di ricevere una tale educazione, propriamente umana e umanista. Un programma (anche ridotto) di educazione "liberale" per tutti è la necessaria conseguenza dell'idea che con la sua libertà, che è il segno della sua spiritualità, la persona umana trascende le stelle e l'intero mondo della natura. Un'educazione "liberale" non dimentica l'eccellenza: se siamo

⁶ *Sulla unità dell'educazione*, Roma, Tipografia del Senato di Giovanni Bardi, 1913, p. 52.

⁷ Ricordiamo che secondo la classificazione medievale, le arti liberali dei trivio e del quadrivio sono rispettivamente grammatica, dialettica, retorica (*artes sermocinales*); matematica, musica, astronomia, geometria (*artes reales*).

costretti ad essere specialisti, non ci è negato di cercare le cose più importanti e più alte. Secondo Leo Strauss, “l’educazione liberale si interessa alle anime degli uomini e perciò non sa che farsene delle macchine”.⁸

Uno dei massimi compiti, forse il principale, dell’educazione “liberale” è di mirare alla formazione-educazione dell’uomo, quale essere potenziale che mira oltre se stesso e che cerca di conquistare se stesso. Un’educazione “liberale” aiuta lo studente a cercare la risposta alla domanda: che cosa è l’uomo? Essa riveste valore per coloro che, desiderando vivere autonomamente, impiegano le più nobili facoltà umane, senza farsi condizionare dai facili modelli proposti dal mercato o dalle risposte più scontate. Nell’educazione “liberale” attraverso la lettura dei grandi testi letterari, poetici, filosofici, scientifici, religiosi, viene cercato il tutto nel frammento; vengono scoperte le più alte possibilità umane, e trovate risposte che sfuggono a coloro che non ne conoscono che una o poche. Ma, ahimè, oggi l’università fa molto poco per stimolare e soddisfare il desiderio di un’educazione “liberale”. Essa “fiori quando preparò la strada alla discussione di una visione unificata della natura e del posto dell’uomo in essa”.⁹ Da ciò si intuisce quale compito dovrebbe esplicitare l’università quale luogo più alto dell’educazione “liberale” se essa rimanesse fedele alla sua vocazione: la ricerca dell’unità del sapere e la superiorità del sapere teoretico su quello utile-applicato, a cui si lega la superiorità della *sapientia* sulla *scientia*. Ma questo è ancora lo scopo morale dell’università, o invece essa si limita a rendere gli studenti tecnici utili al mercato? In tal modo prosegue e si aggrava lo spostamento, iniziato con l’illuminismo, dello scopo educativo dalla formazione dell’uomo alla formazione dello specialista. Al compito dell’università di nutrire l’impulso disinteressato verso la conoscenza e la verità che è consustanziale all’uomo, essa risponde in modo che i giovani non incontrano quasi più una sede dove possa esser posta la domanda sull’uomo, sui fini, sul vero.

Così solo per un’illusione continuiamo a chiamare università l’università, perché in essa vigono l’anarchia delle discipline e i comandi imperiosi di molteplici specializzazioni non illuminate da un sapere unificato. L’università è nata nello e con lo spirito socratico, che non si stanca di chiedere: che cosa è la giustizia? il bene? l’essere? la conoscenza? E che cosa è superiore o inferiore? “La crisi dell’educazione liberale è un riflesso di una crisi al vertice dell’insegnamento, un’incoerenza e una incompatibilità tra i

⁸ *Liberalismo antico e moderno*, Giuffrè, Milano 1973, p. 35.

⁹ A. Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind*, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1988, pp. 346-347.

primi principi con cui interpretiamo il mondo, una crisi intellettuale della più grande ampiezza, che costituisce la crisi della nostra civiltà”.¹⁰ Una delle sue massime conseguenze è il declino dell’educazione “liberale” dell’uomo politico e dello statista, che fino ad un recente passato ha costituito il loro tipo specifico di educazione.

C) MOVIMENTI DI RISVEGLIO: FAI COME DIO, DIVENTA UOMO

C1) Alto è il bisogno di un movimento di *risveglio* educativo e antropologico, e di minoranze creative che introducano discorsi e prassi nuove. Esso deve iniziare subito, “prima che il filo d’argento s’allenti, la lampada d’oro s’infranga, si rompa la secchia alla fonte” (Qo 12, 6).

Nel momento in cui il pensiero raggiunge una verità adeguata, si può avviare un movimento di risveglio: aiutare a uscire da sogni, immaginazioni, manipolazioni. Il risveglio è una necessità della vita, individuale e sociale. Ogni movimento del genere inizia attraverso un’esperienza spirituale, uno sguardo rinnovato sulla realtà e su noi stessi. Qui diciamo semplicemente che la presente fase dell’attualità storica sollecita a riprendere ad educare. Gli ostacoli, e di quale forza!, non mancano certo. Se si dovesse però attendere la scomparsa degli ostacoli per iniziare ad agire, non si comincerebbe mai. Puntare su eventi di risveglio significa dare concretezza alla speranza, il cui vero nemico è l’accidia/*akedia* la quale propriamente non è soltanto la pigrizia, ma soprattutto la noia di Dio che appunto comporta pigrizia spirituale e inedia. Forse da ciò prende origine quell’estesa privatizzazione della fede che ha infierito a lungo in Europa. Durante le Giornate mondiali della gioventù, con il loro comportamento, i giovani hanno detto un “no” massiccio alla privatizzazione della fede.

Le liberaldemocrazie occidentali si possono autocorreggere su vari piani, meno su quello antropologico ed educativo dove esse hanno bisogno di ripartire dai mondi vitali e da stimoli *d’innalzamento* che devono sorgere da altrove e che le procedure democratiche non sono in grado da sole di suscitare. L’uomo è quello di sempre: la politica non lo migliora, al massimo quando essa opera sanamente può inserire qualche sostegno perché il soggetto umano rimanga ad un livello accettabile. La politica può però peggiorarlo. Sebbene non si possano abbandonare le prospettive di sostenere

¹⁰ *Ivi*, p. 346.

l'uomo, di aiutarlo a svolgersi positivamente, l'idea di una natura umana sostanzialmente invariante mi pare nel complesso valida, a meno che la forza del Vangelo introduca nella pasta umana un innalzamento.

C2) Le implicazioni di questo discorso sono notevoli per il cristiano. Lo invitano a praticare il compito o meglio la "carità educativa" mediante un'attenzione ai nuovi bisogni ed una ripresa dei principi di base dell'educazione della persona. Lo invitano ad essere presente senza complessi d'inferiorità e visioni passatiste nell'agorà della cultura e della vita civile, ben sapendo due cose: che l'annuncio del Vangelo si distingue e trascende lo spazio della polis; e che il cristianesimo è una fede storica e incarnata capace di ispirare l'agire senza dimissioni e falsi messianismi. I credenti sono chiamati a manifestare la differenza cristiana secondo una laicità di rispetto e d'incarnazione.

I bambini e i giovani sono la giovinezza della Chiesa e del mondo. Giovanni Paolo II scriveva: "Voi siete la giovinezza delle nazioni e della società, la giovinezza di ogni famiglia e dell'intera umanità; voi siete anche la giovinezza della Chiesa [...] Pertanto, la vostra giovinezza non è solo proprietà vostra, proprietà personale, o di una generazione: essa [...] è al tempo stesso un bene speciale di tutti. È un bene dell'umanità stessa". Abbiamo bisogno dell'entusiasmo dei giovani e della gioia di vivere che è in loro.¹¹ I credenti, la Chiesa devono far fiducia e puntare sui giovani, poiché la loro età è più aperta alla ricerca della verità, del bene, della bellezza, della giustizia e della solidarietà. Giovanni Paolo II proclamava: "Confermo la mia convinzione: ai giovani spetta il compito difficile, ma esaltante, di trasformare i 'meccanismi' fondamentali che, nei rapporti fra singoli e nazioni, favoriscono l'egoismo e la sopraffazione, e far nascere strutture nuove ispirate alla verità, alla solidarietà e alla pace".¹²

C3) Ai giovani che più degli adulti e degli anziani sono aperti allo stupore, la Chiesa deve trasmettere la capacità di stupirsi dinanzi al Mistero. *Il più alto stupore è il Dio fatto uomo*, il Verbo Incarnato, il supremo educatore.

Nell'educazione del giovane è necessario far risuonare il paradossale invito che dice: *Fai come Dio, diventa uomo!* Fai come Dio, assumi in

¹¹ Giovanni Paolo II, *Lettera apostolica ai giovani e alle giovani del mondo*, n. 1.

¹² Giovanni Paolo II, *Messaggio alla "Città e al mondo" nella Domenica di Pasqua*, "L'Osservatore Romano", 9-10 aprile 1985, p. 5.

pieno la natura umana! Diventare uomo è qualcosa di straordinariamente difficile, se è vero che ci ha dovuto provare Dio stesso, dandocene l'esempio: questo è appunto l'eterno cammino di un autentico umanesimo pedagogico. Spesso il destino di una società dipende dalle minoranze creative. I credenti dovrebbero concepire se stessi come una minoranza siffatta, operando in Europa perché l'annuncio cristiano torni ad essere guida ispirante, sotto la straordinaria e sempre inedita proposta: *fai come Dio, diventa uomo!*

Fourth Session

**REGIONAL REPORTS – PART III: LATIN
AND NORTH AMERICA**

HOW TO PAY AN UNPAYABLE DEBT: THE INTERGENERATIONAL CHALLENGE OF LATIN AMERICANS

MARIANO GRONDONA

When reviewing the list of social deficiencies in Latin America, the reader is overwhelmed by the enormous 'social debt' incurred by the governments and leaders in the region, as well as by the minority of those who are better off, with the majority of those who are worst off.¹

The social debt admits two dimensions. In the *intra-generational* dimension, it is the solidarity debt that some have with other fellow coetaneous countrymen. Rulers and political, economic and social leaders, as well as those who are better off, are the carriers of a social debt with those unprotected in their same generation. To this debt another one is added, this time *intergenerational*, of the generation in a productive age with the several generations in an unproductive age: the elderly, minors and those still to be born.²

The Latin American social debt is so vast, so demanding, that to the effort needed for its 'payment' by responsible Latin Americans, two other contributions should be added: (i) the one made by the unprotected themselves, so they try to take advantage of the few or many opportunities that

¹ According to World Bank data, 47.4% of Latin Americans lived under the poverty line in 2004. This does not mean that the remaining 52.6% may be included among those who are 'better off', first because the Latin American criterion to measure poverty is less demanding than the developed countries' one, secondly because sometimes being just above the poverty level does not necessarily presuppose belonging to those who are 'better-off', and thirdly because the Latin American poverty indexes worsen among children and youngsters, reaching 56% of those under 19 years of age, according to UNICEF data.

² We will use the word 'coetaneous' to name the people of the same age, of the same generation, while the word 'contemporaries' will name those who live at the same time but do not necessarily belong to the same generation: a child and an adult, for example.

may come up, avoiding, as much as possible, the temptation of passively accepting the 'gifts' of political clientelism, and (ii) the one from the developed countries, that not only offer an insufficient international aid, but severely restrict also Latin American main exports.³

Together with the intra-generational debt, the Latin American intergenerational debt accumulates a huge *social liability*, that claims for a vast *solidarity* movement.⁴

This liability, that gives a somber tone to the Latin American social landscape, is framed within a theological and philosophical context that could be defined starting with the following concept: each person is born *indebted*.

If the word 'sin' coincides at least partially with the word 'debt', we should mention here the religious doctrine of the original sin. When he moved from the religious vision of the original to its own philosophical vision, Martin Heidegger observed that none of us did anything to deserve life. Among the trillions and trillions of possible human beings that were never born, the relatively few that have been born were invited to the life banquet without previously meriting it. From the religious angle, Pope Benedictus XVI has just mentioned in his encyclical *Deus caritas est* that 'God loved us first'. Human love is, consequently, an *answer* to divine love.⁵

³ The European Union pays the equivalent to U\$S 150.568 billion per year in subsidies to its farmers. The annual amount of the European international aid is equivalent to U\$S 8.704 billion dollars, almost twenty times less. Japan pays the equivalent of U\$S 60.850 billion per year in agricultural subsidies; its foreign aid is equivalent to U\$S 8.906 billion per year, almost seven times less. As far as the United States, it distributes subsidies to its farmers for U\$S 108.696 billion per year, while its foreign aid is U\$S 19.075 billion: five times less. Source: OECD, Development, Donor Aid Charts.

⁴ Linked to the Greek word *holos*, 'whole', the word 'solidarity' is also related to 'salvation' and 'health'. In legal terms, a group of people assumes a solidarity obligation, *in solidum*, when it is like if each one of its members owes everything, and the creditor can claim it indistinctly from each one of them. Solidarity presupposes, therefore, that we assume what other lacks as our own burden. On the other hand, in the same way that hate admits several expressions such as envy, resentment or revenge, solidarity is one of the expressions of love. It is thus mentioned in *Deus caritas est*, Benedictus XVI's first Encyclical. As in the Good Samaritan parable, solidarity is one of the 'unitive' effects of love, since it induces two or more persons to act as if they were one. *In solidum*.

⁵ The words 'debt' and 'sin' are closely related, because sin, 'guilt', generates debts as those mentioned in the classical version of the Lord's prayer when it said: 'forgive us our debts...' In some languages such as German, guilt and debt (*schuld*) are used as synonymous.

Because of this, our life is neither a prize nor a payment. It is a *gift*. To the gift of life as such, the gifts *during* life are added, thus completing the potential with which each person is endowed. But if the gift 'of' life is even for all human beings due to the mere fact that they were graciously chosen to be born, the gifts 'during' life are uneven. One would then wonder what could be expected by those who have received less gifts in life, from those who have received more. To begin with, they might expect their solidarity. Whether it can be legally demanded or not, whether it comes from a religious belief or not, solidarity is a *moral duty* of those who received more vis a vis those who received less, to level off, as much as possible, the account of life gifts.

The solidarity exercise implies adding the human beings' actions to the immense gift of Creation, a gift that would be incomplete without the contribution of its own beneficiaries. To the extent that their contributions are made, human beings ascend to the dignity of *co-creators*.

To return to Heidegger's philosophical argument, each one of us, at the moment he is born, finds its moral accounting in red because, before entering his own annotations in the 'debit' or the 'credit' columns, every human being already has an annotation in his 'debit' column. Man is born in debt because by himself he is 'nothing' and nevertheless has been 'thrown' into existence with the power to take care of himself and develop. *He is not* but, at the same time, *he is*. If he decides to listen to his conscience, his first concern will be to honor his original debt or guilt, that does not come from any specific 'sin' but from the mere previous fact of existing. Life, from a moral standpoint, starts with the intention to pay this original debt.⁶

But here a paradox arises: the original debt is so huge that paying it in full is beyond our scope. At least at the pure natural level, it *cannot be paid*. From the original debt standpoint, thus, the moral life consists in the effort to pay what one will not be able to pay. An effort condemned beforehand?

When we carry on this philosophical vision into the field of the social debt with our own generation, with the generation of our ancestors, with the generation arriving and those yet to come, the debt increases not only because of the millions of people involved but also because in the underdeveloped countries it acquires a dramatic character unknown in developed countries. The high child mortality and malnutrition rates in Latin America tell us that part of that social debt has been already unpaid.⁷

⁶ Heidegger devotes paragraph 58 of *Being and Time* to examine this complex problem.

⁷ The infantile mortality rate in Latin America is 26 per one thousand born alive. In the industrialized countries is 5 per thousand. The rate of undernourished children in

Far from discouraging the overwhelmed payer, the fact that a debt cannot be paid should stimulate him, because the nature of his obligation does not come from a mere arithmetic calculus, but from a powerful *moral mimesis*. How do we react when someone gives us a gift? Wishing, on our part, to make a gift. Behind the urge of meeting the moral obligation that generated the gift, appears the initiative of making a gift not only to the person who gave us the gift but also to others who did not. This is the *generosity mimesis*.⁸

The generosity of the beneficiary of a donation, in turn converted into a benefactor, tends to expand. Generosity is like the circles generated by the stone thrown into a calm lake. It expands indefinitely. From one human being to another, from one generation to another, generosity is destined to grow without stopping, precisely because the donors know that it will never be enough.

The paradox of human life consists thus in that it invites us to make an effort to pay our debt as if we could pay it, warning us, at the same time, that we can not. We must act as if the impossible were possible. 'Pray as if everything depended on God and work as if everything depended on you', told us St. Augustine.⁹

We Latin Americans, and all those who want to help us from outside our region, must consequently make an effort to pay that part of the social debt that is in our hands to pay, even recognizing that the payment we will be able to make will be a small share of our total debt.

Latin America is 7%. In the industrialized countries, it is often not taken into account because it is irrelevant. Source: UNICEF.

⁸ In Chapter III of his book *Resentment*, titled 'Christian morality and resentment' Max Scheler refutes Frederic Nietzsche's opinion according to which Christian love 'is the most delicate flower of resentment' because it sublimates, to say so, the moral of the slave, making him 'rise' as the carrier of a moral response to his master, as a demonstration that who is 'below' can surpass who is 'above' through love. Scheler, instead, supposes that Christian love 'descends' in the direction of others from a height where spills like a full glass, incapable of containing its own overabundance. Let us compare this vision with the one in *Deus caritas est*, when its author refers to Jacob's scale and the 'descending' love that comes from generosity to favor those who have 'less'. This is the 'moral mimesis' of generosity that roams from above, the person in love not keeping for himself his own plenitude.

⁹ In the pages of *Historia de la Filosofía* dedicated to him, Julián Marías observes that St. Augustine was the last man from Antiquity and the first modern man. As the last antique man, he collected the best from classical wisdom. As the first modern man, he started from his own intimacy in the *Confessions* to put the finishing touch in the conception of world history in *The City of God* (Julián Marías, *Historia de la Filosofía*, 'Cristianismo', II).

2. THE LATIN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE

Inasmuch that, as human beings, we are called to help others, so they also must help themselves in the search for development, in the search for the 'passing of everyone and of each one from less human to more human conditions'. We are thus living under the weight of a moral mortgage. This liability outlines such a demanding social landscape that it forces us to select *priorities*.¹⁰

From the reading of the *Acta 10* prepared during the meeting held in April-May 2003 by the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences, the hypothesis emerges that the order priorities of the intergenerational solidarity admits different although complementary approaches, according to circumstances of time and place.¹¹

In said meeting, special attention was paid to the solidarity obligation of the productive generation towards the previous generation of the elderly. This priority might give way to another, different although not antagonistic, in the Latin American case, this time favoring the generations to come, due to two reasons.

The first one is that, while the demographic weight of the elderly predominates in Europe, in Latin America the demographic 'aging', that is also happening, is produced at a slower pace which turns pale before the infantile and juvenile explosion of the Latin American population. In Latin America, to put it simply, there are more children and youngsters than in Europe.¹²

The second reason was already noted in the 2003 meeting by several speakers, in the sense that due to its own nature, the future tends to be more demanding than the past. The intergenerational obligation toward the elderly, toward the past, although huge, is concentrated on only one

¹⁰ The definition of development is from Paul VI, Encyclica *Populorum Progressio*, 1967, paragraph 20. Cfr. Mariano Grondona, *En busca del equilibrio: La encíclica Populorum Progressio*, doctoral thesis, 1969, Buenos Aires.

¹¹ Acta 10, *Intergenerational Solidarity, Welfare and Human Ecology*, Edited by Mary Ann Glendon, Vatican City, 2004.

¹² In 2005 Latin American had 546,656,828 inhabitants; 29.64% were less than 14 years old, 64.53% were between 14 and 64 years old, 5% were older than 65. That same year, the European Union had 456,953,258 inhabitants; 16.04% were less than 14 years old, 67.17% were between 14 and 64 years old and 16.81% were older than 65. As we can see, the Latin American proportion of minors almost doubles the European proportion, while the European figure for older people almost triples the Latin American one. Sources: for Latin America CEPAL, Boletín Demográfico No. 17. For the European Union: CIA World Factbook.

generation, while the intergenerational obligation toward the children and the youngsters extends indefinitely into the future, because if today's youngsters are left unattended, their shortcomings could be transmitted to tomorrow's youngsters and the endless legion of those to be born after them. We are therefore facing the contrast between an intergenerational obligation limited to one generation toward the past, and an unlimited intergenerational obligation toward the future.

While the generation turned passive due to the passing of time deserves to receive solidarity on its own merit, because of the debt we have contracted with our elderly, the generation *still* passive but that will become active shortly would be damaged even before its own deployment, due to the lack of solidarity from its elders during its training years, when its potential remains still intact, thus generating a vicious circle that might continue indefinitely into the future.

The priorities perspective of the intergenerational solidarity should not ignore, also, that part of the elderly generation considered passive by the laws in force may not be so today and tomorrow thanks to the prolongation of the active life happening before our eyes. When this is no longer the case, the passive generation deserves a solicitous and respectful care, but even so, the adequate preparation of today's children and youngsters is the crucial theater of operations where the decisive battle for intergenerational solidarity is being fought.¹³

If the dilemma resulting from the need to agree on the support to the passive generation of the elderly on one hand, and of the children and youngsters on the other, aims in the direction of the latter without forgetting the former, the perception of this priority is accentuated even more in an infantile and juvenile continent such as Latin America.

¹³ Life expectancy in Europe increased from 63 to 73 years in the past 50 years. By 2050 it will reach 80 years. In Latin America it will grow from 70 years in 1995-2000 to 75.3 years in 2020-2025. The legal retirement age, in both cases, is around 65 years. While life expectancy grows in both continents, although more in Europe, the retirement age, in general, has not changed. Sources: International Labor Organization, February 2005 Report. Inter-governments Regional Conference on Aging: Towards a regional strategy of implementation for Latin America and the Caribbean of the Madrid International Action Plan on Aging, Santiago de Chile, 2003.

3. CAN BACKWARDNESS BE 'BETTER'?

When a comparison is made between the economic and social levels of the more developed countries and the less developed ones, sometimes these two classes of countries are imagined as traveling the same road, along a caravan whose vanguard is passing by the same spot where, in due time, the rear guard will also pass.

This idea that the present of developed countries is somehow the future of the Latin American countries, could be accepted in those cases where the developed countries exhibit better indexes than the Latin American ones. How could a Latin American country not wish for an 'European' future, when the gross product per inhabitant, the percentage of poor people, the schooling indexes or the consolidation of democratic institutions are mentioned?¹⁴

But this vision of a single caravan of nations, more and less developed, is no longer convincing when the 'vanguard' shows the deterioration of certain values that does not affect the 'rear guard' as yet, with the same intensity. If the decrease in the fertility rate is sharper in the vanguard countries – where some times does not even compensate the mortality rate – than in the rear guard countries, should we consider it a progress, only because it appears in the vanguard? If the typical family is 'nuclear' in Europe, because it tends to include only the parents and small children, but is wider in Latin America because it congregates the grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins and grown up brothers, which of the two regions is favored by this contrast? If the divorce rate is higher in Europe than in Latin America, should we Latin Americans wish we had it?¹⁵

¹⁴ In Latin America, the per capita income is \$ 3.251 per year. In the European Union it is \$ 28.110 per year. Source for Latin America, CEPAL, Anuario Estadístico de América Latina y el Caribe. For the European Union, CIA World Factbook. The schooling data in Latin America are the following: Illiterate, 10%, primary schooling index, 94.4%, secondary schooling index 65.2%, tertiary schooling rate, 22.6%. In Europe, the primary and secondary education index is slightly above 100%, the tertiary one was between 64% and 49%, depending on the country, in 2002/2003. Source for Latin America: CEPAL. For Europe and North America, UNESCO, For both regions, Education for All Report 2005.

¹⁵ The annual fertility rate in Latin America is 21.7 per one thousand inhabitants. The European one, 9.9 per thousand. The divorce rate in developing countries is 10 per one thousand inhabitants, while in the European Union it is 19 per one thousand inhabitants. 27% of the European homes are unipersonal. In Latin America, unipersonal homes range from 15.8% in Argentina to 3.4% in Honduras. The average in European homes is 2.8 persons per home. In Latin America it goes from 3.1 (Uruguay) to 5.1 (Nicaragua). Source: CEPAL, División de Estadísticas y Proyecciones Económicas. There are also important differences in

That Latin America conserves some characteristics of the traditional family, in whose bosom the intergenerational solidarity is, precisely, *born*, is it the merit of Latin Americans, because is a value they deliberately defended, or is it simply because, due to its historical backwardness, Latin Americans have not *yet* experienced the acute erosion of the traditional family brought by modernity, an erosion that, in time, will also affect our region?

The least that can be said in this respect is that, with the deterioration of family values shown by the developed countries, the less developed countries should experience in another head to prevent a damage whose magnitude has not reached them yet.

The fact that the economic and social development exhibited by leading countries is globally preferred to the underdevelopment of the countries coming behind them, does not necessarily mean that, in certain areas, the indicators in the former countries imply a step backwards rather than forward. Which means that, far from rushing behind the developed countries' model without establishing the necessary differences, the Latin American nations should forge a development model that we could call *mixed*, underlining next to those characteristics of the developed countries we all admire, other characteristics of the Latin American tradition that must not be lost due to their high social value. If we move this concept to the American continent, we should recognize that the comprehensive development of the Latin American countries has no reasons to reproduce the *American way of life*. There is also a *Latin American way of life*, with its own cultural roots, its own order of values, that has to be supported and perfected, but in no way abandoned.¹⁶

4. FAMILY AND FAMILISM

There are three main explanations for the gap that separates the more developed from the less developed countries. The first one, of an economic nature, is also called *structuralist*, because it refers to the macroeconomic data linked to development. Another explanation sometimes receive the

Europe, according to the cultural root of the country involved: while in Denmark unmarried couples reach 25% of all couples and 72% of the couples below 29 years of age, these percentages only reach an average of 8% in Italy, Spain, Portugal and Greece.

¹⁶ Cfr. Mariano Grondona, *Las condiciones culturales del desarrollo económico*, Ariel-Planeta, Buenos Aires, 1999, Capítulo XVII.

name of *institutionalistic*, because it emphasizes the gravitation of democratic political institutions, more vigorous in the developed countries.

A third explanation is called *culturalistic* because it underlines that in the vanguard countries values more compatible with democracy and economic development are in force, compared to the predominant values of the countries in the rear guard.¹⁷

The culturalistic theory, whose origin dates back to the classic book by Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethics and The Spirit of Capitalism*, published in 1904-1905, was updated by the studies made by Edward Banfield and Robert Putnam, centered on the contrast between the development in the North and the underdevelopment in the South of Italy. Today, Lawrence Harrison is the most effective promoter of culturalism.¹⁸

According to Banfield and Putman, the main obstacle in the development of Southern Italy, which also explains at least partially the Latin American underdevelopment, is *familism*, understanding as such a deviant order of values where loyalty towards the family comes before loyalty to the community as if both were incompatible. The most acute and exaggerated example of familism would be, according to this interpretation, the mafia. Don Corleone was not simply an 'immoral' being. He had 'another' moral scale, obviously questionable, according to which the family interest is so intense that it nullifies the general interest.

This erred priority would explain the scarce enforcement of the law in the Latin world, with its overload of tax evasion and corruption, as opposed to the strong law enforcement in the Anglo-Saxon world. The contrast of values between Anglo-Saxon countries and the Latin ones would explain, according to the above-mentioned authors, why those countries and not these ones are at the vanguard of development.

But familism, which according to this thesis would explain Latin backwardness, is only an exaggeration, the deformation of a value whose enforcement is necessary when we talk about solidarity between the generations because it is born precisely between parents and children. We speak

¹⁷ Cfr. Mariano Grondona, above mentioned work, Capítulos VI-VIII.

¹⁸ From Lawrence Harrison, see *Underdevelopment is a State of Mind*, published for the first time in 1985. Together with others such as Samuel Huntington and Francis Fukuyama, Harrison published in 2000 *Culture Matters*. And he also is responsible for *The Central Liberal Truth*, about to be released. From Edward Banfield, see *The Moral Basis of a Backward Society* (1958) and from Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work, Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (1993).

here about the value of the *family* in a well understood way, without additions nor deformations, whose presence is stronger in Latin countries than in Anglo-Saxon ones.

When the culturalistic theory came into the light with Weber, the figures of economic progress could still be used as an argument about the development of the countries with a Protestant cultural root, as opposed to the countries with a Catholic one. However, a century after Weber's classic book, the vision of a Protestant edge in the road to development is no longer unquestionable. The notorious progress of countries with a Catholic tradition such as Italy, Spain, Ireland and Portugal, the strong development drive in Asian countries with a Buddhist and Confucian cultural root, and even the fact that some Latin American countries, such as Chile, are heading towards development, reduce Weber's thesis to the role of a *historical* explanation which, if it was important at the beginning of development, seems to be losing its validity in our days due to the progress made by nations with a non-Protestant culture that have been able to protect, precisely, the value of the family, whose weakness in strongly individualistic countries is part of the problem of the intergenerational lack of solidarity.¹⁹

The profound contrast between an individualistic perception and a family-oriented perception of development can even be traced to the etymology linked to the words *happiness* and *felicidad*. If, as Aristotle already noted, the common wish of human beings is to reach happiness, this target is not defined in the same way in an individualistic culture and in a family-oriented one.²⁰

Although the word *felicity* exists in the English dictionary, when you talk about it in English, the word *happiness* is used, a noun related to the verb *to happen*. According to this perspective, 'happy' is the person who can achieve that whatever she wishes the most 'happens'. From there comes John Rawls' classic definition of happiness, as the awareness someone has that he is complying with his life plan and the confidence he also has that he will continue this way in the future. 'Someone' is, to begin with, an individual.²¹

¹⁹ Cfr. Angus Maddison. *The World Economy, 1820-1992. Analysis and Statistics. OECD perspectives, 1997*. In *The Catholic Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Michael Novak observes that the economic progress is no longer the privilege of Protestant countries (The Free Press, 1993).

²⁰ Aristotle talks about happiness in the first passages of his *Ethics to Nicomaco*.

²¹ Rawls defines *happiness* in paragraph 83 of his *Theory of Justice*.

The word *felicidad* that we Latin Americans use to refer to the status which according to Aristotle is searched by all human beings, responds instead to the Indo-European root *fe*, whose original meaning is 'to suck the bosom'. A Latin man identifies 'felicidad' with a woman, whether his mother or his companion, and he cannot longer say, according to Rawls' definition, 'I am' happy, but 'We are' happy. How? As a family. To the *fe* root, the words 'fertility', 'fecundity' and 'femininity' also correspond.²²

The supremacy of the family as a value can lead to exaggerations that result in 'familism', in a family authoritarian, overprotective or transgressor of the law, but there where the well understood supremacy of the family value does not prevail, an anguishing solitude accompanies the minimization of family links even if the 'life plan' of the individual continues to be complied within the economic and professional fields.²³

5. WHEN BACKWARDNESS IS 'WORSE'

If the task of preserving the family value can be *better done* in Latin American countries than in the more advanced ones, there are other areas, unfortunately numerous, where the Latin American backwardness is unquestionably *worse*.

To begin with, we think here about the Latin American *institutional immaturity*. When we review the social problems outlined in the above-mentioned Acta 10, it is worth mentioning that what is being criticized by several authors from the developed countries, who would like to improve on it, is the existence of several *social policies* they consider unsatisfactory in fields such as education, health and social security. These social policies are even less satisfactory in Latin America, but what is missing here is something more important because it is *previous* to policies: it is *politics* as such, i.e. the State organization conceived as an efficient agent for the common good. Without a solid and stable democratic State, without an adequate political format, it is difficult to have rational and continuous 'policies' aiming at the systematic overcoming of social problems. (In the field

²² Cfr. R. Grandsaignes d'Hauterive, *Dictionnaire des Racines des Langues Européennes*, Librairie Larousse, Paris.

²³ In Latin America, unipersonal families reach from 3.4% in Costa Rica to 15.8% in Argentina, while in the European Union they reach 27%. Source: 'Fuentes Estadísticas', del Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas de España.

of the educational policy, with its high intergenerational impact, it should be mentioned the *Declaration on Globalization and Education*, jointly produced by the two Pontifical Academies in November, 2005).

Thus, as long as in developed countries the basic problem is to reform certain policies looking for more efficient ones, in the Latin American countries the basic problem is to make these policies viable through time, thanks to a persistent action of a reliable State.

But a democratic State, to be the vehicle of rational and stable policies, usually called *State policies*, must be somehow prepared to ensure a prolonged enforcement of them through a succession of *governments* that, despite responding to several political parties, ideologies and leaderships, retain notwithstanding the long term objectives that the democratic *State* has set.

This has been possible in developed countries starting from a fundamental consensus among its main parties, which have made an express or implicit commitment about protecting certain principles, regardless which of them governs. One of the most notorious examples of this consensus and continuity was shown by the Spanish democracy with the 'Moncloa pacts' in 1977, thanks to which Spain traveled from underdevelopment to development in a few decades.

When there is a permanent pact among the democratic parties, the political stability of the State is assured because, both outside and inside the country, it is known that regardless which party governs, the fundamental development lines will be maintained. This long-term perspective is decisive to materialize an unavoidable condition for economic development: the ample and continuous flow of productive investments.

On the contrary, in Latin America we have frequently seen that the government emerging from a new election believes that it starts a new era, opposed to the previous one. The new government becomes then the assumed representative of this new era, whose sunrise coincides with the proclaimed rebirth of the nation, while the previous government embodies everything that went wrong so far, becoming a 'scapegoat' whose sacrifice, sometimes in the form of proscriptions and persecutions, is shown as a necessary condition for the desired regeneration to come.

But the scapegoat story tends to repeat itself. The guilty of yesterday, once they pay the political price of their errors, will end up by finally joining the new discontented ones when the government that announced the rebirth shows its own errors and suffers its own erosion, with which the vicious circle of successive stages of hope and frustration continues to turn.

In the Latin American countries thus hurt because of the exclusive blaming of the adversary turned into an 'enemy', we see the repetitious generation of contradictory stages of governments that mutually accuse and contradict each other, instead of the continuity of a State faithful to its own principles through different, but not contradictory, governments.

This is the difference between a continuous historical line of development and a historical zigzag line, like a 'saw', that results in an off-course navigation. In situations such as this one, the constant progress that would permit the Latin American nations to finally cross, along several decades, the desert that separates them from development becomes improbable.

The only way to progress toward the development target is the creation of a long period of consensus, pluralism and continuity, during which a nation can advance without dismay. Instead of this overcoming *cycle*, supported by State policies, what many Latin American countries had was an agitated succession of *minicycles*, not of some 'decades', but of some 'years', after which the supposedly redeeming government is replaced by another one that challenges it because it has betrayed the expectations it once generated, to start again his own 'minicycle' condemned to a similar end due to the absence of a multi-party consensus.

This syndrome of political and institutional instability is frequently accompanied by the emergence and later fall of personalistic leaders called *caudillos* who, instead of trusting the rotation of democratic institutions bet everything on the radiation of their own 'charisma'. Political bosses replace the institutions from there onwards, and confuse the State progress with the ups and downs of their own biography.

If this has been the logic behind the Latin American political instability, due to the lack of 'State policies', it must also be recognized that in some countries of the region government successions are beginning to appear within the framework of continuity, without minding which is the government whose turn to be in power has come. This is because, above the political parties and their leaders, a State that is faithful to its long term objectives begins to take hold, generally accompanied by rules that restrict the presidential re-election to avoid the false short cut of the 'caudillos'. The existence of such examples is a basis for hope about an authentic Latin American development in coming decades.²⁴

²⁴ We could thus talk of a new 'caravan' of nations, this time Latin American, whose vanguard is being occupied by countries such as Chile, in the direction of development.

6. CORRUPTION

A corruption *act* occurs when the holder of an obligation opts for his own benefit instead of benefiting whoever he is obliged to serve. If the person who thus betrays his moral commitment is a public officer, elected or appointed, we are talking about an act of *political corruption*.

The political corruption is twice as serious because it de-naturalizes the behavior of those in charge of controlling the behavior of the mass of citizens, giving way to the famous Roman question: In cases like this, 'who will take into custody the custodians?' If those in charge of the custody of the citizens' behavior are corrupt, the society is left in the wilderness.

Acts of corruption, that the 'custodians' must sanction, exist everywhere. The problem of corruption appear in its full scope, however, when not only more or less isolated corruption 'acts' but also a *state* of corruption appears, i.e. the proliferation of corruption acts in such a magnitude that society considers them usual, and therefore foreseeable. When the first thing a citizen thinks when he deals with a Customs agent, a bureaucrat or a transit policeman is how much he will have to pay 'on the side', that citizen is living in the midst of a state of corruption.

Acts of corruption upset but do not destroy the democratic State. The state of corruption blocks it, instead, until it turns it unviable. First of all, because it spreads a generalized 'mood of suspicion', whereby the society does not believe in its politicians and officers and tends to corrupt itself through the non-compliance with the law and through tax evasion, under the pretext that the State has lost its legitimacy because it is the first one to cheat. Secondly, because it generates self-defeating decisions, since the corrupt authority, when a law or a resolution is passed, or a tender awarded, does not select the best one for the common good but the best one for the individual interests of the officers involved and their private accomplices, all of which ends up in the squander of national resources.

In the States that adulterate their purpose and *raison d'être*, in the States that become 'corrupt' according to the famous classification of the forms of government due to Aristotle, corruption determines their caducity as agents of the common good. In these cases it is frequent to see that candidates who have promised to fight against corruption in order to respond to their anguished voters during the electoral campaign, gain access to positions of power. But it is also frequent to see that what those candidates really pretended was not to overcome the inherited state of corruption, but to replace their predecessors' corruption with their own. In processes such as this one,

not only the tax collection loses its meaning, but also foreign aid to underdeveloped countries is diverted to benefit those who fraudulently administer it, instead of reaching those who badly need it.²⁵

When corruption statistics in the current world are developed, such as the one annually published by Transparency International, one verifies that the corruption level reflects almost exactly the underdevelopment level of the countries examined. We do not know then if the state of corruption – that counterfeits the representative democracy because the representatives no longer represent the general interest but their own – is an *effect* or a *cause* of underdevelopment.

Latin America is placed in the least favored position in the list of countries affected by corruption prepared by Transparency International, only 'behind' Africa and the least developed nations in Asia. Transparency International puts a 'grade' from 0 to 10 in the subject of fighting against corruption to the 159 nations included in its survey. The first twenty positions in the list are occupied by developed countries with high marks that go from 7.4 to 9.7. The best placed Latin American country is Chile, with 7.3 points, placed 21st, even ahead of developed countries such as Spain (7), Portugal (6.5) and Italy (5). With 5.9 points Uruguay occupies the 32nd position, well ahead of the remaining Latin American countries.

From there, these remaining 19 Latin American countries surveyed by Transparency International appear with a maximum of 4.2 points in the 51th place (Costa Rica) and with a minimum 2.1 points in the 144th place (Paraguay). These 19 countries 'fail' the anti-corruption test, with an average of only 3.1 points.

One could think that the most important Latin American countries are somehow free from this low mark, but it is not so: while Brazil appears in the 62nd place with 3.7 points and Mexico in the 65th with 3.5, Argentina occupies the 97th with 2.8 points.

If we take into consideration that the average grade in the fight against corruption in the 30 developed countries is 7.5, one can easily see that with the above mentioned exceptions of Chile and Uruguay, Latin American countries border a true state of corruption, making illusory the plans proclaimed by their governments to overcome underdevelopment.²⁶

²⁵ Cfr. Mariano Grondona, *La Corrupción*, Buenos Aires, Planeta.

²⁶ Cfr. Transparency International, Report on the Global Corruption Barometer (2005).

7. THE REPUBLICAN INGREDIENT

Purely economic data are frequently chosen to illustrate the Latin American underdevelopment. But it does not follow, however, that the main cause of the Latin American underdevelopment is an economic one. There is an abundance of natural and human resources in Latin America that could have brought development. Why were they badly used? Because, as we have just suggested, the *decision making system* of Latin American States has failed. But the decision-making system of a country is, essentially, a *political* factor. From here comes the paradox that, although it shows economic symptoms unfortunately evident, Latin American underdevelopment is not ultimately an economic phenomenon.

To claim the opposite would be equivalent to saying that the cause of an illness, let us say lung cancer, is the invasive progress of cancer cells in the lung, without considering that who is suffering it has smoked several packs of cigarettes daily for decades. The cause of cancer in this example has not been the progress of the cancer cells, but the defective decision making system of the inveterate smoker.

In the same manner, what has caused the Latin American backwardness is not the economic process itself, but the defective decision-making system that generated it. Following this line of reasoning, one would then conclude that the *economic* Latin American delay comes from the failed Latin American *politics*.

One could look for the origin of these failed policies in the military authoritarianism that has devastated for so long the countries in the region, but it could also be said that once Latin Americans were able to overcome the military systems in the past two decades, they have not been able to replace them with *republican democracies* like the ones prevailing in developed countries, but by hybrid systems more or less close to an *authoritarian democracy*.

The republican democracy is a mixed political regime, formed by a democratic ingredient and a republican one. The democratic ingredient determines the popular election of the ruler. The republican ingredient assures in turn that the ruler, once elected to head the executive branch of the government, will not have absolute power but will be moderated by other actors in charge of controlling his possible excesses, such as the parliament, the local governments, an independent press, the judiciary, and a series of intermediate groups such as trade unions, entrepreneurs and, in general, non governmental organizations.

The development of the republican democracy has had its best expressions, in this respect, where the authoritarianism of absolute monarchies or dictatorships were first replaced by republics which, although still sustained by minorities, became the trial field for tolerance and pluralism, until they expanded later to authentic expressions of the majority rule. In the best cases of political development, the republican ingredient *preceded* the democratic ingredient, finally mixing with it.²⁷

In Latin America, instead, we have frequently followed the opposite course. The military or civilian autocracy was replaced in many cases by the irruption of a non-republican democracy, i.e. the election of a president who, instead of leading a pluralistic system of power that without denying his precedence would balance it, assumed a new authoritarian power in its *exercise*, not in its *origin*, (due to its popular legitimacy) without recognizing at the same time other limits than his own popularity, often obtained and maintained through demagogic promises.

These promises, on one part, reflected the messianic expectation of voters themselves, but on the other part expressed the intention of maintaining them under the illusion of an imminent prosperity without attending to their long-term interests through the establishment of State policies reached by consensus, oriented towards development. In this way, the 'minicycles' gear was cemented in Latin America, with its alternative moods of expectations and frustrations previously mentioned.

But we also said before that, due to a long and painful learning process, there are already some Latin American countries that start to recognize the strategic value of the republican ingredient of democracy, which represents for the region a luminous signal of hope. At least in some cases the inveterate smoker is quitting smoking.

8. BI-PARTISANSHIP OR CAUDILLISMO

Countries have then reached or not economic and social development depending on whether they had or lacked an efficient decision making system, more oriented toward the long than the short term. In advanced democracies, this system has been achieved through the alternation of two

²⁷ In *The Future of Freedom*, Fareed Zakaria attributes the success of advanced democracies to their republican origin (W.W. Norton & Company, 2003).

parties in power, which on the one hand shared a global vision of the economic and social development requirements through functional State policies, on the other hand freely and periodically competed with one another.

On the contrary, what has delayed Latin American countries has been a defective political decision making process marked by political bosses who, despite their often democratic origin, pretended absolute power through unlimited re-elections until their 'minicycle' ended and a new boss begun another one, repeating the formula of his frustrated predecessor.

The cure for this typical Latin American ailment is obvious: the configuration of a *bi-partisan system* whose key no longer consists in a turbulent succession of political bosses but in an institutional and non personalistic formula thanks to the coincidence of the two predominant parties around a series of State policies within which, and only within which, a periodical competition for the head of the democratic power may be fought.

Fortunately this democratic-republican political formula, no longer discussed in Europe, North America, Oceania and the most advanced part of Asia, starts to open its way in Latin America.

In 1990, when dictator Pinochet left after 17 years of absolute power, the *Concertación Democrática* consecrated in the ballots the Christian Democrat Patricio Aylwin as the new Chilean President. The country owes him two fundamental contributions. The first one is to have continued, in its essence, the economic policy established by Hernán Büchi, the last Economy Ministry of the Pinochet government, who launched Chile along the way of a long-term economic growth, his policy becoming when accepted by Aylwin, in retrospective, a State policy through which the social vocation of the *Concertación* started to materialize, without altering its inherited macroeconomic profile.

Aylwin made his second contribution when he rejected the re-electionist temptation in 1994. After this rejection, which became foundational, none of his successors Frei and Lagos went for re-election, and were able to reduce poverty by 50%, well below the Latin American average. The new president Michelle Bachelet promises to consolidate this non-reelection continuity. Although all four of them are members the *Concertación*, while Aylwin and Frei are Christian-Democrats, Lagos and Bachelet are socialists. The opposing center-right party, behind Sebastián Piñera's leadership, is supported by almost half of the Chileans, thus insuring that the country has a *second party* that can win and govern without altering the State policies.

On the other hand, the example of the Chilean republican democracy does not seem to be the only one, since other Latin American nations such

as Brazil, Uruguay and Mexico start to follow a similar path. In fact, after the eight years of Fernando Henrique Cardoso's center-right government, the irruption of the ex communist Lula in the presidency did not divert Brazil from the rational economic course established by his predecessor. When Brazilians elect again the head of the Executive branch of the government, with a regulations system that does not grant presidents the possibility of a third mandate, Lula will have to compete with a center-right candidate, and none of the two will question the State policies in force. Thus this country, the largest one in Latin America, seems to be entering the bi-partisan regime that has proven its efficacy in advanced democracies.

The same could be said about Uruguay, where the traditional predominance of the Colorado and Blanco center-right parties was interrupted by the Frente Amplio headed by Tabaré Vazquez, the new president, whose center-left ideology has not blocked the continuation of the rational economic lines he inherited.

Mexico, in turn, has gone in recent years from the political domination of a single party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) that had governed it for more than seventy years, to a sort of 'tri-partisanship' between the center-right National Autonomist Party (PAN) headed by President Fox, the PRI and the Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), more to the left, without this giving ground to the fears – which nevertheless exists – that the PRD presidential candidate Manuel López Obrador, if he wins, may fall into the vices of populist personalism. On the other hand, it is foreseeable that this 'tri-partisanship' will become a transition stage which in due time will end in a bi-partisanship comparable to those of advanced democracies.

In the other extreme of the Latin American political chart appears Hugo Chávez, the Venezuelan president, a typical *caudillo* who has already announced his plan for endless re-elections. Through populist clientelism policies that have resulted in a significant increase of the poor, whom he tries to attract with demagogical slogans, Chávez concentrates power to such degree that in the last mid-term elections, 75% of the citizens rejected voting due to lack of guarantees. This drastic increase in electoral abstention might be indicating that the beginning of the end of the *caudillo* has slowly started in Venezuela.²⁸

²⁸ In 1987 the poverty level in Chile was 45.1%. In 2000 it had decreased to 20.6%. Source: UNICEF, 2004. In 2001 the poverty level in Venezuela was 39.1%. In 2004 it was 53.1%. Source: Instituto Nacional de Estadísticas de Venezuela.

As Néstor Kirchner, the Argentine president, concentrates all the power through the dominion of the Justicialista Party, the Judiciary and the Congress, he seems to insinuate a personalistic strategy consistent with his peronist predecessors Juan Domingo Perón and Carlos Menem. But as yet, it cannot be said that he has fully materialized his populist rhetoric. Beyond Chávez and Kirchner, of course, Fidel Castro governs Cuba without any kind of institutional restrictions since 1959, positing himself, without doubt, outside the Latin American democratic mainstream.

9. NEIGHBORHOOD OF NATIONS

As we have seen, the fundamental problem of the Latin American economic and social underdevelopment is of a political nature. If having a democratic regime capable of designing long term State policies is the previous condition necessary to place Latin America effectively on the road to answer the challenge presented by the moral imperative of intergenerational solidarity, one can say that Latin American nations find themselves today at a crossroad. On the one hand, they are threatened by the eventual prolongation of the populist tradition to which they owe their backwardness. On the other hand, hope appears behind the deepening of the political and institutional change that some of them have already insinuated: the advent of democratic republics, similar to those prevailing in developed nations.

Populism consists in the pretension of satisfying the immediate aspirations of the majority of the people through short-term measures. This pretension receives a warm popular welcome because the immediate needs of the Latin Americans are certainly much more urgent than those of the developed countries, whose more well-to-do situation facilitates a wider temporal vision.

Given this accumulation of unsatisfied urgent needs, added to the low educational level, the Latin American populations become more easily the catch of populist partisan bosses, of demagogues who stimulate their expectations of 'magical' solutions that cannot be sustained in the long term. Although populist political bosses do not acknowledge, or pretend not to acknowledge this mistake, they nevertheless obtain what for them matters the most, to win the next elections, thus enjoying with popular acceptance a new 'minicycle' until reality irrupts to refute them.

The specific effect of the 'minicycles' is, however, increased poverty. It is anguishing to see that this does not seem to affect demagogues' behavior, that

it even seems to favor them in immediate terms, because, when they throw the masses to new poverty levels without offering them the advantage of a better education, they make them even more dependent on social policies that appear as alleviating their problems but end up in aggravating them.

A *clientelistic* relationship is thus established between demagogues and their followers, whose dependence on the politicians that administer social programs becomes more and more imperious, with a paradoxical translation of their electoral loyalty to the very same originators of the disorder, a loyalty assured by poverty and ignorance. When political bosses return to Latin America under any form, one would have to apply them what José Ortega y Gasset wrote about a comparable situation in Spain in the past century: 'Now they are proposing as a solution the return of those who originated the trouble'.

This is the common brand of Latin American populism, a flow that is neither center-left nor center-right because it does not respond to the ideological alternatives of serious political regimes.²⁹

The word 'populism' also contains a serious conceptual error, when it emphasizes the word 'people' instead of emphasizing the word 'nation'. In effect, the *people* is the sum of the contemporaries. The *nation*, instead, is a succession of peoples through time. This means that when the 'accounting of justice' is made, about what corresponds to who, the 'populist' vision only includes those alive, without considering the ones that will live after them.

But it is in the national dimension where also those who do not vote, either because they are children or because they have not yet been born, are taken into account. In the dimension of a people without nation, only the intra-generational generosity can be applied. That is why the populist vision of justice only tends to distribute what is available among those who are there, without reserving resources for the future under the form of investments. Populism even resorted to the exponential increase of the public debt, a heavy burden for those to come, in order to satisfy the expectations of immediate relief created by it among its contemporaries.

²⁹ In an article titled *Decálogo del Populismo*, published by the Argentine newspaper *La Nación*, the Mexican writer Enrique Krauze found surprising coincidences between the Latin American populism and the description of demagogy in the *Politics* by Aristotle. From Krauze one can also read a lucid review of the current Mexican politics in *Foreign Affairs* ('Furthering Democracy in Mexico', *Foreign Affairs*, January-February 2006).

It is only in a national dimension that one can conceive what Rawls called 'the just savings principle' in the direction of those who do not vote as yet. But this prevision, which is logical and natural in the family bosom, is not so in the political regimes whose leaders, instead of thinking about the next generation, instead of being 'intergenerational', only think about the next election.³⁰

But this fatal defect of the short-term temptation omnipresent in populism can only be eradicated once the two main parties agree on a long-term development project. Because when they sign it, they also renounce to the possibility of obtaining demagogical advantages from their rival, thus removing the immediate political cost of the rational measures to be adopted by the government. When the heart-rending dilemma between the short and the long term, between the demagogic temptation and political prudence, is thus eliminated from the electoral competition, only then the road to economic and social development opens again.

We said before that this bi-partisan agreement looking towards the long term is already materializing in some Latin American countries. How could it extend to the ones still trapped in the clientelistic network of populism?

In our help comes the answer to a question we had not made as yet. What is Latin America? How to attribute to it a common essential characteristic that may cover nations so different as are those in a continent populated by over five hundred million people?

By saying that rather than being a region divided into some twenty countries, Latin America is really a *neighborhood of nations*. The Latin American countries have strong common features in their history and culture. But their main characteristic is that, perhaps due to this profound affinity that dates back to the past, each one of them is particularly attentive about what happens to the other ones. Every Latin American nation cares a lot about what happens to the other ones, but not only to trade with them but to look at them in an intensive manner; thanks to the drive of a sort of historical *curiosity* which ends up in imitation or aversion. Each Latin American nation presents itself before the others in this way, whether they want it or not, as a 'model' to be followed or as an 'anti-model' to be avoided. We spy on each other. We have illusions or are outraged about each other, but not because of territorial conflicts, as was the case in Europe for a long time, but because some of us approve or reject what the others are doing. Each Latin American nation

³⁰ John Rawls speaks about the 'just savings principle', of an intergenerational nature, in paragraph 44 of his *Justice Theory*.

inspires in the other ones that are looking at it out of the corner of their eyes, an attraction or repulsion movement. Latin America thus behaves like a tightly-packed neighborhood of nations.

This common characteristic of the Latin Americans is today a basis for regional hope. If some Latin American countries persist in deepening the model of the republican and bi-partisan democratic model they are adopting, they will be able to show to the rest the fruits of constant progress and inter-generational solidarity. If those governments that have chosen instead the ephemeral profits of the short term, persist in their attitude as some do today, sooner or later they will suffer the exhaustion of their shortsightedness.

With the hope of this double learning, through trial and error, brought by the achievements and failures of neighbors, a positive horizon appears for the economic and social development of Latin American democracies.

10. APPENDIX: THE 'APORIA' OF THE LATIN AMERICAN CATHOLICISM

The Greek word *aporia*, (*a*, 'without'; *poros*, 'road'), could be literally translated as a 'street with no way out'. It was used by Aristotle at the beginning of his *Metaphysics* when, after observing that 'men naturally look for knowledge' noted that, in the course of the search for knowledge, we sometimes find ourselves in streets with apparently no way out. When colliding with this obstacle, men eagerly look for an answer. Philosophy and science emerged, precisely, from the effort of overcoming this challenge. Without the *aporia*, the systematic investigation through which we try to satisfy our vocation for knowledge would not have developed.

When we ask ourselves about the role of Catholicism in Latin America, we find ourselves facing the following *aporia*: How is it possible that Catholicism being, as it is, the religion with the highest presence in our region, it has been unable to take Latin America to a high degree of development, and it has furthermore left a space that other religious currents could penetrate, for example the Evangelic movement? If we find the right answer to this *aporia*, it would also be possible to design an effective program to return the Latin American Catholicism to the crucial position it should never have left.

The *aporia* of Latin American Catholicism is so demanding, its edges so sharp, and the landscape aimed at so vast, that here we can only outline it with the hope that others with more wisdom offer their answer. In any case, we are daring to suggest a couple of lines of investigation.

The first one is that the Patronage institution that for centuries characterized the relationship between the State and the Church in Latin America brought with it the *statist* ailment, whose enforcement, as in other fields, put an obstacle to the Catholics' initiatives. When the State says that it is taking charge of initiatives that should rather be taken by the society, it not only violates the subsidiarity principle but it also induces the members of the society to leave in its hands what they should have taken into theirs.

It is this, perhaps, the case of the Catholics' role in Latin America? When the State assumes the role of protector of a religion, does it not discourage it in the effort to develop its own responsibility? When the State unduly assumes the protagonism of solidarity, is it not trying to hoard at the same time the responsibility of the citizens, particularly the Catholic ones, for the progress of the less favored members of their own generation and the members of next generations? From the moment when the Church and the Catholics tend to get rid of the suffocating and also inefficient tutelage of a 'statist' State, don't they feel the intense renovation of their own energy, of their own creativity?

Another line of investigation in response to the *aporia* of Latin American Catholicism could also take us to ask if, when we eagerly looked for an answer to its role in the development of the region, we Catholics have not followed an apparently progressive track through roads such as the so-called 'Liberation Theology' or the 'Third World priests movement', when the basis for our action were already there, before our eyes, in the rich deposit of the Church's social doctrine which, we may add, has been ordered recently in a luminous compendium?

I remember that when Pope John Paul II died, Sergio Bergman, an Argentine rabbi, made me note that Benedictus XVI's predecessor could be so revolutionary in issues such as the relationship between Catholics and Jews precisely because he was a 'conservative'. Because, Bergman continued, only who is firmly installed in a tradition can 'afford' venturing in the demand for new horizons. Those who persist, on the contrary, in looking for renovation outside from what has been acquired, inevitably tint their noble zeal with a sensation of uncertainty, of insecurity.

When so many Catholics inhabited by the noble renovation zeal were looking for it outside their authentic religious and intellectual identity, were they not risking the exploration of somehow inconsistent explanations? And if this was so, didn't this risk materialize in the replacement of thousands of years of wisdom by a series of 'fashions', as such temporary?

I am outlining these question marks, as I said before, as an attempt certainly insufficient to look for a way out to the urging *aporia* of Latin American Catholicism.

SOCIAL POLICIES IN BRAZIL AIMED AT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

PATRUS ANANIAS

When analyzing the youth in a foreseeable future for our generation, I wish one could use less the term 'turbulent'. In fact we live a time that shakes our confidence to build a more dignifying, human and equalitarian world. This historical period threatens to cloud the horizons of history if we are not firmly committed to our goals. It is a challenge that magnifies our responsibility to build a better future for our youth.

The globalized world brought about a fragmented time, the hegemony of the neoliberal rhetoric deprived of universal values and marked by all kinds of exclusions – economic and social and also in the realms of knowledge, information and culture. In the times of globalization and post-modernity, remarkable achievements of human and collective values are scarce. Then we are more than never confronted with the challenge of rescuing, incorporating and broadening ethical values that have been consolidated in the last two thousand years under the aegis of the best part of the Christian thought. These values are based on the defense of the human dignity, the primacy of human life, the defense of the common good, the care towards the poor. We need to recover the presence of God and the reference to the values of Justice. Technological progress, which thinkers inspired by Enlightenment conceived as a clue to strengthen human potentials, has reinforced social contradictions rather than consolidating Enlightenment ideals. The wave of triumphant capitalism has once more paved the way to an era of the 'temple merchants', which undermines the social fabric and turns the market itself into the new temple. The supreme reference has turned out to be money, private property unlinked to its social function, profit by all means has become the current expression of the 'golden calf'. The consequence of the divinization of consumption is the loss of the fundamental values that inspire human development, and casts a shadow upon the importance of mediation of human conflicts and human relations. The

weakening of references represents a remarkable challenge for the formation of young people, whose opportunities are compromised by anxiety, anguish and doubts. An objective assessment of our challenging times leads us to pessimism.

On the one hand we are pessimistic about our historical period, on the other the work and efforts to face the challenges in Brazil and other Latin American and Caribbean countries allow space for optimism. The acknowledgement of our difficulties must stimulate the search for solutions to change reality, instead of giving space to inaction. Therefore, I take this opportunity to talk about the source of our hope as far the future of the children and young people of my country is concerned.

Brazil recognizes the effects of the post-modern and global times, to which must be added a historical social debt that have accentuated social inequalities for a long time. Shattered families, young people with few or no perspectives, unemployment, child labor, sexual violence against children and teenagers, child prostitution, hunger, all these factors bring about generalized hopelessness among young people. These are some of the challenges we are trying to overcome. Since we came to power in 2003 we have been maintaining, consolidating and widening social policies with the purpose of establishing a new paradigms to protect and support poor families. I may say we have been successful in carrying out the task through a set of policies that promotes investment to benefit of our youth.

Social policies aimed at the most vulnerable family of our country are a State priority now and represent one of the main tokens of progress in our country. For the first time in our history social policies are dealt as public policies, regulated by specific legislation, they are planned and carried out according to objective and clear criteria, oriented by goals supported by social indicators.

Before considering policies aimed at children and young people, it is important to stress that the concern over these segment of society comes before any specific action. Our policies are basically centered on the family, not on individuals, and are geared towards an integrated implementation, so as to compose a web of social protection and promotion.

President Lula took this point into consideration when he launched the 'Zero Hunger' program, inspired by the highest values of the Christian tradition and the social teaching of the Catholic Church that are expressed in Latin America as the option for the poor. The 'Zero Hunger' program is a governmental strategy that articulates policies aimed at promoting the right to life, starting from the most basic level of human dignity, the right

to nourishment, most of all in the case of the poorest groups of the society. This strategy bring together actions carried out by eleven ministries, the core of which is the 'Bolsa Família' program, a program of income transfer with conditionalities.

The creation of the Ministry of Social Development and Fight Against Hunger (MSD), in January 2004, is also the byproduct of this conception of articulated implementation of public policies. The 'Bolsa Família' comprises programs carried out by two ministries – Social Assistance and Food safety – and a special secretary directly subordinated to the Presidency. The coordination goes beyond the bureaucratic sphere because all programs are linked and carried out in a synergy, which implies a political action under the aegis of the common conception of promoting social development.

Bringing together different areas and valuing the family are founding principles of an official decision that is strictly followed by all the unities of our Ministry. By concentrating our attention on the family and on the urge to recover and strengthen family ties, we are preserving cardinal values in the formation of our citizens. This is reflected in the names of the programs carried out by the different Ministries: 'Bolsa Família', National Program for the Strengthening of Family Agriculture, Houses of Family, Program for the Eradication of Child Labor.

The 'Bolsa Família' program, the major program of income distribution with conditionalities, reaches nowadays nine million families. It provides a basic income to those families who have a monthly income per person that is not higher than R\$ 120 (US\$ 57). This program guarantees the basic and sacred right to nourishment and enables the children of the beneficiary family to attend school and have access to sanitary protection, provided they comply with conditionalities (school attendance and mandatory vaccination).

From this year on, the 'Bolsa Família' project is bound in a formal and direct link to our efforts to fight and eliminate child labor, one of the most damaging situations to the future of a child. We are promoting its integration with the Program for the Eradication of Child Labor – PETI, composed by two main strategies. The first is the income transfer, a monetary contribution to families so their children attending school may also take part in social and educational activities through the day. The second strategy is the transfer of resources to communities entitled to carry out these activities. Therefore the resources of the PETI program may be directed to its main purpose, that is, to promote social and educational activities aimed at recovering the sense of citizenship and the self-reliance of children and young people. This integration enabled us to reach all children or young

people who illegally work in our country, a category estimated in 2,77 million. The Ministry of Social Development is currently carrying out a research to assess the possibility of integration the PETI program and the 'Sentinela' program, an initiative against child and juvenile prostitution. It is an effort aimed at strengthening the measures to eradicate one of the major challenges of modern societies, the sexual exploitation of children and young people.

Under this unified system of social assistance, the Family Houses project provides social and psychological care, try to identify specific local needs and to find possible solutions for them. There are currently 1,49 million families assisted by 1980 centers. These groups have carried out actions of strategic importance for the implementation of complementary policies of labor training, promotion of jobs and income increase, therefore widening the social integration of these families under the perspective of personal emancipation.

Our efforts on food security are inspired by the Encyclical Letter *Mater et Magistra*, by John XXIII, the 'peasant pope', who considered family agriculture a strong support for a democratic and stable society. The budget for the National Program for the Promotion of Family Agriculture has increased 275% in the last three years. Today it involves 1,57 million financial activities. In order to strengthen this initiative, we have conceived the Program for the Acquisition of Family Agriculture Products, which promotes the acquisition of staple food from small landowners aimed at the formation of a strategic stock for the provision of basic food needs and distribution of milk to children, pregnant women and old people of poor families. On one hand, the program promotes the local agriculture and stimulates the stable settlement of families in the countryside, providing them with conditions for stability. On the other, it is an instrument for the promotion of the food security of poor families.

The special care towards the youth is an important component of the mobilization of the government of President Lula for the promotion of poor families in Brazil. Therefore, the programs specifically aimed at them are an evolving web we have been weaving, by means of policies geared to social emancipation and 'youth empowerment'.

The Secretary General of the Presidency, in collaboration with the Ministries of Social Development, of Education and of Labor, has carried out the National Program for Youth Inclusion ('Pró-Jovem'), the aim of which is to attend 400.000 young people from 18 to 24 years old between 2005 and 2007. This program requires partnership with under-federal unities.

We also carry out the Young Agent Program, aimed at 112.000 young people in 1.077 cities, with a budget of about R\$ 86 million (US\$ 40 million). In this program poor young boys and girls between 15 and 17 years old receive a monthly stipend of R\$ 65 (US\$ 31) during one year, provided they attend school and take part in training courses to support their communities in health care, environment protection and civic education. We plan to promote professional training to the poorest young people included by the 'Bolsa Família' program, with the collaboration of the Ministry of Labor.

In partnership with the United Nations Development Program, by means of a contest we selected 28 public and communitarian universities to carry out 38 projects of labor integration of socially vulnerable people, which give special priority to people at the same age level as those attended by the 'Pró-Jovem' program (from 18 to 24 years old) and engage them in the family and local context.

The educational policy is another outstanding element aimed at widening the training options for our children and young people. In this sense the Government has conceived a project for the creation of the Fund for the Maintenance and Development of Basic Education and Promotion of Education Professionals.

The Program for the Expansion of Professional Education is another relevant initiative of the federal government that involves training schools and conceives the institution of technical schools at the intermediate level. In the field of higher education, new federal universities and 42 new campi have been planned. The University for All Program forecasts the creation of four hundred thousand scholarships in private higher education institutions in the coming four years. The intention is to increase the number of posts and to engage the public and free education in the fight against social and economical inequality.

Considering only the initiatives carried out by the Ministry of Social Development, we estimate that programs for social inclusion reach about 17 million children and young people. They are also supported by the Program for the Eradication of Child Labor ('Peti'), the Program for Fighting Sexual Abuse and Violence Against Child and Young People ('Sentinela'), the Program for Intensive Family Care, thought the Family Houses, and most of all the 'Bolsa Família' project.

The eradication of child labor is a feasible possibility in Brazil. I am certain that my generation will have the opportunity to witness the end of hunger and malnutrition in our country. According to current trends, extreme poverty will cease to be a sad inheritance to future generations. In

contrast to what was done in the past, we have been supporting income distribution in order to promote sustainable economic development with social justice. Therefore it has been possible to break the free market logic and defend its regulation in order to benefit the poorest groups of society. With the basic income and the improvement of professional training initiatives, our young people have recovered hope in their future. Their families are a strong reference again. I have if not all at least many and remarkable reasons to face the future with hope.

We have been building the possibility of changing reality. Nevertheless I think we should unite our efforts so this possibility of change may become a reality in other countries also. The world have already recognized the importance of investing in the youth, of protecting and promoting poor families, both for ethical and practical reasons, in order to guarantee the sustainability of economical development. This path is indicated by the declaration of the eight millennium development goals sponsored by the United Nations.

We acknowledge the striking social debt we have accumulated thorough our history, a fact that is also linked to the colonization process and other patterns of unbalanced economical relation with richer countries. This situation was properly denounced in the three encyclical letters that deal in a more direct way with justice in international relations – *Pacem in Terris*, by Pope John XXIII, *Populorum Progressio*, by Pope Paul VI, and *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, by Pope John Paul II, published in commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of *Populorum Progressio*.

We are confident to overcome this social debt. And we have been mobilizing the efforts of our people in tandem with the initiatives of people of good will around the world. We need this international solidarity, this web of people engaged in building a better future for the generations to come. We need them in order to achieve the promise of Jesus the Nazarene, the Prince of Peace, 'I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly'.

COMMENT TO MARIANO GRONDONA'S PAPER

JUAN J. LLACH

It is not an easy task to comment on such a well written and soundly based paper as Mariano Grondona's one. He starts pointing out the overwhelming and two-dimensional social debt that characterizes Latin America (LA). The first dimension is the *intra-generational*, i.e., the solidarity debt between people from the same generation, whose main responsibility is in the hands of public officials, political, economic and social leaders and those who are better off. The second one is the *intergenerational*, i.e., that of people in active ages towards the elder, the youngsters, the children and generations yet unborn. According to Grondona, nobody is innocent. We all are debtors, because life is a gift we have received from God and, as a consequence, we all were born theologically and philosophically indebted. But, as in Orwell, some human beings are more indebted than others and they are those who have received more talents. Although their debt is, per se, unpayable, this does not exempt them from moral obligations towards those who have received fewer talents. The amount and obligations arising from this intragenerational debt compound when we consider future generations at the same time, for the very simple reason that they are innumerable. And this is particularly true in LA and other developing countries, with their high demographic growth, infant morality and malnutrition.

In order to pay the payable part of such unaffordable debts, Grondona argues, not only are needed the efforts from those directly responsible, but also from those of the developed countries and the unprotected people themselves. The solution to this complex process requires establishing priorities. Grondona thinks that in the case of LA the intergenerational debt towards future generations has the main priority, not only for demographic reasons – the high proportion of youngsters and children – but also because of its own nature, i.e., it includes many generations. It is impossible not to agree with Grondona when he says that 'the adequate prepara-

tion of children and youngsters is the place where the decisive battle of intergenerational solidarity takes place’.

Grondona then investigates if, regarding the intergenerational debt, LA backwardness could be an advantage. To do this, he first explores if the future of developing countries is going to be nothing else but to walk along the same route already walked by developed countries. Perhaps it is, but this is not necessarily desirable because, ‘confronted with the deterioration of family values in developed countries, developing countries must learn in order to prevent a damage that has not reached them yet’. Grondona suggests that a mixed development model, combining the positive values of developed countries with some socially highly valuable traits of the LA traditions could be the ideal.

Regarding intergenerational solidarity, the most relevant of these values is the higher prevalence of family life in LA. But this prevalence leads to other important question and it is if ‘familism’ – as a sort of extra-limitation of the prevalence of the family life – could not be, at the same time, an obstacle to economic development. In order to explore the point Grondona mentions alternative hypotheses that have been suggested to explain LA backwardness. They are structuralism, institutionalism and culturalism, but the author analyzes mainly the two last ones. Culturalism criticizes familism as something particularistic, opposed to law, and associated instead to corruption or tax evasion. Grondona argues that recent economic progress of Buddhist or Catholic countries shows that the old Weberian thesis of some sort of incompatibility between those religions and economic growth has proved to be wrong.¹

If there are good arguments to sustain that, regarding family, backwardness could be an advantage, very different is the case when we turn to institutions, whose lack of development in LA is one of the clearest weaknesses of our continent. More than that, Grondona thinks, and I agree, that it is the main cause of LA underdevelopment. It is true that we need good social policies to pay our social debts. But they require good politics, meaning here the organization of the State conceived as an efficient agent of the common good. This requires a solid consensus of the main political parties on which can be called ‘statepolicies’, as different from the policies of a particular government.

¹ From my point of view the issue has already been proved in cases like Belgium or Northern Italy. On the other hand, only time will say if growing non-Protestant countries will be able to preserve the value and the prevalence of the family.

The Moncloa Pact in Spain is the canonical quotation in this context. In LA, instead, changes of government very frequently imply changes of *regime*, on a zero-sum base and political opposition also tends to be perceived as the enemy. Fortunately, LA is beginning to show that a basic consensus and state-policies are both possible, being Chile the clearest example.²

Other very clear manifestations of institutional underdevelopment in LA are corruption – not only corrupted behaviors but a corrupt State as well – and the lack of republican values and procedures. In contrast to what happened in more developed political systems, in which the development of republican virtues and institutions preceded the development of democracy, in LA military or civil autocrats – sometimes more republican – were very frequently replaced by non republican democracies. As a consequence, authoritarianism has been, and still is, another almost permanent manifestation of LA political underdevelopment, not only during military governments, but also in many democratic restorations. This authoritarianism is associated to *caudillismo* and the lack of a solid two-party system.³ Very frequently, the typical LA authoritarianism has been combined with different sorts of populism, i.e., the propensity to give answer to the immediate needs of the people without taking care of the future. The only way to overcome populism, Grondona concludes, is a bipartisan agreement. Only ‘when the heart – rending dilemma between the short and the long term, between demagogic temptation and political prudence, is thus eliminated from the political competition, only then the way is open to the social and economic development whose omission Latin Americans have suffered’.

The Structural Hypothesis

I have three main comments to the paper. The first one refers to the structural hypothesis of LA underdevelopment, the one that is mentioned but not fully analyzed in Grondona's paper. The second one seeks some additional links between economic backwardness and institutional under-

² Chilean history, however, it is not an ideal one, since most economic and social reforms were put in place by a military dictatorship. But the crucial ability of Chilean politicians was to agree on a transition scheme from dictatorship to democracy.

³ The bipartisan formula is nowadays accepted as the more efficient one in democratic regimes. There are signals of its development in Brazil, Chile, México and Uruguay. On the opposite side, we find nowadays the cases of Argentina, Bolivia, Paraguay and Venezuela, among many others.

development. The final one refers to the opportunity that LA has in order to preserve one of the 'advantages of its backwardness', i.e., its higher prevalence of the family.

Urban modernity in LA constituted itself on fragile bases. The continent, and particularly South America, has had from the very beginning a very generous endowment of natural resources relative to population. However, it suffered a huge expropriation of these resources during the colonial period, as well as a very unequal distribution of the land, in a Prussian rather than in an American way. As a consequence, vast and growing impoverished populations were obliged to immigrate into the cities. Until the fourth or fifth first decades of the XX century, governing elites did not realize the necessity to gradually develop a more diversified productive structure, large enough as to give employment to these new urban masses. From the middle of the last century onwards, a new system of political economy was put in place. Its core was the extraction of resources from the primary sector to assign them to the manufacturing and other urban activities. This system was similar to the ones applied in other newly industrialized countries, but in the case of LA it was more biased towards the domestic market, closing the economy almost completely. During the first years, approximately until the Korean War, the system worked reasonably, because of the favorable international terms of trade. But they did not last and, with some exceptions during the oil shocks in the seventies, the terms of trade severely deteriorated.⁴ Of course, one of the main explanations of this deterioration was the development of a system of huge agricultural protectionism and subsidies, set in place by Europe, Japan and the USA since the second Postwar. The result of this combination of worse terms of trade and orientation to the domestic market was a chronic shortage of foreign resources, and the economies of the region thus resulted exposed to violent turbulences, with equally violent social and political consequences. Even the tragedies of the seventies are impossible to understand out of this framework.

Trying to replace the role of their natural resources, LA societies give to the State a protagonist role, not only in the distribution of income but also in the creation of wealth. This was, and still is, one of the typical traits of LA populism. With some delay, the development of the LA State was more

⁴ Since the nineties, and as a consequence of the growing Asian demand of commodities, LA foreign terms of trade have improved.

similar to that of some European countries in the interwar period, than to its modern version, in which the steady development of a sounder welfare state was compatible with endogenous growth patterns, more market-friendly, open to the world and increasingly based on human capital and technology. Additionally, the development of the State in LA was based on the extraction of resources from the primary sector of the economy and on domestically biased manufacturing. These foundations proved to be essentially fragile. LA populism thus resulted in a political sort of magic realism, based on the belief that it was possible to create wealth almost from outside of the civil society. Some negative but logical consequences were chronic inflation and public sector indebtedness, both originated in the same sin, the failure to develop fiscal responsibility prone institutions.

The Structural Hypothesis and Institutional Underdevelopment

My second comment is referred to what is perhaps the core of Grondona's paper, i.e., the idea that institutional underdevelopment is the main cause of economic backwardness. This is a well documented hypothesis, at least since the days of Adam Smith and Tocqueville and developed, more recently, by Douglas North, Mancur Olson and Mariano Grondona himself in previous works. More recently, Dani Rodrik has criticized this hypothesis, arguing that the economic progress of Asian Pacific countries shows that an institutional set very different from that of Western republican democracies is also compatible with economic development. Rodrik's arguments have some strengths, as well as some limitations. First, Asian economic development is a relatively recent phenomenon, so it cannot be compared to the long run development of Western countries. Secondly, it is true that migration is not good for institutions, but this is true for every country, not only for Asia. And, in the case of LA, it would be unrealistic to think of a set of institutions different from those of the republican democracy that all LA countries established in their constitutions since the middle of the XIX century. Having said this it is also important to understand that the institutional difficulties confronted by LA countries are not isolated from the historical malformations succinctly described in the previous section. So, from my point of view, our institutional underdevelopment cannot be fully explained by cultural or institutional factors themselves but we need to add to them a deep understanding of those malformations.

Perhaps the following typology can help us to a better understanding of the relationships between economic and institutional development. For

instance, the place a country has in this typology is critical to understand the institutional quality and the prevalence and the kind of corruption it has and its future development.⁵

Countries in the NW quadrant not only have been the most successful regarding economic development, but also have had their regulations enforced by governments long ago established *from the civil society upwards*. Those regulations are, for that reason, legitimate or, as Max Weber said, people in those societies tend to act *as if* those were legitimate. This legitimacy is the matrix that gives birth, simultaneously, to accountability and law enforcement. At the same time, the principle of fiscal correspondence, clearly stated in sentences like ‘no taxation without representation’, was crucial to that legitimacy. This was typically the case of constitutional monarchies in Northern Europe, their offshoots in North America and Oceania and commercial, normally republican, cities. In these countries, and for the same reasons, local governments have been traditionally very important. The possibility of corruption is always open, but societies’ control imposes stricter limits to bribery.

TYPOLOGY OF GOVERNMENTS

KINDS OF GOVERNMENTS	ESTABLISHED ‘FROM THE BOTTOM’ Stronger civil society	ESTABLISHED ‘FROM THE TOP’ Weaker civil society
LEGITIMATE	Constitutional monarchies New countries Commercial republics	Absolutist monarchies and successor states
ILLEGITIMATE	Parallel governments: mafias, guerrillas, bandoleers	Dictatorships (Africa, Asia, Latin America)

In countries of the eastern quadrants, on the other hand, the presence of absolutist or very powerful monarchies or dictatorships was much more pervasive and, as a consequence, people got used to perceiving much of

⁵ This part of the paper is elaborated after Llach (2001).

their regulations as illegitimate.⁶ More recently, something similar has happened in most LA countries as a result of the disenchantment with the reforms of the nineties and the resulting backlash. Moreover, the idea of legitimacy itself originally became from top to bottom and an anthropomorphic idea of the State, with capital letters, still tends to prevail. Local governments, on the other hand, tend to be very weak.

Let me quote in this context the Italian saying: 'Se piove, governo ladro; e se non piove, governo ladro'.⁷ Illegal activities have tended to be frequently seen as legitimate, because they were considered as a reaction against a government perceived as illegitimate. A very clear and widespread example of illegal behavior is tax evasion. And a typical situation in which it arises, as we can read from the Gospel onwards, is the imperial or colonial domination. Of course, if because of international economic conditions or otherwise, legal ways of winning the bread are scarce, different kinds of rent-seeking and bribery are going to be much more frequent. The other side of the coin of this 'legitimate' bribery of the citizens is the equally 'legitimate' corruption of governments whose control from society is very weak.

Under extreme conditions, a complete parallel government is created through guerrillas, mafias or bandoliers (SW quadrant). One the most interesting cases we can quote in this context is Sicily. Its capital, Palermo, was the most populated European city at the eve of the second millennium (Shleifer and Vishny, 1998). Precisely in those times a never ending succession of foreign princes invaded and dominated the island, as Lampedusa in *Il Gattopardo* so wonderfully tells us. The most striking outcomes of this incredibly long historical process were the economic stagnation of Sicily and the development of a powerful mafia, so pervasive that have even been exported to other countries.

'Quality of government' and, more recently, 'institutional development' have historically meant legitimate and deep rooted origin, fiscal correspondence, rule of law, accountability, societal control and law enforcement. On the other hand, once behaviors like rent-seeking and bribery become widespread in society, they tend to survive far beyond the removal of its original causes. It seems clear that deep changes in the political decision making process, along

⁶ By the way, this typology could also lead us to a better understanding of the relationship between religion, economics and politics. Even when protestantism appears as positively associated with less corruption and more economic development, it is probable that the efficient cause of this association is the type of government, as suggested in the typology.

⁷ If it rains, thievish government; if it does not rain, thievish government.

the lines just mentioned, are critical to foster institutional development in LA countries. The reconstruction of fiscal correspondence, i.e., the unification of the roles of citizens, tax payers and beneficiaries of public expenditure, can also play a crucial role in this institutional building process.

Finally, what can we say about the future prospects of LA? Do we have some chances of simultaneously improving our institutions and our economic development performances? First of all, it should be said that Chile's success story very clearly shows that nothing idiosyncratic impedes political and economic development in our region. Furthermore, coincidentally with the recent recovery of their foreign terms of trade, there are nowadays some signals that the aforementioned structural factors might be changing. As a consequence of the failure of the so-called neoliberal reforms during the nineties, particularly in South America, a new 'heterodox orthodoxy' is emerging. And contrary to what happened in the past, social democrat governments have been adopting sounder economic policies, based on fiscal equilibrium or surplus, inflation-targeting as the goal of the monetary policy and an open economy. This is what is going on not only in Chile, but in Argentina, Brazil, México, Peru or Uruguay as well.⁸ These developments are crucial, because as it is true that economic development needs a good institutional framework it is also true that a good performance of the former can help to improve political institutions. Additionally, LA is showing some signals of reconciliation with its natural resources endowment, not considering them as a curse anymore, but as a blessing, and opening to the primary sector full opportunities to develop. This could help to strengthen the other, and mostly hidden, weakness of LA, i.e., the fragility of civil society, because in a context of development of the agribusiness sector also local communities, the fabric of civil society, will improve. For the same reason, the dismantling of agricultural subsidies and protectionism, is the best thing developed countries could do to help LA. Only in the context of the development of social capital it would be possible to get at the same time economic and political development and to create the conditions for an effective practice of intergenerational solidarity. Looking at the past, we can hope, but not be sure, that recent improvements in LA economic performance might gradually make more solid and denser our civil societies.

⁸ Llach and Crespo (PASS, 2005). There are, at the same time, different doses of populism in these countries. They are almost absent in Chile, moderate in Brazil, México, Peru and Uruguay, and stronger in Argentina, as it can be seen in the tolerance towards inflation and the degree of State intervention in the prices mechanism.

I arrive now to the point referred to the family and family values. Our Chancellor put the day before yesterday a question mostly addressed to economist that remained just floating in the air. Does the market disincentives the constitution of families and having children? My very provisional answer is that one of the consequences of economic growth is a continuous increase in the price of time and in the opportunity cost of non-economic activities. The problem with the market arises because it is the most efficient institution to 'produce' economic growth and, for that reason, both the market and economic development tend to be identified. As a consequence, we can hypothesize that economic development has negative externalities towards the family. This is a problem not only for the ones that believe in the importance of the family regarding human life. It is also a problem for the good performance of all human societies. The reason is very simple. Families 'produce' two very valuable goods: children and the values that cement societies. Additionally to the erosive effect of economic development on families, the State intervention through taxation and public expenditures is not neutral to the constitution of families either.

If this is the case, and adding some dose of wishful thinking, we can hypothesize that LA countries still have the opportunity to preserve at least some of the 'advantages of backwardness' mentioned by Grondona, i.e., family values and motherhood and fatherhood vocations. This could be made possible through an integral family policy, including (i) at least equal incentives/disincentives to have children in the income tax legislation; (ii) a family wage, implemented in such a way as to be neutral regarding labor demand of people with or without children and (iii), a true improvement of educational policy, putting more emphasis on early childhood, pre-school and primary school. I would not say that this integral family policy would fully answer and solve the question posed by our Chancellor. But, at least, it could be not only a fascinating experiment of social policy, but also an act of justice towards present and future generations.

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LUCES Y SOMBRAS EN AMERICA LATINA

BELISARIO BETANCUR

Estas notas han sido inspiradas en una lectura cuidadosa del espléndido documento preparado por el escritor Mariano Grondona, que hace referencia al desafío intergeneracional de los latinoamericanos.

Voy a tratar tres temas fundamentales: en primer término, una rápida mirada al desempeño económico y social de la región en el siglo XX. En segundo lugar, un breve análisis comparativo del desarrollo de Estados Unidos, Canadá y América Latina. Finalmente, unas observaciones basadas en la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia y en los resultados de un seminario internacional que organizamos hace unos meses en Bogotá, con la colaboración de nuestra Academia Pontificia de Ciencias Sociales.

1. AMÉRICA LATINA EN EL SIGLO XX

En el siglo XX el ingreso per capita de la región aumentó en un 500%. Se construyeron grandes obras de infraestructura y los centros urbanos tuvieron un dinámico crecimiento. El sector industrial en varios países llegó a representar hasta el 25% del producto interno bruto. La expectativa de vida aumentó en forma espectacular. La cobertura de la educación y de los servicios públicos creció de manera significativa. Los índices de pobreza extrema disminuyeron en forma visible en la mayoría de los países.

Estos son logros significativos. No obstante el panorama general latinoamericano está caracterizado por luces y sombras.

En efecto, los niveles de desigualdad al terminar el siglo estaban entre los más altos del mundo. Como acertadamente anota Mariano Grondona, la mortalidad infantil y diversos fenómenos asociados con la exclusión y la marginalidad, son preocupantes. Yo agregaría que los índices de inestabilidad política se reflejaron, en la mayoría de los países, en altos índices de volatilidad macroeconómica. Las fluctuaciones de las principales variables

macroeconómicas fueron excesivas. Variables como el crecimiento, el empleo, la inflación, las tasas de cambio y de interés, tuvieron un índice de volatilidad varias veces el registrado por los países de altos ingresos.

Naturalmente hay que hacer una acotación. Aún cuando los países latinoamericanos comparten entre sí muchas características políticas, económicas y sociales siempre ha habido países con rasgos muy singulares. Un caso claro es el comportamiento de Chile en los últimos 15 años, país que ha alcanzado una inserción exitosa en la economía mundial y ha logrado reducir los niveles de pobreza.

Otro caso interesante es el de Colombia: entre 1933 y 1999 fue el único país del hemisferio que registró tasas positivas de crecimiento todos los años, y la volatilidad de sus variables macroeconómicas estuvo más cerca del promedio europeo que del promedio latinoamericano. Explicar este resultado no es fácil, porque al mismo tiempo Colombia ha estado sometido a unos niveles de criminalidad y violencia por encima de lo normal. No obstante, uno de los factores que ayudan a entender este comportamiento, es el diseño de instituciones que permitieron aislar, en mayor grado que en otros países, el manejo macroeconómico de los ciclos políticos. Al mismo tiempo, el país tuvo mayor continuidad en sus procesos democráticos.

Menciono estos ejemplos para reflexionar en que en el caso de América Latina no es prudente generalizar, ya que cada país tiene características especiales y ha tenido comportamientos políticos, económicos y sociales que no siempre coinciden con los de los demás. Argentina es un buen ejemplo en este contexto: perteneció al grupo de países de altos ingresos al inicio del siglo XX y luego vivió largos períodos de inestabilidad política y social que afectaron su desempeño económico.

¿En dónde está América Latina en este momento desde el punto de vista de sus indicadores económicos y sociales?

Este fue uno de los principales temas de análisis de la Asamblea del Banco Interamericano de Desarrollo que acaba de tener lugar en Bello Horizonte, Brasil. Los índices de crecimiento, empleo, inversión e inflación son mejores a los registrados hace algunos años. La mayoría de los países tuvo un crecimiento superior al 4% en el año 2005; los precios de los productos básicos que exporta la región han tenido un comportamiento favorable. El sector externo se ha diversificado y ahora países como Brasil exportan aviones a Estados Unidos; otros países exportan manufacturas de nivel tecnológico medio y servicios de diversos tipos incluyendo programas del área de informática (software). Lo anterior es positivo y es visible que uno de los grandes retos de la región es consolidar estos resultados.

Para hacer frente a los fenómenos de exclusión, pobreza y desigualdad estos países tienen que crecer en forma sostenida por encima del 5% por un período por lo menos de 15 a 20 años. El crecimiento dinámico es condición necesaria para reducir la pobreza, pero no es suficiente: se requieren además programas bien diseñados para aumentar el capital humano (salud y educación) de los grupos más vulnerables y se requiere focalizar el gasto del Estado en los más necesitados.

Todo lo anterior debe hacerse en el marco de la estabilidad macroeconómica y la disciplina fiscal. Los latinoamericanos tenemos muy claro que los grandes desequilibrios fiscales y la hiperinflación, afectan en forma negativa a los más pobres y hacen imposible alcanzar el crecimiento sostenido de las economías.

En la reunión del BID que acabo de mencionar, Estados Unidos propuso condonar la deuda de los países más pobres de la región (Nicaragua, Bolivia, Honduras, Guyana y Haití). Se trata de una suma superior a los 4500 millones de dólares. Es una excelente iniciativa, siempre y cuando quienes asuman este costo, sean los países socios más prósperos del Banco (Estados Unidos, Canadá y Japón).

2. HISTORIA COMPARATIVA DE ESTADOS UNIDOS, CANADÁ Y AMÉRICA LATINA

Hace algunos años tuvimos en Bogotá la visita del profesor Douglass North, padre de la nueva economía institucional y Premio Nobel de Economía. Viajó a recibir un doctorado honoris causa que le concedió la Universidad de los Andes.

Este ilustre académico sostenía que uno de los temas que más le interesaban era explicar las grandes diferencias del desempeño económico de los distintos países de América. Estados Unidos, Canadá y América Latina, decía, todos tienen una gran base de recursos naturales. Es evidente que las diferencias iniciales en la dotación de factores, no explican un desempeño económico y social tan distinto: la clave está en el desarrollo institucional, agregaba el profesor North. Las instituciones son las reglas básicas del funcionamiento de las sociedades. Estados Unidos diseñaron unas reglas que promovieron la estabilidad política y el desarrollo económico, mientras que los países latinoamericanos no lograron salir del caudillismo y no crearon condiciones para el desarrollo económico autosostenido.

Esta es una tesis bien interesante y coincide en buena parte con lo expresado por Mariano Grondona en su ponencia.

El origen de muchos de los problemas económicos y sociales latinoamericanos, es de tipo institucional y político. Es claro que se han registrado serios problemas de gobernabilidad y de corrupción. Yo agregaría que en Estados Unidos y Canadá, desde el inicio le dieron importancia a la inversión en capital humano y alcanzaron niveles de escolaridad más avanzados que los conseguidos por los países latinoamericanos. No hemos invertido suficiente en temas críticos, como la formación de profesores y maestros; y no hemos llevado las mejores metodologías de la enseñanza al grueso de nuestra población.

En este contexto, me gusta manifestar que estoy de acuerdo con Grondona cuando señala que no todas las experiencias de los países de altos ingresos, son positivas. El menciona el tema asociado a la desintegración de la familia. Y tiene sobrada razón. Yo agregaría que la drogadicción y los problemas de discriminación racial, no siempre han sido manejados de manera óptima por esos países y los latinoamericanos tenemos que encontrar nuestras propias formas de superar esas dificultades. Nuestra cultura tiene valiosos elementos filosóficos, musicales y artísticos, que debemos preservar.

3. LA DOCTRINA SOCIAL DE LA IGLESIA

Tanto Su Santidad Juan Pablo II como el Papa Benedicto XVI, han hecho énfasis en sus mensajes y encíclicas sobre la necesidad de aplicar la Doctrina Social de la Iglesia a la problemática actual. Hace unos meses reflexionamos en Bogotá sobre la relación entre nuestra Doctrina y la globalización, con el apoyo de la profesora Mary Ann Glendon y la Academia Pontificia de Ciencias Sociales. Los participantes en aquel seminario, reconocieron que la globalización ofrece beneficios y oportunidades para nuestros países pero éstos serán mucho mayores en la medida en que los países de altos ingresos abran sus mercados y aumenten sus inversiones y sus niveles de financiamiento para los países en desarrollo.

Estoy de acuerdo con Mariano Grondona en el sentido de que, a nivel interno los principios de solidaridad y generosidad tienen que aplicarse en forma mucho más intensa. Además de Estados transparentes y eficientes, necesitamos empresarios creativos y dinámicos, con alto sentido de la responsabilidad social, que ayuden a generar empleos productivos y a mejorar los diversos indicadores sociales. Para dar un ejemplo de Colombia, me complace comentar que en mi país se han creado numerosas Fundaciones sin

ánimo de lucro, tales como la *Fundación Carvajal*, la *Fundación Corona*, la *Fundación Compartir* y muchas más, que están participando en forma muy activa en llevar vivienda, salud y educación a las comunidades más pobres.

En este contexto del desarrollo social, la tarea de la Iglesia Católica ha sido fundamental en Colombia. Ha llevado servicios a las poblaciones más apartadas y más vulnerables; ha jugado un papel de primera línea en los procesos de reconciliación y ha ofrecido a nuestras sociedades un marco ético y moral, indispensable para derrotar la corrupción y para mejorar el bienestar espiritual y material de nuestras comunidades.

REPORT ON THE CONDITION OF NORTH AMERICAN YOUTH

KEVIN RYAN

This North American regional report focuses on the conditions of youth in the United States and Canada. In particular, it describes the three dominant institutions affecting the lives of young people: the troubled and weakened family; the resource-rich, but uneven elementary and secondary schools; and the highly sexualized, media-driven cultural world of the young. An examination of the transmission of the faith relies heavily on a recent, large-scale study of religion and U.S. teenagers, a study which suggests a serious breakdown of the current efforts of U.S. Catholics to transmit the faith to their children. The final section of the report lays out the blueprint of a Church-wide program to evangelize the young and, in the process, to aid in the revitalization of the faith of adult Catholics.

Currently in the United States and Canada there are 330 million people, 298,000 million residing in the U.S. [U.S. Census, 2006] and 32 million in Canada [Statistics Canada, 2006]. The populations of both countries are heavily Christian. The U.S. is the fourth largest Catholic country in the world with 67 million Catholics, 23% of its total population (Allen, 2005). With its large percentage of French Canadians, Catholics make up the principal religious group in Canada with more than 14 million or 43% of the population (Statistics Canada, 2006). Together, Catholics represent one-quarter of North America's population.

For four centuries both nations have experienced extensive immigration and have had a good deal of experience responding to different ethnic and racial groups. Currently the racial composition of North America is 81% White and Hispanic, 12% Black, 4% Asian and 3% a combination of Native Americans, Arabs and Pacific Islanders (C.I.A., 2005).

Relative to the industrialized Western World, North America has a high birth rate, with 14.1 births per 1000 people and an average of 2.08 births per female in the U.S., and with 10.8 births per 1000 people and a somewhat lower rate, 1.61 births per female, in Canada. While slightly inferior to Western Europe, North American has a relatively low infant death rate. The U.S. has a rate of 6.5 infant deaths per 1000 births. Canada does better with 4.75 infant deaths per 1000 births (C.I.A., 2005).

The Troubled Family

There are 88.3 million young people nineteen years old or younger in North America. 80.3 million reside in the U.S. and 8 million in Canada (C.I.A., 2005). The North American family, however, has in the modern era gone through significant shifts and appears to be a less secure institution for providing children with the supports they need to reach maturity. To grow up in a family in 1806 compared to in 2006 are radically different experiences. Thirty years ago, the American sociologist, James S. Coleman, wrote about changes in children raising and particularly how, in a dominantly agrarian society, children were within the eye-sight of their parents until they left home in their late teens. Coleman observed (1974) that two generations ago the American father left the home, presumably to work in a factory or office, and one generation ago the mother left the home, also to work in a factory or office. In the intervening three decades, these trends have increased. For instance, currently in Canada the female work force participation rate is 60%, up from 31% in 1965. More relevant to family life, now 71% of married women with children six years old or young work outside the home. In 1965, the percentage was 25%. (Canada, 2006). In the U.S. in 2003, the same percentage of women, 60%, was in the workforce. Nearly 75% of them were mothers of young children (National Partnership for Women and Families, 2006). Today, the space previously filled by the family is being filled by schools, the media and the street.

It is not only less contact time between parents and children that has changed. In the past, typically a son expected to do the same work as his father, and a girl the same work as her mother. Much of family life was parents teaching their young the knowledge and skills they would need in adult life. Today the tailor's son grows up to be a software engineer. A housewife's daughter is a trial lawyer. The knowledge-and-skill transfer between generations has been greatly reduced. In fact, in many North American homes children are teaching their parents how to negotiate their way around the

Internet, program the family's VCR to record TV shows and perform other marvels of the technology age. It would appear that along with this change in roles has also come a reduction in parental authority.

Perhaps because of their personal family histories of migrating from Europe, Asia and South and Central America, North American families frequently change their residents. For instance, in 2003, 14% of Americans moved. While most of these residential moves were within the same county, a solid percentage of the moves were across state lines and even across the continent. In the same year, 2003, fully one-third of Americans between the ages of 20 and 29 changed their residences (U.S. Department of Labor, 2006). All of this residential movement, largely driven by economic factors, takes its toll on families. One of the primary effects is that North American families are often living in relative isolation from the normal family support system. Children are raised at a distance from grandparents, uncles, aunts and cousins. The lack of 'blood ties' means less supervision by individuals who are truly concerned with a child's wellbeing. When troubles occur, families are forced to cope with them with reduced human resources.

Another factor affecting the family is the reduction in size. As the U.S. and Canada shifted from being primarily agricultural countries to more urban, industrialized nations, the number of children in families has shrunk. In the U.S. in just a few decades from 1970 to 2000, the average number of people per household decreased from 3.14 to 2.57. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 'Households have decreased in size, with the most profound changes occurring at the extremes, the largest and smallest households (2000)'. Over roughly the same period [1971 to 2000], the size of the average Canadian family declined from 3.7 individuals to 3.0 (Canadian Statistics, 2004). However, masked by these statistics is the dramatically growing trend of the single parent family. Since the 1960s, the rate of divorce in North American has increased significantly. In 2002, in both the U.S. and Canada there were 38 divorces for every 100 marriages (Statistics Canada, 2004; Divorce Reform, 2002). Curiously, in Catholic Quebec, the divorce rate in 2002 was 48 divorces per 100 marriages. In both countries the sharp upturn in the rates of divorce seems to have peaked, and even begun to decline, albeit from quite high rates. This positive development, however, is somewhat off-set by the sharp rise in single parent families in recent decades.

In 1960 only 9% of U.S. children lived in single-parent families. By 2004 this figure jumped to 28% (Catholic On-line, 2005). The recent increase of single-parent families appears to be growing as a result of three trends:

divorce, out-of-wedlock births to teenage mothers and out-of-wedlock births to women who chose not to marry. In 2002, there were 13.8 million single family households with 21.5 million children under 21 years of age. In effect, over one quarter of American children live in this condition. Eighty-four percent of these families were led by women and 16% were led by men (U.S. Census, 2003). In Canada, 15% of the families with children are lone-parent families and another 6% are common-law couples with children (Department of Justice Canada, 2000). A trend toward fatherless families leveled off in the late 1990s, but the most recent data show a slight increase. In 1960 only 9% of U.S. children lived in single-parent families. By 2004 this jumped to 28% (Catholic On-line, 2005). The difficulties and demands of nurturing and training children are greatly compounded for single parents since so many of them face severe economic problems. According to UNICEF (1996), over 50% of the solo-mother households in the U.S. and Canada are raising their children in poverty.

What these data show is that the North American family life that has emerged in these two wealthy but socially experimental countries is a very fragile structure for use in the preparation of their future citizens. It is debatable whether the looser bonds of marriage and the new family formats are providing healthy conditions for the adults involved. There is no doubt, however, that this social experiment is bringing strong negative effects to the children and youth who are involved.

Education

Both the U.S. and Canada have highly decentralized educational systems, with authority resting with the individual states and provinces. Both countries spend heavily on pre-collegiate education, with the U.S. States spending an estimated \$9000 dollars per pupil in 2006 (U.S. Department of Education, 2005, Table 33). Both countries have a mixed system of public, private and religious elementary and secondary schools. A major, and in the U.S. increasingly controversial, difference, however, is that in Canadian state funds are used to support religious schools. Currently, in the U.S. the Catholic Church annually educates about 2.5 million students or a shrinking 5% of all American students [U.S. Department of Education, 2002). As the costs of education increase, so, too, does the pressures on U.S. Catholic dioceses to close schools.

While North America is host to some of the finest universities and colleges in the world today, its elementary and secondary schools are, at best,

uneven. This is particularly true of the U.S. Since 1995, there have been a number of international studies of school achievement at three grade levels – fourth, eighth and twelfth – in science and mathematics. While U.S. fourth graders perform adequately, by the eighth and twelfth grades their academic performance on a comparative basis is quite weak. For instance, in the 1995 test of knowledge in mathematics and science, U.S. twelfth grades ranked near the bottom, 19th of 21 countries (Schwartz, 1998). On the other hand, Canadian elementary and secondary students have performed quite respectfully on these international tests.

There are a myriad of explanations for this weak performance of U.S. students. Among them is the fact that U.S. junior high and high school students spend much of what is a relatively short school day on nonacademic activities, such as homeroom, driver training, AIDS awareness, counseling and consumer affairs. In order to earn a high school diploma, U.S. students have only to spend 41% of their time devoted to core subjects (Bracey, 1998). Another issue is that many of these same high school students are employed, typically working not to add to family income, but to pay for cars and luxury items. 55% of 12th graders in the U.S. report working three or more hours daily at a paid job. This percentage is three times the international average. At the same time, U.S. high-school seniors report spending substantially fewer hours on homework than the international average for students in 12th grade (Kiyosaki and Lechter 2001). While there is a solid core of disciplined and high achieving students in the U.S., the overall picture is of an undemanding educational system which is reaping mediocre results.

Where once education in North America was a great economic escalator and social leveler, it is increasingly becoming a source of sharp social stratification. In the U.S., a college degree of almost any kind divides one from those who have only a high school degree or less. The demands of an information society versus those of our earlier agricultural and industrial society are closely linked to the skills required to negotiate a college degree. Those young people, who through poor educational opportunities or lowered family expectations, do not go to college live in a different social and economic world than their friends who go on to college. Compared with college graduates, high school graduates earn substantially less, divorce at twice the rate, smoke more, get less exercise, do less volunteer work and vote less (Pell Institute, 2004). These are just a few indicators of a growing educational gap that portend a dangerous social chasm.

For a number of years there has been concern expressed by North American educators about the poor academic performance of female stu-

dents. Of particular concern had been the academic achievement drop off of young women during the high school years. However, in recent years the situation has changed quite rapidly. Thirty years ago male students made up 58% of U.S. college undergraduates. Today that percentage has shrunk to only 44% of the college population. The majority of National Merit scholarships, as well as college academic scholarships, currently go to young women. Boys constitute the majority of high school dropouts, as much as 80% in some U.S. cities. Boys and young men are one and a half years behind girls and young women in reading ability, a deficiency which continues into college and the workplace (Gurian, 2006). The recent rise in predominance of females in Canadian colleges and universities suggests that a similar trend may be occurring north of the U.S. border (Statistics Canada, 2004).

Psychologists suggest that this lowered educational performance and rise in anti-social behavior among boys is due to changes in the character of schools and the workplace and, also, a result of the lack in so many U.S. homes of a male role model (Thompson & Kindlon, 1999; Gurian & Stevens, 2005). Because of the changes in the modern workplace, that is, its move from farm and factory to office and highly technical trades, more young men are forced to stay in school longer and to focus more on the manipulation of symbols and other cognitive tasks. While many have adjusted, many young men are not, finding escape in joining male gangs, in sexuality, and escapist diversions, such as drugs and videogames. These young men who will neither find a place in the modern U.S. economy nor find stability in marriage life represent social dynamite.

The Sexualized World of North American Youth

Fifty years ago, the Canadian communications scholar, Marshall McLuhan quipped, 'When a child goes to school today, he interrupts his education (Personal communication, March, 1955)'. The mid-20th Century world to which McLuhan was referring included radio, TV [then in its infancy], records, films and print media. Since then the media alternatives available to the young have proliferated enormously to include broadcast, cable and satellite TV and radio, the VCR, the DVR, tapes, CDs, digital recordings, personal computers and the various on-line activities they allow [e.g., the World Wide Web, e-mail, instant messaging, chat rooms, video streaming], both TV-based and handheld video games, iPods with huge banks of stored music, and portable cell phones capable of accessing the Internet and sending and receiving video content. As they leave home for

school each morning, some sort of miniaturized, portable media device is a standard part of North American adolescents' 'equipment'.

In 1998, a study (Nielsen Media Research) reported that U.S. adolescents view nearly 17 hours of television a week, which is more than three times their weekly time devoted to homework. A 1999 study (Roberts) found that American children spend more than 38 hours a week using such media as television, videos, video games, music and computers. By the time a young person has graduated from high school, he has spend many more hours viewing television show than hours spent in the classroom.

Numerous studies have reported on the negative effects of the current media content on children and youth. While most of these have dealt with television and film violence, a growing number of reports have focused on the sexual content. The most recent study found that among the top 20 most watched television shows by teenagers, 70% include depictions of sexual behavior, such as kissing, fondling and sex talk (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005). Further, 67% of all network television prime-time shows include sexual content, averaging five scenes with sex in them every hour. In a one-week sample of all TV programming, there were 88 scenes in which intercourse was depicted or strongly implied. This study further reported that the sexual content of television programs has nearly doubled since 1998. The media's unrelenting message of sexual exploration to the young is hardly countered by the educational system. While the public schools in the U.S. have in recent decades made a major effort at what is called 'sex education', the content of the courses and materials is descriptive and morally neutral. Currently, there are some 93,300 schools in the U.S. and only 700 of them have adopted the 'abstinence-only' sex education approach (Christian Law Association, 2005). Unable or ill-equipped to deal with the spiritual and moral aspects of human sexuality, the educational aim of the sex education courses is physical health, including stress reduction. However, whatever efforts the schools are making appears to be washed out by the unrelenting messages of sexual license that surround North American children and youth.

In recent years the popular media's line between mainstream entertainment and pornography has become blurred. Currently, pornography of all sorts, catering to a wide range of sexual interests and tastes, is free and instantaneously available on the Internet. Children and youth are particular targets and they often unintentionally come across the most explicit material. Also, many North American children have become addicted to pornography and one of their major online activities is the swooping of

'porn sites'. With only a slightest effort, children can view heterosexual and homosexual intercourse, fellatio, cunnilingus, masturbation, bestiality, sadomasochism, rape and incest (Savino, 2001). It is well recognized that modern American culture is permeated with sexual messages, but the growth of the pornography industry and its effects on North American children have not been widely recognized, let alone responded to.

While the causal link between a sexualized culture and the actual sexual behavior of pre-adults is empirically difficult to establish, the sheer increase of sexual activity by the young is not. While a recent U.N. report (2005) announced that early sexual activity is climbing around the world, in North America the last decade has seen a slight reduction in teenage sexual activity. Nevertheless, this premarital sexuality activity among the young is a reduction from an historically extremely high level. Currently, in the U.S. 61% of high school seniors report having had sex (SIECUS, 2005). Forty-two percent of boys and 33% of girls between fifteen and seventeen have had intercourse. Eighty-five percent of the one million U.S. teen pregnancies each year are unplanned. One in twelve children is no longer a virgin by age thirteen. Twenty-three percent of teens think it is embarrassing to admit they are virgins (Christian Law Association, 2005). In Canada, according to a new study (The Daily, 2005), an estimated 12% of boys and 13% of girls have had sexual intercourse by ages 14 or 15. The same study reported that an estimated 28% of 15- to 17-year-olds said they had sexual intercourse at least once in their lives.

The consequences of this sexualized culture are chilling. The U.S. and Canadian profiles of teenage sexual activity are quite similar. However, U.S. teenagers have nearly double the rate of pregnancies, births and abortions as Canadian teens (Guttmacher Institute, n.d.). Each year in the U.S. almost 900,000 teenagers get pregnant. Of these, 425,000 are brought to term, representing by far in the highest teenage birth rate among developed nations (Infoplease, 2004). Presumably, the other half million pregnancies are terminated through easily available abortion. In addition to largely unwanted pregnancies, in recent years this sexual behavior by U.S. teens has led annually to approximately three million cases of sexually transmitted diseases [STDs], with gonorrhea and chlamydia being the most commonly acquired disease (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1998).

North American youth, while economically among the most privileged in the World, face a very real human problem. Economic realities and their related educational demands strongly urge that they delay marriage well beyond the time in their lives when they are physically ready for sexual

activity. A culture which once strongly supported abstinence-until-marriage has all but lost out to a media- driven culture of sexual license and permissiveness. The popular media's celebration of sexual freedom seems to have drowned out youth's awareness of the physical and psychological costs, let alone spiritual consequences, of serial sexual activity: broken relationships, abortions and divorces. The only socially sanctioned messages that seem to be getting through to teenagers are 'safe sex' messages, related primarily to their physical health.

Religious Faith

The transmission of religious faith from one generation to the next has been a primary human imperative throughout recorded history. Historically, North America has been Christian and noted for the high level of religious identification and observance of its people. While the U.S. and Canada have been predominantly Protestant, since the mid-19th Century, there has been growing numbers of Roman Catholics, due largely as a result of immigration from Europe. As noted above, Catholics currently represent a little less than a quarter of all Americans and 43% of all Canadians. The percentage of Catholics in the U.S. is gradually increasing, due in large part to the substantial immigration of Hispanics from Central America in the second half of the 20th Century.

The Religious Education of the Young

Starting shortly after the founding of the initial settlements in North America, earlier settlers had a fear that their children's spiritual survival would be threatened in the untamed New World. Particularly in New England, they were convinced that teaching their children to read the Bible was a fundamentally important step to ensure their salvation. For example, in 1647, the overwhelmingly Protestant citizens of Massachusetts passed a law, famously called 'The Old Deluder Satan', requiring the establishment of 'common schools' [now called 'public schools'] in all villages and towns over a certain size. The clear purpose behind the establishment of these schools was to empower children through access to the Bible to resist the snares of that 'old deluder, Satan'. This same religious purpose for public education continued well into the 20th Century, although to a less intense degree.

The Catholic immigrants to the U.S. during the 19th Century and early 20th Century [primarily from Germany, Ireland and Italy] were fearful that

the American public schools would wean their children away from the Catholic faith. As a result, they made major efforts to build parochial schools and religiously-oriented youth serving institutions. By the 1960s, the Catholic Church throughout North America had an extensive, though qualitatively uneven, network of elementary and secondary schools and colleges. Also, in place was a rather well developed religious education program for young Catholics not attending Catholic elementary and secondary schools. Called the Confraternity for Catholic Doctrine [CCD], it provided a basic education in the faith in a 'released time' or after school venue.

At the end of the 1960s, the forward progress of these institutional efforts faltered. The causes were many. Major among them was the exodus of many men and women religious who had manned the schools, plus the declining vocations to replace them. Without trained religious and now staffed by lay teachers with weak preparation in catechetics, the Catholic content and character of Catholic schools has been severely diminished. Also, there has been a curricular retreat from teaching the theological doctrines of the Church to a more secular focus on brotherly love and social service. Further, the rising costs of education have been particularly telling for Catholic schools. The financial impact has been such that many schools have closed and most are beyond the financial means of the majority of Catholics. In addition, the attitudes of many Catholics changed after World War Two. Their social and economic status began to rise and they felt less prejudice and more acceptance from their Protestant neighbours. In the U.S, the election of the first Catholic president, John Fitzgerald Kennedy, signalled to many Catholics that 'they had arrived' and their previously well-defined identity as Catholics began to fade. Subsequently, their patterns of divorce and birth control began to shadow those of the rest of the U.S. citizenry. What, however, have been the effects of these shifts on the transmission of the faith to young Catholics?

Religious Formation and Teenagers

Typically, the transmission of a religious faith begins in early childhood and continues into early adulthood. However, this paper focuses on the teenage years, 13 to 17, for two reasons. First, it is during these years that a young person in North America moves out from the close supervision of parents and get in connect with a much larger world. They begin to encounter ideas that are at variance from those of their parents and their immediate community. They become more social and they experience the

pulls of sexuality. They begin to seek their own identity and some degree of independence. In particular, they begin to examine more closely, and often to question, the religious ideas which they previously had accepted 'on faith'. It would appear, then, that these years of adolescence are of special importance in religious formation.

Second, this issue of religious formation among North American teenagers has been the target of a massive U.S. study, entitled the National Study of Youth and Religion [NSYR] completed in 2005 (Smith, 2005). A representative sample of some 3370 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17 and their parents was interviewed. 52% of the teenagers were Protestants, 23% Catholics, 16% not religious, 2.5% Mormon, 1.5% Jewish and the rest a diversity of religious affiliations. Based on their extensive analyses, the researchers came to a number of conclusions:

- Religion is a significant presence in the lives of most American teenagers;
- The vast majority of U.S. teenagers have very conventional religious views, strikingly close to those of their parents. They tend to be very positive about religion with only a small minority who are alienated and rebellious about religious involvement.
- Very few U.S. youth describe themselves as 'spiritual, but not religious'. Contrary to many press reports, exotic, 'new age' religions have few adherents among under 18 Americans.
- Also, contrary to popular cultural stereotypes, the single most important influence on the religious lives of American youth is their parents.
- The more a church community does by way of outreach [i.e., instruction, youth-oriented programs, camps, opportunities and challenges to teenagers], the greater the positive impact on its teenagers. The greater the effort to reach out to teens, the greater the religious 'harvest'.
- Overall the level of religious and spiritual understanding of American teens is very low. Most had great trouble articulating the tenets of their faith. In place of holding traditional religious views, the researchers described the dominate faith of American youth as Moralistic Therapeutic Deism, a faith the researchers describe as suited 'for our culturally, post-Christian, individualistic, mass-consumer capitalistic society' (p. 262).

Catholic Teenagers

One of the most startling findings to the sociologists of religion who conducted this study was the laxity and relatively low level of religiosity of

Catholic teenagers compared to teenagers in other U.S. Christian traditions. Among their findings are that when compared with Conservative Protestants [e.g., Evangelicals, Baptists, *et al.*], Black Protestants and Mormons [i.e., The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints], Catholic teens:

- Have lower levels of attendance at religious services;
- Pray less frequently;
- Report that their religion is less important in shaping their daily lives and life decisions;
- Have less frequently attended Sunday School/CCD, been on a religious retreat, attended a religious conference or rally or camp, or been on a religious mission or service project;

Fewer Catholic teens:

- Believe in a judgment day when God will reward some and punish others;
- Believe in miracles, the existence of angels, and life after death;
- Have made a personal commitment to live their lives for God;
- Would attend religious services if totally up to themselves;
- Are involved in a religious youth group;
- Are in congregations that have a designated youth minister;
- Have openly expressed their faith at school;
- Have adults in their church, other than family members, whom they enjoy talking with and who give lots of encouragement;
- Report that their congregation has helped them understand their own sexuality and sexual morality;
- By a substantial margin have ever had an experience of spiritual worship that was very moving and powerful;
- Have shared their religious faith with someone not of their faith;
- Report that they find church a warm and welcoming place and that services make them think about important things;
- Believe that God is a personal being involved in the lives of people today;

On the other hand, more Catholic teens

- Believe in reincarnation and astrology, and in psychics and fortune-tellers;
- Report that they are bored in church;

The National Study of Youth and Religion also reports that only 71% of U.S. Catholic teenagers have had their First Communion, only 40% attend mass on a weekly basis and that 11% never attend. With regard to religious education, only 10% of Catholic teenagers attend Catholic schools and only 19% attend CCD weekly. The light which the survey shines of Catholic teenagers is of a group which does not know or understand what

are the core teachings of their church and do not appear to think about or care very much about the religion into which they were born. In addition, Catholic youth:

... score 5 to 25 percentage points lower than their conservative, mainline, and black Protestant peers on many of a variety of religious beliefs, practices experiences, commitments, and evaluations. Perhaps more important for Catholics, our findings regarding Catholic teenagers show many of them to be living far outside of official Church norms defining true Catholic faithfulness (p. 194).

This study appears to confirm the observations and impressions of many who see the U.S. Catholic youth as largely disconnected from their Church, going through parish CCD programs [if they attend at all] in a disengaged, if not indifferent, manner. It further suggests that even those who attend do not receive, as earlier generations did, a reasonably substantive encounter with Church doctrine and what it means to be Catholic in contemporary society. Standing back from their data, the researchers summarize:

It appears ... that too many U.S. Catholics have through inertia continued to rest assured that old organizational structures were taking care of their children when in fact they increasingly have not been. And so many or most Catholics teenagers now pass through a Church system that has not fully come to terms with its own institutional deficit and structural vacuum with regard to providing substantial and distinctive Catholic socialization, education, and pastoral ministry for its teenagers (p. 214).

This study yields a picture of the American Catholic Church whose efforts at the transmission of the faith are failing both teenagers and their parents. It is against this background of ineffectiveness that the alternative program of religious education described below is offered.

AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR THE EVANGELIZATION OF YOUNG CATHOLICS

The Goal

The goal of this proposal is for the Church to launch a global effort by clergy *and* laity to evangelize the young. More specifically, the goal is for the Church to develop a fresh plan and a new vehicle for the Christian education and formation of children and youth. However, in order to achieve this goal, two proximate goals need to be reached: first, the intense and effective training of young married couples as the 'first religious educators' of

their children; and, second, the recruitment and retraining of large numbers of the laity, drawn heavily from the ranks of the single and retired, as resources in the work of evangelizing the young.

The Audiences

There needs to be a strong intergenerational quality to this evangelization program. While the primary focus will be on children and youth from ages four to eighteen, the secondary focus will be on adults. This program could be the instrument of re-evangelization of adult Catholics through their training and involvement in the program as teachers, councilors, managers, and parents. A programmatic effort of the magnitude and intensity described below will require the participation of large numbers of the laity, many of whom currently are only passively involved in the Church. While such dependence on large numbers of unprepared and uninvolved Catholics might seem like an obstacle, it may, indeed, be a rich opportunity. Many Catholic adults, especially the single and retired, have the energy, the free time and the untapped desire to respond to such a call. In fact, many hunger to participate in the work of the Church in a more substantial way than on their parish council or as lectors. The opportunity in Jesus' words to 'launch out deeper and drop your nets' is one to which many will respond, particularly if they are called to this work by our new Pope, Benedict XVI.

The Program

The driving purpose is the development of a powerful educational program to help our children *know* Christ, *love* Christ and be ready to *do* Christ's work in the world. Rather than simply an understanding of the demands of the faith, the appeal will be an affirmative one to the head, the heart and the hands. Over a thirteen or fourteen year period, our young will have a guided introduction to the Catholic faith and the responsibilities of being a Catholic in the modern world. The research on teenagers and religion cited above is strong evidence that the current efforts by the American Catholic Church to transmit is failing. Further, common sense suggests that forty-five minutes a week of religious instruction for only thirty weeks a year is inadequate to educate the kind of Catholics prepared both to save their own souls and be vital carriers of the Gospel's good news to the rest of the world. The youth program described here will require something on the

order of three hours a week for forty weeks a year through the formative years of youth.

The educational program, however, will begin in the home and continue there until age four or five. At that time, it will be augmented by the parish-centered program. Throughout a child's Catholic education there will be coordination and connections between home and parish. Parents will be aware of and reinforce parish-based activities and vis-a-versa.

The Program's Creators

At the heart of this proposal is the creation of a 21st century Catholic education program. It must bring together and draw creatively on the Church's leading theologians and religious educators and the world's best film makers and communicators. However, the first task will be carefully to examine the best religious educational materials and practices from the past and the present. At this point, the program's creators will bring into being fresh materials. In this effort, they will rely heavily on the newer media to educate our young about Christ and what it means to be His follower in today's world

Parents, the First Christian Educators

A necessary component of the program will be the preparation of married people for their responsibilities as Catholic parents. Building on the model of Catholic marriage preparation, the current requirement for nuptials in a Catholic parish, a similar program will be designed for the sacrament of Baptism. In effect, before the christening of a couple's first child, both parents will go through a short, intense course, which both outlines their responsibilities as Catholic parents and teaches how to fulfill them. Here, again, much of this training will be supported by high quality video presentations.

The Instructional Program for Youth

Throughout the curriculum and at its heart must be Christ. We are people-of-the-story. Story is the way most of us learn life's essential truths. Example, too, is our most potent moral teacher. At the curriculum's center, then, must be the story of Christ and His Church. The young will benefit by encountering the 'personality' of Christ as leader, as radical teacher, as ser-

vant. In his first international trip to Cologne as Pope, Benedict XVI said to his hearers, 'Dear young people, the happiness you are seeking, the happiness you have a right to enjoy has a name and a face: It is Jesus of Nazareth, hidden in the Eucharist'.

This generation is a visual one and the story must be seen and seen at a high standard. Therefore, creation of this curriculum, along with the materials needed to prepare the teachers, again must be the collaboration of the finest Christian educators and the most effective mass communicators. Much of the curriculum will be delivered via the newer media [DVDs and videotapes]. By directed use of the Internet both teachers and students can be put in contact with the great religious art treasures of the world. They can take virtual pilgrimages to the Holy Land and Rome, guided by scholars and area specialists.

The curriculum will need to be sequenced and structured by age or grade. Nevertheless, it will be flexible and adaptable enough to allow for some local variation. In addition to the formal, weekly program, additional and more voluntary activities can be planned, such as retreats, camps, long and short service projects, and youth clubs which sponsor a variety of religious and social activities. These latter, 'extra-curricular' activities are where the movements, such as, Regnum Christi, Communio et Liberatione and Opus Dei, can play a particularly important part. In fact, the development and the delivery of this new program present an opportunity for closer cooperation and activity between the movements and the parishes.

Truth and Reason

The proposed instructional program of evangelization must, also, be firmly based on truth and reason. Recently, Pope Benedict XVI reiterated the Church's commitment.

Man's unique grandeur is ultimately based on his capacity to know the truth. And human beings desire to know the truth. Yet truth can only be attained in freedom ... truths of the spirit, the truths about good and evil, about the great goals and horizons of life, about our relationship with God. These truths cannot be attained without profound consequences for the way we live our lives.

In addition, then, to the revealed truth of Scripture, young Catholics need to encounter the hard spine of rationale thought in the tradition of St. Augustine, St. Thomas and other Church scholars. At a moment in history when mechanistic and materialistic views of human life are so prevalent,

they must fully understand the Church's conception of the human person. From this bedrock understanding of who and what they are, students will move on to engage questions of what is a worthy life and what are our obligations to one another. The Church's transcendent view of the person ought to be their intellectual North Star as they thread through the various world-views embedded in secular education and as they confront an array of social issues from abortion to genetic manipulation.

Therefore, principled reasoning, long the hallmark of the Catholic religious tradition, is a fundamental aspect of this new program. Although it has been somewhat out-of-favor in recent decades, apologetics ought to be a significant part of the curriculum. It is both a vehicle for learning how to think clearly, but also to possess a coherent and reasoned understanding of the corpus of faith. Our young will need such a command of reason and truth since they are called to be both defenders of the faith and to messengers of God's word.

Inspiration

The Christian inspiration of the young must be a key element of this new program. In 'Is There Really Hope in the Young' in *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II (1994) wrote concerning the need to nurture the natural idealism of the young. He acknowledged, though, that today's young grow up 'in an atmosphere marked by a new positivism' that expresses itself mostly in the form of criticism. He urged the restoration of the romantic traditions that response to youthful idealism with duty and a call to service. Again, stories of Christian lives can do much to revive this tradition.

Pope Benedict XVI, also, has spoken of the need and capacity of the young for inspiration in his April 25th' 2005 address to German pilgrims.

If we look at these young people who were gathered around the late Pope, and as a result, around Christ, whose cause the Pope espoused, something just as comforting could be seen: it is not true that young people think only of consumerism and pleasure. It is not true that they are materialistic and self-centred. Just the opposite is true: young people want great things. They want an end to injustice. They want inequalities to be overcome and all peoples to have their share in the earth's goods. They want freedom for the oppressed. They want great things, good things.

This is why young people are – you are – once again fully open to Christ. Christ did not promise an easy life. Those who desire com-

forts have dialed the wrong number. Rather, He shows us the way to great things, the good, towards an authentic human life (Benedict XVI, 2005).

While the life of Christ must pervade the curriculum, 'student Catholics' will come to know deeply the lives of early and modern saints and see clearly that they personally are called to greatness. The lives of the Apostles and our saints down through Maximillian Kolbe and Mother Teresa must be large in their minds and imaginations. At each year of their Catholic education, they will learn about particular saints and how they came to know and serve Christ. Here in particular is the opportunity for regional and national adaptations of the curriculum by emphasis on the saints from students' part of the world. The Christian tradition is rich in inspiration, from Christ's conscious decision to offer His body to the torture of crucifixion to the long army of martyrs and saints who have followed Him. Our young must both know and develop allegiance to this tradition.

Christian Action

This new Catholic education program requires a strong experiential element. Instead of just learning about Christ and His Church, the young must be taught *how to act* as Christians. At all levels, students must be given opportunities to witness and to serve as followers of Christ. The linkage between the Word and Christian action will be a key component. There will be regular tasks in their home, neighborhoods and schools to help others. Older students, besides being heavily involved in helping teach younger students, will be woven into parish and community work. Still older students will take on larger tasks, go on religious retreats, youth gatherings and even visits to foreign countries. This component will require strong mentoring from many adults, but on the other hand, the spiritual and psychological benefits to the mentors will be great. The desired outcome here for the students is to see themselves as parts of a community of Christian worship and action. Students must perceive themselves as part of an on-going project to bring the Word of God to all His people. There is much to learn about experiential programs for youth from the successful efforts of the various Catholic Youth Service offices around the world and the work of the Mormon youth missions, the Taize community in France, and Jewish efforts to send their young people to Israel.

Private Prayer and Public Liturgy

Prayer and worship must be a key element of the program. Students must be taught about prayer and helped to make prayer a regular and intimate part of their lives. In particular, they ought to be instructed about the Mass, the central liturgical act of the Catholic Church. While special liturgies for children and youth ought to be part of the instructional program, Masses must reflect the deep mystery of our faith. In this regard, liturgies should be counter-cultural, inspiring awe and wonder rather than a comfortable familiarity. Our rich treasure of religious music can make a major contribution here. In particular, students will know and be able to sing the very best of the Church's song.

For centuries, Catholic spiritual life has been enriched by private devotions, such as those to the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Virgin, and to various saints. However, in many places these devotions, along with Benediction, the Rosary, Stations of the Cross on Lenten Fridays and visits to the Blessed Sacrament, have been downplayed and have begun to disappear. Few children get down on their knees before bedtime for night prayers. In the past, these traditional devotions have fueled what sociologists call the unique 'Catholic imagination', the function of which has been regularly to remind us of the reality that we are children of God and only pilgrims here on Earth. The proposed program will aim to revive these private devotions.

The Church in History

The Bible, which is frequently given scant attention in Catholic educational programs, must become a familiar source of instruction and guidance. Instruction in the Divine Word must go on at each grade level. However, the program, while educating students to the stories of God's People as revealed in the Old and New Testaments, tells the story of the Church's efforts to bring the Kingdom of God into being for the last twenty centuries. In particular, given the current inaccuracies and distortions about the impact of the Catholic Church on world culture, students need a deep understanding of the past and continuing contributions of the Church, our contributions to education, the arts and the alleviation of human suffering. Recent books, such as Thomas E. Woods' *How the Catholic Church Built Western Civilization* (2005) and George Weigel's *Letters to a Young Catholic* (2004) can be quite helpful here. Nevertheless, the complete presentation of our Church acknowledges the Church's failures and frailties, stressing the need of all Catholics continually to renew and refresh Christ's mission on Earth.

Both Global and Local

As Catholics, we have one, overriding message for our children: 'Come to know God through His Son, Jesus Christ'. Since we, also, share a common humanity, the vehicle by which this message is delivered must have a certain universality. Separate national or racial or regional programs of evangelization would be counter productive. We are all part of the same Mystical Body of Christ. We all aim to be part of the same Communion of Saints. Our hunger for God and happiness is universal. Going forward in a world torn by racial, economic, religious and ethnic strife, Catholics need to see themselves first and foremost as what we are: a common corps of missionaries working to advance His Kingdom.

While elements of the program will be adapted to local Catholic communities, such as highlighting of certain saints and historical events, the Christ-centric core must be common. To start, the formation of this program will be a work of the global church. The program's initial planning and development committee must be drawn from the universal Church. In addition, elements of the project ought to be field tested in different settings. Such possible sites might be Chile, Nigeria, Germany, Korea and the U.S.

Conclusion

The proposed program, particularly given its size and scope, will encounter resistance. Currently around the world there are institutions and large numbers of well-intentioned individuals engaged in the religious education of Catholics. This new program could initially be seen as a repudiation of their efforts. Justifiably, many may feel personally threatened. The impulse to resist may be strong. Therefore, if this proposed program is judged worthy of promotion, strong papal leadership will be crucial. Also needed will be transitional mechanisms and retraining programs for our current religious educators.

Such an effort as described above will be enormously expensive at a time when the Church has many calls on her purse. A religious educational program, particularly when one currently exists and which to many seems adequate, will appear as a questionable use of the Church's limited funds. On the other hand, there is great wealth in the hands of the Catholic faithful, many of whom share this concern about the transmission of the faith to our young. If a new and modern evangelization effort were seen as the means to revitalize our Church, many would respond to a special call.

The new globalism that is sweeping the World (Albrow, 1997) is being propelled by consumerism and is energized by what Freud called 'the pleasure principle'. With globalization has come a shrill, media-driven culture which rarely acknowledges the reality of our God. The young are the most vulnerable to its seductions. Their natural impulse toward the spiritual is being blunted and starved by this intrusive, secular culture. But, while unmet, their hunger for God persists. The Church must address it. It is imperative that the Church leadership make this problem – and this opportunity – our highest priority.

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COMMENTS ON CHILD POVERTY, THE FAMILY, THE MARKET, PUBLIC POLICIES AND THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

JOSEPH STIGLITZ

Let me begin by just saying that I agree with most of Kevin's descriptions of the problems facing America's youth. But I think he might have given a more dramatic description of the historical consequences of the fact that such a large fraction of American children live in single parent households in a high level of poverty. Malnutrition is combined with the fact that we do not have an adequate public healthcare system. Moreover in the last few years there has been an erosion of some of the safety nets that had been created earlier. For instance, in the area of healthcare, a programme, called chips, was providing children with health insurance under the responsibility of the states. It stayed in place in certain parts of the United States. But some of the states have almost taken a war against children. The State of Texas, for instance, has cut back enormously on the children healthcare programmes and made it more difficult for parents to apply. As another example, in contrast to some of the things going on in Brazil to improve the plight of poor children, in the United States there is an erosion of the school lunch programme which was very important in addressing problems of malnutrition.

I now want to spend my time on talking about some of the underlying causes, their consequences and the responses that may be given. On the causes, a number of discussants and Kevin talked about increased mobility and about the requirements of our national economy. The United States in that way is different from many other countries. It is a very large country with a very high degree of mobility, and that means that children often are separated from their parents.

Two issues have come up a number of times before here: the role of the State and the role of the market in weakening the family, which were exam-

ined on Saturday afternoon by Professor Mlčoch in his paper and subsequently discussed. First I want to emphasize the point I then made. When it decides to provide more social services, the State puts less responsibility on the family and this may lead to a weakening of the role of the family and of the bonds within the family. To a large extent the State took such increased roles because they were not being performed. The State was then filling a gap. But it was a vicious cycle to the extent that it had the effect of weakening the family. However, since the alternative would have been to leave these vast needs unmet, I think there was really no alternative but for the State to take on an increased role.

The second issue was the question of the role of the markets in weakening the family. On this point I should like to speak at some length. First, we cannot ignore that extending the market has a positive role, in freeing people's time. This means that women in developing countries do not have to spend as much time gathering wood, energy, or water. By the way, in the United States, given the high value that Americans have placed on consumerism, the time that we spend working is higher than in almost any other society (the number of hours worked by the average American worker is about 20% more than that worked by the average European worker). Actually this is related to the growing inequality in America and to the particular problem of lower income families. The fact is that wages in the United States at the bottom of the income distribution have stagnated for 25, 30 years. Our economy may be exhibiting increases in GDP, but they are not being translated into higher wages at the bottom and even at the middle.

I now want to comment on a difficult issue that has come up repeatedly in the discussion earlier this morning, namely the role of the family in risk-bearing. Some argue that the family is the most important insurance provider that people have. Others point out that the market has one big advantage, namely that it spreads risks widely and actually is a more efficient distributor of risks. But, on the other hand, it is now well known that insurance markets generate perverse incentives because of 'moral hazard'. For many the insurance market appears to be much less efficient in monitoring moral hazard than the family is: indeed the family is better able to ascertain whether one of its members is suffering because of something beyond his or her control or because of carelessness. A number of years ago, in a paper with Richard Arnott of Boston College, we looked carefully at the issue and showed that, even on economic terms, one had to be careful about saying whether in fact the replacement of the family by the market would be efficient.

Again on the relationship between markets and the family, the next comment concerns a real issue in many developing countries, particularly in Africa. There is such a strong inter-generational solidarity that it may be an impediment to development, at least in many people's interpretations. Individuals would realise that, if their income goes up, they will have to share it with an extended family. Such a prospect would lower individual incentives. Another issue is a result of women being more actively involved in the labour force. It gives them the option of divorce, which they did not previously have because of economic necessity. That has effects for the children. But the fact that women can make those choices freely is an enhancement of their wellbeing. In some Muslim countries for instance the husband can say to the woman 'I divorce thee' three times, and the divorce happens. Changes of legal frameworks may create more symmetry. Such an interesting development occurs in Bangladesh where some loans for mortgages are provided on the condition that the house be put in the name of the woman. If the husband says 'I divorce thee' three times, the woman can say 'yes, you have to leave', and he becomes homeless as opposed to she becoming homeless. The little change in finance has the potential of having effect on family stability and on economic power within the family.

Well, the final comment I want to make on the relationship between markets and family relates to a recent development in the United States where the soaring real estate prices have meant that many children have become more dependent on their families in their twenties and thirties. They cannot afford to have a home of their own and they have to borrow from their parents. I am not sure how good it is. But it has strengthened family bonds by making the children once again dependent on their parents.

I am now turning back to remarks having to do with increases in poverty, particularly with the responses that can be given. Indeed it is extremely important for public policy to deal with the economic consequences of family dissolution, leading to single parent families, to childhood poverty and malnutrition. These are becoming increasingly important social issues. It is important to have programmes, like the earned income tax credit, that provide increased income to those who work. We also need to be sensitive to the policies that may have exacerbated some of the problems we talked about.

Let me begin with tax policies. It has been argued that our past tax system discouraged labour force participation of women (note that this may have been good from the perspective of family stability). Interestingly, the current administration has been changing the tax system and encouraging female participation in the labour force. On the other hand, our welfare

programmes have the effect of encouraging single parenthood because if a woman gets married, she loses her eligibility for welfare. I think there ought to be more recognition of the incentive effects of these programmes.

Now, let us consider what has to do with the media. I think Kevin is right in saying that the media play a very important role. It used to be that, in order to get a TV licence, you had to do a certain amount of public services broadcasting, like education broadcasting. The philosophy here was very clear: the airwaves, or the spectrum as we call it, was a nationally owned natural resource. When we decided to privatise it, the question ought to have been: under what conditions will privatisation be consistent with our social values? Among those ought to have been a high requirement on educational programming and strong restrictions on the adverse kind of programming that Kevin was criticising. But we did not give that response and did not encourage the use of the media in a positive way.

As a third kind of response we ought to be more actively thinking about controlling the environment in which our children grow up. And this speaks to the question of, for instance, the government using subsidies to encourage some movies. But there has been an initiative within the WTO by the United States to restrict the ability of governments to subsidise movies. The French have resisted this initiative and it remains an issue under debate. More generally, the question is whether it is legitimate to pursue through the media a variety of social agenda. I think we ought to, and I worry about losing that ability within international agreements.

As the family gets weaker, another kind of response follows from the realisation that a lot of functions of the family can now be more actively undertaken through communities. Part of the transmission of values can be done through schools or other communities. The idea that the government ought to provide financial support to such communities should be more on the national debate. We ought to recongnize that things can be done to create a better learning environment, particularly for lower income individuals. We need to have summer camps. We need to have after-school programmes. So is the way to help substitute for some of the things that the family has provided in the past.

Let me just take an illustrative example from my American environment. We used to have a national guard, which was a community-based group involved in rescues and cases of emergencies. When you had a flood, it brought in a whole group. But they also had a social function and an ongoing basis. They got together once a month and they march around. They could also take children, helping them to learn skills and get jobs. They

could organize all kinds of community groups to provide activities for children from single parent families or even two parents families when both parents were working. So there they created a better environment for these children to grow up and in the same time integrate into the labour force.

Finally I want to put forward an idea about learning of values by living. Indeed, a good way you learn about values is actually to live those values. So you learn how to be of service and to care about others by being in, by providing services. Watching the United States in the aftermath of the war and remembering the generation of the sixties, I know that the peace corps was a very successful programme of sending Americans abroad and getting them much more committed to those service values. I think there ought to be now more of this kind of activities. The Church is actually in a very good position for doing something similar. It is the largest grass-roots organisation in the world. And it is in many communities around the world. It could help establish a global peace corps, teaching education and health, having people involved in individual communities in the developing world and in the developed world. For instance in the United States there is a need of such a process involving young people at that critical age of 19 to 23. The opportunity to spend one, two or three years doing that would really change their perspective for the rest of their lives.

LA JEUNESSE NORD-AMÉRICAINE À L'ÈRE DE LA MONDIALISATION: LE CAS DU CANADA ET DU QUÉBEC

LOUIS SABOURIN

Introduction

Dans son étude, intitulée *Report on the Condition of North American Youth*,¹ Kevin Ryan, professeur émérite à l'Université de Boston, examine les différents facteurs qui ont affecté, au fil du temps, les familles en Amérique du Nord. Il met en lumière les nombreuses similitudes entre les États-Unis et le Canada, notamment aux chapitres de l'éducation, de la réduction du nombre des enfants dans les familles, la croissance des divorces et des familles monoparentales. Selon lui, trois problématiques principales affectent la jeunesse américaine, à savoir l'utilisation accrue de divers médias populaires, notamment la télévision et Internet, la sexualisation précoce et la déconnexion entre les jeunes et la religion catholique. Reconnaissons tout de suite qu'il en est de même au Canada, en particulier à ce qui a trait à la diminution de l'influence de l'Église dans la vie des jeunes tout comme dans l'ensemble de la société. En fait, la réduction de l'influence des diverses églises traditionnelles est plus forte au Canada qu'aux États-Unis. Ces problèmes sont évidemment indissociables des changements rapides à caractère démographique et sociologique dans les deux pays.

J'aborderai donc ici, dans un premier volet, ce phénomène socio-démographique au Canada. Dans un second volet, j'examinerai quelques caractéristiques de la jeunesse canadienne en mettant en relief la montée des jeunes filles et des femmes dans presque tous les secteurs de la vie canadienne, notamment dans celui de l'éducation.

¹ Ryan, Kevin. 2006. *Report on the Condition of North American Youth*. Paper presented to the general assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences. Vatican City.

1. ÉLÉMENTS DÉMOGRAPHIQUES

1.1. *Le cas du Canada*

Le Canada compte actuellement 32,5 millions d'habitants dont 4 millions ont plus de 65 ans. *Statistique Canada*² en prévoit 34 millions, en 2011 et 39 millions, en 2031. L'âge médian de la population canadienne est de 37,6 ans. Le groupe d'âge ayant connu la plus forte croissance entre 1991 et 2001 est celui des Canadiens âgés de plus de 80 ans. L'espérance moyenne de vie à la naissance est de 78 ans, soit de 76 ans pour les hommes et de 81 ans pour les femmes.

Dans les différents scénarios³ de croissance envisagés, les personnes âgées de plus de 65 ans deviendraient plus nombreuses que les enfants âgés de moins de 15 ans vers 2015. Vers 2031, le nombre des plus âgés varierait entre 8,9 millions et 9,4 millions et le nombre d'enfants se situeraient entre 4,8 millions et 6,6 millions. On envisage que le vieillissement de la population canadienne devrait s'accélérer à partir de 2011, c'est-à-dire à partir du moment où les premiers baby-boomers nés en 1946 atteindront l'âge de 65 ans. Ce vieillissement devrait augmenter jusqu'en 2031, moment où les aînés représenteront environ 24% de la population canadienne, presque le double du chiffre actuel qui est de 13 %.

Si la tendance se maintient, la population en âge de travailler diminuerait à partir de 2011, soit pendant les décennies de 2010 et de 2020. Présentement, la population des 15-64 ans représente 70% de la population canadienne mais passerait à 62% en 2030. Trois scénarios concernant la population active des 15-64 ans sont envisagés par *Statistique Canada*. Selon une croissance moyenne, cette population augmenterait jusqu'en 2020, demeurerait stable pendant la décennie suivante puis se remettrait à croître. Selon une perspective de *faible croissance*, cette même population commencerait à décliner vers 2017. Enfin, suivant le scénario de la *forte croissance*, elle augmenterait continuellement. Pour conclure, dans tous les scénarios envisagés, l'accroissement naturel deviendrait négatif (plus de décès que de naissances) en 2020 selon la faible croissance, en 2030 selon une croissance moyenne et en 2046 selon une forte croissance. À la lumière de ces données, force est de constater que l'immigration internationale

² Statistique Canada. 2006. "*Le Canada en statistiques*". <<http://www40.statcan.ca/102/cst01/>>

³ Statistique Canada. 2005. "*Le Quotidien: projections démographiques: 2005 à 2031*". <<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/Francais/051215/q051215b.htm>>

deviendrait alors la seule possibilité pour favoriser une croissance démographique au Canada.

Depuis plusieurs années et à l'instar de plusieurs pays industrialisés, le taux de fécondité décline considérablement. Selon *Perspective Monde*,⁴ on constate qu'en 42 ans, le taux de fécondité canadien a chuté de 60% et se retrouve maintenant à 1,52. L'année 1972 marquait la date où le taux de fécondité canadien n'est plus suffisant au *seuil de remplacement des générations*. De 1971 à 1972, le taux passa de 2,14 à 1,98. Le visage démographique du Canada est donc en train de se métamorphoser très rapidement. En plus de cette tendance au vieillissement, on constate selon l'étude de *Statistique Canada* que 43.3% des citoyens des plus grands centres métropolitains du Canada sont nés à l'étranger. Le Canada devra donc s'adapter à de nouvelles réalités telle la culture, la langue et celle de l'industrie des soins de santé.

1.2. Le cas du Québec

Actuellement, le Québec compte environ 7,5 millions de personnes. Selon *l'Institut de la statistique du Québec (ISQ)*, la population pourrait croître jusqu'à 8,1 millions en 2031 si la tendance des dernières années se maintient. Deux scénarios⁵ sont toutefois envisagés par *l'ISQ*. Le scénario "D faible" conduirait à une décroissance dès 2011 et ramènerait la population québécoise à 6,3 millions en 2051. Le "E fort" plus favorable celui-là, conduirait plutôt à une plus grande vigueur démographique avec une croissance annuelle durable ce qui porterait le Québec à 9,0 millions de personnes en 2051. Selon *l'ISQ* la population des 20-64 ans représente environ 4,7 millions de personnes et celle des plus de 65 ans est d'environ 1,04 millions d'individus.

Toujours selon *l'ISQ*, la population en âge de travailler déclinera à compter de 2013. Culminant à 4,9 millions de personnes, le groupe des 20-64 ans déclinera sans cesse par la suite. Le déclin le plus intense de la population en âge de travailler surviendra entre 2016 et 2031. Pour 100 aînés de 60 à 64 ans en âge de sortir de la masse des travailleurs, il y aura 70 jeunes de 20 à

⁴ Université de Sherbrooke. *Perspective Monde*. <<http://perspective.usherbrooke.ca/bilan/servlet/BMTendanceStatPays?langue=fr&codePays=CAN&codeStat=SP.DYN.TFRT.IN>>

⁵ Thibault, Normand, Esther Létourneau et Chantal Girard. 2003. *"Perspectives démographiques: Québec et régions 2001-2051"*. Méthodologie, démographie et enquêtes spéciales. Institut de la Statistique du Québec. <http://www.stat.gouv.qc.ca/publications/demograp/pdf/tendance2001_2051.pdf>

24 ans pour les remplacer. Le volume de l'immigration internationale et la capacité du Québec à endiguer les sorties interprovinciales n'empêcheraient pas une diminution du nombre de Québécois en âge de travailler mais permettrait simplement de modifier l'ampleur et la durée du déclin.

Au Québec, le taux de fécondité était de 1,48 enfants par femme en 2004, représentant environ 16 0000 naissances. L'année 1970 est une date importante au Québec, soit celle où le *seuil de remplacement des générations* de 2,1 n'est plus atteint. En 1970, le taux de fécondité a atteint 2,08 et n'a cessé de décliner par la suite. Évidemment, ce phénomène est une source de grande préoccupation au Québec présentement.

1.3. Comparaisons

On constate que la plupart des pays industrialisés connaissent plus ou moins le même phénomène qu'au Canada à ce qui a trait au vieillissement de la population et au faible taux de fécondité ce qui les place en deçà du *seuil de remplacement des générations*. C'est donc dire que la plupart de ces pays seront confrontés au phénomène intergénérationnel et devront trouver des solutions avant que ne se creuse un lourd fossé intergénérationnel. On remarque que les États-Unis est l'un des rares pays industrialisés qui atteint le *seuil de remplacement des générations* avec un taux de fécondité de 2,1. Ce taux peut être expliqué par la croissance de l'immigration et par un taux de fécondité élevé des groupes hispano et afro-américains. Actuellement, si la population canadienne est plus jeune que celle de la plupart des pays du G8, on s'attend à ce qu'elle vieillisse plus rapidement que ceux-ci au cours des années à venir. Ceci serait attribuable au baby-boom et au déclin rapide de la fécondité qui en a suivi.⁶

1.4. Les différentes générations au Canada

GÉNÉRATION	DATE DE NAISSANCE	AGE EN 2004	% DE LA POPULATION
Seniors	1901 à 1946	58 à 103 ans	17 %
Baby-boomers	1947 à 1965	39 à 57 ans	29 %
Génération X	1966 à 1978	26 à 38 ans	18 %
Génération Y	1979 à 1995	9 à 25 ans	24 %

⁶ Statistique Canada. 2006. "PLEINS FEUX sur la population: nous vieillissons vite". <http://www42.statcan.ca/smr04/2006/01/smr04_02306_04_f.htm>

Au Canada, notamment au Québec, quatre générations se côtoient actuellement à l'intérieur du marché du travail et celles-ci ont des valeurs et des attentes qui se distinguent les unes des autres. Il s'agit des seniors, des baby-boomers et des générations X et Y qui sont représentés dans le tableau ci-haut. Sans tomber dans les clichés et les stéréotypes commodes, ces différentes générations ont des traits spécifiques. La génération des seniors a subi de grands bouleversements résultant de la première et de la deuxième guerre mondiale. Leurs caractéristiques sont fondamentalement les suivantes: l'oubli de soi, le sacrifice, le respect des valeurs traditionnelles, l'importance de la morale, le respect de l'autorité, de la loi et de l'éthique.⁷

Les baby-boomers qui les suivent ont vécu leur jeunesse dans une période marquée par un grand nombre de changements politiques, économiques, culturels et sociaux et par une mutation profonde de la société principalement issue de l'établissement de l'État providence dans l'ensemble du Canada et de la *Révolution tranquille* au Québec laquelle a complètement changé les comportements.

Succèdera à la génération des baby-boomers, la génération X. Qualifiée par plusieurs auteurs de "génération sacrifiée" ou encore de "génération tampon", les enfants issus de cette génération seront ceux qui naîtront au début des années 60 jusqu'à la fin des années 70; ils représentent actuellement 18% de la population. Suivra ensuite la génération Y, les enfants nés entre 1980 et 1994 qui représente 24% de la population. Les jeunes issus de ces générations sont fréquemment décrits comme individualistes et dénudés d'idéaux, hostiles ou encore paresseux. Mais qu'en est-il réellement de la jeunesse d'aujourd'hui ? Serait-elle réellement cynique et désabusée? Les baby-boomers ont-ils véritablement généré un groupe d'enfants-rois égocentriques, incapables de respect? À mes yeux, il est erroné de les stigmatiser ainsi. Les jeunes Y n'ont pas tous eu la même chance et n'ont pas vécu dans le même contexte économique. Idem pour les baby-boomers qui n'ont pas tous hérité d'un travail "à vie" et d'une retraite dorée. Dans le second volet, j'examinerai les différents mythes qui dépeignent les jeunes et leurs aînés, en particulier les problèmes que vivent les jeunes en 2006, en particulier le chômage élevé et l'éclatement des familles. J'aborderai enfin la nécessité de trouver des solutions qui permettraient un meilleur dialogue avec les jeunes afin d'atténuer le fossé intergénérationnel qui est de plus en plus évident.

⁷ Lévesques, Alain. 2004. *La rencontre des générations: le nouveau défi des communautés: Actes du 16^e colloque du Réseau québécois de Villes et Villages en santé*, (Val-d'Or les 16-17-18 septembre 2004).

2. LA SITUATION DE LA JEUNESSE CANADIENNE

2.1. *La structure familiale*

Outre la baisse marquante du taux de fécondité des femmes canadiennes, déjà évoquée, d'autres facteurs affectent la structure familiale dans laquelle les jeunes tirent leurs ressources. Selon *Statistique Canada* le nombre de divorces ne cesse d'augmenter: sur 100 mariages, 38 se termineront par un divorce. Au Québec, ce taux grimpe à 48. Ce taux n'a cessé d'augmenter depuis 1968 lorsque les premières dispositions législatives fédérales en matière de divorce ont été adoptées. C'est en 1985 que ce taux atteint un sommet avec les amendements apportés à la *Loi sur le divorce*, facilitant ainsi la rupture du mariage. Selon le *Ministère de la Justice du Canada*, 30% des enfants nés d'un couple au début des années 1980, ont vécu la séparation de leurs parents avant l'âge de 15 ans et 25 % avant l'âge de 12 ans. Pour 25% d'entre eux qui naîtront 5 ans plus tard, la séparation surviendra 3 ans plus tôt, soit vers l'âge de 9 ans.

Le divorce affecte l'enfant qui le vit mais aussi l'adolescent et l'adulte qu'il sera. Selon le *Rapport du Sénat et de la Chambre des communes sur la garde des enfants*,⁸ l'enfant issu d'un divorce ou d'une séparation vit une restructuration complète de son environnement familial. Les fondements mêmes de son existence chavirent et plusieurs d'entre eux seront ensuite défavorisés sur le plan économique, social et émotif. La séparation et le divorce auront des répercussions à long terme sur les modèles de formation de la famille de la génération suivante. La cohabitation avant l'âge de 25 ans est supérieur de 70% chez les jeunes adultes dont les parents étaient séparés tandis que la probabilité de mariage est beaucoup moins grande (40% inférieure chez les femmes). Les femmes ayant vécu la séparation de leurs parents sont deux fois plus susceptibles de donner naissance à un enfant avant l'âge de 20 ans que celles qui proviennent de familles intactes et presque deux fois plus susceptibles d'être des mères seules. Les hommes sont près de trois fois plus susceptibles de connaître un échec au mariage s'ils proviennent de parents divorcés.

La famille joue donc un rôle déterminant pour les jeunes. Au Canada, la décision de vivre plus longtemps chez les parents et de fréquenter l'é-

⁸ Parlement du Canada. 1998. "Pour l'amour des enfants: Rapport du Comité mixte spécial sur le droit de visite des enfants". <<http://www.parl.gc.ca/InfocomDoc/36/1/SJCA/Studies/Reports/sjcarp02-f.htm>>

cole plus longtemps va de pair avec celle de reporter la formation d'un couple et donc avec la diminution de la fécondité. À l'inverse, les jeunes issus de familles éclatées sont plus susceptibles de cohabiter et d'avoir des enfants à l'extérieur du mariage. Ils seraient plus susceptibles d'avoir des problèmes scolaires et d'avoir de faibles revenus dans des cas où ils auraient connus des déménagements fréquents et par ricochet, des changements d'écoles et donc de faibles résultats. *L'étude spéciale de Statistique Canada*⁹ énumère une série de facteurs qui ont des répercussions en lien avec une famille unie ou au contraire avec une famille éclatée. Le divorce constituerait un facteur de stress psychosocial et laisserait sur le comportement des jeunes, des séquelles à long terme. Certains enfants mal soutenus peuvent présenter des problèmes de comportement, de la déprime et des difficultés dans leurs relations intimes et sociales. Il est important de noter que, quelque soit les causes réelles, le taux de suicide chez les jeunes Québécois est malheureusement l'un des plus élevé du monde occidental. Selon *l'Institut national de santé publique du Québec*,¹⁰ le taux de suicide a chuté dans la plupart des pays industrialisés mais a augmenté au Québec. Depuis 1998, ce dernier se classe au troisième rang des 20 nations industrialisées détenant le plus haut taux de suicides chez les hommes et au sixième rang concernant le taux de suicides chez les femmes. La progression à la hausse est nettement marquée chez les hommes de 30 à 49 ans et depuis la dernière décennie, le taux de suicide chez les jeunes filles de 15 à 19 ans a plus que doublé.

2.2. Familles monoparentales

Selon *Statistique Canada*, on retrouve environ 8,3 millions de familles canadiennes et de ce nombre, 1,3 million sont des familles monoparentales. Au Québec, *l'ISQ* indique que l'on compte approximativement 2,0 millions de familles et de ce nombres 335 590 sont des familles monoparentales.

⁹ Corak, Miles. 1999. Extrait de l'introduction de "Les marchés du travail, les institutions et l'avenir des enfants au Canada", no 89-553-XPB au catalogue dans *Étude spéciale: Perspectives à long terme des jeunes*. Statistique Canada-No 11-010-XPB. Canada. <http://www.statcan.ca/francais/ads/11-010-XPB/pdf/jan99_f.pdf>

¹⁰ St-Laurent, Danielle et Clermont Bouchard. 2004. *L'épidémiologie du suicide au Québec: que savons-nous de la situation récente?* Unité Connaissance-surveillance. Institut national de santé publique du Québec. INSPQ-2004-029.

2.3. Perspectives professionnelles

Selon les prévisions d'*Emploi-Québec*,¹¹ 640 000 emplois seront disponibles au Québec et environ 120 métiers et professions offriront des perspectives d'emplois favorables ou très favorables au cours des années 2004 à 2008. La croissance de l'emploi attendue au cours des prochaines années et les besoins de main-d'œuvre qui en résulteront fera en sorte que les jeunes Québécois ne suffiront pas à pourvoir les postes qui vont se libérer par les départs à la retraite ou qui seront générés par l'économie. En effet, 40% de la demande totale de main-d'œuvre découlerait de la croissance économique tandis que 60% de cette demande proviendrait du remplacement des gens qui quitteront le marché de l'emploi. Selon cette étude, les possibilités d'emplois seront un peu plus élevées pour les domaines qui exigent un diplôme universitaire. En ce qui concerne les emplois de niveau technique, les jeunes Québécois auront plus de facilités à se trouver un travail qui demande une formation technique collégiale. Les jeunes Québécois semblent donc avoir des perspectives d'emploi plutôt favorables pour les années à venir.

2.4. Le taux de chômage des jeunes

Selon *Statistique Canada*, le nombre d'emplois a augmenté de 26 000 en janvier 2006. Malgré cela, le taux de chômage a augmenté faiblement de 0,1 point s'établissant à 6,6% au Canada. En janvier, les jeunes ont bénéficié d'une augmentation de 22 000 emplois à temps partiel. Cette hausse a été neutralisée par une baisse du même ordre des emplois à temps plein ce qui fait en sorte que la croissance sur 12 mois de l'emploi chez les jeunes représente 2,1% ou 21 000 emplois. Actuellement, le taux de chômage des jeunes dans la population active s'est accru de 0,5 point pour atteindre 12,4%. Ces indications dévoilent une métamorphose du marché du travail qu'auront vécu les jeunes Y et X. Ces derniers (surtout les 20-30 ans) dénoncent les conditions trop précaires que leur présentaient leur environnement de travail, la difficulté de trouver un emploi stable et permanent, l'embarras des employeurs à leur offrir leur "première chance" donc celle de prouver leurs capacités, le manque de crédibilité dont ils bénéficient et un taux de chômage élevé. Les statistiques d'*Emploi-Québec* annoncent toutefois un avenir meilleur pour les jeunes demandeurs d'emploi.

¹¹ Emploi Québec. 2004. *Le marché du travail au Québec: Perspectives professionnelles 2004-2008*. <http://emploi.quebec.net/publications/2_tendances/Persp_prof_2004-2008/PersProf_2004-2008_national.pdf>

2.5. *Le décrochage scolaire*

Selon *Statistique Canada*, le taux de décrochage est défini comme la proportion des personnes âgées de 20 à 24 ans qui ne fréquentent pas l'école et qui n'ont pas terminé leurs études secondaires. Il semblerait que ce taux ait diminué depuis le début des années 1990, principalement dans les provinces de l'Atlantique. Pour l'année 2004-2005, 212 000 jeunes Canadiens sur un total de 2,2 millions ne fréquentaient pas l'école et n'avaient pas de diplôme secondaire. Ce chiffre était cependant 32,2% plus bas qu'en 1990-1991. Les jeunes hommes semblent plus susceptibles de décrocher que les jeunes femmes. Pour l'année 2004-2005, près du tiers des décrocheurs était des hommes. De leur côté, les employeurs seraient moins portés à embaucher des décrocheurs au secondaire. Par conséquent, le taux de chômage des décrocheurs était de 19,4% en 2004-2005, soit près du double de tous les autres de ce groupe d'âge.

2.6. *Sexualisation précoce des jeunes*

La sexualisation précoce chez les jeunes est de plus en plus présente dans nos sociétés occidentales. Comme le précise Kevin Ryan dans *Report on the Condition of North American Youth*, la prolifération de différents médias a probablement contribué à ce phénomène. Outre la télévision et la radio, les jeunes sont rapidement initiés aux ordinateurs, courriels, messageries instantanées, "chat room", iPods, téléphone cellulaire, satellite, câble, dvd, cd et autres. Les jeunes passent plusieurs heures par semaine à l'utilisation de ces divers médias et sans un minimum de supervision parentale, ces derniers peuvent être aisément confrontés à certaines formes de violences ou à des contenus sexuellement explicites. En revanche, Internet et les divers médias comprennent aussi d'abondants avantages pour les jeunes et pour la population en général, la preuve étant que de nos jours, rares sont les jeunes au Canada qui ne l'utilisent pas. Internet permet d'obtenir rapidement une multitude d'informations et il constitue en soi, une véritable encyclopédie. Grâce à la messagerie instantanée et aux courriels, les jeunes peuvent demeurer en contact avec des gens provenant de partout dans le monde et découvrir ainsi, de nouvelles cultures et de nouveaux pays. Par ailleurs, le sondage du *CRIC – Globe and Mail: le nouveau Canada*,¹² révèle

¹² CRIC-Globe and Mail. 2003. *Le nouveau Canada*. <http://www.cric.ca/fr_re/analysis/index.html>

une ouverture plus nette à l'égard du pluralisme culturel chez les jeunes Canadiens que chez leurs aînés. Évidemment, les jeunes Canadiens ont été rapidement initiés aux différentes cultures dans les écoles qu'ils ont fréquentées ou dans les quartiers qu'ils ont habités. L'avènement d'Internet, tout comme la télévision et l'immigration massive, ont contribué à développer au Canada, une plus grande ouverture au monde.

2.7. *La montée des jeunes femmes*

Depuis le début des années 1980, les statistiques révèlent que les femmes canadiennes sont plus nombreuses que les hommes à fréquenter les universités. Au Canada, on constate qu'elles représentent 52% des étudiants au baccalauréat, 44% à la maîtrise et à peine 27% au doctorat. Mais cette donnée statistique évolue rapidement. Les femmes québécoises représentent 60% des étudiants au baccalauréat, taux qui a progressé de 5% depuis le début des années 1990. À la maîtrise, les deux sexes enregistrent un taux de fréquentation de 8.5% mais les statistiques tendent à démontrer une augmentation favorable aux femmes. Au Québec, les hommes devancent de quelques peu les femmes au doctorat. Selon *Statistique Canada*, dans l'ensemble de la population active du pays, 15% des femmes possédaient un diplôme universitaire en 2001 contre 16% des hommes. Les femmes ont toutefois connu une progression importante depuis 1971 alors qu'elles n'étaient que 3% à détenir un diplôme universitaire. Dans les universités québécoises, les femmes étaient traditionnellement attirées vers les sciences infirmières, les sciences humaines et sociales et sont donc majoritaires en criminologie, en anthropologie et en sociologie. Maintenant, elles dominent en comptabilité et en science comptable.¹³ Selon une étude sur les effectifs médicaux réalisée par le Groupe de recherche interdisciplinaire en santé (GRIS) pour le Collège des médecins du Québec, les femmes représentent 71% des omnipraticiens et 56% des spécialistes chez les médecins âgés de moins de 35 ans. Le Dr Yves Lamontagne,¹⁴ président du Collège des médecins, indique que les femmes comptent pour plus de 70% des médecins en devenir. À l'Université Laval, celles-ci représentent le double des diplô-

¹³ Shields, Alexandre. 2006. "Des femmes majoritaires: les professions libérales changent de visage". *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 8 mars, p. A1.

¹⁴ Les Actualités. 2006. "Les femmes à l'Université". *Le Devoir* (Montréal), p. A4.

més depuis l'an 2000. En 2005, 96 d'entre elles ont complété leur parcours contre 43 hommes. C'est la même situation à l'Université McGill, à l'Université de Montréal et à l'Université de Sherbrooke. Trois décennies plus tôt, les femmes ne comptaient que pour 12% des diplômés en médecine. En 2004, l'Ordre des Pharmaciens du Québec chiffraient le nombre de nouveaux permis à 220 pour les femmes et à 60 pour les hommes. L'organisme prévoit une féminisation encore plus grande de la profession qui se situe actuellement à 60%.

Cette montée des femmes canadiennes dans les milieux universitaires et professionnels est due au fait que celles-ci obtiennent de meilleurs résultats scolaires et qu'elles ont la capacité de passer outre les différents stéréotypes sexuels liés à leur choix de carrière. Louise Lejeune,¹⁵ coordonnatrice du Comité aviseur *Femmes en développement de la main d'œuvre* indique que "statistiquement, celles qui luttent contre les préjugés réussissent mieux". Elle ajoute que "les femmes ont compris que l'autonomie passent par l'éducation et que les hommes auront moins de difficultés à se trouver un emploi s'ils sont moins scolarisés". Toujours selon elle, le taux d'activité des femmes entre 1976 et 2004 est passé de 30 à 78%. Cependant, celles-ci en paient souvent le prix en cherchant à concilier travail et famille. Les femmes canadiennes sont de plus en plus préoccupées par les compromis à faire entre leur vie professionnelle et leurs obligations familiales, et cela dès le début de leurs études universitaires. Au Barreau, on remarque une nette progression des femmes qui représentaient en 2005, 45% des membres alors qu'en 1982 les membres féminins se chiffraient à 18%. Lise Samoisette,¹⁶ Présidente du Comité sur les femmes du Barreau, révèle que "pour les avocats détenant moins de 15 ans de pratique, les femmes représentent 63% des effectifs".

2.8. L'équité salariale

Malgré la montée fulgurante des femmes, le problème de l'équité salariale demeure présent. Selon Louise Samoisette "les avocates salariées sont moins bien payées que leurs confrères masculins. Au cours des 20 dernières années, c'est l'élément qui a été le moins important dans les questions traitées". Selon une étude de *La Relance à l'Université*, un organisme du

¹⁵ Shields, Alexandre. 2006. "Entre désir d'autonomie et combat contre les préjugés". *Le Devoir* (Montréal), 8 mars, p. A4.

¹⁶ Shields, Alexandre, *op. cit.*, p. A1.

Ministère de l'Éducation, les bachelières reçoivent un salaire hebdomadaire brut moyen inférieur à celui des hommes, soit 723 dollars canadien par rapport à 828 dollars canadiens. À la maîtrise, la différence est de 212 dollars canadiens par semaine. Selon Marie-Thérèse Chicha,¹⁷ professeur à l'École de relations industrielles de l'Université de Montréal "celles qui accèdent à des postes de direction se retrouvent souvent dans des domaines qui offrent peu de pouvoir comme en administration ou en gestion du personnel". Cette tendance est aussi confirmée par l'étude de *Statistique Canada: Femme au Canada*, publiée le 7 mars 2006.¹⁸

2.9. Le cas des États-Unis

En septembre 2005, le *New York Times* publiait une étude controversée qui fit bondir les féministes américaines qui se demandent si la révolution féministe aurait été inutile.¹⁹ À la suite de 130 entrevues électroniques faites auprès d'étudiantes de la prestigieuse Université de Yale, 60% des jeunes filles ont dit souhaiter arrêter de travailler une fois mère ou du moins, réduire leur nombre d'heures au travail.²⁰ En 2000, un sondage effectué par la même université auprès de ses cohortes 1979, 1984, 1989 et 1994 révèle que seulement 56% des femmes sont toujours sur le marché du travail contre 90% des hommes. On voit la même tendance à la Business School de l'Université Harvard. En 2001, un sondage mené à Harvard autour de ses cohortes de 1981, 1985 et 1991 révèle que 31 % des femmes travaillent désormais à temps partiel. Ces chiffres n'ont toutefois pas convaincu plusieurs observateurs alors que certains n'y voient que des résultats anecdotiques. Toutefois, Linda Hirshman²¹ de l'Université Brandeis souligne que depuis 2000, les chiffres du recensement américain indiquent une tendance à la baisse de la participation sur le marché du travail, des mères de jeunes enfants. *De 58,7% des mères actives en 1998, elles ne sont plus que 52,9% en 2004. Une perte pour l'avenir. Une perte de l'espoir que le rôle des femmes dans la société ira de l'avant.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. A1.

¹⁸ Statistique Canada. 2006. *Le Quotidien: Les femmes au Canada*. <<http://www.statcan.ca/Daily/Francais/060307/q060307a.htm>>

¹⁹ Galipeau, Silvia. 2006. "La femme nouvelle est arrivée: une nouvelle qui fait jaser". *La Presse* (Montréal), 25 février, p. actuel 5.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. actuel 4.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. actuel 5.

2.10. *Intégration des jeunes au marché du travail*

Selon *Emploi-Québec*, l'intégration des jeunes sur le marché du travail sur une base équitable par rapport aux autres salariés serait l'une des principales revendications de ce groupe. Ces jeunes ne constituent pas un groupe homogène dans la société; de fortes différenciations existent entre eux-ci. Toujours selon *Emploi-Québec*, le rapport à l'emploi des jeunes serait fortement tributaire de la situation de ceux-ci sur le marché du travail. En effet, le taux de chômage serait plus élevé chez les jeunes que chez leurs prédécesseurs et on retrouverait une plus grande concentration de ces jeunes dans des emplois précaires. L'Observatoire jeunes et société²² recense les propos qui furent tenus lors du colloque "Vivre à l'ère précaire" les 1^{er} et 2 juin 2001. Selon l'Observatoire, le travail précaire affecterait particulièrement les jeunes et engendrerait des situations parfois inquiétantes comme leur insertion difficile sur le marché du travail, le prolongement de leur scolarité, l'endettement et l'appauvrissement, qui rendent plus ardues la fondation d'une famille, l'engagement social ou financier. Selon Jacques Théoret,²³ coordonnateur du *Comité des jeunes de la Fédération des travailleurs et travailleuses du Québec* (FTQ), les jeunes acceptent de plus en plus des emplois incertains et se battent de moins en moins pour améliorer leurs conditions de travail étant donné que la précarité des emplois est devenue la norme.

Madeleine Gauthier,²⁴ chercheur à *l'Institut national de la recherche scientifique* (INRS) du Québec traite de l'importance de la solidarité intergénérationnelle et celle de faire le pont entre les différentes générations présentes sur le marché du travail:

"Dans une société comme la nôtre, un doctorat ne vaut pas grand-chose en soi. La période de transition que nous vivons ressemble, par l'ampleur de ses changements, à la Révolution industrielle. Il va falloir inventer des moyens nouveaux. Sans une solidarité intra-générationnelle très forte, la loi du plus fort risque de l'emporter et seuls les débrouillards et les petits futés s'en sortiront".²⁵

²² Raymond Véronique et Rachid Labchir. 2003. Résumé de *Actes du colloque Vivre à l'ère précaire. Causes et conséquences de l'emploi atypique chez les jeunes*. Université Laval, 1^{er} et 2 juin 2002, Québec, Conseil permanent de la jeunesse, avril 2003, 79 pages.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 1 du *Résumé*.

²⁴ Guéricolas, Pascale. 1996. "Jeunes loups contre panthères grises". *Au fil des événements*. (Québec), 31 octobre. <<http://www.scom.ulaval.ca/Au.fil.des.evenements/1996/10.31/baby.html>>

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

Contrairement aux baby-boomers des années 1970, plusieurs associations étudiantes ignorent comment mobiliser leurs membres, aujourd'hui. En effet, à force de se faire dire qu'ils doivent avoir les meilleurs diplômes pour obtenir un emploi décent, que l'avenir est bouché, qu'il vaut mieux profiter dès maintenant de vacances "dans le sud" et qu'un travail à temps partiel réduit leurs dettes, les jeunes ne militent plus beaucoup. Par contre, certains spécialistes s'entendent sur l'idée d'une certaine stigmatisation des jeunes par rapport à leur désengagement politique. Selon eux, il en serait ainsi à cause du poids démographique de la génération des baby-boomers qui possédait la force et le nombre nécessaires pour se faire entendre, ce que ne possède pas les jeunes issus de la génération Y. Ils doivent pourtant prendre leur place dans la société mais comment faire sans cette force démographique pourtant essentielle à faire entendre sa voix?

Malgré tout, force est de constater que le phénomène intergénérationnel touche plus ou moins tout le monde. Cependant, le mot en lui-même est trop souvent synonyme de "conflit entre générations". De plus, les problématiques concernant cette question sont renforcées par les stéréotypes que se font les différentes générations les unes des autres. Cependant, il serait hasardeux de passer outre le fait que depuis plusieurs années, les jeunes sont confrontés de façon récurrente aux propos pessimistes des médias concernant divers sujets épineux comme le remboursement de la dette publique et le financement du secteur de la santé.

Jacques Roy, dans *Les personnes âgées et les solidarités: la fin des mythes*,²⁶ demeure optimiste et souligne "qu'entre le spectre générationnel, il existe des passerelles entre les personnes âgées et les nouvelles générations". Selon lui, des recherches dévoilent que 70% des personnes âgées ont des contacts réguliers avec leurs enfants et que l'aide entre les aînés et leurs enfants est réciproque; ces informations pourraient donc traduire un potentiel d'ouverture et de solidarité entre les personnes âgées et les nouvelles générations.

2.11. *Perspectives: visions optimistes et pessimistes*

Une inquiétude grandissante au sujet de la situation démographique canadienne se développe présentement. Le rapide vieillissement de la popu-

²⁶ Roy, Jacques. 1998. *Les personnes âgées et les solidarités: la fin des mythes*. Sainte-Foy (Qué.): Éditions de l'IQRC, 118 p.

lation et la perte de travailleurs qualifiés inquiètent les entreprises. Les jeunes vivent des difficultés indéniables face au marché du travail et on se demande pourquoi les organisations ne semblent pas avoir entrepris des transformations inhérentes à ce marché du travail changeant. Joel Prager,²⁷ professeur à l'Université de Calgary, questionne les conséquences qu'auront sur le marché du travail et sur la capacité de production les changements démographiques décrits comme *la plasticité de la mortalité à l'âge avancé*. Selon lui, il n'est pas surprenant que certains économistes prévoient un avenir plus chaotique vu le nombre croissant de travailleurs âgés et de préretraités durant les deux prochaines décennies.

Des visions pessimistes et optimistes existent concernant le phénomène du vieillissement de la population sur le marché du travail. Les optimistes estiment que la réduction de la main d'œuvre sera un avantage économique puisqu'elle permettrait l'investissement dans la technologie et épargnerait ainsi du travail, ce qui nous rendrait plus efficace et plus productif. Les pessimistes indiquent pour leur part que la transformation technologique apporterait en fait une croissance sans emploi. Un grand nombre de retraités disposeront désormais de beaucoup de temps libre. De plus, le danger d'une rivalité intergénérationnelle s'accroîtra puisque les retraités et les plus démunis seront davantage dépendants de l'État. Les optimistes pour leur part soutiennent que les changements démographiques et économiques vont finir par améliorer la "culture civique" et encourager un grand nombre de retraités à devenir bénévoles en s'engageant dans un ensemble de projets publics.

Le "vieillissement productif", comme le décrit A.R. Herzog,²⁸ représente "toute activité qui produit des biens ou des services, rémunérés ou non, y compris des activités telles que le travail ménager, la garde d'enfants, le travail bénévole et le fait d'aider sa famille et ses amis".²⁹ Il indique que si nous n'avons pas encore réussi à quantifier la valeur financière de telles activités, nous savons que ces dernières contribuent à l'augmentation de la productivité canadienne. Comme l'indique Prager, les questions concernant la productivité sur une population vieillissante sont complexes et les réponses ne sont pas à portée de main. Le principal défi reste que "si nous ne subven-

²⁷ Prager, Joel. 2003. "Vieillissement et productivité: que savons-nous?". Dans *Vieillissement et évolution démographique au Canada*, sous la dir. de David Cheal, p. 145-190. Montréal (Qué.): Les presses de l'Université de Montréal.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 158.

²⁹ Cité dans S.A. Bass (dir.), *Older and Active*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1995.

tionnons pas la recherche nécessaire pour mettre de l'ordre dans notre productivité et nous permettre de mieux comprendre comment utiliser notre main d'œuvre grisonnante, il sera trop tard pour faire quoi que ce soit”.

2.12. *Des solutions pour les jeunes?*

Il est donc urgent de trouver des solutions qui permettront aux jeunes de s'adapter plus facilement au marché de travail changeant et par le fait même, prévenir la perte des travailleurs plus âgés. Si les jeunes doivent conclure des alliances avec les baby-boomers comment se fait-il que l'entente entre les deux groupes semble si problématique? Outre les préjugés que se font les différentes générations entre elles, on constate que les jeunes ont des attentes complètement différentes de celles de leurs prédécesseurs. Toutefois, il faut être prudent dans le discours “jeunes vs baby-boomers” indique Raymond Hudon,³⁰ professeur au Département de Sciences politiques de l'Université Laval, car selon lui “la génération des parents devient toujours le bouc émissaire des frustrations de la génération suivante”.

Les futurs employeurs des jeunes ont toutefois des attentes élevées et ne semblent pas avoir adapté leurs attentes en fonction d'une masse de travailleurs qui n'est plus la même qu'il y a 20 ans. Par exemple, on sait que l'équilibre entre le travail et la vie privée, rompu par les baby-boomers et la génération X, est aujourd'hui non négociable pour la génération Y. C'est donc dire que le contexte sociologique a changé l'équilibre travail – vie privée. Le travail n'est donc plus la pierre angulaire de la vie des jeunes qui recherchent davantage un équilibre et une satisfaction au travail. Les employeurs doivent donc en tenir compte. Certaines entreprises n'embauchent carrément pas de jeunes mais comme le souligne Marc-André Dumont³¹ “dans un contexte où la main d'œuvre est rare, la génération la plus scolarisée de l'histoire du Québec constitue une relève prometteuse”. Hervé Sérieyx,³² dans *Les jeunes et l'entreprise: des noces ambiguës*, indique que l'incompréhension des gestionnaires à l'égard des jeunes de 16 à 30 ans pourraient leur nuire dans les années à venir car ces jeunes représentent un

³⁰ Guéricolas, Pascale, *op. cit.*, p. 1.

³¹ Dumont, Marc-André. 2004. “Les employeurs sont trop impatients avec les jeunes: les exigences à leur égard sont parfois les mêmes que pour un employé d'expérience”. *Les Affaires* (Montréal), 11 septembre, p. 31.

³² Soulié, Jean-Paul. 2003. “Le monde du travail: Pas facile d'intégrer la nouvelle génération”. *La Presse* (Montréal), 30 avril, p. 2.

bassin de collaborateurs de grande qualité qui se sont adaptés au pluralisme multiculturel et à l'informatique aisément. Il ajoute que pour eux, le travail n'est peut-être plus une vertu mais ils sont prêts à travailler très fort s'ils y voient des résultats notoires:

Cette jeunesse numérique, tombée dès l'enfance dans la marmite de l'Internet, des emails et du portable, est bien plus adaptée que ses aînés à la civilisation des réseaux. Donnez leur du sens, ils vous donneront de l'énergie, donnez leur du fun, ils vous donneront de l'engagement, donnez leur de l'autonomie, ils innoveront.³³

Michel Masseloni,³⁴ psychologue social et chercheur, présente les jeunes comme des individualistes tribaux. Selon lui: "Le courant de mai 1968 avait été celui de l'individualisme. Les jeunes d'aujourd'hui le sont toujours, mais pas seuls. Ils veulent être ensemble". Selon Sérieyx, les jeunes sont toujours individualistes mais répugnent à se séparer de leur tribu. La difficulté réside dans la fidélisation de ces jeunes et selon lui, la solution résiderait dans l'idée de fournir un mentor aux jeunes pour qu'ils s'adaptent plus aisément au marché du travail. Ceci permettrait de combler l'écart générationnel.

Selon André Gagnon,³⁵ coordonnateur du Service de carrière et de placement à l'Université Concordia, les attentes des employeurs envers les jeunes sont trop exigeantes. Il précise que le contexte du néolibéralisme pousse les entreprises à chercher des jeunes qui ne "courent pas les rues", c'est-à-dire des jeunes exceptionnellement performants ayant maintenu de bonnes moyennes, qui ont du leadership, un bon esprit d'équipe et qui ont réussi dans des activités parascolaires. Il ajoute: "Ce qui est paradoxal, c'est que ceux qui engagent les jeunes aujourd'hui ont eu tout le temps nécessaire pour s'adapter au marché du travail quand ils l'ont intégré dans les années 80". L'attitude impatiente et exigeante des employeurs ne pourra pas perdurer compte tenu de la rareté de la main d'œuvre, comme le souligne le Professeur David Cheal dans *Aging and Demographic Change in Canadian Context*.³⁶

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

³⁵ Dumont, Marc-André. 2004. "Les employeurs sont trop impatients avec les jeunes: les exigences à leur égard sont parfois les mêmes que pour un employé d'expérience". *Les Affaires* (Montréal), 11 septembre, p. 31.

³⁶ Cheal, David (ed.), 2002. *Aging and Demographic Change in Canadian Context*, Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 288 pp.

Conclusion

À l'heure de la mondialisation, le chantier social des relations entre les générations est à peine ouvert au Canada. Toutefois, la recherche de solutions doit être mise de l'avant pour que les quatre principales générations puissent tisser des liens essentiels au développement d'une société plus harmonieuse. La recherche de solutions à l'écart intergénérationnel doit être encouragée et bien que les autorités civiles et politiques aient déjà abordé la question, elles doivent être plus proactives. Les solutions faciles relèvent de l'utopie mais l'ouverture d'un dialogue permet, au minimum, de sensibiliser les différents acteurs impliqués. Les jeunes de la génération Y ont des valeurs et des aspirations distinctes de celles des baby-boomers et c'est pourquoi une restructuration des conditions de travail et du marché du travail doit être amorcée. Bien que le Canada soit aux yeux de plusieurs pays industrialisés et évidemment du Tiers-Monde dans une situation privilégiée, les problèmes démographiques et sociaux ne manquent pas, en particulier dans les milieux minoritaires et dans un très grand nombre de "réserves" où vivent environ la moitié du million d'autochtones au Canada.³⁷

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³⁷ Je tiens à remercier Élodie Bilodeau Lamonde pour sa participation à la préparation de cette étude.

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L'observatoire jeunes et sociétés, <http://obsjeunes.qc.ca>

Parlement du Canada, <http://www.parl.gc.ca>

Perspective Monde, <http://www.usherbrooke.ca>

Statistique Canada, <http://www.statcan.ca>

Fifth Session

**PROSPECTS FOR FORMATION OF BODY, MIND
AND SPIRIT OF COMING GENERATIONS**

THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND MINORS IN INTERNATIONAL CHARTERS

OMBRETTA FUMAGALLI CARULLI

1. THE TWENTIETH CENTURY 'CHILDREN CENTURY'

At the beginning of the twentieth century a book was published doomed to a great fortune. Its author, Ellen Key, foretold the twentieth century as 'The Century of the Child'. As many as 64 editions issued in the first six years highlighted a need felt by the society. Although its serious limit is that to put the aims of education in the second place, it shook the European culture.

The 'discovery' of the child did not occur suddenly. Ancient tenets of the Christian thought had already 'overturned' the previous traditions. Nevertheless translating the Christian conceptions into the laws of the 'city of man' is an extremely slow process. Declarations and Constitutions of the eighteenth century devoted themselves of the adult individual only. The modern humanism, being anthropocentric, deriving from the Enlightenment, rationalist, bourgeois and in the end eventually atheistic, is the main inspirer thereof, often in antithesis with the Christian humanism. The laws in '800 did not envisage forms of protection of the minor either, albeit the industrial revolution requires children as labour force.

The historical evolution, pre-legal and legal, is therefore slow. It is necessary to reach the first decades of the twentieth century and in particular its second half to see the child been granted the status of weaker party to be protected but at the same time to be promoted during the process of development of his/her personality towards maturity. The first international charters are created in different places, but with a unique purpose: to define the statute of the child's rights.

As we are unable here to analyse in detail all the documents issued within the international community, after a cursory overview of the early private

charters we will deal in depth with UN and European Charters as compared with the African and Arab ones on one side and with the American convention on the other side.

We anticipate a surprising issue for those belonging to the western culture: in the African Charters we can find principles and concerns from which we should take example.

2. FROM PRIVATE CHARTERS TO UN CHARTERS

2.1. *The Geneva and London Declarations*

The first Charters started from pure charitable needs and had private origin, although addressed to social needs. So the International Committee of the Red Cross published in 1920 the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (Geneva, 6 January 1920).

Adopted by the Assembly of the League of Nations as (first) *Geneva Declaration* (24 September 1924) it outlined some duties¹ of humanity towards children in education, welfare and health.

The *Ligue internationale pour l'éducation nouvelle* launched in 1942 the *Charter of Infancy or London's Charter*, which did not deal with duties of society, but with primary rights to guarantee and provide every child with: the right to be nourished, dressed, housed; the right of medical assistance; the right of access to sources of knowledge and wisdom of the nation, to education and religion.

The International Union for Infancy's Protection published then the (new) *Geneva Declaration* in 1948, including a list of duties of humanity similar to those contained in the first Declaration, with the further addition of measures of assistance and social security.

2.2. *UN Charters*

a) The transition from protection through assistance to protection through rights is found in the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York, 10 December 1948).

¹ The charter defines the following duties of the humanity concerning the child: to enable his/her normal development, both physically and spiritually; provide him with

It states a list of fundamental rights and freedoms which 'every human being' (therefore children too) must enjoy.

Among them, and first of all, right to life. Article 3, which guarantees it, does not mention the prenatal life. This silence – its necessary notice it – remains in the subsequent International Charters, so there are contrasting opinions every time issues about prenatal life, like abortion, genetic manipulation, and in general assisted procreation are discussed within United Nations.

As for specific protecting rules, besides a generic statement that childhood is entitled 'to a special help and assistance', some articles concern the life condition of children: family as 'the natural and fundamental group unit of society' (Article 16), motherhood and childhood, the right 'to special care' (Article 25) and right to education (Article 26).

A full acknowledgment of rights has not been reached yet. Above all the declaration is not legally binding, not even for the signatory states, as it is neither a treaty nor a convention. It has however an important political value. It constitutes a synthesis of the *jusnaturalistic* American and French traditions with the person-focused Christian thought.² It inspires several subsequent constitutions of European states which place side by side the first generation of human rights (civil and political rights deriving from liberal revolutions) and those of second generation (social rights, work, assistance, education and culture, deriving from the nineteenth century movements for solidarity sake). It is the basis from which the international community starts more specific documents aimed at children and youth (right of third generation so called 'of differences').

Closely linked to the Universal Declaration, the two *International Covenants* (New York, 1966) complete the framework of the international statute of human rights with some specific guarantees. The Covenant on civil and political rights (but not the one on economic, social and cultural rights) recognises the right of individual appeal before the controlling organism (the Human Rights Committee) making justiciable the infringed right.

adequate support in case of dis-ability (to feed him/her when hungry, to cure when ill, to stimulate if retarded, to recover if mislead, to shelter and help if orphan or abandoned); rescue first in case of necessity; help a regular process of socialization (putting him/her in the position to earn his/her living and protect him/her against every kind of exploitation); finally raise him/her with the feeling that his best qualities must be put at service of his fellows.

² The synthesis appears, for instance, in the term 'dignity' added to the term 'rights' (Article 1: 'All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights').

b) The *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* (New York, 20 November 1959)³ proceeds from equal rights to the rights of differences with exclusive attention for children.⁴

There appears the statement (since then acknowledged in all subsequent texts as reference for every protection, almost a style clause) which in every situation the 'best interest of the child' must be taken into account.

It represents a lead concept certainly significant in indicating the priorities of protection both by the laws adopted by the States in order to guarantee the special protection of the child (Principle 2) and by those responsible for his/her education and guidance, in the first place his/her parents (Principle 7).

Nevertheless the rarefied formula mentioning the 'best interest' refers back to the personal individuality of the child. Without predefined legal criteria, the formula leaves discretion to legal system of every State to determine the real contents so that implementation becomes largely arbitrary. It results therefrom a protection with a patchy distribution depending on each State, so jeopardizing the characteristic of universality and therefore the inviolability of the right.

Furthermore, in the Charter already the tendency to proliferation of rights can be already outlined, as rights are made to coincide with human needs and in this case the category of right loses its nature. In Principle 6 affection is mentioned along with the right of children to be loved: a feeling important for their growth and central in pedagogy of growth, but difficult to define on legal grounds.

c) A turning point is constituted by the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (New York, 20 November 1989, entered into force on 2 September 1990), the fruit of ten year of dedicated work. It is the most coherent international text, to which all the subsequent documents will refer regarding specific areas of protection. We will consider it in detail.

³ Like any declaration it does not bind even the signatory States, as it has the value of a moral commitment only. It has however the merit of recognizing a full dignity of being a person to the minor as well as to set up the route in order to stipulate proper international agreements binding for the States.

⁴ The qualifying aspects regard the child's right to be raised under the care and responsibility of the parents, and in any case in a loving atmosphere and a feeling of moral and material security: the right of not being separated from the mother; of being relieved first, of being protected from any form of neglect, cruelty and exploitation in particular in work.

First of all the legal instrument is a step forward: the Convention is no longer a mere exhortation but binds the signatory States and compels them to introduce all the legal measures required in order to enforce it.

It is a step backwards with respect to the above mentioned Covenant on civil and political rights as it does not encompass the faculty to make a complaint for the infringement of the obligations stated herein neither by the Contracting States nor for the individual victim of violation.

The controlling organ (the Committee on the Rights of the Child) has a competence to hear the reports submitted by the contracting States every 5 years. Moreover it performs an addressing duty: makes comments on single reports, advises States on which measures to adopt in order for a better implementation of the Convention, along with general observations on specific subjects addressed to all the Contracting States.

As for the content some observations can be prompted.

c.1. Rights Peculiar to Children

The child, in addition to rights of adults, has peculiar rights which take priority. Among them: right to play, to rest and leisure (Article 31), already treated in the Charter of 1959,⁵ penal guarantees,⁶ right to be heard in any judicial proceeding (Article 12); right of protection against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 34), against abduction, against sale of and traffic in children (Article 35); right to a family, and therefore to maintain personal relations with both parents, even if they are living in different Countries, or to benefit from an alternative care if the family lacks (Articles 8, 9, 10, 20, 21); the prohibition to enlist people who have not attained the age of fifteen years (Article 38).

To these must be added the personal rights, already guaranteed to everyone in former Charters and reaffirmed in the Convention with respect to children: right to personal identity (Article 7) and to preserve it (Article 8); to freedom of speech, thought, conscience, religion, association, (Articles 12-15); to privacy (Article 16) and to health (Article 24).

⁵ Principle 7: 'Child must be allowed to play and to have leisure time, aiming to educational purpose'.

⁶ Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment are allowed for children; the detention shall be used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time. States must promote laws so that no child alleged as, accused of, or recognised as having infringed the penal law shall be deprived of his/her liberty unlawfully or arbitrarily (Articles 37 and 40).

To the rights of children correspond precise undertakings by the States. For instance, the respect for the sexual personality of the child is coupled by the obligations of the States to protect him/her against exploitation and violence (Article 34). For the first time – must be noticed – this article clearly mentions a very wide and alarming problem, connected with pornography.⁷

c.2. The Relationship Rights: Child and Family

If the right to family is a right peculiar to child, it is too the most important relationship right of children.

About this issue the Convention shows controversial points. To have mentioned in a paragraph of the Preamble the family not only as ‘the fundamental group of society’ but also ‘the natural environment’ for the growth and welfare of children is certainly positive. It is positive as well the request, reported in several provisions, to the States of promoting in their domestic laws the parent-offspring relationship.

Assertion, sometimes heard, that Convention sets children against parents is not correct.

Not only the Convention does not concern with private relationship between child and his/her family, because it (as every convention) binds States, not private citizens. But also suggests that State should not interfere, except for very serious and specific reasons, in relationship between child and his/her ‘natural environment’ (the family) and, on the contrary, that they should help family to take care of and to grow children, giving appropriate support. The subsidiary role of State intervenes when the family lacks means to secure to the children the minimum standard of welfare necessary for their growth (Article 27).

Rather, the Convention is aimed at providing the child the ‘right to parents’ contribution’.⁸ This is inferable from many provisions which guaran-

⁷ This fills the gap left by a more ancient Convention of Geneva (12 September 1923) against circulation and trade of obscene publications, which did not deal with infantile pornography, though at that time it was universally considered forbidden.

⁸ Among these rights: to provide appropriate direction and guidance, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, is a duty of parents (Article 5); the parents have the primary responsibility to secure the conditions of living necessary for the child’s development (Article 27); a child shall not be separated from his/her parents, except when such separation is necessary for the best interests of child (Article 9); the child separated from one or both parents must maintain personal relations with both parents, except if it is contrary to the child’s best interests (Article 9.3); it is parents’ right

tee more specific rights and duties. The Convention considers the family rather realistically not only in its physiology, but also in its pathology.

Everyone can easily suppose that the natural and optimal situation of a child living happily in his family may come to an end for many reasons: there are children of separated couples, children in hospitals, street children, during wars there are children orphan or separated from parents or even enlisted as soldiers. General principles, to which domestic legislation of States Parties must be inspired, cope with these situations (and many others which I cannot mention for lack of time).⁹

When child must be protected from his/her own family, the traditional international principle (expressed in various Conventions, for example in European Convention for Human Rights, precisely in Article 8) according to which States are not allowed to interfere with familiar life, cannot be acknowledged.¹⁰ Exactly concerned with sexual abuse on children the European Court of Human Rights (*Stubbing and Others v. the United Kingdom*, 1996) ruled asserting both the positive obligation by the States (Paragraph 62) and the rights of children and other vulnerable individuals to State's protection (Paragraph 64).

It is plain that if family does not exist or is not able to carry on its duties, it is due up to the State to indicate which instruments can fulfil the rights provided by Convention. Article 20 lists possible solutions: foster placement, 'kafalah' of Islamic law, adoption, placement in suitable institutions for the care of children.

Certainly the formulation of some articles does not seem to be very clear and precise: Article 10, for instance, about immigration, suggests that States should consider a request of family reunification 'in a positive, humane and expeditious manner': this very generic formulation conceals the fears felt by rich States about a massive arrival of immigrants if the family reunification is granted too easily. Some Countries (Japan, United

to provide the child with direction towards freedom of manifesting his/her religion or beliefs (Article 14); States shall ensure alternative care for child temporarily or permanently deprived of his/her family environment (Article 20).

⁹ Let's make an example from phenomenon of violence in the family: States Parties shall take all appropriate legislative measures to protect the child 'from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse' (Article 19). ECPAT (NGO against sexual exploitation of children) reports that many sexual abuses happen inside and not outside family.

¹⁰ Article 8 of ECHR recognises to States the right to interfere only in accordance with the law.

Kingdom, Singapore) approved this article under a reservation of a strict interpretation. The Committee on the Rights of the Child, as to it, insists upon ratifying the Convention of 1990 about protection of rights of migrant workers and of their family's members.

c.3. Other Relationship Rights and Social Rights

The variety of rights exceeds the relationship between State-parents-children.

Pedagogy of human development, to which the Convention is inspired, is aimed to growing a subject not only who lives in family, but also who is expected to interrelate with other people in a society structurally and politically organised, and to be provided with cultural stimulations.

Social rights are also protected: first of all the right to primary education, compulsory and available free, and to a higher one (Article 28), regulated in a way consistent with dignity of the child as a human being; secondly (Article 32) the right to a formative job, characterized by progressive training and by absence of conditions of economic exploitation or in any case harmful to the child.

International Labour Organisation (which after World War II became a Specialized Agency of the UN) has intervened since 1992 against the negative consequences of the process of the economic world globalisation on child labour.

More recently, the fight against the 'worst forms of labour', which harms health, morality and safety of the child has become object of several actions for their eradication. *ILO Convention No. 182* (June 1999) and *Recommendation No. 190*¹¹ call upon member States to adopt adequate criminal punishments, to implement integrated actions in favour of prevention, education and formation and to support families with economic and cultural assistance.

The complexity of the themes (economic, ethic, legal) about child labour does not allow now a thorough analysis. The delocalisation, one of the most

¹¹ The variety of the 'worst form of labour' taken into consideration and with respect of which the Convention calls upon States Parties adequate sanctions are: all forms of slavery, compulsory labour, forced recruitment for use in armed conflict, the use of a child for the production of pornography or for the production and trafficking of drugs, work which is likely to harm the health, safety or morality of children.

worrying and difficult problems, drives many factories to open new activities in States (from Asia to Brazil) where they can use low cost manpower. In those Countries exploitation of child labour permits to achieve high market shares thanks to a growth based on export. Answers on this issue by ILO or other international bodies, such as the WTO, are still lacking today.

c.4. *Prevalence of Interests*

As we mentioned above the Convention refers to the 'interest of the child' (it means a young under eighteen years, but in some specific situation the age limit is lowered) as the paramount consideration in the exercise of some rights. The interest of the child is too the superior and general principle.¹²

In legal language interest of the child means prevailing legal test, which implies that in a conflict between right of a child and right of an adult, the first one prevails.

Here appears a very delicate question: is the prevalence of child's right absolute or is it to be assessed taking into consideration the whole familiar structure? The Christian concept of *patria potestas* supports the second solution, in fact the Holy See, ratifying the Convention, made some reservations. The Holy See declares that it interprets the Articles of Convention in a way which safeguards the primary and inalienable rights of parents, insofar as these rights concern education (Articles 13 and 28), religion (Article 14), association with others (Article 15) and privacy (Article 16).

It is important to emphasize that parents are not mentioned in the Charter as persons having rights, but certainly many rights of their children are actuated by them or even they find enlargement in parents' rights-duties. It is not easy to reconcile two principles both coming from the Convention: the principle that the child's rights must be considered inside the family and that the child's rights prevail over those of the family, better of the heads of family, the parents.

Let's make an example: to such an extent is the right to religious education or to sexual one is a right which can be exercised only by the minor himself/herself and from which point, the right is vested in him/her but

¹² 'In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration' (Article 3).

he/she is prevented from exercising it? Does the 'weighty responsibility of caring education' (quoting a famous definition of Vatican II) bring as a result a primary role by parents?

A detailed legal analysis is lacking up today. It is useful to draw a distinction between relationships inside the family and relationships between the child and the State. In the second case the rights of the child certainly prevail. In the first case the rights of parents prevail according to the 'right to parents' contribution', which lays stress on responsibility of parents and which – as we said above – can be acquired from various conventional provisions.

European Codifications state how to conciliate rights of parents and rights of children. For instance: Italian Law specifies not only the duties of parents to children, but also those of children to parents.¹³ A clearer international provision to precise inviolable rights of children would stimulate every State to adjust its domestic legislation. If the child needs a family is clear that his/her best interest is not achieved when the family is scattered.

Here appears one of the most hot subject of current times. Which model of family must be considered: a traditional family or a, so called, alternative one? For instance there is a discussion about gay couples and their claim of a 'right to a child at any cost' (adoptive or outcome from genetic manipulation). Without thinking to exhaust the complex question, it is necessary to remember that psychologists underline the importance of both paternal and maternal figures for a well balanced growth of children and even of the couple of parents.

The Convention does not adopt a definite position on the matter, but its interpretation could lead, with the authority of an international seat, to favourable interpretation that children are adoptable by homosexual couples. Therefore the definition of the 'prevailing interest of minor' today, more than in the past, should be seriously and deeply pondered.

c.5. *The Right to Life*

The most critical aspect is 'the inherent right to life' (Article 6). It is guaranteed in the triple specification of right to physical and mental integrity

¹³ As for the duties of parents the Italian Civil Code affirms that 'marriage imposes both husband and wife to maintain, teach and educate progeny bearing children's talent, innate inclination and aspirations' (Article 147). The article 315 regarding the children's duties states that 'the child should respect his/her parents and should contribute, according to his/her property and income, to family's welfare, as long as he/she lives with his/her family'.

(Article 19), right to health (Article 24) and, without any details, right to protection from any form of exploitation, prejudicial to any aspects of child's welfare by every person (Article 36).

From articles of Convention it is excluded any possible link with prenatal life, which does not mean only protection of embryo from manipulation or foetus from abortion, but also protection of child before birth, that belongs to the juridical legacy of the civilisation of roman legal tradition (enough to remember the protection of right of unborn child to inherit).

The Convention mentions prenatal life only in the Preamble.¹⁴ It literally speaks of appropriate legal protection before as well as after birth. This assertion, written after a long fight during preliminary works engaged both by those States more sensitive to right to life since conception and by the delegation of the Holy See, is legally material. Preamble and annexes to Treaties – as Article 31 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (23 May 1969) affirms – are guide for interpretation of articles. It goes without saying that an article protecting right to life of a future baby since conception would guarantee much more. Preliminary works clearly demonstrate the fear of contradicting laws for abortion of many States.

One can therefore understand that the Holy See by acceding to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 April 1990), remained confident that the ninth preambular paragraph will serve as 'the perspective' through which the rest of the Convention will be interpreted. Article 31 of the Vienna Convention is clearly quoted. The Holy See made also some reservations: on Article 24 about family planning education and services: it is necessary to refer only to natural methods morally accepted by the Roman Catholic Church. As we said above, the Holy See made a reservation on its interpretation on articles about education (Articles 13 and 28), religion (Article 14), association with others (Article 15) and privacy (Article 16), so that primary and inalienable rights of parents – first educators of child – are safeguarded.

These extremely delicate points deserve unambiguous definitions. The same words 'child' and 'family', if they are not correctly defined, risk being prejudicial to the right to life and the right to family. It is an objective remark that abortion breaks the right to life of child preventing his/her birth and that

¹⁴ The Convention, affirming that child 'by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care' adds 'including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth'.

genetic investigations may persuade to sacrifice the right to life. It is too an objective remark that for family we intend the natural institution, not alternative models, the right is to 'one family' not to 'families'. Nevertheless observations on both remarks prove the clash of opposite opinions.

We notice then that the Committee on the Rights of the Child (which controls the implementation of the obligations of the Convention) often interpreted the Convention with criteria prejudicial of rights of prenatal life, therefore some jurists, designed as components of Committee and chosen among supporters of a line prejudicial of the right of life, affect the decisions of each State.

The Convention could be wider and more punctual also about the right of parents to provide religious and moral education of children.

More recently, the *Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the 'sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography'* (signed on 6 September 2000, entered into force on 18 January 2002) intervenes about the more dramatic involution of our social life. It underlines that 'a number of particularly vulnerable groups, including girl children, are at greater risk of sexual exploitation and that girl children are disproportionately represented among the sexually exploited' (Preamble).

Another *Optional Protocol 'on the involvement of children in armed conflict'* (signed on 6 September 2000, entered into force on 12 February 2002) condemns 'the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict and direct attacks on objects protected under international law, including places that generally have a significant presence of children, such as schools and hospitals' (Preamble).

Moreover, on 25 December 2003 entered into force the *Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime* (adopted on 15 December 2000) about trafficking in persons, especially women and children.

In May 2002 took place the most important Conference, the *Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children*, which was very participated. For the first time the object of discussion was the condition of children. At the end the draft report 'A World Fit for Children' was adopted. It is the new agenda, including 21 specific goals and targets for the next decade, promoting healthy lives; providing quality education for all; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

2.3. *The Millennium Development Goals*

The Road Map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration states as fourth goal that to reduce by two thirds between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate. Certainly this is an important initiative, but it does not cope with the problem of the future baby. On the contrary, introducing the protection of the 'reproductive health of the woman' it denies the right to the life of future baby in case of conflict with woman's health.

3. THE CONVENTION ON PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND COOPERATION IN RESPECT OF INTERCOUNTRY ADOPTION

The intercountry adoption has been often a favourable field for violation of fundamental rights of children and for unclear traffic and procedures. The *Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption* (The Hague, 29 May 1993) approaches different laws and matches its goals with those of the Convention of New York (1989).¹⁵

The new regulation, has raised in many European Countries the number of couples requiring an intercountry adoption; sometimes they are not fully aware that the adopted one comes from a quite different culture.

As some survey investigations report,¹⁶ many couples resort to intercountry adoption as a second choice due to the long delay and complex procedures for national adoption, without being aware of what this type of adoption implies. In similar cases the risk of a dramatic failure grows, not just with reference to the phase of the introduction of the child in the family but mostly with regards to the phase of teenager crisis, a period difficult to manage by unprepared parents. Thence the emerging of ancient prejudices against the 'child coming from faraway', which can poison both the internal relationship within the foster family but also their social life.

¹⁵ They can be summarized along three major lines: a) to ensure that the intercountry adoptions take place in the best interest of the child, b) to establish a system of cooperation amongst Contracting States; c) to secure the recognition in Contracting States of adoptions made in accordance with the Convention.

¹⁶ You can see, for instance, the inquiry made by the Italian Parliament (final document 27 October 2004).

Summing up the culture of acceptance by the candidate couples, which should be supported otherwise by all the interested parties (institutions, youth courts, social services and approved agencies) seems not yet rooted.

4. THE EUROPEAN POSITIONS

4.1. *The European Charters*

The Council of Europe approves the *European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights* (Strasbourg, 25 January 1996) based on the Convention of the Rights of the Child.

The discrepancies on the matter of age of majority with European position still too different (ranging between 19 and 21 years) had some relevance in producing a widely shared agreement. One extremely delicate problem was at stake: how far the law could keep the pace with the social phenomenon of the gradual earlier occurrence of psychophysical maturity without favouring a lowering of responsibility of parents or of those in charge of youth education.

Hence derived an arrangement restricted to the participation of minors in those processes where their rights are at stake. The guarantee organ therein introduced – a permanent committee of no more than 7 experts designated by the States – is unable to create a form of supranational control on the domestic compliance of the provisions of the Convention, but can put forth only recommendations.

More recently the Council of Europe adopted the *European Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions concerning Custody of Children and on Restoration of Custody of Children* (20 May 1980), the *Convention on Cybercrime* (opened for signature on 23 November 2001) and the *Convention on Contact concerning Children* (opened for signature on 15 May 2003).

4.2. *The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* (Charter of Nice, November 2000; presently second part of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe, signed at Rome on 29 October 2004, so called European Constitution) also deals with the inviolable rights of youth, encompassing rights already guaranteed by UN Conventions¹⁷ and reaffirming the best interest of child as 'prevailing' on that of adults.

¹⁷ Among other duties, we underline: the right to maintain on a regular basis a personal relationship and direct contact with both his or her parents, unless that is contrary

4.3. Among the European political position it is worth mentioning here the *European Parliament Resolution of 16 March 1989*. Intervening on the ethical and legal problems of genetic engineering it calls on governments and parliaments of the Member States for acting specific law to protect the human embryo, guaranteeing the protection of genetic identity, forbidding experiments aimed at modifying the genetic program of human beings, prohibiting as a criminal offence any commercial use of embryos or foetuses. The rigour, in method as well, of the resolution however was abandoned in the subsequent ones.

5. THE AFRICAN AND ARAB POSITIONS

5.1. *African Declarations and Charters*

Between the 70s and the 90s of the last century the issue of the rights was dealt with Africa.

The relative international instruments reflect the needs of a society conscious at last that the principle of non-discrimination is fundamental in every civilisation. South Africa, a country with the major discriminating tradition, as soon as apartheid vanished puts age among factors of non-discrimination.¹⁸

The definition of children rights is trusted first to the general charters, thereafter to specific documents. Among these the *Monrovia Declaration on the Rights and Welfare of the African Child* (17 to 20 July 1979) and the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, adopted on 11 July 1990.

Albeit the list of rights is not so different from that present in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most peculiar provision of the African Charter appears to be Article 31. It regulates children's responsibility, stating in particular that the child, among other duties, must work for the cohesion of the family, respect his parents, superiors and elders as well as assist them.

to his or her interests; the prohibition of child labour; against economic exploitation and any work likely to harm their safety, health or physical, mental, moral or social development or to interfere with their education.

¹⁸ 'The State may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth'.

The prospect of children duties toward their family, and not only of rights, is certainly a reflection of the communitarian culture alive in Africa. The economically weak structures of the African continent, due to a lack of economic-industrial development, has its point of strength in the socio-political organisation based on the family and clans as primary sites of offspring growth.

Much different is the situation in the other continents. Every cultural homologation can be considered inappropriate. However, apart from careful distinctions, more attention paid to duties and not only to rights could be everywhere the wished countermeasure to fragmentation, which the culture of individual rights is boosting.

The African Charter in addition to offering a more balanced point of view, represents also a remarkable breakthrough in the traditional approach to juvenile justice. For the first time a individual is granted the faculty of making a complaint before an international organ of safeguard for an infringement not only of civil and political rights, but of the economic, social and cultural ones as well – usually considered not justiciable – which imply the adoption of proactive measures and the allocation of resources by the respondent state.

If this new model works, it is conviction of the legal science that the actual framework of child protection in Europe must be likewise reconsidered.

5.2. *Arab Declarations and Charters*

The *Universal Islamic Declaration of Human Rights* (19 September 1981), presented as ‘a declaration for mankind, a guidance and instruction to those who fear God’, based on the Quran and the Sunnah, sets the human rights each Muslim government must implement. But the very limit, which every law can have, due to the principles of Sharia, introduces many constraints to the inviolability of human rights, because it makes them relative instead of absolute, and therefore inviolable. Let’s take for instance, the large number of limitation set by the religious law to the capacity of women, which become unavoidably the incapability of girls.

Also the *Cairo Declaration on Human Rights in Islam of 5 August 1990*¹⁹ and the *Arab Charter on Human Rights* (adopted on 15 September 1994 by

¹⁹ The Declarations considers ‘the fundamental rights and universal freedoms in Islam’ as ‘an integral part of Islamic religion’ and affirms that family is ‘the foundation of socie-

the Council of the League of Arab States by its resolution 5437) envisage a privileged protection for the family, motherhood and infancy (besides elders) but always within the limit of the respect of the Sharia. The Arab Charter, while recalling the death penalty for extremely severe crimes, states that execution can not be carried out on minors below 18, additionally on a pregnant women prior to her delivery or on a nursing mother within two years from the date on which she gave birth (Article 12).

6. THE AMERICAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

The protection of the baby to be born is clearly guaranteed by the *American Convention on Human Rights*, adopted at San Jose, Costa Rica, on 21 November 1969 and entered into force on 1978. Its Article 4.1 affirms that the right to life shall be protected by law and 'in general, from the moment of conception'.

Among the prescription to which the international community binds the States, this is the only one explicitly addressing the legal subjectivity of the born to be. As this does not forbid dissociated praxis the protection results attenuated.

7. THE UNCERTAIN PROTECTION OF THE MINORS NOTWITHSTANDING INTERNATIONAL CHARTERS

Notwithstanding the international protection, the child today lives in a social context which experiences difficulties to relate with the children world and to understand their needs and rights. Even more so when family is unsteady or is missing, the child is subject to an accelerated process of growth. He/she is involved in the so called 'adultization' risking being deprived in reality of the right of being happily infant in his innocence and ingenuity. On the other hand, the proliferation of human rights, even in the very sensitive field of children rights, poses a risk of misunderstanding, that

ty' (Article 5). About the offspring-parent relationship (Article 7) underlines that 'parents have the right to choose the type of education they desire for their children' but 'provided they take into consideration the interest and future of the children in accordance with ethical values and the principles of the Sharia' (7.2). And only 'in accordance with the tenets of the Sharia' both parents are entitled to certain rights from their children (7.3).

to each single need corresponds a right, without additionally a duty being attached thereto. The category of insatiable right, which starts worrying the most sensible European legal science is applicable to the children rights too.

Neither in the UN Charters nor in the European ones the child is so explicitly recalled to his/her duties towards his/her family. I mentioned above that it is not correct to accuse the Convention on Rights of the Child to put children against parents. Now I add that its auspicious development should be focusing on the duties of children towards their family. In the African Charters this is stated more clearly. In the Arabic Charters the constraints of the Sharia limit the inviolability.

Fragility of the child faces increasing difficulties in rich countries as well in poor ones, though for different reasons.

As investigators on child's deviance report, children often become on one hand a victim of individual and social abuses on the other the actor of violence, as a double faced Janus, expression of scattered values in the communal life itself. Otherwise, he/she faces a radical loneliness which finds its primary cause in a collapse of the family stability and unity. Anglo-Saxon students explain the children's unsettlement with the theory of 'sensation seeking' i.e. looking for, often unaware, strong sensations in new or extreme experiences: a rebellion against social conventions in order to obtain the esteem from others and to win one's own loneliness and fear.

Two recent UNICEF reports, following the Special Session of the UN General Assembly on Children in May 2002 (above mentioned) are dramatically significant. The 2003 Report 'State of the World's Children-Child participation' provides worrying data on children mortality, loss or lack of parents, scanty education, unregistered birth, killing or injuries in war operations, trade of children, mostly girls.²⁰ The 2004 Report 'State of the World's

²⁰ Each year in the world some 11mn children below 5 years die because of diseases which can be prevented by vaccination; 6000 young people are infected by AIDS/HIV every day; 14mn children below 15 lost one or both parents because of AIDS; in the sub-Saharan countries more than 15 % children below 15 are orphans. As for education 120mn children at school age do not attend any school, 53 % of them are females; in sub-Saharan Africa and in Southern Asia more than 50mn girls at school age have no access to education. In 2000 beyond 50mn newborn babies not were registered (41 % of world births). Since 1990 over 2mn children were killed and 6mn severely injured in wars. Children labour is an experience for 1 child out of 8 in the world: about 211mn minors are working, 180 of them between 5 and 17. Trade of children is a 1bn US \$ business per year, involving an esteemed 1,2mn children and young. The trade of girls has seen a remarkable increment of girls from Moldova, Romania and Ukraine, illegally transferred to western Europe by criminal gangs based in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and Former Yugoslavia.

Children-Girls, Education and Development', specifically aimed at the education emergency with special reference to girls, is nonetheless alarming.²¹

To these data must be added those concerning the denial of rights in prenatal life: abortion, disposal of frozen embryos, experiments on stem cells. UNICEF does not mention them. It is a deafening silence, beside being worrying, broken only by the voices of the Churches. Yet everyone should understand that no investment in protecting prenatal life, as well as no investment in children, no attention for the youngest, mean no future for a country, in addition to despising the most precious resources.

In the end, this youth, so cared by the international community for more than 50 years, seems to vanish, if even can be born.

Generalizations are risky. Despite negative events, everyday comforting news are reported of young people involved in their families and societies to live in positive the rights that the international Charters grant to them. Their presence and their initiatives deserve the appellation of 'sentinel of the dawn' given to them by the late Pope John Paul II.

But in order to make this outlook comforting everywhere, it is necessary to put a remedy to the many educational inadequacies, to the merchandising of the society, to the socio-economic problems of the poor countries, to the alienating lifestyles of the rich countries.

What to do? It is a duty to go on proclaiming the children rights in the international seats as well as within the single States. But this is no longer enough. It is mandatory to clarify as soon as possible the ambiguities still present in matter of right to life, offspring-parent relationships, family model, role of the family in social life.

Moreover rights must be enforced by amending, if necessary, the international control instruments. The question is not just to make justiciable those rights guaranteed to children but also to better define the competence of the organs currently established within the international community. For instance the question to be solved, once and for all, is whether it is lawful or not that a technical organ devoid of any political legitimation like the Committee (established for the control of the Convention) may by means of interpretation endanger the right to life, having such an endangerment the

²¹ The 83 % of girls not attending school lives in sub-Saharan Africa, Southern Asia and East Asia. Among the conditions causing this situation we number the distance between schools and dwelling, the lack of drinking water and all these contexts harbour violence in the surrounding as well as within the school itself.

same dignity as that of inviolable rights. The impact of this practice on domestic law ends to modify the correct institutional design, according to which each norm is a product of the democratic consent expressed by the organs politically established for.

Most of all it is urgent to establish 'human ecology' as defined in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, recalling that its first form is the family 'in which man receives his first formative ideas about truth and goodness, and learns what it means to love and to be loved, and thus what it actually means to be a person'.

THE CHILD'S RIGHTS IN INTERNATIONAL CHARTERS
COMMENT ON THE REPORT
OF PROFESSOR OMBRETTA FUMAGALLI CARULLI

HANS F. ZACHER

The Academy owes Professor Fumagalli a deep gratitude for her report on the statements which can be found in international legal documents about the rights of children and minors. The tradition of such statements is a very young one, both in national and international law. The more valuable is the precise and comprehensive report, which Professor Fumagalli has presented. I should, however, not only like to thank Professor Fumagalli for having studied and presented the texts in such an instructive way. The sincerest thanks must be expressed to her for the helpful explanations, which make us better understand the relation between the texts and reality. Her critical remarks outline with admirable succinctness what can be said to evaluate the development.

What is left for a comment after so much agreement? Let me try to put complementary accents by an alternative approach of examination. Professor Fumagalli's report follows a line that is determined by the international institutions which have produced the texts, by the scope of their responsibilities and by the historical sequence of the texts. I will in contrast start with the difficulties which are caused if light is to be shed on the maze of correlations and contradictions in which the child is embedded as a social being, by drawing on elementary normative statements which correspond with the tradition of human rights.

These difficulties consist above all

1. of the extraordinary complexity of the real and normative contexts in which children live and grow up;
2. of the extreme uniqueness through which that complexity in ethnic or religious communities, in social classes, in local, regional or national units reduces itself to concrete real and normative conditions;

3. of the maximum diversity and instability of the individual situations and developments which occur in spite or on account of these ethnic, religious, social, local, regional or national specifications;
4. of the fractures, which may result at any time if the borders separating those communities, classes, regions etc. from each other, are crossed, a fact which, however, especially comes true if children, parents, families or comparable groups cross national borders together or separately. The growing transnationality of human life gives that aspect special topicality.

AD 1) FIRST THE COMPLEXITY OF THE REAL AND NORMATIVE CONTEXTS IN WHICH CHILDREN LIVE AND GROW UP SHALL BE DEALT WITH

– Let us start with the rights of the *child*. At the very beginning there is the simple right to be: the right to life. But there is also the difference between what that right means for the time before birth and what it means after birth. On the other hand, at the end of childhood there should be the young adult who is able to exercise all the rights men enjoy, in a self-determined way. From the very beginning, the right to life is accompanied by the right to equality: the right not to be disadvantaged, not to be discriminated. From birth on, a child may also enjoy property rights, which may be exercised by the parents or by guardians. Other rights, however, grow along with the young life. While the child becomes older they change. There is, on the one hand, the right to be fostered, to be looked after, to be cared for, to be provided with goods, but also to be protected from damage. From the very beginning, childhood also embraces the right to education. As time goes by, this right differentiates, and thus some branches – especially when schools are involved – go independent ways. On the other hand there are the freedoms. They start with the naïve freedoms to experience the environment and to play. But behind them grow those freedoms which also adults enjoy. For quite a while the freedoms and the right to education penetrate each other. But then this combination ceases. Freedoms and education go independent ways. Together with the growth of rights the child's duties start to grow as well. The child has to adjust itself to the process of its own development. It has to contribute to this process. It has to learn to be responsible. All this because otherwise, as a rule, the process of its development cannot take place or the success of the process will at least suffer. And finally because learning freedom without learning duties and responsibility is futile.

– *Parents* are regarded the natural party opposite. They are primarily responsible for the mentioned process regarding the being and the development of their child or their children. But that is as true as it is much too simple. That one man and one woman are the common parents to one or more children does not necessarily mean that both of them experience the relationship in the same way and that they are unanimous in implementing it. Before birth there is the strongest evidence for that. But after birth it is valid in the same way. In spite of their common relationship with one or more children each of the parents is an individual person, has individual rights and interests, has individual ideas of values, individual opinions and emotions, and each of them has an own rationality. The possibility of a patriarchal (or also a matriarchal) order of parenthood does not make things overcome. In contrary: it underlines that father and mother are different.

That parents live upon their own rights is also valid for the relationship between parents and children. Parents can only bear responsibility for their child's process of being and development if and to the extent to which they develop their personality. In the context of rights that means: because they are subjects of own rights and because they materialise those rights. In doing so they are *by no means only* parents. They live their lives. And their rights constitute their free play. Their being parents and their being themselves are complementary. But not only that. Their being parents and their being themselves also exist in a relationship of competition, of rivalry, and of conflict. That is all the more valid as parent's rights and parent's duties cannot be separated from one another.

– Parents and children are not isolated. Men live in societies and in states. Thus also childhood and adolescence as well as parenthood take place in the full context of society and state. And that should be that way. Childhood and adolescence does not mean to form the young person only according to the measure of the parents. The meaning of childhood and adolescence is to enable the human being together with others to lead an autonomous life in the context of society and state. But that again means to approach another field of manifold complexity.

Society and state complement the relationship between parents and children in *individual cases* if the relationship suffers from *concrete deficits*. Important examples are the assistance to overstrained parents, the protection of children against degradation or abuse, the committing of children to foster families or homes, the guardianship after parents having died.

Society and state complement the parent-child relationship, however, also in a *general* way: if there is a reason to *generally presume* that the *com-*

petence and/or the efficiency of the parents will not suffice to enable the young person to lead an autonomous life together with others in the context of society and state. The prime example is the school system. Other examples are institutions caring for children or adolescents and also youth organisations themselves. Various constellations between harmony and conflict can be observed. Offers of the mentioned type, as a rule, feature a certain value-orientation. These value-orientations may coincide with the parents' ones. They can correspond to the adolescents' ones, which is especially relevant to adolescents whose responsibility is approaching majority. The bodies running the institutions or services can try to avoid contact with the orientation of the parents or the adolescents, be neutral. But they may also combat the parent's or the adolescent's orientations, and suppress them. And not rarely it is the government who compels them to do so. In all those situations measures are necessary to distinguish the permissible from the inadmissible. Value-orientations generally have a background within fundamental rights. That deserves recognition and respect. But also an excessive affirmation may become a problem if it suffocates the understanding that others are different, hence pluralism.

Even much more diverse are the problems coming from the many *co-educators* that accompany and influence the development of children and adolescents beyond all the offers provided by special institutions. The multiplicity of those influences is immense. There are the mass media having a public mandate or working for commercial reasons. There are influences aiming at others and others to adopt a certain lifestyle, a certain behaviour, a certain opinion, certain convictions. Other influences simply act on the assumption that others are as they are and do what they do: that they present their commercial offers, practise the arts, practise their religion, spend their leisure time, buy, consume, enjoy themselves etc. There are influences exerted by children on children, by young people on young people, by masses on individuals, by individuals on individuals. That chaos of 'co-education' has its causes. It corresponds to the freedoms out of which society lives. And that children and young people experience those 'co-educators' belongs essentially to them getting used to society and state. But, no doubt, there are also influences they should be protected from. Where should the limits be drawn? Once more: nothing here is simple. The international documents on the child's rights have touched that question least of all.

Behind all that there is the pitiless rule that society and state decide on the political, economic and cultural standards within which children grow up and parents bring them up. The microcosm of the parent-child-

family is only able to get rid of those bonds within narrow limits. Also the relevance of political or legal concepts with respect to the status and relationship of children, parents or families depends on those conditions. All elementary statements written in national constitutions or international documents on the rights of children, parents or families therefore are to be understood with the reservation of that relativity. Rights that may be reasonable under certain conditions may be ridiculous under others. Sometimes these statements miss the bare essentials. And often enough they are to no avail.

At the beginning I mentioned some further parameters of the problems. To keep to the limits of a comment, I will refer to them by some catchwords.

AD 2) MY SECOND POINT WAS: THE EXTREME UNIQUENESS THROUGH WHICH THAT COMPLEXITY IN ETHNIC OR RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES, IN SOCIAL CLASSES, IN LOCAL, REGIONAL OR NATIONAL UNITS REDUCES ITSELF TO CONCRETE REAL AND NORMATIVE CONDITIONS

For instance if the relationship between parents and children is overgrown by the structures and the norms of an enlarged family whose claim to power eclipses the immediate and primary relation the child has with its parents. Or if the comprehensive social ideology of an ethnic or religious majority suppresses the multiplicity of options to design the relation between parents and children, and locks the way into an open society for the children.

Perceived by their authors or not, elementary statements in the tradition of human rights, as a rule, presuppose matters of course, which they don't articulate. At least, less important presuppositions are renounced in favour of the articulation of more important ones. Thus these elementary statements are incomplete regulations. In the national context the risk of this technique is limited. If the course of history shows that an additional clarification of the content is necessary, this can be done by the amendment of the constitution, by the decisions of a court or by a practice based on consensus. Universal documents, however, run a much higher risk. Universal – legal, political or social – norms being able to complement the explicit statement, are frequently missing. Thus they are dependent on particular – legal, political or social – norms to be complemented. This way, however, the critical function often gets lost which the universal statement should have compared to the particular conditions.

AD 3) MY THIRD POINT WAS: THE MAXIMUM DIVERSITY AND INSTABILITY OF THE INDIVIDUAL SITUATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS WHICH OCCUR IN SPITE OR ON ACCOUNT OF THE ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS, SOCIAL, LOCAL, REGIONAL OR NATIONAL SPECIFICATIONS

Examples are the frequency of developments and events making the connection between wedlock and family dissolve, and the social practise of patchwork-families in western countries.

Children's rights and parent's rights correspond to each other in a special way if two parents, who are married raise and educate their common children in a permanent community. This precondition was always put at risk: by the death of father or mother or both parents; or by the possibility, that a mother gives birth to a child whose father is not her husband. Meanwhile, however, the constellations as to how parent-child relations may be designed have multiplied, as well as the reasons for leaving the traditional patterns of life. One of the consequences is that the composition of parent-child communities as well as the design of parent-child relations outside of such a community become more and more 'hand-made' by the intervention of an authority. That way, also the measure of 'the child's best interest' has acquired more and more importance. In the context of the traditional family the presumption was that the use of the parent's right is in accordance with 'the child's best interest'. That was the rule. The explicit application of the measure of 'the child's best interest' was the exception. Today not rarely an open circle of persons (parents, fathers and mothers; husbands and spouses or other partners of father or mother; foster parents, relatives etc.) discusses the 'child's best interest', and a final decision lies with the authorities whereas the implementation [very often] lies with the persons who are not the parents. Whereas in many parts of the world – because of poverty, underdevelopment, exploitation, oppression, prejudices etc. – the 'child's best interest' is extremely neglected, in other parts many parents (in any case: too many) have lost the energy and the determination to do justice to the 'child's best interest' in spite of a relative prosperity. In a very peculiar way the apparently natural basic rule of the 'child's best interest' thus shows an extreme ambiguity.

AD 4) MY FOURTH AND LAST POINT REFERRED TO THE FRACTURES WHICH MAY RESULT IF CHILDREN, PARENTS, FAMILIES OR COMPARABLE GROUPS CROSS NATIONAL BORDERS TOGETHER OR SEPARATELY

The growing transnationality of human life gives that aspect special topicality. There are so many reasons for these fractures: the easiness of mobility, looking for a better life, looking for work, food, shelter, catastrophes, displacement, flight, and to barely escape with one's life. And children especially in this context experience the most varied fate. They are taken with by their parents, by relatives, by others. They are left behind, sent away. They are kidnapped, sold. Their parents killed, imprisoned, made slaves. But even if they change the country under peaceful conditions they suffer social fractures. Who ever ponders on children's rights should dedicate the highest attention to the threats to, and suffering of children. But the international documents which are the subject of the report as well as of this comment have only perceived that concern in a very selective way. Perhaps one should say: in a marginal way.

Final Remarks

At the end of my comment I feel confusion, embarrassment. What can the rights which Professor Fumagalli has presented in her report, really mean amidst these difficult, complex contexts, filled with contradictions? Is there not eventually the danger that the problems are seen in a simple way, much more simple than they are. On the other hand: can universal 'rights' in the tradition of human rights be renounced. Their power is indispensable to do what is possible and can be done for the children. The search for the best solutions must go on.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE ROLE OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND CATHOLIC ORGANIZATIONS WORLDWIDE

MICHEL SCHOOPYANS*

INSERTING THE PERSON INTO SOCIETY

Subjection to the City

The formation of young people and their preparation for insertion into the life of the polity has long been a human preoccupation. The most celebrated philosophers of Greek antiquity, such as Plato and Aristotle, were concerned to prepare young people to become good *citizens*. In education as they conceived it, a clearly political aim predominated. Plato was inclined to remove the child from the family in order to entrust him to teachers dedicated to the City. Aristotle saw the family as the basis of political society, but ultimately he acknowledged the superiority of the City over the family. The family was supposed to train the child in the civic virtues.

This political manner of envisaging the formation of young people is manifested throughout history. One can find various formulations up to the present time. Numerous strains of thought envision the formation of young people essentially as a pathway that should lead to their insertion in society. One of the most influential representatives of this tendency was John Dewey, but one finds that his work was anticipated by the positivist founders of contemporary sociology.

The priority of society in relation to the individuals of which it is composed has been expressed in different accents. According to one of the *socialist* traditions, the State has precedence over individuals, and individuals are citizens before they are persons.¹ The State thus has a preponder-

* The Author thanks warmly the President of the Academy, Professor Mary Ann GLENDON, who spontaneously took on the translation of this text.

¹ In this text, we use the word 'State' in its general sense to refer to the public authorities who carry out the functions of political society. The word thus does not denote any particular regime.

ant role in the formation of children. The Marxist-Leninist tradition specifies that the proletarians, incapable of achieving class consciousness by themselves, should be formed, i.e., shaped, by mentors instilled with the only scientific ideology, namely, the Marxist ideology.

Subjection to the Cosmos

A contemporary variant of this tradition has been elaborated by the *ecologist* school of thought. This is the current version of an ancient vision that subordinates citizens to the City, and the City to the Cosmos. To form the human being is primarily to make him understand that he is only one element among others in the Cosmos, that he is not entitled to claim a special place in Nature, that he must learn to subject himself to Mother Earth, or Gaia. The 'Charter of the Earth' is one of the clearest expressions of this strain of thought.

The formation of the child, envisaged as insertion into society, gives rise to other conceptions in which one can recognize the influence of the *liberal* tradition. Under the influence of a tradition that goes back to Hobbes, we are presumed to be in a state of 'war of all against all' and man must be prepared to struggle for self-preservation. This tradition is expressed in the works of Malthus, of Darwin, and above all of Galton. For the latter, in fact, the prerequisite for the formation of human beings is *artificial, voluntarist, selection*. Genius being hereditary, biological determinism is primordial. All education should take as its primary objective to encourage the most gifted to engender the even more gifted and to dissuade the less gifted from transmitting life of a mediocre quality.

The liberal tradition that we have just evoked has continually been modulated and it finds expression today, for example, in the UN current of thought promoting 'reproductive health'.

Toward what Finality?

These different traditions assign various *finalities* to the formation of human beings, and to their education: apprenticeship in respect for society, for the City, for the State, for biological integrity, for the environment, etc. Today, one also encounters new manifestations of an *anarchist* strain, that is, the rejection of all principle, all claim of right, all authority. This current was already evident among the Cynics in the ancient world, but, in its contemporary formulation, it owes a good deal to a double reading of Rousseau. In fact, while the author of the *Social Contract* exalted the

Sovereign and the General Will, the author of *Emile* exalted individual liberty to the point of rejecting the very idea of direction, of principle, of finality and authority. Since man is naturally good, corruption can only come from sources external to him. The Teacher ought to be the first to restrain himself from respecting various norms, and from transmitting them to others. In fact, the child should be self-educated; he should learn to be autonomous. In his *Profession of Faith of a Savoyard Vicar*, Rousseau specifies that this autonomy implies each person's fidelity to his own individual conscience. One's conscience is in direct contact with a God who cannot appear or arise from a source external to man himself. Rousseau thus had to propose a *deist* concept of pedagogy in order to develop his concept of the Sovereign and of civil religion. Rousseau therefore appears as the precursor of those currents which today contest the family, including conjugal and parental bonds, as well as all authority whatever its nature, in the name of the sacralization of the General Will.

The Child: Object or Subject?

This too brief review leads us to note that it was unnecessary to wait for the rise of experimental pedagogy and psychology in order for the child to be considered as an *object* that one shapes, to the point of programming him or her. Several vivid contemporary examples reveal that this manipulation, this objectification, can lead directly to unimaginable forms of fanaticism. Young people can be alienated in their subjectivity to the point of consenting to their servitude.² Furthermore, when the child is relegated to his or her own *subjectivity*, he or she is arrested in an infantile stage of development of his freedom and believes he or she ought to invent norms by himself or herself for his or her conduct, norms that are changeable.

Whether the child is considered as a malleable object or as an individual devoted to constantly creating him or herself, there is in either case a loss of memory. But memory is the condition *sine qua non* for the maintenance of the social fabric. In these two hypothetical cases, there is no place at all for the human being as subject, nor for a real solidarity between the generations.³

² See, on this subject, the classic work of Étienne de La Boétie, *Le discours de la servitude volontaire*, texte établi par P. Léonard, Paris, Éd. Payot, 1976.

³ For more details on the history of the formation of children, see the following article, which we closely follow here: D. Morando, 'Pedagogia', in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, Florence, Casa Editrice G.C. Sansoni, 1957, col. 1234-1239.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE JUDEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The Judeo-Christian tradition has illuminated the necessity to rethink human education by transcending the excessively political, sociological, and biological visions that have existed up to the present time. This tradition develops two axes of reflection that can revolutionize our perception of solidarity among generations.

The Generations

First of all, the Bible is rich in references to *generation* and to *generations*.⁴ From to age human beings have remembered the actions of God, His blessings, and also the chastisements that He reserves for those who ignore His law. Successive generations are obliged to record divine actions and to transmit the divine Word. Each generation is called to receive this divine deposit and to faithfully assure the transmission of the tradition to succeeding generations.

One notes therefore that, in the Bible, the word generation contains two inseparable meanings: the word designates the cohort of those who live *together* through the same demographic period, those who are born in the same epoch. But the word also designates the *succession* of cohorts who have had the same experience. Thus a double dimension of solidarity appears: it is *synchronic* or horizontal, in the sense that it is lived at the level of contemporaneity; it is *diachronic* or longitudinal, in the sense that it is inscribed in time.

The Bible specifies that these two inseparable forms of solidarity are lived at two levels: that of the family and that of the community. First in the family, where solidarity exists both in the *conjugal* relationship and the *parental* relationship. However, in the framework of the Old Testament, this solidarity is also considered frequently as being lived at the level of the race whose unity is based on common origin. But little by little the call to solidarity, addressed at first to the Hebrews, the people of God (*laos*), acquired a universal scope, and all the Nations (*ethnè*), all the Gentiles, were invited to participate in it. In the book of *Genesis*, God blessed Abraham by reason of his faith and promised him *descendants* as numerous as the grains of sand of the seashore.

⁴ See the article by André Barucq, 'Génération', in *Vocabulaire de Théologie biblique*, Paris, Éd. du Cerf, 1966, col. 409-411.

This solidarity, of course, has a religious source; it manifests itself first of all in worship, where thanks are given to God for His blessings. But worship in reality is authenticated only by those who welcome the word of God and put it into practice by entering into solidarity with their neighbors. This vision of solidarity opens out gradually to an eschatological vision according to which God at the end of time will reassemble all the generations and all the Nations to subject them to His judgment.

St. Augustine and the Call to Beatitude

Beyond these *longitudinal* and *transversal* visions of solidarity, the Judeo-Christian tradition also develops an *ontological* conception of the same solidarity. As one can see, these approaches are ultimately convergent. We owe to St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas two of the most celebrated thematizations of this conception. Here we will limit ourselves to a brief evocation of the contributions of St. Augustine⁵ and St. Thomas Aquinas.

For the Bishop of Hippo, all men without exception are body and soul; all are brothers because issued from the same Father. In their earthly existence, all participate, as persons, in the existence of God, but all are called to eternal life, that is to say toward a blessed life in which we will participate in the beatitude of God.

Solidarity finds its foundation here in the truth that illuminates the heart of all men, and this truth comes finally from the word of God himself. The Master and the disciple are both illuminated by God: they are in solidarity to the extent that they recognize that the truth is already in the one as in the other. To be in solidarity signifies, therefore, to be walking together toward beatitude. Human life has a *finality*: human beings are created for eternal bliss. By reason of the ontological relationship of man to God, a relation revealed by the incarnate Word, the horizon of the world, or of the Terrestrial City is here transcended, it dissolves into the vision of the City of God.

St. Thomas and Solidarity

The concept of solidarity developed by Saint Thomas is grounded in his philosophical anthropology and his theory of knowledge.⁶ The faculty of

⁵ An excellent introduction to St. Augustine is that of Henri-Irénée Marrou, *St Augustin et l'augustinisme*, Paris, Éd. du Seuil, 1955.

⁶ The position of St. Thomas Aquinas is explained in detail in our work, *Démocratie et libération chrétienne*, Paris, Éd. Lethielleux, 1985, pp. 141-201.

intelligence is constitutive of the human person, that is, it is an active faculty which is the very principle of knowledge. This faculty permits every human being to form the first concepts and the fundamental principles of cognitive activity.⁷ It is the personal agent intellect that permits the acquisition of these concepts and principles. Through his intelligence, man, though wounded by sin, can acquire by himself certain true understandings: this is what Saint Thomas calls *inventio*. Man can also acquire knowledge from external sources. Thus the master collaborates with the pupil in the latter's acquisition of knowledge. In that case, Saint Thomas speaks of *disciplina*.

Just as man can progress in this manner in the acquisition of knowledge, so he can progress in the acquisition of virtue. In his quest for virtue, as in his quest for knowledge, man can benefit from external sources, coming for example from the example of a teacher who cooperates in the moral education of his disciple. In the acquisition of knowledge as well as in the acquisition of virtue, the master should limit himself to *revealing* and activating the cognitive and moral potencies that the disciple possesses.

Saint Thomas thus takes up the augustinian idea according to which God is, in the final analysis, the first, interior, teacher, while human teachers (with parents in the first rank) are His conduits. But, less preoccupied with the struggle against Pelagianism than his illustrious forebear, Saint Thomas held that, even though man is wounded by sin, he is, after all, not wholly corrupt.⁸ God is certainly the only teacher, because all science and all virtue are in Him. But Saint Thomas reinterprets the augustinian thesis in the light of his own doctrine of existential participation and analogy. Every man is capable, by himself, of arriving at truths of different levels, even though the longing for truth can be met fully only by the Truth that is revealed to man in Jesus Christ. Just as man is capable, by reason of his intelligence, of giving his assent to *truth*, he is able to order his will to the practice of the *good*.

Solidarity and Truth

It is thus evident that, according to both Saint Augustine and Saint Thomas, the foundation of solidarity is in God. However, Aquinas provides

⁷ We follow here the article by C. Giacon in *Enciclopedia Filosofica*, Florence, Casa Editrice G.C. Sansoni, 1957, vol. 4, col. 1231-1260; see especially, col. 1257.

⁸ Pelagius was a 5th century Breton monk who denied the doctrine of original sin and held that everyone could be saved through his own efforts, that grace was useful but not necessary. In this manner, the difference was blurred between nature and the supernatural.

further philosophical elaboration of the foundation of solidarity among human beings. All men are brothers because they have received existence in common from the same Creator. They are naturally capable of arriving at the true and the good, and they can assist each other in this double quest. The gift of faith, to which human intelligence can give reasonable assent, permits those who accept it, to achieve levels of knowledge that men left to their own devices cannot even imagine. It is through experiencing this solidarity founded in reason and sublimated by grace that the Church appears as the concrete historical location where humanity begins to welcome the call to beatitude. Conceived thus, solidarity is a sign of theological hope in the sense that it serves to transfigure human existence by continually bringing man into the highest participation in the existence of God. Theologians tell us that the guarantee of this transfiguration was given to us historically in the Resurrection of Christ.

The works of Augustine and Thomas thus provide us with an essential teaching concerning solidarity. Solidarity is possible only if it is founded on the assent of all human beings to the diverse levels of objective truth. Subjectivism can only lead to false imitations of solidarity which, for that reason, carry within them the seeds of division and perhaps violence. Solidarity is possible only if it is founded on the inclination of the will toward the good. Moral relativism can only lead to a solidarity built on the shifting sands of consensus. Solidarity is possible only if it is ordered to a finality founded on hope in the faithfulness of God. In the absence of this finality, solidarity is destined to dissolve into in utopia and violence.

FAMILY AND SOLIDARITY

These preliminary observations prepare us to understand the connection between the family and solidarity. The family is par excellence the primordial location of solidarity. It is founded on the *solid* bond, the bond of *fidelity*, by virtue of which one man and one woman commit to become 'one flesh', to love each other and to freely transmit life, as they themselves freely received it. The family is the point of culmination of preceding generations, and the point of departure for future generations. It is in the family that the human and religious heritage is received, and where that heritage is transmitted after having been enriched in the course of the generations.

The Family, Subject of Memory

The family is therefore the place of living memory, it is the point of exchange between generations, the liaison between them; it is the subject of memory. It is the principal driving element of human society. In human society, the family is certainly an actor at the economic, political and cultural etc. levels; it contributes to social capital. But it is, above all, an actor because those who are its members—adults, elderly persons, children—interact among themselves and beyond that, they are active elements in society.

Relations of Dependency

This activity of the family is characterized by *relations of dependency*, often analyzed by demographers. *Children* depend on their parents during the period of their life when they are educated. This education takes place first in the family and continues in the school. *Elderly persons* in their turn depend on their children, and this dependence is organized within the framework of specialized institutions which provide care and retirement pensions. One should add that *adults* also are dependents. They depend on their children to the extent that children provide their parents with the incentive to surpass themselves in making choices that they would not have made if they were not stimulated to do so by their own children. They depend on their elderly parents who provide working adults with the incentive to surpass themselves by caring for their own parents and receiving from them the treasures of wisdom. The *spouses* themselves depend on one another: they are committed to be faithful for better or for worse.

Human love appears here as the source and the exemplary image of solidarity. As for the natural institution that is the family, it is the first *subject* of human solidarity. It is in the heart of the family that persons are recognized, formed, protected and promoted in their inalienable dignity. Christian marriage appears here as the *sacrament of solidarity*.

THE FAMILY AT RISK OF SHRINKING

The Increasing Precariousness of Family Bonds

In order to be the location par excellence of solidarity, the family cannot be reduced to a particular aspect of what it is. The family is sometimes reduced to a simple unit where *reproduction* takes place, reproduction that

must be promoted from a eugenic perspective as in the Nazi ideology, or restricted as in the Malthusian perspective. At times the family is also reduced to a simple production unit, as in certain versions of liberal ideology. From this perspective, the family forms or dissolves according to the opportunities of the market or the dictates of centralized planning. The foundation of the family is sometimes presented as resulting from a simple *contract*, which could be dissolved at the wish of one of the parties.

In all these cases of reduction of the family, the bond among the members becomes precarious; all forms of solidarity between adults, between young people, and between elderly persons are at any moment at risk of being denied or rejected. It is thus impossible to think about solidarity between generations from the point of view of an individualistic anthropology.

The Family and Human Capital

Studies showing, and even proving, that it is within the family that human capital is formed should therefore be evaluated with care. The family is a subject of solidarity. It is not an object, malleable according to individual wishes or ambient hedonism; it is not reducible to a unit of production and consumption. However public authorities generally have a tendency to assist the family by treating it, for example, as an object whose productivity, especially in the economic sphere, must be improved. From that perspective, solidarity between the generations is subordinated to criteria of efficiency and economic utility. A current example could be mentioned here: children, like elderly people, are included or maintained in structures of solidarity *to the extent* that they contribute to the creation of employment.

But to establish an authentic solidarity between the generations, the public authorities ought first of all to aid families as subjects, that is to say as active social organisms, composed of free and responsible persons. It is to the extent that they are recognized as subjects that families can be the prototype of every solidary society, composed not of individuals but of persons. It is as a subject of action in society that the family can contribute to the common good through the interaction of its members.⁹

⁹ Most valuable suggestions for improving family policies are discussed by Allan Carlson in *Fractured Generations. Crafting Family Policy For Twenty-First-Century America*, New Brunswick and London, Transaction Publishers, 2005.

Recovering Motherhood

It is thus with reason that celebrated studies have emphasized the essential role of the family in the formation of human capital.¹⁰ But, just as the family cannot be reduced to a production unit, the mother must not be reduced to being primarily a 'teacher', a unit for formation of children, working in the service of productivity and the market. By her very nature, the mother is an active subject of solidarity by reason of the fact that she naturally tends to promote loving relations over and above utilitarian relations or relations of power.

A vision of the family that is too strictly objective thus entails a vision that over-objectifies the woman within the family circle. The woman, if she is reduced to her utilitarian role, is confined within her individuality, whereas she is the human subject who leads the initiative to be in solidarity by freely welcoming the child that she discovers in her womb and that she offers for recognition and solidarity with others. Solidarity between generations thus depends upon a *re-maternalization* of the woman herself.

Recovering Fatherhood

But what further complicates the tightening of the bonds of natural solidarity is the individualistic vision of the father that accompanies the individualistic and utilitarian view of the mother. Already in his *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville noted that democracies privilege an individualistic vision of the father.¹¹ The father tends to be only a citizen who is older than his son; father and son have the same rights. It follows that democratic society tends to attenuate the solidarity between the father and his children (to whom society today accords individual civil rights earlier and earlier). It follows that when the relation of fatherhood fades under the influence of the 'democratic' conception of society, the period of childhood tends to shrink. During this crucial period, parenthood and paternity are only partial images of solidarity. The parental tasks are carried out to the extent that they are

¹⁰ On this subject, see the classic work by Gary S. Becker, *A Treatise on the Family*, Cambridge, Massachusetts, Harvard University Press, reprinted 1994.

¹¹ See Alexis de Tocqueville, *De la démocratie en Amérique*, Collection Bouquins, Paris, Éd. Robert Laffont, 1999, cf. II, III, Chapter 8, pp. 559-563. Tocqueville writes, notably: 'In democracies,...the father, in the eyes of the law, is only a citizen who is older and richer than his son' (p. 560).

necessary for nutrition and hygiene; these tasks moreover can be delegated, and the child can be *deposited* in the nursery or the school. Earlier and earlier, parents are even legally deprived of rights concerning the behavior of their children. In brief, the State is stealing childhood from children.

It follows that the establishment of solidarity not only requires a substantial reconsideration of the identity of the mother; it also requires a reconsideration of the identity of the father, his *re-paternalization*. Daddies must re-learn what it is to be fathers. Solidarity is not possible between a father and his children if the father resigns his authority as father by giving priority to other ends such as productivity, profits, etc. There is no chance for solidarity if the father, together with his wife, is not the first to share fundamental traditional values with his children. There is no chance for solidarity between generations if children do not see that the marriage bond of their parents is of a solidity, a *solidarity*, that is strong enough to withstand all tests.

CONTRADICTIONS OF THE VOTE-SEEKING STATE

The State in the Service of the Consensus of Individuals

Historically, at the institutional level, politically as well as legally, the democratic State in the liberal tradition has constantly striven to favor and promote family solidarities, in spite of its exaltation of individualism. One could even show that concern to respect these solidarities was already inscribed in Roman law. In that realistic tradition, the natural institution of the family founded on marriage is regulated by positive legislation. This legislation organized and protected the transmission and allocation of patrimony, the regime according to which the spouses were married, and distinguished the legitimate from the natural child.

But under the influence of the currents of political democracy, and the individualism that democracy postulates, the State finds itself more and more enmeshed in an insurmountable contradiction.¹² Its legislation gives more and more liberties to individuals, and, as a result, the law no longer

¹² In this section, we closely follow the reference work by Claude Martin, *L'après-divorce: lien familial et vulnérabilité*, Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 1997. For a different perspective, see the monograph by Louis Roussel, *La famille incertaine*, Paris, Éd. Odile Jacob, 1999.

has regard for the natural reality represented by the family, the natural institution where solidarity is put into practice. The law is based, or is believed to be based, on the *consensus of individuals*. Law does not merely give the family a legal framework; law claims to define the institution itself!

Institutionalizing the Denial of Solidarity

Among the innumerable examples that one could cite for that proposition, one can mention the tendency to put children born outside marriage on the same footing as legitimate children. Certainly all children have the right to effective legal protection, but they ought not to be taken as hostages in a maneuver (of which they are the first victims) that has for the aim and effect of weakening the family. The same remark can be made concerning work by mothers outside the household. The respect due to their just aspirations for individual professional realization should not be diverted for the sake of an opportunity for paid work entailing risks for family solidarity. The same remark can be made concerning the different kinds of cohabitation, hetero- or homosexual. The facility with which these unions are formed and dissolved recalls that *repudiation*, when it is legalized, is destructive of solidarity. Another example: traditionally, the principal cause of the precariousness of natural solidarities was the death of one of the spouses. Whether the mother or the father died, the children were plunged, for somewhat different reasons, into a situation where the primary form of solidarity, familial, was weakened in its very essence, despite the devotion of friends and relatives. But today, the principal cause of the precariousness of natural solidarities is the increase of divorce and the ease with which the law permits individuals to obtain divorce. This blow to conjugal solidarity has direct repercussions on the solidarity the children enjoyed before their parents' divorce. Last example, and the most tragic: the laws legalizing abortion put an end to the lives of the most vulnerable and most innocent of human beings. Organized by the law, the denial of solidarity vis-à-vis these beings forces one to realize that henceforth all forms of human solidarity hang by the tenuous thread of the consensus of individuals, tending to lead to a purely positive legalization.

The Obsequious State

The effect of these legalized behaviors is to dis-aggregate natural family solidarities. As if bewitched, the State *inevitably* accelerates this disaggregation. In fact, individuals demand that the State multiply its interven-

tions in all sorts of areas in order to palliate the familial precariousness that the State itself, in its obsequiousness, has organized by catering to individuals! The State, turning its back on the natural reality of the family institution, reserves to itself the power to redefine the family and to impose its definition. However, under pressure from those upon whom it has showered individual liberties, the State has to invent substitute forms of solidarity, defined consensually by individuals!

Defining the Scope of Solidarity and Exclusion

As we have noted, the politically democratic and juridically liberal State subjects family solidarity to a double process of *deconstruction* and attempted *reconstruction*. The family is not only de-institutionalized, but its natural reality is denied, and reconstructed, in a voluntarist fashion by the juridical fiction of positive law. This deconstruction-reconstruction encumbers all forms of natural solidarity in their very foundation. The scope for the operation of solidarity is accordingly limited by voluntarist decisions that, by mirror image, also limit the scope of exclusions. The studies on post-divorce situations show moreover that where the conjugal bond has become precarious, other solidarities unravel too, rendering men, women and children all the more vulnerable.

Return to the Subsidiary State

In sum, children as well as elderly persons are the first victims of a crisis of natural solidarities founded on the family. Under the impetus of hyper-individualistic currents, the dependency of these two groups on their families tends to be transferred to the State. But by its nature, the State is not even in a position to provide individuals with a substitute solidarity; in any case this would only be an *ersatz* solidarity. As another name for sociability, for 'care', for 'proximity', solidarity is a disposition inscribed in the human heart. It is prior to the State and to all positive legislation that attempts to regulate its exercise. In this domain, as in others, the role of the State is and must remain *subsidiary*: it should *aid* people and intermediary groups to tighten the bonds of natural solidarity that unite the human community. It certainly must be open to institutionalized solidarity by the competent authorities; history is rich in examples on this score. But this institutionalization has its limits, and in any case it cannot function unless the family provides it with its foundational reference point.

PERILS FOR SOLIDARITY WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Special mention should be made of the repercussions on young people of the increasing number and the proportion of elderly dependent persons. This increase is constant and, greatly simplifying the matter, we will confine ourselves to saying that it results above all, on the one hand, from the decline in fertility, and on the other hand, from the increase in *longevity*, that is the increase in life expectancy due to improvements in living conditions. For young people, the repercussions of this situation are numerous and inextricably interrelated.¹³ Here are some of them:

1. Young people are victims of *credit policies*. In fact, by facilitating the access to credit by large segments of the population, governments have opened to these borrowers an enlarged access to consumption. But what are these new consumers going to buy? They often prefer to acquire consumer and/or luxury goods rather than to invest in goods that consolidate solidarity with children such as schools, medical care, better nutrition, etc.
2. The child becomes itself the *object of a choice* between a child and other goods in relation to which the child is not perceived as essentially different. The child is no longer perceived above all as an expression of the couple's that is expected to last for the long term. By the same token, the child is no longer perceived as one who will take his place in the chain of generations. The child is frequently perceived as an object to which one has a right.
3. The transition from the rural mode of life to the urban mode also has repercussions on inter-generational relations. *Rural life* favors solidarities among generations, the sense of duties, reciprocity. One should not forget either that in many areas children are still considered, from their adolescence, as a source of labor. They produce and contribute to family solidarity.
4. The deficiencies, or the absence, of *family policy* penalize couples with children; they privilege individualism to the detriment of solidarity among generations.
5. It also happens that a portion of (often meager) *family allowances* is transferred to social assistance budgets, for example, unemployment, or that the family allowances are subjected to taxation. The principal victims of this maneuver are obviously children.

¹³ We treat these questions in more detail in *Le crash démographique*, Paris, Éd. Le Sarmant-Fayard, 1999.

6. The various *contraceptive techniques* produce a double psychological effect that is unfavorable to solidarity. They encourage one to envisage physical union as the good to be sought, and the child as a risk that should be avoided, not to mention an evil that must be removed.
7. Working adults are rapidly becoming aware of the 'burden' that the *growing mass of dependent elderly persons* represents for them. Public authorities tend to pay court to the elderly because their electoral power is considerable. But tensions inevitably arise when, for example, for three or four active persons there will be one or two dependent elderly persons. The former then will seek for ways to be relieved from solidarity. More precisely, these working persons will have responsibility for elderly dependents living longer and longer and costing more and more. Euthanasia is then presented as a cynical and effective solution to reduce the burden of retirement pensions and medical care.
8. Furthermore, these same working people also often have responsibility for their children for whom they must assure education. Thus, these adults are chafing at the idea of paying, via increased taxes, for the retirement pensions and medical care of elderly people, while the elderly people are benefiting, to the detriment of adults and young people, from the demagoguery of political actors. Let us notice once again that this intergenerational tension will be further radicalized to the extent that euthanasia will be legalized and presented as a *final solution* to the impasses of Social Security.
9. Development requires investments. But one cannot invest while indefinitely having recourse to borrowing. In order to invest, it is necessary that the economy generate a surplus. This means that in order to make productive investments possible, *saving* is necessary. Therefore the capacity to produce ought always to be superior to the mere ability to cover needs. In other words, the economy should not simply satisfy needs; it also ought to produce savings. The aging of the population appears here as one of the most formidable perils that threatens intergenerational solidarity in human society. In effect an aging population, that is to say, a population with a large concentration of elderly persons, tends to produce less, to invest less and to *consume savings*. An aging population tends to limit investments in productivity and capacity; it does not encourage productivity. It therefore tends not only to consume savings, but to have recourse to debt whose weight is transferred onto the shoulders of the succeeding generations, which are less numerous.

10. Solidarity between generations is also weakened by the deterioration of the *educational system*. In bad economic times and under pressure from the very problems that they themselves have created, the public authorities cut back on budgets for education, because they estimate that one elderly person costs society twice as much as one child. This tendency to neglect the educational system is even more serious when it comes to the point where many parents abandon their own responsibilities for education and transfer them to the schools. In the age of globalization, this problem is currently producing upheavals in international relations. The dramatic educational deficiencies in the European Union have been pointed out by Andreas Schleicher. These deficiencies are especially noticeable in France and Germany, as well as in Italy. From the point of view of professional education and training, Europe remains far behind the United States and Japan. The respected daily economic paper, *L'Echo*, concludes that the European Union 'is thus losing the decisive battle in the new economic competition with China and India'.¹⁴

WHAT CAN THE CHURCH DO?

At the present time, the most explicit contributions of the Church to the study of solidarity are found in publications bearing on Christian social teaching.¹⁵ Certain magisterial documents, such as the encyclical by John Paul II *On social concern* (1987), are particularly rich in this respect. An impressive survey of the magisterial teaching on solidarity is presented in the precious *Compendium* published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace.¹⁶ The teaching of Benedict XVI is particularly original, and we will give it special attention.

¹⁴ The sobering study by OECD expert Andreas Schleicher was published in Brussels on 13 March 2006 by the think tank, The Lisbon Council for Economic Competitiveness, in its *Policy Brief*. This 20-page study is titled *The economics of knowledge: Why education is key for Europe's success*. The text can be found at: <http://www.lisboncouncil.net/files/download/Policy_Brief_Economics_of_Knowledge_FINAL.pdf> – Serge Vandaele presented this study in *L'Écho* (Brussels) in an article appearing on 14 March 2006 titled 'Education x Financement = Compétitivité². CQFD'.

¹⁵ One should not forget the pioneering work on this subject by Fr. Fernando Bastos de Ávila, *Solidarismo*, 3rd ed., Rio de Janeiro, Éd. Agir, 1965.

¹⁶ See the indispensable *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, published by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, Vatican City, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004. The index includes no fewer than four columns of references to solidarity (cf. pp. 506 et seq.).

After the examination we have just made, we might ask ourselves how the Church can foster reflection and action in favor of solidarity between generations and especially in favor of young persons and their education. We will begin by suggesting three avenues of reflection. The first is of a scientific nature; the second is of a doctrinal character; the third concerns pastoral practice.

Scientific Information

One must begin by sensitizing Christians and persons of good will by helping them to understand the reality of the crisis of the family, of the general decline in fertility, and of the causes and consequences of each of these phenomena. The crisis of inter-generational relations is an unprecedented moral crisis in the history of the human community; it is a crisis of solidarity. Along with many other specialists, demographers, geographers, economists and jurists can contribute everywhere to this process of sensitization.

Special attention ought to be paid to the question of *social capital*, envisaged here as the totality of scientific, technical, moral and legal, etc. acquisitions that we have received from the past. This social capital was accumulated by our predecessors at the cost of great efforts and they transmitted it to us so that we could make it fruitful. We are not the owners of this capital; it is an inheritance that belongs to all human beings in common. The same is true for *moral capital*: we have inherited a patrimony of human wisdom that we ought to memorialize by enriching it. Solidarity presupposes that, from generation to generation, the sense of belonging to the same great human family, the consciousness of our interdependence and our common destiny, should be reanimated.

It is therefore not without reason that one stresses the necessity of respecting the *environment* so that future generations may have a satisfactory quality of life. But this kind of solidarity cannot rebound against the human community, which is what would happen if it were founded on the sole invocation of physical-chemical considerations.

On the Doctrinal Level

The central point of the sensitization that we recommend consists in *reviving awareness of the value of the realities represented by marriage*, elevated by Christ to the dignity of a sacrament, *and the family*, which issues from marriage. Every culture that endeavors to obliterate these *natural*

institutions will end by compromising all its efforts to structure solidarity, over time as well as in space.¹⁷

It is also clear that the question of intergenerational solidarity should be taken up in relation to the theology of marriage and the family. These avenues have been evoked in part above, a propos of the biblical theology of generations and a propos of St. Augustine and St. Thomas. It would also be necessary to further clarify this question in relation to philosophical and theological anthropology. Human society is a community of persons, and not an aggregation of individuals. Happily, contemporary philosophy is rich in suggestive contributions on that point.

In addition to these points, any profound study of intergenerational solidarity depends, as we have suggested, on an expansion of the doctrine relating to marriage and the family, two natural inseparable realities situated at the interface between the private and the public.

It goes without saying that Catholic universities should be the first to be concerned by the study of solidarity on the scientific level as well as the doctrinal level. This study, for which we are calling, will find its principal source of inspiration in the most recent expressions of the social teaching of the Church.

Perhaps our Academy could ask the Holy Father, who is so sensitive to the condition of young people, to explicitly pronounce – when he judges it good and according to modalities that he will define – on the multiple aspects of solidarity. We respectfully recommend that a forceful *briefing* be prepared on intergenerational solidarity. This document ought to take into account the demographic aspects of intergenerational solidarity, the attacks against the family and against life, and the transmission of the tradition of human wisdom and Christian values.

Pastoral Action

Beyond this action at the doctrinal level, the Church is also remarkably well-equipped to incite, stimulate and coordinate activities promoting intergenerational solidarity. Inaugurated by John Paul II and confirmed by Benedict XVI, who has emphasized their spiritual dimension, innovative initiatives like the World Youth Days and the World Meetings of Families

¹⁷ On this subject, see, for example, the work of Lise Vincent Doucet-Bon, *Le mariage dans les civilisations anciennes*, Paris, Éd. Albin Michel, 1975.

with the Pope are, with many others, prominent sites where intergenerational solidarity is fostered.

We respectfully recommend that an inter-dicasterial working group be constituted with the object of integrating all the efforts of solidarity emanating from the different dicasteries. Let us take the example that concerns us the most: solidarity with young people. It is clear that this question concerns different dicasteries, notably, the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the Evangelization of Peoples, for Catholic Education, for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, etc., as well as the Pontifical Councils for the Family, for the Laity, for Justice and Peace, for Health, for the Ministry to Migrants, the Pontifical Academy for Life, etc. In itself, such a working group would already be a witness of internal solidarity within the Church, but completely oriented toward the human community.

One discerns here the role that the episcopal conferences could play in order to channel corporatisms and consolidate initiatives that are too often scattered and sometimes shattered, but whose impact would be increased if they were coordinated and convergent.

Moreover, the Catholic Church possesses a network of agencies that is the most highly developed in the world. No public or private organization has such a worldwide network of universities, schools, youth movements and Catholic Action, charismatic movements, family movements, charitable institutions, hospitals, means of communication, etc. Impressive directories exist. No organization possesses such a large body of members ready to freely commit themselves to projects of solidarity. No organization has such an impressive number of saints who, each according to his fashion, are builders of solidarity.

BENEDICT XVI AND 'EDUCATIONAL CHARITY'

The contribution of Benedict XVI to reflection regarding intergenerational relations and solidarity deserves a very special attention. We will focus here on his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, which addresses us directly.¹⁸ In fact, in his first encyclical, the Holy Father brings to the themes that we are debating a substantial clarification that calls out to us for a response.

¹⁸ This encyclical letter is dated Christmas Day, 25 December 2005. We will refer to it in the text by the abbreviation DCE followed by the paragraph number.

Charitable Service

In the second part of his Letter, Benedict XVI explains 'the performance of love on the part of the Church as a community of love'. He explains what charitable service is called to be, the specificity of Christian charitable action. This text appears to be, from now on, an essential document for the social teaching of the Church. Certainly, within the framework of this Letter, the Pope has in view above all the social engagement of Christians. But what he writes in this respect applies fully to engagement in educational service. It is not just a question of an analogy between the two forms of engagement: the educational service of the Church is well and truly one of the most important elements of its service to society.

'Love', writes the Pope, 'needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community' (DCE, 20). From its origins, the Church organized the *diaconia* (cf. DCE, 23). Every monastery includes an 'institution...responsible for all works of relief'. To the diaconia can be added educational service. This bundle of organizations in the service of charity contributes importantly to making the message of the Church credible.

Evoking the neo-pagan actions of the emperor Julian the Apostate (d. 363), Benedict XVI recalls that the 'system of charity' of the Church, 'organized charity', preceded the similar activities established by the new paganism of the fourth century. Contemporary secularism does not proceed differently:¹⁹ it seeks to discredit the Church by mimicking its organizations and, more radically, by instituting processes that would disable them in order finally to bring about their extinction. Christian educational institutions would thus be deprived, a priori, of all reason for being. The education organized by the Church would thus be reduced, as the Holy Father always suggests, to nothing but 'a kind of welfare activity which could equally well be left to others', whereas the educational charity that we envi-

¹⁹ In the French language, according to current but recent usage, the word *laïcité* is often used in the sense of *laïcisme*. However, for authors little known for sympathy toward the Church, such as Renan, the word *laïcité* denotes the distinction and the separation between political society and the Church. As for the word *laïcisme*, in one sense it signifies a wholly rationalist *doctrine* that battles for the elimination of all Christian and religious belief. But this doctrine gives rise to *programs of action*. *Laïcisme* thus connotes militant movements aimed at the victory of anti-religious rationalism among individuals and in society. It is evident therefore who has an interest in perpetuating the confusion between these two words. Cf. the discussion on this point in our work, *La face cachée de l'ONU*, Paris, Éd. le Sarmant-Fayard, 2000; cf. in particular pp. 82-85.

sion here 'is a part of her nature, an indispensable expression of her very being, which she cannot renounce' (DCE, 25).

Historically, the Church devoted herself with enthusiasm to educational charity. Well before 'circles, associations, and unions' were born in order to meet the 'concrete needs' that arose in the nineteenth century, the Church instituted organizations where she also engaged herself 'against situations of failure in the educational sector' (DCE, 27). It was not by accident that, in the nineteenth century above all, there was a concomitance between the engagement of Christians in social questions and the flowering of Christian educational institutions. Exemplified by figures like Don Bosco, this activity was recognized and celebrated by John Paul II who canonized a great number of educators among whom several were cited by Benedict XVI (cf. DCE, 40). In the spirit of this great tradition, the Holy Father insists on the necessity of a continuous reaffirmation of the foundational principles of society: 'Building a just social and civil order, wherein each person receives what is his or her due, is an essential task which each generation must take up anew' (DCE, 28a).

Forming Consciences for Justice

Reactivating the charity-justice problematic, Benedict XVI shows that the parallelism between social engagement and educational engagement does not end there. There is even room to speak of connection, inter-wovenness. Educational engagement should *refine the sense of justice* and *contribute to forming consciences* so that human beings are capable of realizing justice 'here and now' (DCE, 28a). But the question of justice is not of a purely pragmatic nature; it is of an ethical nature. It is necessary therefore to educate one's reason. Reason 'must undergo constant purification, since it can never be free of the danger of a certain ethical blindness caused by the dazzling effect of power and special interests' (DCE, 28a).

The specific contribution of the Church to education (DCE, 29) flows from the fact that faith 'is a purifying force for reason itself' (DCE, 28a). Catholic educational institutions therefore justify themselves more than ever through the fact that, by purifying reason, they refine the perception of the demands of the virtue of justice and promote the translation of this virtue into practice under concrete and very variable circumstances. Through its network, unique in the world, of educational institutions, the Church is better equipped than any other organization to call young people in the world to commit themselves to the service of justice. Furthermore,

Christian educators will have numerous possibilities to be the salt of the earth and the yeast in the dough by working in public educational institutions, private institutions that are not denominational, and in every sort of activity open to benevolence (cf. DCE, 30).

The inter-relatedness between the social doctrine of the Church and the Christian conception of education is underlined by Benedict XVI in another fashion. The social doctrine is not aimed at pushing the Church to act politically (cf. DCE, 28a). This social doctrine 'wishes to help form consciences in political life and to stimulate greater insight into the authentic requirements of justice as well as greater readiness to act accordingly, even when this might involve conflict with situations of personal interest' (DCE, 28a).

The educational commitment of the Church in the frame of adapted institutions, therefore has nothing optional about it, although its modalities vary according to the circumstances. It is necessary for the Church to form capital that is fully human, the complete person, that is, the person called by God to the practice of social charity and invited for that very reason to the purification of one's reason and one's sense of justice. Because 'love, *caritas*, will always prove necessary, even in the most just society. There is no ordering of the State so just that it can eliminate the need for a service of love' (DCE, 28b).

This conception of education, and putting it into operation as a service of charity, is therefore the Church's distinctive offering to all the members of the human community, but above all to young persons. As useful as it is, the system of public education cannot suffice at this highest level of education. 'The State which would provide everything, absorbing everything into itself...(is) incapable of guaranteeing the very thing which the suffering person – every person – needs: namely, loving personal concern' (DCE, 28b). Paraphrasing, respectfully, the Holy Father, one does not hesitate to write that the affirmation according to which the State system of education would render Christian educational institutions superfluous 'masks a materialist conception of man: the mistaken notion that man can live 'by bread alone' (Matthew 4:4; cf. Deut. 8:3), a conviction that demeans man, and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human' (DCE, 28b).

It is therefore urgent for Christian educational institutions to loyally establish an accounting of their engagement in the service of educational charity, to redefine their projects, and to reconsider the public that they address. What the Holy Father has written concerning charitable organizations of the Church in general is valid in particular for educational organizations. All of them 'constitute...a task agreeable to her, in which...she acts as a subject with direct responsibility' (DCE, 29).

Contemporary paganism is reforming itself, the Pope has warned, just as ancient paganism reformed itself under Julian the Apostate. Having seen the effectiveness of the Christian social system, whether it concerns forming the use of reason clarified by faith, or the 'formation of the heart', today's pagans want to dissolve the educational system of the Church into 'just another form of social assistance' (DCE, 31).

Conjugal Love, Educational Charity

Finally, the fundamental teaching on love, set forth by the Holy Father in the first part of his Letter, permits one to see that the clearest engagement of the Church in the service of education would ultimately involve the reinforcement of the institution of the family. It will become obvious that the social service of love cannot take place without the support of the family, nor without supporting the family. It is in fact in the family that the experience of intergenerational solidarity primordially resides: in the place where faithful love of husband and wife is sublimated in generous service of educational charity.

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Up to the present time, our Academy has produced works of the highest value on essential themes such as inequality, work, democracy, and globalization. For several years, it has devoted its attention to the difficult question of intergenerational solidarity. With the study of this theme, the time has come to ask ourselves how we can improve, so that our works are more perceived as a service of the Church, as a service proposed to the human community, in brief, as a practical exercise of solidarity.

I GIOVANI DELLE GMG, PROTAGONISTI DELLA “RIVOLUZIONE DI DIO” OGGI

STANISLAW RYLKO

1. UN'EREDITÀ CHE IMPEGNA

L'istituzione delle Giornate mondiali della gioventù nella Chiesa è stata indiscutibilmente una delle grandi scelte profetiche del servo di Dio Giovanni Paolo II. Egli ha dato così il via a un'avventura spirituale che in questi vent'anni ha coinvolto milioni di giovani di tutti i continenti. Quanti cambiamenti di vita ne sono seguiti! Quali importanti scoperte per la vita dei giovani! La scoperta di Cristo: Via, Verità e Vita; la scoperta della Chiesa come madre e maestra che sostiene nel cammino dell'esistenza; la scoperta del Successore di Pietro come guida sicura e amico di cui fidarsi. Per tanti giovani la Gmg è diventata una specie di “laboratorio della fede”, come amava definirlo papa Wojtyła, il luogo della riscoperta di una religiosità che non è in contrasto con l'essere giovani e moderni. Quante vocazioni al sacerdozio e alla vita religiosa! C'è chi afferma che nel mondo dei giovani è in atto una “rivoluzione silenziosa”, il cui potente motore propulsore sono proprio le Gmg.¹ È grazie alle Gmg che la Chiesa alle soglie del nuovo millennio ha ritrovato il suo volto giovane, il volto dell'entusiasmo e di un coraggio rinnovato. La storia delle Giornate mondiali della gioventù è la storia affascinante della nascita di una nuova generazione di giovani, che molti chiamano la “generazione di Giovanni Paolo II”.² Si tratta dei gio-

¹ Cfr. F. Garelli, “La sensibilità religiosa emergente”, in: F. Garelli, R. Ferrero Camoletto (a cura di), *Una spiritualità in movimento*, Messaggero di S. Antonio Editrice, Padova 2003, p. 267.

² Cfr. M. Muolo, *Generazione Giovanni Paolo II. La storia della Giornata Mondiale della Gioventù*, Ancora, Milano 2005.

vani del “sì” a Cristo e dell’adesione convinta alla Chiesa e al Successore di Pietro. Papa Wojtyła li chiamava “sentinelle del mattino” (Roma 2000), “popolo delle beatitudini” (Toronto 2002).

C’è una domanda diffusa che affiora a ogni nuova edizione della Gmg: la domanda su quale sia il “segreto” di questo sorprendente fenomeno che ha rivelato al mondo una faccia del tutto inaspettata, non solo della Chiesa ma degli stessi giovani di oggi. Le Gmg sono un dono che continua a suscitare stupore all’interno della Chiesa e fuori di essa. E sono la fotografia di una gioventù molto diversa dal cliché diffuso dai media, di una gioventù assetata di valori e alla ricerca del senso più profondo della vita. Lasciatisi alle spalle ideologie di vario conio e falsi maestri che propinano miraggi di una felicità in svendita, questi giovani cercano una risposta alle fondamentali domande sulla vita, e la cercano in Cristo e nella Chiesa. Grazie al carisma di papa Wojtyła, negli ultimi vent’anni le Gmg sono diventate un potente strumento di evangelizzazione del mondo dei giovani e di dialogo con le giovani generazioni perché, come egli ha scritto, “la Chiesa ha tante cose da dire ai giovani e i giovani hanno tante cose da dire alla Chiesa”.³ Ogni Gmg è una grande festa della fede giovane, l’epifania di una Chiesa che non invecchia, che è sempre giovane, perché Cristo è sempre giovane e sempre giovane è il suo Vangelo. L’epifania di una Chiesa che – con generale stupore – ritrova sempre di nuovo la sua straordinaria forza attrattiva e aggregativa anche nei confronti delle giovani generazioni. Il progetto pastorale fondante della Gmg, però, non riguarda soltanto i giovani, ma tutto il popolo di Dio che ha costantemente bisogno di essere stimolato e rinvigorito dall’entusiasmo e dallo slancio della loro giovane fede. Le Gmg, preziosa eredità spirituale del servo di Dio Giovanni Paolo II, rappresentano perciò un dono provvidenziale dello Spirito alla Chiesa del nostro tempo.

2. L’ORIGINE DELLE GMG

Per cogliere appieno la portata evangelizzatrice e la novità sorprendente di questo dono bisogna risalire agli inizi. Il primo degli eventi che hanno preparato il terreno all’istituzione delle Gmg è stato il Giubileo dei giovani nel 1984. Su invito di Giovanni Paolo II arrivarono a Roma da tutto il mondo migliaia e migliaia di giovani. E lo stupore fu grande e di molti.

³ Giovanni Paolo II, Esortazione apostolica *Christifideles laici*, n. 46.

Dopo gli anni burrascosi della grande contestazione degli anni Sessanta e Settanta, nel mondo dei giovani si stava verificando qualcosa di nuovo se così numerosi dimostravano il loro avvicinamento alla fede e alla Chiesa. L'anno seguente, l'Anno internazionale della gioventù indetto dalle Nazioni Unite fornì l'occasione per un altro grande incontro del Papa con i giovani del mondo e per la pubblicazione di un documento senza precedenti: la *Lettera apostolica ai giovani e alle giovani del mondo*, con la quale in forma molto personale e diretta Giovanni Paolo II parla loro – da amico e da padre – del valore e del senso della giovinezza. È un testo straordinario sul quale si dovrebbe tornare spesso, perché il passare degli anni non ne ha minimamente intaccato l'attualità né la freschezza dello stile. Per papa Wojtyła, così sensibile alla lettura dei segni dei tempi, quei due eventi erano una sfida e una opportunità providenziale che la Chiesa non poteva non cogliere al volo. Annunciando l'istituzione della Giornata mondiale della gioventù, nel dicembre del 1985, spiegava così i motivi della sua decisione: "Tutti i giovani devono sentirsi seguiti dalla Chiesa: perciò che tutta la Chiesa, in unione con il Successore di Pietro, si senta maggiormente impegnata, a livello mondiale, in favore della gioventù, delle sue ansie e sollecitudini, delle sue aperture e speranze, per corrispondere alle sue attese, comunicando la certezza che è Cristo, la Verità che è Cristo, l'Amore che è Cristo, mediante una appropriata formazione – che è forma necessaria e aggiornata di evangelizzazione".⁴ Con queste concise parole il Papa esprimeva il nucleo stesso del progetto delle Gmg. E diversi anni dopo, ritornando alla loro genesi, diceva: "Nessuno ha inventato le Giornate mondiali dei giovani. Furono proprio loro a crearle. Quelle Giornate, quegli incontri, divennero da allora bisogno dei giovani di tutti i luoghi del mondo. Il più delle volte sono state una grande sorpresa per i pastori, e persino per i vescovi. Hanno superato quanto anch'essi si aspettavano".⁵

Quella di papa Wojtyła fu una decisione che non solo colse tutti di sorpresa, ma che in alcuni ambienti suscitò pure qualche resistenza. Perché non è facile seguire i sentieri dei profeti. Essi guardano lontano e vedono più degli altri. Ci vuole tempo per capire appieno le loro scelte, i loro progetti. Giovanni Paolo II non ha fatto eccezione. E scaturisce certamente da

⁴ Giovanni Paolo II, "Allocuzione al Collegio dei cardinali, alla Curia e alla Prelatura romana per gli auguri natalizi", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 20 dicembre 1985, p. 5.

⁵ Giovanni Paolo II, *Varcare la soglia della speranza*, Mondadori Editore, Milano 1994, p. 150.

qui quella capacità di sorprendere che sembra essere una costante delle Gmg e che è una sfida ai nostri ricorrenti cedimenti alla tentazione di sottovalutare non soltanto le potenzialità di bene insite nei giovani d'oggi, ma anche la forza trasformatrice della grazia. Diceva il cardinale Jean-Marie Lustiger, commentando la Giornata mondiale della gioventù celebrata a Parigi nel 1997: "In questo evento la nostra sorpresa non deriva dal numero dei giovani, che ha superato le nostre previsioni, ma dalla nostra 'poca fede' allorquando il Signore opera in mezzo a noi".⁶ E un anno dopo, tornando sullo stesso tema, egli usava parole che vanno al cuore del fenomeno delle Gmg e del carisma di Giovanni Paolo II: "Talvolta vi sono eventi che appaiono improvvisamente, suscitando lo stupore generale. In realtà, essi però esprimono un movimento di fondo che non si voleva o non si sapeva vedere, dinnanzi al quale si era ciechi. È il caso della Giornata mondiale della gioventù di Parigi, grazie alla venuta di Giovanni Paolo II. Ci si è sorpresi, meravigliati che una generazione – composta nella stragrande maggioranza non da adolescenti ma da giovani – potesse, invece di fare festa, partecipare gioiosamente a momenti d'intenso raccoglimento, di ascolto attento, di scambio e di preghiera". E, riguardo al singolare rapporto dei giovani con il Papa, aggiungeva: "Dire di amarlo è anche il loro modo di porsi nella Chiesa; questo grido stabilisce un rapporto con l'istituzione molto diverso da quello che esprimono dinnanzi ai loro genitori o nei sondaggi [...] Amando il Papa i giovani amano, in lui e attraverso lui, la Chiesa che in fondo desiderano e che Giovanni Paolo II dà loro la possibilità di esprimere e di vivere. La sua presenza catalizzatrice ne è garante".⁷

3. LE GRANDI SCOMMESSE DI PAPA WOJTYLA

Torniamo ora a quella ricorrente domanda cui accennavo all'inizio: qual è il segreto delle Giornate mondiali della gioventù? Per darvi risposta dobbiamo soffermarci su tre scelte "strategiche" che stanno alle radici di questo fenomeno. La prima riguarda proprio i giovani. Giovanni Paolo II è stato il Papa che nel suo progetto pastorale per la Chiesa universale ha

⁶ "L'eco della XII Giornata mondiale della gioventù. Intervista al card. Jean-Marie Lustiger, Arcivescovo di Parigi", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 1° ottobre 1997, p. 8.

⁷ J.-M. Lustiger, "Parigi 1997: qualcosa di profondo sta cambiando nel cuore delle giovani generazioni", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 21 agosto 1998, pp. 6-7.

avuto il coraggio di scommettere sui giovani, che considerava protagonisti importanti e insostituibili della vita e della missione della Chiesa: "Voi siete l'avvenire del mondo, la speranza della Chiesa. Voi siete la mia speranza", diceva loro con appassionato vigore già all'inizio del suo pontificato.⁸ E in quelle parole era racchiuso un preciso programma pastorale, che egli ha portato avanti fino alla fine della sua vita con uno slancio e un amore straordinari. Papa Wojtyła ha visto la gioventù come speciale "via della Chiesa". A questo proposito, scriveva: "Voi siete la giovinezza delle nazioni e della società, la giovinezza di ogni famiglia e dell'intera umanità; voi siete anche la giovinezza della Chiesa [...] Pertanto, la vostra giovinezza non è solo proprietà vostra, proprietà personale, o di una generazione: essa [...] è al tempo stesso un bene speciale di tutti. È un bene dell'umanità stessa".⁹ La giovinezza è dunque, di per sé, un grande valore e un tesoro prezioso da non svalutare. A sottolineare poi il legame che intercorre tra i giovani e la Chiesa, il Papa scriveva: "La Chiesa guarda i giovani; la Chiesa in modo speciale guarda sé stessa nei giovani – in voi tutti ed insieme in ciascuna e ciascuno di voi".¹⁰ È, infatti, nei giovani che la Chiesa ritrova continuamente la capacità di stupirsi dinanzi al Mistero e l'entusiasmo che porta a traguardi sempre nuovi. "Abbiamo bisogno dell'entusiasmo dei giovani", diceva Giovanni Paolo II, "abbiamo bisogno della gioia di vivere che hanno i giovani. In essa si riflette qualcosa della gioia originaria che Dio ebbe creando l'uomo. Proprio questa gioia i giovani sperimentano in loro stessi. È la medesima in ogni luogo, ma è anche sempre nuova, originale".¹¹

Karol Wojtyła non ha mai diffidato dei giovani, neppure nei difficili anni Sessanta e Settanta. E, a dispetto di ricerche e sondaggi sociologici dai quali usciva una gioventù dipinta a fosche tinte, scriveva: "Nei giovani c'è [...] un immenso potenziale di bene e di possibilità creative".¹² Egli ha avuto sempre fiducia nei giovani d'oggi ed essi lo avvertivano, sentendosi valorizzati, riconosciuti e soprattutto amati. Giovanni Paolo II vedeva tutta la forza propulsiva dell'età giovanile, l'età per eccellenza della ricerca della verità, del bene, della bellezza, della giustizia e della solidarietà. E additando costantemente ai giovani questi alti ideali, diceva loro: "Confermo la mia

⁸ Giovanni Paolo II, "Angelus", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 22-23 ottobre 1978, p. 2.

⁹ Giovanni Paolo II, *Lettera apostolica ai giovani e alle giovani del mondo*, n. 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, n. 15.

¹¹ Giovanni Paolo II, *Varcare la soglia della speranza*, op. cit., p. 151.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 150.

convinzione: ai giovani spetta il compito difficile, ma esaltante, di trasformare i 'meccanismi' fondamentali che, nei rapporti fra singoli e nazioni, favoriscono l'egoismo e la sopraffazione, e far nascere strutture nuove ispirate alla verità, alla solidarietà e alla pace".¹³ La prima scelta strategica su cui si fonda il fenomeno delle Gmg è, quindi, la coraggiosa scommessa che papa Wojtyła fa sui giovani e della cui riuscita è conferma ogni Gmg.

La seconda mossa è la modalità scelta per dialogare con i giovani e annunciare loro Gesù Cristo. In tempi in cui negli ambienti ecclesiastici si guardava a questo tipo di manifestazioni con un filo di apprensione e qualche diffidenza, Karol Wojtyła decide per un raduno di massa. Ed è una scelta vincente. Perché all'appuntamento con il Papa i giovani arrivano sì in massa, ma non sono una massa amorfa e anonima; bensì popolo, Chiesa. Ed è questo che fa la differenza! Questa dimensione delle Gmg è stata così descritta: "Il fascino del meeting di massa, in cui i singoli pur attratti da momenti di fusione collettiva, mantengono viva la loro domanda di senso individuale, hanno l'esigenza di essere interpellati e riconosciuti personalmente".¹⁴ Un raduno di massa, dunque, ma non massificante. Di più, un avvenimento che cambia la vita delle singole persone, come confermano tante testimonianze! Per i giovani cristiani di oggi che spesso si ritrovano a vivere la fede nell'isolamento è una esperienza di straordinaria importanza, un "serbatoio di coraggio", come affermano in tanti. La Gmg alimenta in loro la consapevolezza di essere parte integrante della Chiesa, li fa sentire protagonisti della sua vita, rinfrancati dalla conferma di non essere soli. La portata e l'intensità dell'evento – affascinante esperienza della Chiesa universale – fanno scoprire il "carattere planetario della fede e il significato universale dell'appartenenza religiosa".¹⁵ Eppoi, i grandi numeri per i quali i media, di solito metodicamente chiusi all'informazione religiosa, danno visibilità mondiale all'avvenimento. Ma che, soprattutto, mettono in risalto la vitalità della Chiesa e la sua straordinaria capacità di mobilitare e aggregare le giovani generazioni pure nella società postmoderna, ormai diffusamente secolarizzata. Le Gmg sono state per i giovani una scuola dove imparare a rapportarsi alla fede con serena adesione e, di fatto, oggi essi mostra-

¹³ Giovanni Paolo II, "Messaggio alla 'Città e al mondo' nella Domenica di Pasqua", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 9-10 aprile 1985, p. 5.

¹⁴ R. Ricucci, "Giovani e Gmg. La 'memoria' di un'esperienza", in: F. Garelli, R. Ferrero Camoletto (a cura di), *Una spiritualità in movimento*, op. cit., p. 48.

¹⁵ F. Garelli, *La sensibilità religiosa emergente*, op. cit., p. 277.

no di non essere più a disagio nell'esternarla. Anzi, è proprio l'entusiasmo della loro partecipazione a eventi religiosi, l'impeto delle loro testimonianze, a ricordare – come sottolinea Tony Anatrella – che il fatto religioso è un fatto sociale irriducibile al privato. Anatrella scrive che “durante le Giornate mondiali della gioventù, con il loro comportamento, i giovani hanno detto un “no” massiccio alla privatizzazione forzata della fede”.¹⁶ Le Gmg sono dunque un avvenimento che va controcorrente anche in questo senso. E, ancora, il popolo delle Gmg – come ha voluto Giovanni Paolo II – è un popolo in movimento, in cammino, in pellegrinaggio attraverso i continenti. La dimensione del pellegrinaggio dà a questo raduno di massa una particolare valenza pedagogica, parla della vita come un “cammino insieme”, come una continua ricerca di senso, insegna a superare sé stessi nell'affrontare le difficoltà che s'incontrano lungo la strada.

A questo punto è bene aprire una parentesi per rilevare un dato importante. Le Gmg, del cui peso per l'evangelizzazione dei giovani siamo tutti consapevoli, non sono però una realtà a sé stante: da sole non bastano. Papa Wojtyła non si stancava di ribadire la necessità di un forte legame organico tra la Giornata mondiale della gioventù e la pastorale giovanile ordinaria, intesa come sforzo paziente e perseverante di iniziazione cristiana e di educazione delle giovani generazioni alla fede. Dietro ogni Gmg c'è e deve sempre esservi il lavoro pastorale di diocesi e parrocchie, ma anche l'opera educativa di associazioni e movimenti ecclesiali. Le Gmg vanno preparate e devono avere un seguito nelle comunità cristiane. Bisogna dare insieme continuità all'evento nella vita ordinaria dei giovani, aiutandoli a “digerire” i contenuti della Gmg affinché siano di nutrimento alla loro vita. L'esperienza del Pontificio Consiglio per i Laici conferma che, negli ultimi anni, i responsabili della pastorale giovanile e gli stessi giovani sono andati maturando una crescente consapevolezza di questa esigenza. Ed è un segno davvero confortante.

Torniamo ora al nostro discorso. La terza scelta di Giovanni Paolo II – e anche questa è una grande scommessa – è la decisione di porre al centro della Gmg la croce di Cristo. Egli ha capito da subito che è Gesù Cristo che cercano i giovani, e il Signore lo si incontra soprattutto nel cuore del mistero pasquale, cioè nella sua morte e nella sua risurrezione. Non è dunque un caso che come data della celebrazione annuale della Gmg egli abbia indi-

¹⁶ T. Anatrella, “Le monde des jeunes: qui sont-ils, que cherchent-ils?”, *Bulletin du Secrétariat de la Conférence des Evêques de France*, n. 7, mai 2003, p. 20.

cato la Domenica delle Palme, che apre la Settimana santa. Né è un caso che alle origini delle Giornate mondiali della gioventù si trovi il gesto fortemente simbolico della consegna ai giovani della Croce del Giubileo dell'anno 1984, che il Papa accompagna con queste toccanti parole: "Carissimi giovani, al termine dell'Anno Santo, affido a voi il segno stesso di quest'anno giubilare: la croce di Cristo. Portatela nel mondo come segno dell'amore del Signore Gesù per l'umanità e annunciate a tutti che solo in Cristo, morto e risorto, c'è salvezza e redenzione".¹⁷ E così è avvenuto: la croce è andata pellegrina nel mondo. Quante conversioni, quanti cambiamenti di vita radicali ci sono stati; quante scelte importanti di vita hanno fatto innumerevoli giovani che l'hanno incontrata, innumerevoli giovani che incontrandola hanno spesso voluto toccarla con le proprie mani! Giovanni Paolo II non ha avuto paura di mettere i giovani dinanzi al mistero della Croce e non ha mai temuto di prospettargli le rigorose esigenze della fede. Ancora pochi anni fa, egli diceva loro: "Cristo è esigente con i suoi discepoli, e la Chiesa non esita a riproporre anche a voi il suo Vangelo 'senza sconti'. Quanti si pongono alla scuola del divin Maestro abbracciano con amore la sua Croce, che conduce alla pienezza della vita e della felicità. Non è forse proprio la Croce a guidare [...] il pellegrinaggio dei giovani in occasione delle Giornate mondiali della gioventù?".¹⁸ Fino all'ultimo messaggio quando il Santo Padre, ormai senza voce, ha affidato alla lettura di Sua Eccellenza Monsignor Leonardo Sandri quello che suona come il suo testamento spirituale ai giovani: "Continuate senza stancarvi il cammino intrapreso per essere dovunque testimoni della Croce gloriosa di Cristo. Non abbiate paura! La gioia del Signore, crocefisso e risorto, sia la vostra forza, e Maria Santissima sia al vostro fianco".¹⁹ Questa Croce è, ormai, da oltre vent'anni la grande protagonista e cuore pulsante delle Gmg.²⁰

È sulla base di queste tre grandi scommesse di Giovanni Paolo II che si è andata progressivamente delineando la struttura fondante delle Giornate mondiali della gioventù, che rispecchia in certo modo lo schema classico

¹⁷ Giovanni Paolo II, "Chiusura dell'Anno Santo nella Domenica di Pasqua", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24-25 aprile 1984, p. 1.

¹⁸ Giovanni Paolo II, "Angelus", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 2-3 aprile 2001, p. 7.

¹⁹ Giovanni Paolo II, "Meditazione all'Angelus", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 21-22 marzo 2005, p. 6.

²⁰ La straordinaria avventura della Croce dei giovani è raccontata in cinque lingue nel dvd e nell'album fotografico *Giovanni Paolo II e la Croce delle Gmg*, recentemente pubblicati dal Pontificio Consiglio per i Laici.

della *traditio-redditio*: annuncio di Cristo (le catechesi), celebrazione di Cristo (la Riconciliazione sacramentale e l'Eucaristia), invio missionario. La persona chiave delle Gmg è il Papa ("persona faro", come dicono i sociologi), Successore di Pietro, testimone e maestro della fede, catechista per eccellenza. Le catechesi sono infatti elemento portante delle Gmg e confermano ogni volta la sete della parola di Dio che hanno i giovani, definiti da molti vescovi catechisti come "spugne" assetate dell'annuncio evangelico.

4. UNA PROVOCAZIONE SALUTARE...

Ma chi sono i giovani d'oggi e che cosa li differenzia dalle generazioni precedenti? Tony Anatrella ha tracciato un sintetico, ma incisivo, identikit della gioventù contemporanea.²¹ Come in ogni epoca, anche ai nostri giorni i giovani vogliono essere sé stessi, desiderano affermare la propria identità, ricercano ragioni di vita. Se adeguatamente motivati, sono capaci di generosità, solidarietà e dedizione, ma – in confronto al passato – hanno meno punti di riferimento e minor senso di appartenenza. Fortemente individualisti, reclamano il diritto di costruirsi la vita a prescindere da valori e norme comunemente accettati. Li caratterizza una forte carenza di radici culturali, religiose e morali. A differenza della generazione precedente, sono decisamente meno permeabili a influssi ideologici, ma nella loro vita prevale la dimensione affettiva e sensoriale, a scapito della ragione, della memoria, della riflessione. In una società che favorisce e coltiva il dubbio, l'immatùrità e l'infantilismo, questi giovani hanno difficoltà a crescere, anzi, sembrano averne poca voglia. Nella loro vita si accorcia l'infanzia e si prolunga a dismisura il periodo dell'adolescenza. Erroneamente convinti che ciò li priverebbe della loro libertà, hanno paura di assumere impegni duraturi e rifuggono perciò da scelte definitive (matrimonio, vocazione alla vita religiosa). Rappresentano un tipo di personalità estremamente fragile e incoerente. Riassumendo, sono figli di una cultura in crisi profonda che ha perso la capacità di educare veramente le giovani generazioni, cioè di aiutarle a "essere" di più e non solo ad "avere" di più.²²

²¹ Cfr. T. Anatrella, *Le monde des jeunes: qui sont-ils, que cherchent-ils?*, cit.

²² Punto nevralgico della cultura contemporanea, questa incapacità di educare attenta a un'autentica solidarietà inter-generazionale. E qualcuno suona l'allarme: "È in crisi la capacità di una generazione di adulti di educare i propri figli. Per anni dai nuovi pulpiti – scuole e università, giornali e televisioni – si è predicato che la libertà è l'assenza di lega-

Il mondo giovanile è un mondo in continua e rapida trasformazione, e le Giornate mondiali della gioventù sono diventate una sorta di sensibilissimo sismografo che registra le tendenze emergenti in questo complesso e variopinto “pianeta” in generale, e tra i giovani cristiani in particolare. Per quanto riguarda questi ultimi, si tratta di tendenze che vanno coraggiosamente controcorrente rispetto alla cultura diffusamente secolarizzata dei nostri giorni. Cosicché il popolo delle Gmg sembra incarnare in qualche modo le caratteristiche di quelle “minoranze creative” che, secondo Arnold Toynbee, sono determinanti per il futuro dell’umanità. Non a caso Giovanni Paolo II ha definito i giovani delle Gmg le “sentinelle del mattino” dell’inizio del terzo millennio (Roma 2000). C’è chi fa notare che oggi “è la Chiesa universale che sembra aver assunto la funzione di interprete delle aspirazioni profonde dei giovani credenti attraverso la funzione svolta da personalità faro come il Papa stesso”.²³ E chi afferma che in questo campo la Chiesa universale, grazie alle Gmg, sembra muoversi più velocemente di quella locale.²⁴ Insomma, le Gmg rappresentano una salutare provocazione alla pastorale di routine. Come sostiene qualcuno, l’esperienza delle Gmg, che scardina prassi educative e pastorali consolidate e spesso coglie i sacerdoti impreparati, mette positivamente in crisi la pastorale giovanile ordinaria.²⁵ E questo servizio che le Giornate mondiali della gioventù rendono all’opera di evangelizzazione del mondo giovanile è di estrema importanza. Le Gmg non forniscono ovviamente ricette pronte per ogni evenienza. Quella delle Gmg è un’esperienza che interpella piuttosto gli operatori di pastorale giovanile e tutti gli educatori a rimettersi continuamente in questione, a non fermarsi mai nella ricerca di vie nuove e sempre più efficaci per educare le giovani generazioni e in particolare per comunicare loro il Vangelo. Una esperienza che li aiuta a riscoprire la dimensione profetica dell’opera pastorale della Chiesa e che insegna a saper osare, a non temere

mi e di storia, che si può diventare grandi senza appartenere a niente e a nessuno, seguendo semplicemente il proprio gusto o piacere. È diventato normale pensare che tutto è uguale, che nulla in fondo ha valore, se non i soldi, il potere e la posizione sociale. Si vive come se la verità non esistesse, come se il desiderio di felicità di cui è fatto il cuore dell’uomo fosse destinato a rimanere senza risposta” (“Se ci fosse una educazione del popolo tutti starebbero meglio”, Appello, *Atlantide*, n. 4/12/2005, p. 119).

²³ F. Garelli, *La sensibilità religiosa emergente*, op. cit., p. 269.

²⁴ Cfr. R. Ferrero Camoletto, “La Gmg e la pastorale giovanile ordinaria”, in: F. Garelli, R. Ferrero Camoletto (a cura di), *Una spiritualità in movimento*, op. cit., p. 143.

²⁵ Cfr. *Ibid.*, pp. 141-143.

di proporre ai giovani scelte e attitudini controcorrente, come l'adorazione dell'Eucaristia a Colonia. I giovani non si tirano indietro. E le Gmg sono l'espressione per eccellenza del bisogno che essi hanno di pastori e di educatori che sappiano farsi carico delle loro inquietudini e che siano capaci di dare risposta alla loro sete spirituale e alla loro domanda di senso. Qui, la figura carismatica del servo di Dio Giovanni Paolo II rappresenta un modello affascinante al quale guardare ancora a lungo, un solido ed efficace punto di riferimento e di guida per la nuova generazione di operatori di pastorale giovanile (sacerdoti, religiosi e religiose, laici) di cui ha bisogno la nuova generazione di giovani nata dalle Gmg.

Sulla base della ventennale esperienza delle Gmg quali sono, dunque, le imprescindibili priorità della pastorale giovanile e della evangelizzazione delle giovani generazioni? Articolero la risposta a questa domanda in tre punti.

Primo, al centro di ogni azione evangelizzatrice dev'esserci la persona di Gesù Cristo. Sembra un'affermazione scontata, ma non lo è affatto! Scriveva papa Wojtyła: "Non ci seduce, certo, la prospettiva ingenua che, di fronte alle grandi sfide del nostro tempo, possa esserci una formula magica. No, non una formula ci salverà, ma una Persona, e la certezza che essa ci infonde: *Io sono con voi!*".²⁶ Il compito di chi evangelizza i giovani è di annunciare loro Gesù Cristo. E i giovani si aspettano soprattutto questo. Non accettano moralismi, né sono disposti a farsi propinare pillole di pseudo-saggezza umana o repliche dei dotti discorsi socio-culturali che riempiono già le pagine dei giornali. Cristo non deve mai essere un pretesto per parlare ai giovani di altro, di cose che si pensano siano per loro più interessanti e attraenti. Cristo dev'essere al centro! Il compito dell'evangelizzatore è quello di aiutare ciascun giovane a incontrare Cristo redentore – Maestro buono, guida e amico –, e a iniziare con lui un dialogo personale: "Che devo fare per ereditare la vita eterna?" (Lc 10, 25). Da quell'incontro nasce sempre una spinta missionaria: "Andate ... Mi sarete testimoni! ..." (*traditio – redditio*). E in questo specifico ambito, i carismi di movimenti ecclesiali e nuove comunità hanno generato itinerari pedagogici di straordinaria forza persuasiva. A Denver, nel 1993, Giovanni Paolo II esortava a gran voce: "Non abbiate paura di andare per le strade e nei luoghi pubblici, come i primi apostoli che hanno predicato Cristo e la Buona Novella della salvezza nelle piazze delle città, dei paesi e dei villaggi. Non è tempo di vergognarsi del Vangelo (cfr. Rm 1, 16). È tempo di predicarlo dai tetti (cfr. Mt 10, 27). Non

²⁶ Giovanni Paolo II, Lettera apostolica *Novo millennio ineunte*, n. 29.

abbiate paura di rompere con i comodi e abituali modi di vivere, al fine di raccogliere la sfida di far conoscere Cristo nella moderna 'metropoli'".²⁷ Parole forti e toccanti che riguardano non solo i giovani, ma anche chi li evangelizza. L'incontro personale con Cristo, poi, è sempre inscindibile dall'incontro con la sua Chiesa. Papa Wojtyła insisteva molto su questo punto affermando che i giovani "in questa ricerca e scoperta di Cristo non possono non incontrare la Chiesa. E anche la Chiesa non può non incontrare i giovani. Occorre soltanto che la Chiesa abbia una profonda comprensione di ciò che è la giovinezza, dell'importanza che riveste per ogni uomo".²⁸ Torneremo su questo argomento, più avanti.

Un altro insegnamento che ci viene da Giovanni Paolo II riguarda le fondamentali scelte di vita che sono chiamati a fare i giovani e la loro ricerca del senso ultimo della propria esistenza. Nel suo progetto pastorale, ha un grande ruolo la concezione della vita come vocazione. E così scriveva: "In un tale contesto il 'progetto' [di vita] acquista il significato di 'vocazione di vita', di qualcosa che viene all'uomo affidato da Dio come compito. Una persona giovane, rientrando dentro di sé ed insieme intraprendendo il colloquio con Cristo nella preghiera, desidera quasi leggere nel pensiero eterno, che Dio, Creatore e Padre, ha nei suoi riguardi".²⁹ Nel pensiero di papa Wojtyła, vivere la vita significa viverla nella prospettiva del dono. Occorre, dunque, far scoprire ai giovani la dimensione della vita come dono da non sprecare, ma da vivere in modo responsabile dinanzi a Colui dal quale essa ci viene. Vivere la vita in pienezza, non "vivacchiare" come diceva il beato Piergiorgio Frassati. Porsi nella prospettiva del dono vuol dire riconoscere il valore della propria vita e di ogni vita umana, e vuol dire saper fare anche della propria esistenza un dono per gli altri, cioè non cedere alla tentazione dell'egoismo e dello sfrenato consumismo imposto oggi dalla cultura dominante. Si tratta, allora, di aiutare i giovani a compiere le loro scelte vocazionali (le scelte per la vita!), siano esse al sacerdozio, alla vita consacrata o al matrimonio. E le Gmg ci dicono che la pastorale giovanile è sempre, in senso lato, una pastorale vocazionale.

Il terzo e ultimo cardine del progetto pastorale di Giovanni Paolo II per le giovani generazioni è, di fatto, il presupposto fondante di ogni attività

²⁷ Giovanni Paolo II, "Omelia per la celebrazione eucaristica conclusiva dell'VIII Giornata mondiale della gioventù", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 17-18 agosto 1993, p. 11.

²⁸ Giovanni Paolo II, *Varcare la soglia della speranza*, op. cit., p. 151.

²⁹ Giovanni Paolo II, *Lettera apostolica ai giovani e alle giovani del mondo*, n. 9.

evangelizzatrice in questo specifico campo: l'operatore di pastorale giovanile, e ogni educatore in genere, deve conoscere e saper tener presente l'essenza e l'importanza della giovinezza nella vita di ciascuna persona. Neppure questo è scontato come sembra! Papa Wojtyła ha scritto righe stupende al riguardo: "Che cos'è la giovinezza? Non è soltanto un periodo della vita corrispondente a un determinato numero di anni, ma è, insieme, un tempo dato dalla Provvidenza a ogni uomo e dato a lui come compito, durante il quale egli cerca, come il giovane del Vangelo, la risposta agli interrogativi fondamentali; non solo il senso della vita, ma anche un progetto concreto per iniziare a costruire la sua vita. È proprio questa la più essenziale caratteristica della giovinezza. Ogni educatore, a partire dai genitori, nonché ogni pastore, deve conoscere bene tale caratteristica e deve saperla identificare in ogni ragazzo e in ogni ragazza. Dico di più, deve amare ciò che è essenziale per la giovinezza".³⁰ Credo che qui si trovi il punto focale della formazione degli operatori di pastorale giovanile. Solo chi ha sviluppato questa particolare sensibilità, infatti, si dedica alla pastorale giovanile con passione, senza risparmiarsi, mettendo a disposizione dei giovani tutte le sue energie, cercandoli con ogni mezzo possibile, accompagnandoli come educatore e come amico, ascoltandoli. Il servo di Dio Giovanni Paolo II ci ha lasciato, in tal senso, un esempio stupendo. La conoscenza di quello che costituisce l'essenza della giovinezza, nell'operatore di pastorale giovanile deve accompagnarsi al riconoscimento del desiderio di affermazione di sé che ogni giovane si porta dentro. Ciò significa carità pastorale, speranza, fiducia. Perché se non vi è un rapporto di fiducia non è possibile stabilire un vero rapporto educativo. Anche qui Giovanni Paolo II è stato un grande maestro: egli si è fidato dei giovani, conosceva i loro problemi, credeva fermamente nella potenzialità di bene insita nel loro cuore. E il suo non era un ottimismo ingenuo e sprovveduto; era bensì un ottimismo basato sulla grazia, che supera sempre ogni miseria umana. Il Papa diceva: "Se in ogni epoca della sua vita l'uomo desidera affermarsi, trovare l'amore, in questa [nel tempo di giovinezza] lo desidera in modo ancora più forte. Il desiderio di affermazione, comunque, non deve essere inteso come una legittimazione di tutto, senza eccezioni. I giovani non lo vogliono affatto: sono disposti anche a essere ripresi, vogliono che si dica loro sì o no. Hanno bisogno di guide e le vogliono molto vicine".³¹ Il

³⁰ Giovanni Paolo II, *Varcare la soglia della speranza*, op. cit., p. 147.

³¹ *Ibid.*

desiderio di affermazione del giovane deve attuarsi quindi nell'amore e nella verità. L'educatore, il pastore, colui che evangelizza non può censurare o annacquare le esigenze del Vangelo, adeguandolo a mode passeggero oppure a ideologie vecchie e nuove, nella falsa supposizione di renderne il messaggio più attraente e appetibile. Non deve avere paura di annunciare il Vangelo ai giovani in tutta la sua integrità, senza ambigue riduzioni. E anche in questo Giovanni Paolo II ci è stato maestro. Amava definire sé stesso "amico dei giovani", ma un amico esigente. Perciò prospettava loro cammini impervi, traguardi alti: "Non abbiate paura di diventare santi" (Santiago de Compostela, 1989), "Volate ad alta quota" (Czestochowa, 1992). Ecco, dunque, quali sono le coordinate generali dell'evangelizzazione del mondo dei giovani lasciateci in eredità da papa Wojtyła e che nelle Giornate mondiali della gioventù hanno trovato una espressione di straordinaria forza ed efficacia.

5. LA GMG DI COLONIA: L'INIZIO DI UNA NUOVA TAPPA DELLO STESSO CAMMINO

Arrivati alla conclusione delle nostre riflessioni, il pensiero va spontaneamente all'ultima Giornata mondiale della gioventù, celebrata a Colonia nel mese di agosto del 2005. Qualche mese prima di quell'importante appuntamento, dopo una lunga e sofferta malattia, Giovanni Paolo II fa ritorno alla casa del Padre lasciando il mondo intero e specialmente i giovani nel dolore e nello sgomento. La Chiesa ha un nuovo Pontefice nella persona di Benedetto XVI. E il nuovo Papa conferma subito e con gioia palese la sua partecipazione alla Gmg di Colonia. Ma da quel momento in tanti cominciano a chiedersi cosa sarà, come sarà quella Gmg senza Giovanni Paolo II. I fatti hanno dimostrato che a Colonia vi è stata perfetta continuità con le precedenti edizioni. E ancora una volta la risposta dei giovani ha superato le aspettative più audaci: erano oltre un milione, arrivati da 194 Paesi di tutti i continenti e accompagnati da 757 vescovi e 9.000 sacerdoti. Benedetto XVI li ha conquistati con il suo sorriso pieno di amore, con il gesto delle braccia aperte e con la sua parola chiara e incisiva che è penetrata fin nell'intimo del loro animo. Un Papa nuovo, ma sempre lo stesso cuore di padre spalancato ai giovani di tutto il mondo. I giovani lo hanno capito subito e, a loro volta, hanno voluto far sentire il loro attaccamento al Successore di Pietro con applausi entusiasti a ogni suo intervento. Sono stati giorni sui quali la presenza spirituale di Giovanni Paolo II è aleggiata quasi palpabile, come ad aprire la strada al suo Successore. Papa Wojtyła è

stato evocato più volte da Benedetto XVI come "geniale iniziatore delle Giornate mondiali della gioventù, un'intuizione – diceva – che io considero un'ispirazione".³² A Colonia il Santo Padre non ha celato il suo stupore per il dono provvidenziale delle Gmg, un vero dono di Dio – ha ribadito a più riprese – "poiché nessuno può semplicemente creare l'entusiasmo dei giovani, nessuno può creare per giorni questa unione nella fede e nella gioia della fede".³³

Per le Giornate mondiali della gioventù è iniziata una nuova tappa. È naturale. Come è naturale che ogni nuovo Pontefice, in avvenire, lasci sulla Gmg la sua impronta personale. L'essenza di questo evento però rimarrà sempre la stessa. E la Gmg rappresenterà certamente anche in futuro un forte stimolo al processo di evangelizzazione delle giovani generazioni. Nel suo discorso ai vescovi tedeschi, a Colonia, il Papa ha espresso così il suo auspicio e il suo augurio: "La loro [dei giovani] fede e la loro gioia nella fede continuino a essere per noi una provocazione a vincere pusillanimità e stanchezza e ci spingano, a nostra volta [...] a indicare loro la strada, cosicché l'entusiasmo trovi anche il giusto ordine". E più avanti: "Dobbiamo accogliere la provocazione della gioventù", affinché la Gmg di Colonia possa diventare veramente "un nuovo inizio per la pastorale giovanile".³⁴

A Colonia, Benedetto XVI ha ribadito che "solo da Dio viene la vera rivoluzione, il cambiamento decisivo del mondo".³⁵ Penso che il Papa abbia voluto dare così ai giovani l'importante ed esigente consegna di essere protagonisti di quella "rivoluzione di Dio", di cui il mondo ha urgente bisogno e della quale le Gmg possono davvero costituire la "miccia".

Alla fine della ventesima Gmg, secondo la consuetudine, Benedetto XVI ha annunciato il prossimo appuntamento mondiale del Papa con i giovani che avrà luogo a Sydney, in Australia, nel 2008. La grande avventura spirituale delle Giornate mondiali della gioventù continua.

³² Benedetto XVI, "Discorso ai presuli della Conferenza episcopale tedesca", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 24 agosto 2005, p. 4-5.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Benedetto XVI, "Veglia di preghiera sulla spianata di Marienfeld", *La traccia*, 7/8, luglio-agosto 2005, p. 337.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SOCIAL TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

DIARMUID MARTIN

My reflections will be marked by some limitations. In the first place I have not been able to be present at the discussions of these days and must limit my comments to questions which emerged in the written papers which I received in advance. Secondly, in the years since I was last here at the Pontifical Academy of Social Sciences my academic interest in the Social Teaching of the Church has been relativised by the daily pressures of my current activities as Archbishop of Dublin.

I thought therefore that my comments should take the form of a reading and interpretation of your papers by the busy pastor of the largest diocese in Ireland (about one third of the population of the Republic of Ireland lives in the Archdiocese of Dublin. It is also the Seat of Government, of the major newspapers and television networks and of five universities).

The busy pastor must of course be attentive to the social situation in which the Church is present, both on a local and on a global level.

The situation in Ireland is unique in many ways within Europe.

It is not, I hasten to add, the type of uniqueness of the Ireland of the past or indeed the uniqueness which many people imagine belongs to Ireland. People are shocked to find that religious practice in Ireland has dropped quite dramatically. In Dublin regular Mass attendance would overall around 20%, with a large number of parishes having practice rates of less than 5% and some at around 2%. I celebrated my first Christmas back in Ireland in a Church only one third full. Last year, for the first time in the history of the Archdiocese, there was not one single priestly ordination.

There are no reliable statistics concerning the percentage of younger people who practice. In many places there is anecdotal evidence that it is extremely low, though there are parishes where there is a vital presence of young people and there is a high interest of young university students around matters of faith.

Let us look at the current situation of children and the family in Ireland.

The Irish Constitution 'acknowledges that the primary and natural educator of the child is the Family and guarantees to respect the inalienable right and duty of parents to provide, according to their means, for the religious and moral, intellectual, physical and social education of their children'.¹

It further stipulates that 'The State shall provide for free primary education and shall endeavour to supplement and give reasonable aid to private and corporate educational initiative'.²

Finally the Constitution notes that 'Legislation providing State aid for schools shall not discriminate between schools under the management of different religious denominations'.³

It is important to note that the Irish Constitution stipulates that the State shall *provide for* free primary education. It does not say that the State *shall provide* such education. Hence in the area of primary education all schools are owned and run by recognised patrons, mainly the major religious denominations. Overall in the Republic of Ireland 95% of primary education is provided under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Church. This means that I am patron of 460 primary schools within my diocese. Salaries and a high percentage of building costs are paid for by the State, but the State respects the specific religious ethos of these schools, as also of voluntary secondary schools. On the secondary level there are Community Schools and Colleges which are provided for by local educational authorities, but normally with a presence of a representative of the Bishop on the Boards of Management.

These Catholic Schools provide religious education as a normal part of the school curriculum. Preparation for the sacraments is also provided within the primary schools by regular teachers with a varied level of shared participation by parents and parish.

There are considerable pressures to change this situation. Various non-religious Patron organizations have emerged and the State has a policy of favouring a plurality of providers in new areas and is attempting to do so also in existing areas where demographic changes permit it. There is also a certain reluctance on the part of parishes to take on some of obligations in the area of management connected with Catholic schools. Teacher organi-

¹ Constitution of Ireland, Art. 42 #1.

² *Ibid.* art. 42, #4.

³ *Ibid.* art. 44, #4.

zations stress that a growing number of teachers do not wish to be involved in religious education and especially in sacramental preparation. The evidence from the teacher training colleges, however, is of a widespread willingness among younger teachers to teach religion.

Finally the Constitution recognises that 'In exceptional cases, where the parents for physical or moral reasons fail in their duty towards their children, the State as guardian of the common good, by appropriate means shall endeavour to supply the place of the parents, but always with due regard for the natural and imprescriptible rights of the child'.⁴ The Courts have generally given considerable attention to the rights of natural parents in disputed questions.

Participation rates in Irish Education are very high. Ninety percent of all Irish children take part in secondary education and 50% go on to third-level education. There is a growing number of schools that teach the curriculum through Irish (Gael scoileanna).

One of the characteristics of the schools in the Dublin area is their growing multi-cultural identity. The Irish economy has a great need for workers and thus in a very short period of time Ireland has moved from being a country of emigration to one of immigration. In my two years as Archbishop of Dublin I have opened 'quasi parishes' for Polish, Lithuanians, Latvian, Rumanian, Nigerian and Syro-Malabar Rite Catholics.

A recent survey of the ethnic and religious mix in the schools in North and West County Dublin produced interesting results. It noted that there are children of 104 different nationalities in these schools and in one deanery the percentage of 'international children' generally reached figures of around 30%, with peaks of 60% and in one case 80% of the children'.⁵ The Catholic schools in Dublin have played an extremely important role in introducing young people from many different ethnic and religious backgrounds into a new understanding of Irish identity and avoiding the creation of immigrant ghettos.

In Ireland today the birth rate is below replacement level but high compared to some European countries. Immigration exceeds emigration. A large number of the immigrants are Irish nationals and given their age profile it would appear that many of them are families with young children.

⁴ *Ibid.* art. 44, #5.

⁵ Survey seeking information on International Students, in the Primary Schools in the deaneries of Fingal North, Finglas and Maynooth, Archdiocese of Dublin.

The net change in the population in 1999, taking account of natural increase and migration showed a population increase of 1.1% leading to the highest population since the census of 1881.⁶

The birth rate fell for the first time to below replacement level in 1989 and apart from a slight rise in total period fertility in 1990 to 2.10 it has remained below replacement level since then. There are currently 14.47 births/1,000 population (2005 est.). It is estimated that 21.3% of the population is aged between 0-14 years, while 11.4% are 65 and over.

Accompanying the dramatic drop in the birth rate there has been an equally dramatic rise in non-marital births. For most of the 20th century up to the 1970s the percentage of births outside of marriage remained relatively constant at less than 3% of all registered births. By 1999 this percentage had risen to 30.9%.⁷ Almost three-fifths of these births are to women in the age range 20 to 29 years with less than one-fifth to women under the age of 20 years.

The participation of mothers in the active labour force has dramatically changed over the past few decades. This change is found both in the number of women and the number of mothers in employment. In 1971 the female participation rate was 28.2. By 1999 this had risen to 48.5.⁸

In addition, the highest concentration of married women in the labour force according to the 1999 figures is the age group 25 to 34 years (Statistical Bulletin, 2000: 233).⁹ These figures show that employment coincides with women's childbearing and childrearing years.

Let me come now to some reflection on children and young people in Ireland today and to try to draw out from these some reflections for the social teaching of the Church.

I will begin with one of the most shocking statistics about Ireland today, namely, that Ireland has the fastest-growing rate of youth suicide in the world and almost one in four suicides occur among those aged between 15 and 24. Suicide has become the most common cause of death among young men today.

⁶ *Statistical Release*, (1999), 'Population and Migration Estimates, April 1999', Central Statistics Office, Government Publications, Dublin.

⁷ *Vital Statistics*, (2000), Central Statistics Office, Government Publications, Dublin.

⁸ *Statistical Bulletin*, (2000: 228), Central Statistics Office, Government Publications, Dublin.

⁹ *Statistical Bulletin*, (2000: 233), Central Statistics Office, Government Publications, Dublin.

In the Dublin area, where about one-third of the population of 3.6 million lives, about 200 people call the Samaritans every day, many of them to discuss their possible suicide. In 2002, over 8,500 people were treated in hospital for self-inflicted injuries, with some of them in their pre-teens. At any given time 300,000 people in Ireland suffer from depression.

A Government task force reported earlier this year that the rate of suicides of males between 15 and 24 was about 19 per 100,000 people, higher than that in most European countries and apparently growing.

Since 1987, the number of Irish people who have killed themselves has doubled, to about 500 a year, and men are responsible for four of five of those deaths. These figures may indeed be somewhat lower than the actual number of suicides because police in rural areas often report suicides as accidents to spare the feelings of relatives.

It is difficult to determine why so many Irish people, particularly young men, find themselves in such a state of distress and hopelessness that the only way they can see of resolving their confusion and pain is by taking their own lives. Experts say that while alcoholism, depression and other serious illnesses are still major causes of suicide, other broader changes in Irish society may also be contributing.

The recent rapid changes in Irish society are difficult for some to adapt to and are presenting challenges they feel they cannot withstand. Job security is a thing of the past with people required to work longer and at a more demanding pace than ever before. Many young people are required to leave their communities and find themselves isolated in urban environments. The pressures to achieve very high standards in examinations required for university entrance are stressful. Added to this, many young people are abusing alcohol or illicit substances which can have a devastating effect on one already struggling with depression.

During my meetings with young people in universities or youth groups, or during the World Youth Day and its preparations, the two questions which come up most regularly are about suicide and about the Church's attitude to gay and lesbian people, this latter looked on exclusively as a 'justice issue'.

Why is it in an Ireland which today has unprecedented opportunity for young people that young people are so fragile? Each year, the diocese of Dublin brings about 200 invalids to Lourdes and about 250 very talented young men and women, from the final year in secondary school or the first year at university come as helpers. It is interesting to note that the demand among the young people far exceeds the numbers we can take. There is

great goodness in these young people. The dynamic of the interaction between the young people and the sick is fascinating to observe and the one comment which many of the young people full of promise make to me about the sick is 'Archbishop, these people are happier than we are'.

One of the factors which contribute to this lack of hope is the change in Irish society – but the same could be said also for other societies – from one in which religion served as a basis for a cohesive moral viewpoint within society, even when there was not always agreement on all of the particular conclusions. Today, as the influence of the Church wanes, there is no other institution which is able to carry out this role in society. A nation needs a soul and not just economic success.

I was struck by a comment on German television by Gregor Gysi, leader of the German 'Left Party', successor to the East German Communist Party. Asked about his fears for the future of society he replied 'Ich fürchte eine Gottlose Gesellschaft', 'I fear a society without God'. It was not the declaration of a conversion to religion, but the recognition by a rather cynical atheist that the roots of many of the values which bring cohesion to society are to be found the Christian tradition.

It is hard to deny that there is a sense then in which our Western societies even when they appear to be de-Christianized still retain vestiges of a Christian culture which possesses a unique capacity for moral cohesion. No other philosophical or political basis has ever done so quite so well.

The answers of alternative sources of spirituality do not seem to provide the fundamental anchor needed to provide social cohesion. Spirituality, despite the seemingly obvious meaning of the word, may in fact be entirely material, with no true openness to the transcendent. I remember at the UN Conferences of the 1990's we would have debates on the appropriateness of UN documents containing references to spirituality and spiritual values. In general, the pluralist European countries were not enthusiastic, as they feared that this might imply some positive reference to religion (which would be a secularist mortal sin). On the other hand, the Russia of the early Gorbachev administration was appealing for spirituality and even the Chinese supported the requests of the Holy See conceding that their system admitted spirituality: 'Chinese socialist spirituality', the Ambassador hastily added.

There is something fundamental in human yearning that seeks the spirit, meaning and hope. There is something in the human spirit which aspires to ask deeper questions about the meaning of life and to identify what are the deepest realities.

Many will find their path in secular spirituality and they will live out their worldview with dedication, idealism, generosity and satisfaction. For others, seeking spirituality may indeed be a sign of seeking the transcendent and be a first opening to faith. The originality of faith is however that it is not of our construction, it is response to a personal action of God. It is response to an invitation made to me in my personal situation. Christian faith, as opposed to other spiritual visions, is above all the recognition that God loves me personally.

Pope Benedict XVI stresses the relationship between faith and reason in the social context in his Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* (#28). 'Faith by its specific nature is an encounter with the living God – an encounter opening up new horizons extending beyond the sphere of reason. But it is also a purifying force for reason itself. From God's standpoint, faith liberates reason from its blind spots and therefore helps it to be ever more fully itself. Faith enables reason to do its work more effectively and to see its proper object more clearly. This is where Catholic social doctrine has its place'.

In that sense faith is always surprise and risk. It is the surprise that God has sought me out personally and asks me to respond. That relationship was described by Pope Benedict XVI in his inaugural address in Saint Peter's Square now some months ago: 'We are not some casual and meaningless product of evolution. Each of us is the result of a thought of God. Each of us is willed, each of us is loved, each of us is necessary. There is nothing more beautiful than to be surprised by the Gospel, by the encounter with Christ'.

Our communities if they wish to help young people in the struggles and searching for meaning must be communities of mature faith, but they should not become elitist ghettos. The Church by its nature must be open and it must open a path of welcome for those who are still journeying, who are still seeking, of those who are still weak, of those who are sinners.

Ireland's economic success has brought with it great changes. I have mentioned the large numbers of immigrants. Ireland is a society with 5% annual economic growth, and with unemployment at 4.3%. If there is emigration it is emigration by choice. Many Irish young people go abroad to study and to enjoy themselves when the finish studying.

In the current Irish economic situation the reflection of Pope John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus* (#39) is particularly relevant: 'the economy is only one aspect and one dimension of human activity' and that 'economic freedom is only one element of human freedom'. If economic life is absolutised, if the production and consumption of goods become the centre of social life

and society's only value, not subject to any other value, economic freedom looses its necessary relationship the human person, and ends up by alienating and oppressing.

Despite all the positive economic indicators and amidst the public demonstration of pride and satisfaction, there is in Ireland also uneasiness, and a search for a more secure national identity.

Economic prosperity has not brought with it even those elements of social progress that one could legitimately have expected. There is a crisis in health care provision. There is not enough investment in education. There is a permeating fear that jobs are in the long run not secure in the face of competition from other economies that are today doing what Ireland did twenty years ago through exploitation of cheaper labour costs.

There is a growing instance of marital breakdown in Ireland and this is having a serious effect on the lives and psychological health of children. On many occasions teachers tell me that they would almost need to have a lawyer present at parent/teacher meetings to see who is legally responsible for some of the children. These children then grow up within an extremely conflictual network of relationships of various fathers and mothers.

The question of an ageing population is also one to which more attention must be given. People have a right to be able to live their human potential to the fullest degree possible for the longest time possible. This will require enabling older people to remain on in their homes or localities and also in some cases to be able to work in some fulfilling role, either with or without remuneration, in retirement. The increase of chronically ill older people will give rise to greater institutionalisation.

Greater attention needs to be given to the quality of care that such institution can provide. One group in Dublin visits elderly people who have no relatives of their own in a large Dublin geriatric hospital but is not allowed to take these older people out for a drive on a summer's day because the insurance costs would be excessive.

Grandparents play an enormous role in passing on values and traditions to their grandchildren and very often substituting the parents who are both working. But in the near future non-working grandparents are also going to be a rare species and socialization will be handed over to professionals.

There is a felt need for greater solidarity, but people are too busy to have the time to take on that challenge themselves. Yes, there are examples of extraordinary solidarity in Irish society. The largest Conference of the Society of Saint Vincent de Paul in Ireland is in what was traditionally the Protestant University, Trinity College Dublin. Irish development aid is aim-

ing to reach the UN target of 0.7% within this decade. The Irish are among the most generous per capita donors in voluntary development aid. A single collection in the Churches in Dublin last year for the victims of the Tsunami produced 4.5 million Euros in one day.

A number of papers have stressed that solidarity begins within the family. Professor Schooyans has referred to how changes in the perception of the family can reduce the capacity of the family to generate solidarity. He notes how within then family today the 'child can become itself the object of a choice between a child and other goods in relation to which the child is not perceived as essentially different'. And he adds the 'child is frequently perceived as an object to which one has a right'. This is quite different from the Christian vision in which the child is considered as both 'gift' and as the expression of mutual self-giving, thus recognising the newness and originality of each new life with all its human potential.

The paper of Professor Fumagalli Carulli drew attention to a particular challenge presented to the Social Teaching of the Church by certain international documents on the rights of the child and in particular concerning the relative rights of parents and children. This has been a subject of much discussion and controversy since the publication of on the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Article 5 of that International Convention deals with the rights of parents. It affirms:

'States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents...to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention'.

I remember the negotiations which took place around the application of this question during the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo (ICPD) in 1994 and the World Conference on Women and Development held the following year in Beijing. The question was the possible conflict between the rights of parents and the rights of children and adolescents regarding the provision of reproductive health services and the interpretation of the term 'the evolving capacities of the child'.

The relevant paragraph of the ICPD (7.45) is a classic product of prolonged negotiations, allowing sufficient vagueness for the text to be interpreted in various ways:

Recognizing the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents and other persons legally responsible for adolescents to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the adolescent,

appropriate direction and guidance in sexual and reproductive matters, countries must ensure that the programmes and attitudes of health-care providers do not restrict the access of adolescents to appropriate services and the information they need, including on sexually transmitted diseases and sexual abuse. In doing so, and in order to, *inter alia*, address sexual abuse, these services must safeguard the rights of adolescents to privacy, confidentiality, respect and informed consent, respecting cultural values and religious beliefs. In this context, countries should, where appropriate, remove legal, regulatory and social barriers to reproductive health information and care for adolescents.

All the elements in the discussions are mingled into the text. The more libertarian groups were fighting for measure which would 'not restrict services for adolescents', the notions of 'right to privacy, confidentiality, respect and informed consent' by the adolescent have been added and an appeal was made to 'remove legal, regulatory and social barriers to reproductive health information and care for adolescents'. The more conservative groups placed their hopes on terms like 'recognising the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents' and 'respecting cultural values and religious beliefs'.

One year later the Beijing Conference on Women and Development produced a new formulation (Par. 108 e), using the same concepts but changing the order and therefore reducing the place assigned to the rights of parents:

...especially information on sexuality and reproduction, taking into account the rights of the child to access to information, privacy, confidentiality, respect and informed consent, as well as the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents and legal guardians to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and in conformity with the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In all actions concerning children, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.

In this new formulation the rights of the child to privacy and confidentiality move to first place and come before any reference to the rights of the parents. Even there the traditional order 'rights, responsibilities and duties' is changed to 'responsibilities, rights and duties'. The concept of the best interests of the child is stressed as a primary consideration.

Such consensus documents of International Conferences may not have legal weight, but they become part of 'soft law' and influence public opinion as to how the International Conventions should be interpreted.

One reproductive health lobbyist wrote after the Beijing Conference that 'An avalanche of conditional language asserting parental rights in sections of the Platform relating to reproductive and sexual health education, information and services for children and adolescents was streamlined. The final agreement recognized the primacy of adolescent rights, over the duties, rights and responsibilities of parents, thereby taking into account the evolving capacity of the child. This language is true to the basic premise that the needs of the child come first, as expressed by the international community in the 1990 Convention on the Rights of the Child'.

Whereas the Compendium of the Social Teaching of the Church does address the question of the rights of the child, it does not get into any analysis of the potential clash between the rights of the child and those of parents, presuming that the parents will normally be the best judges of what the best interests of the child might be.

In today's culture of judicial litigation there is a real danger that courts will overrule the right of parents and will stress more and more the space open to public authorities to substitute themselves for the parents.

The Compendium (#245) looks at some of the particular violations of the rights of the child 'due to the lack of favourable conditions for their integral development despite the existence of a specific juridical instrument for protecting their rights'. It mentions explicitly 'lack of healthcare, or adequate food supply, little or no possibility of receiving a minimum of academic formation or inadequate shelter'. It also mentions the specific problems of 'trafficking in children, child labour, the phenomenon of street children, the use of children in armed conflict, child marriage, the use of children for commerce in pornographic material'. It notes that 'it is essential to engage in a battle at the national and international levels against them violations of the dignity of boys and girls caused by sexual exploitation, by those caught up in paedophilia, and by every kind of violence directed against these most defenceless of human creatures'.

The on-going scandals of the involvement of priests and religious in crimes of paedophilia are not something which has brought honour on the Church. Hard lessons are still being learned about how Church authorities should deal with allegations of abuse.

This should however not lead to a situation in which the Church, which due to its own sad experience has acquired a certain expertise in dealing

with the matter, should not be an advocate in the fight against the societal plague of child sexual abuse, which in some cases would seem to be far more prevalent in society than it was traditionally presumed.

The emphasis on the rights of the parents is however not just to be seen within the terms of a possible clash between the rights of parents and these of the child, but above all within the context of the principle of subsidiarity, in which the rights of parents should be protected over and against an over invasive state. It is about an entire vision of how society and its principal actors should be structured.

Intergenerational solidarity must find its roots in the attitude of people. One can look at all the economic and social factors affecting the decline in births in Europe, but one also has to ask why has a Europe which is enjoying unprecedented prosperity become somehow fearful or unwilling to pass on life from one generation to the next and to ensure that values and traditions are passed on with generosity. A generation which closes in on itself is one which lacks one of the fundamental dimensions of humankind, namely, looking to a future with hope.

Again there are indications that a purely materialistic understanding of the economy can be a contributing factor to such a closed mentality. Pope John Paul II stressed 'that man commits himself in work not only for his own sake but for the sake of others. Every person collaborates in the work of others and for their good'.

The economy of the 'New Ireland', like that of many other regions, has yet to find a practical balance between individualism and solidarity. Naturally everyone is anxious to provide for *their* children, *their* parents and *their* pension. But solidarity requires more.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his Encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* has stressed in particular the contribution of the concept of Christian love to the building of true intergenerational solidarity. He stresses that 'This love does not simply offer people material help, but refreshment and care for their souls, something which often is even more necessary than material support. In the end, the claim that just social structures would make works of charity superfluous masks a materialist conception of man: the mistaken notion that man can live 'by bread alone' (*Mt* 4:4; cf. *Dt* 8:3) – a conviction that demeans man and ultimately disregards all that is specifically human'.

Further (#30) he stresses that involving young people directly in works of solidarity 'constitutes a school of life which offers them a formation in solidarity and in readiness to offer others not simply material aid but their very selves. The anti-culture of death, which finds expression for example

in drug use, is thus countered by an unselfish love which shows itself to be a culture of life by the very willingness to “lose itself” (cf. *Lk 17:33 et passim*) for others’.

He addresses the doubts which assail young people about the meaning of their lives reminding us that the believer, ‘immersed like everyone else in the dramatic complexity of historical events’ can ‘remain unshakably certain that God is our Father and loves us, even when his silence remains incomprehensible’.

The recognition that God is Love transforms our impatience and our doubts into the sure hope that God holds the world in his hands. ‘Love is the light – and in the end, the only light – that can always illuminate a world grown dim and give us the courage needed to keep living and working’.

The contribution of the Social Teaching of the Church to the creation of a culture that is open and generous in the transmission of life is one of creating a new confidence in humanity as such. It is one which stresses the need to create a society in which people know that they can realize their human potential fully, and not just in the sphere of economic life.

The Social Teaching of the Church must be made appear in our modern world as an overwhelming vote of confidence in the human person. Young people need to be enhanced in their own self esteem so that they can overcome the doubts and insecurities which economic progress may indeed even have enhanced.

Curiously the contribution of the Social Teaching of the Church to the challenge of preparing our young people to build a just and sustainable society for tomorrow, for themselves and for others, will be one marked by a recognition that fullness of life comes not just from having but from the ability to give. Recognizing that life is a gift the young person can take the risk of faith in following the path of Jesus, who gave himself for us, so that we could have life to the full.

A PROPOS DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT SOCIAL COMMENTAIRES FAISANT SUITE À L'EXPOSÉ DE S.E. MSGR. MARTIN¹

EDMOND MALINVAUD

1. INTRODUCTION

Il est question ici de la solidarité de générations plus âgées envers la génération des adolescents, y compris les jeunes gens, soit les jeunes âgés de 12 à 25 ans qui sont les uns dans l'enseignement secondaire et supérieur, les autres dans les premières années d'activité. Il est évidemment question aussi de la doctrine de l'Eglise s'adressant directement à ces jeunes.

Ainsi qu'il convient plus généralement dans notre programme portant sur la solidarité entre générations, il faut nous placer dans une perspective assez longue. Plus précisément je pense aux devoirs de tous ceux qui ont plus de trente ans et sont en bonne santé, vis-à-vis de la génération actuelle des adolescents et jeunes gens, et des deux ou trois générations de jeunes qui suivront.

Ma perception des devoirs envers les jeunes est évidemment dépendante du contexte géographique dans lequel je vis, la France et l'Europe occidentale, sans d'ailleurs que j'aie compétence pour m'adresser au pays exceptionnel qu'est aujourd'hui l'Irlande où Msgr. Martin exerce son apostolat, dans le contexte difficile qu'il vient de nous décrire.

2. UN CONSTAT

L'histoire retiendra que, au moins dans l'Europe de l'Ouest, les premières générations de jeunes adultes du XXIème siècle auront injustement

¹ Sous la désignation *Acta 8*, les références adéquates seront faites à mon essai "Intergenerational solidarity in the social teaching of the Church", paru dans les Comptes Rendus de la huitième session plénière de l'Académie, 8-13 avril 2002.

souffert de l'égoïsme des générations plus anciennes. Une telle déclaration est évidemment caricaturale. Mais la caricature est pertinente. En effet que léguent et que légueront encore ces générations mûres? Une société de consommation vorace et peu soucieuse de l'environnement; une société permissive dans laquelle on revendique des droits et des jouissances, mais on ne veut pas entendre parler de devoirs ou d'ascèse; une société inégalitaire, marquée par un chômage persistant des moins formés; des dettes publiques et sociales colossales, dont les générations suivantes auront à assurer le service, donc les impôts et prélèvements publics attenants qui, du fait de la démographie, seront très supérieurs à ceux que les générations antérieures dispendieuses auront eu à acquitter.

3. UN CERTAIN RETARD DE LA DOCTRINE

Je m'explique: on ne peut pas dire que l'enseignement catholique ait passé sous silence ces lourds héritages; mais il ne semble pas avoir assez insisté sur eux. On en comprend bien les raisons: l'Eglise avait à hiérarchiser ses déclarations; elle avait à faire passer d'abord son message religieux; prônant l'espérance, ce message devait se garder d'apparaître exagérément pessimiste.

Le retard est aujourd'hui particulièrement manifeste quant aux devoirs vis-à-vis de l'environnement physique. Peut-être l'Eglise a-t-elle longtemps différé de s'exprimer sur ce sujet, afin de mieux s'opposer au malthusianisme démographique. Quoi qu'il en soit, c'est seulement en 1991 avec *Centesimus annus* que le pape Jean Paul II a nettement pris position. Quatre ans auparavant *Sollicitudo rei socialis* avait déjà fait une brève référence au problème, mais cette autre encyclique entendait traiter de la solidarité internationale plutôt que de la solidarité entre générations. Je ne rappelle pas ici les références aux deux encycliques: elles figurent dans les pages 48 à 50 de *Acta* 8. En revanche il me paraît opportun de renouveler ici le conseil que j'avais donné en 2002 quant à l'intérêt que notre Académie pourrait porter aux pages 506 à 511 du livre du Père René Coste.²

4. LA DOCTRINE SE PRÉCISE QUANT À L'ENSEIGNEMENT SOCIAL

Celui-ci a au contraire figuré au centre de l'enseignement social de l'Eglise depuis ses débuts. Mon essai de 2002, qui ne cherchait pas à faire

² *Les dimensions sociales de la foi*, Editions du Cerf, Paris, 2000.

œuvre d'histoire, n'est remonté qu'à *Gaudium et spes* (1966) avec alors les pages 50 à 53. La contribution de notre collègue José Raga à cette session fait de nombreuses références à ce même sujet. Je voudrais surtout ici rendre compte des précisions apportées récemment à cet enseignement. Pour donner du piment à mon propos, je me permets de l'aborder sous un angle assez particulier, quoique pertinent dans cette session.

Il serait trop hardi de ma part de dire ce que devrait être la justice immanente dans la répartition du bien-être entre générations. Néanmoins je m'interroge: la condition humaine requiert-elle que les générations aujourd'hui les plus âgées fassent, en Europe occidentale, l'objet d'aussi manifestes prévenances relativement aux jeunes générations? Qui d'ailleurs devrait répondre à la question?

Dans son encyclique *Deus caritas est* Benoît XVI consacre sa plus longue section 28 à clarifier la réponse et à considérer pour cela les responsabilités respectives, vis-à-vis de la justice, de l'Etat et de l'Eglise. Il écrit:

L'ordre juste de la société et de l'Etat est le devoir essentiel du politique. Un Etat qui ne serait pas dirigé selon la justice se réduirait à une bande de vauriens, comme l'a dit un jour Saint Augustin. ... L'Etat se trouve de fait inévitablement confronté à la question: comment réaliser la justice ici et maintenant? Mais cette question en présuppose une autre plus radicale: qu'est-ce que la justice? C'est un problème qui concerne la raison pratique; mais pour pouvoir agir de manière droite, la raison doit constamment être purifiée.

Plus loin le Saint Père reprend:

L'Eglise a le devoir d'offrir sa contribution spécifique, grâce à la purification de la raison et à la formation éthique, afin que les exigences de la justice deviennent compréhensibles et politiquement réalisables. L'Eglise ne peut ni ne doit prendre en main la bataille politique pour édifier une société la plus juste possible. Elle ne peut ni ne doit se mettre à la place de l'Etat. Mais elle ne peut ni ne doit non plus rester à l'écart dans la lutte pour la justice. Elle doit s'insérer en elle par la voie de l'argumentation rationnelle et elle doit réveiller les forces spirituelles, sans lesquelles la justice, qui requiert aussi des renoncements, ne peut s'affirmer ni se développer.

Je m'en tiens à cette sélection des fortes phrases de l'encyclique, car notre collègue Michel Schooyans a déjà abondamment cité devant nous la seconde partie de l'encyclique (sections 19 à 39), celle qui nous intéresse le plus directement.

Revenant en arrière dans le temps, il convient ici de considérer aussi la partage des responsabilités entre la famille, l'Eglise et l'Etat en matière d'édu-

cation des jeunes. C'est sans doute alors l'exhortation apostolique *Familiaris consortio* de Jean Paul II (1981) qui convient le mieux. Nous y lisons:³

La famille est la première mais non la seule et exclusive communauté éducative. En lui-même l'aspect communautaire de l'homme – tant civil qu'ecclésial – le requiert et conduit à une activité plus large et plus articulée qui doit résulter d'une collaboration bien ordonnée entre les divers agents de l'éducation. Tous ces agents sont nécessaires, même si chacun peut et doit jouer son rôle en accord avec sa compétence particulière et la contribution qui lui est propre. ... En correspondance avec leur droit, les parents ont un sérieux devoir de s'engager totalement dans une relation cordiale et active avec les professeurs et les autorités scolaires (40).

5. LA JEUNESSE: UN TRÉSOR TOUT PARTICULIER

Fort judicieusement notre collègue Raga a parlé, dans ses pages 2 à 5, de 'la jeunesse, architecte de la société future' et il a alors souvent cité Jean Paul II. Il aurait pu le faire plus encore, étant donné la dévotion que l'instaurateur de notre Académie portait aux Journées Mondiales de la Jeunesse. Dans ses conclusions Raga a aussi montré comment Benoît XVI poursuivait cet enseignement, avec notamment cette déclaration aux jeunes catholiques des Pays-Bas: "Jésus a besoin de vous pour renouveler la société contemporaine".

Dans le même esprit je voudrais attirer votre attention sur la Lettre apostolique de Jean Paul II *Dilecti amici* (1985), dont j'ignorais l'existence lors de mon essai de 2002 et qui est importante pour notre session. Sa section 3 a précisément le titre retenu ci-dessus. Je me limite à présenter le cœur de la section 9 intitulée "Le plan de vie et la vocation chrétienne".

Que dit cette section? Que chaque personne a dressé pour elle-même au temps de sa jeunesse un plan de vie, mais que 'plan' est un mot trop faible? Il s'agit d'une véritable vocation, qui traduit une hiérarchie personnelle des valeurs ainsi qu'un idéal à réaliser. Et cela attire le jeune quand il s'interroge sur son avenir: 'Que dois-je faire?', telle est la question qu'il se pose naturellement. C'est pourquoi Jean Paul II s'adresse aux jeunes dans les termes suivants: "Dans la réponse que vous donnez à cette question (que dois-je faire?), votre humanité se développe et s'affirme: face à vous-même, face aux autres, face à Dieu".

³ Je traduis ici le texte anglais figurant à la page 45 de *Acta* 8.

KATHOLISCHE SOZIALLEHRE UND SOLIDARITÄT DER GENERATIONEN

HERBERT SCHAMBECK

Die Soziallehre der Kirche ist ein wegweisendes Mittel der Glaubensverkündigung.¹ In ihr drückt sich *die Verbundenheit der Offenbarung mit der menschlichen Natur* und daher auch *von Glaube und Vernunft*² besonders aus. Der junge Mensch ist die Personifikation dieser Verbundenheit. Das Werden und die Entwicklung des Menschen beginnend mit der Zeugung, der Geburt, von Jugend über das Erwachsensein zum Alter bis zum Heimgang sind Zeichen einer *in der Schöpfungsordnung grundgelegten Entelechie*, in der für den gläubigen Menschen Seins- und Persönlichkeitsentfaltung sowie Heilsfindung eins werden können.

I.

Gleich der katholischen Soziallehre, die, wie es schon *Papst Johannes Paul II.* in seiner Enzyklika *Centesimus Annus* ausdrückte, „im Schnittpunkt des christlichen Lebens und Bewusstseins mit den Situationen der Welt“³ liegt, befindet sich auch *der Mensch* selbst beginnend mit seiner Geburt. Individuelle und soziale Umstände bestimmen *sein Schicksal*, das gilt schon für die Zeit seines Werdens, beginnend mit der Zeugung bis zur möglichen Geburt. Diese ist nämlich in vielen Staaten der Welt durch *die Möglichkeit der Abtreibung* gefährdet. *Kardinal Alfonso López Trujillo* hat es bereits festgestellt: „Es ist erschütternd, wenn man mit ansehen muss, wie viel versprechende Prozesse auf einem bestimmten Gebiet

¹ *Papst Johannes Paul II.*, Enzyklika *Centesimus Annus*, Nr. 54 und Kompendium der Soziallehre der Kirche, Nr. 66.

² Siehe *Papst Johannes Paul II.*, Enzyklika *Fides et Ratio*.

³ *Papst Johannes Paul II.*, Enzyklika *Centesimus Annus*, Nr. 59 und Kompendium Nr. 73.

wieder erstickt werden. Es sah so aus, als würde dem Kind nicht mehr nur ein peripherer und nebensächlicher, sondern ein zentraler Platz zuerkannt. Nun schwebt es allerdings bereits im Mutterschoß in Lebensgefahr: wenn die Parlamente zu einem Ort werden, wo das ungerechteste Todesurteil ausgesprochen wird“.⁴

In dieser Sicht befindet sich der Mensch schon in seinem Werden, im Hinblick auf die Vielzahl an Abtreibungen in einem Risiko und in der Gefahr, „das Licht der Welt“ im wahrsten Sinne des Wortes nicht „zu erblicken“. Schon in diesem seinen Werden steht der Mensch zur Disposition und erfährt auch *die Folgen der „Diktatur des Relativismus“*, auf welche am 18. April 2005 *Kardinaldekan Joseph Ratzinger* in seiner Predigt in der Heiligen Messe „Pro eligendo Romano Pontifice“ hingewiesen hat. Er sagte: „Es entsteht eine Diktatur des Relativismus, die nichts als endgültig anerkennt und als letztes Maß nur das eigene Ich und seine Gelüste gelten lässt“.⁵

Bei einer solchen Einstellung wird in vielen Staaten unabhängig von Glaube und Moral durch den Gesetzgeber viel Mögliches auch zum Zulässigen erklärt, sogar das Ja und Nein zum Leben selbst!

Das Ja zum Leben wird in und außerhalb der Ehe in Frage gestellt, entweder von Mann und Frau als auch von einem der beiden alleine. In vielen Fällen gehört viel Mut, besonders von der Frau dieses Ja zum Leben Wirklichkeit werden zu lassen, *Kardinal Franz König* hat dies auch 1980 aus der Sicht der Kirche betont und gefordert: „Vor allem gegenüber den unehelichen Müttern wird die Kirche heute mitfühlendes Verständnis, Hilfe und Respekt aufbringen müssen, weil sie trotz gesellschaftlicher Verfeindung nicht den bequemen Weg der Abtreibung gegangen sind“.⁶

Das Werden des Menschen mit seinem Weg zur Geburt ist der Beginn jener *Verantwortung in der existentiellen Situation von Ich und Du*, die gemeinschaftsbegründend sein kann und nach der göttlichen Schöpfungsordnung in

⁴ *Kardinal Alfonso López Trujillo*, *Die Familie: Geschenk und Verpflichtung, Hoffnung der Menschheit*, Vaticano. J., S. 26.

⁵ *Kardinaldekan Joseph Ratzinger*, *L'Osservatore Romano*, Sonderausgabe in deutscher Sprache, 2005, S. 20; dazu *Herbert Schambeck*. *Die Möglichkeiten der Demokratie und die Diktatur des Relativismus*, ein Beitrag zur Zeitverantwortung in der Lehre Papst Benedikt XVI., *L'Osservatore Romano*, Wochenausgabe in deutscher Sprache 12. Mai 2006, Nr. 19, S. 10 f und 19. Mai 2006, Nr. 20, S. 9 f.

⁶ *Kardinal Franz König*, *Ehe und Familie, Die angemessene Lebensform*, in: *Apostolat und Familie*, Festschrift ihr Opilio Kardinal Rossi, hrsg. von Herbert Schambeck, Berlin 1980, S. 325.

die Ehe und Familie eingebettet sein sollte; *Papst Benedikt XVI.* hat es vor kurzem auch betont: „Jede Hoffnung auf eine Erneuerung der Gesellschaft, die nicht an Gottes Plan für Ehe und Familie festhält, ist zum Scheitern verurteilt, denn dies ist der Ort, wo die gottgegebene Würde jedes Menschen ihre erste Verwirklichung findet und wo das Selbstvertrauen, das notwendig ist, um im Erwachsenenalter reife Beziehungen aufbauen zu können, zuerst erfahren und genährt wird (vgl. Apostolisches Schreiben *Familiaris Consortio*, 3)“.⁷

Das mögliche Werden menschlichen Lebens, das Schicksal des geborenen Menschen von Jugend an bis ins Alter, ist begleitet von der Einstellung zum Du des Mitmenschen, das in der *Ehe und Familie die segenvollste dauerndste Form menschlichen Miteinanders* finden kann, nämlich in Verständnis, Entgegenkommen, Annahme und letztlich in der Zuneigung, die im bleibenden Zu- und Füreinander gipfelt. Wohl am schönsten drückt es der Satz, der älteren Eheleuten zugeschrieben wird, aus: „Ich liebe dich mehr als gestern, aber weniger als morgen“. In seiner Enzyklika *Deus Caritas Est* hat *Papst Benedikt XVI.* es hervorgehoben: „Der Eros verweist von der Schöpfung her den Menschen auf die Ehe, auf eine Bindung, zu der Einzigkeit und Endgültigkeit gehören“.⁸

II.

Dieses Ideal- und Wunschbild begleitet leider die Tatsache, dass *alles Zwischenmenschliche auch mit einem „ungedeckten Wechsel“ vergleichbar* ist und die heutige Zeit nicht allein die von Glauben und Moral begleitete und geprägte eheliche und familiäre Gemeinschaft kennt, sondern auch u.a. die Lebensgemeinschaft, Lebenspartnerschaft auf Zeit, Ehebruch, und Scheidung. Sie führen neben ehelichen auch zu unehelichen Geburten, neben ehelichen auch zu unehelichen Müttern sowie neben häuslichen, auch zu allein erziehenden und allein verdienenden Müttern, die Beachtenswertes leisten. Sie sind mit ihren Kindern ein besonderer pastoraler Auftrag!

Auf diese *Situation* sei beispielsweise in Österreich verwiesen.⁹ So sind in Österreich 43% der Paare kinderlose Ehepaare bzw. Lebensgemeinschaften;

⁷ *Papst Benedikt XVI.*, An Ehe und Familie festhalten, Ansprache am 1. Dezember 2005, L'Osservatore Romano, Wochenausgabe in deutscher Sprache, 20. Januar 2006, Nr. 3, S. 9.

⁸ *Papst Benedikt XVI.*, Enzyklika *Deus Caritas Est*, Nr. 11.

⁹ Siehe *Herbert Schambeck*, Zur Bedeutung von Ehe und Familie für Gesellschaft und Stadt (ein österreichischer Beitrag), *Familia et Vita*, Anno LX., Nr. 3, 2004/1 2005, 8. 185 ff

von 8,1 Mill. Einwohnern haben wir in Österreich 248.000 allein erziehende Mütter und 45.000 allein erziehende Väter. Nur 14,1% der Familien mit Kindern haben drei oder mehr Kinder.

Die Erwerbsquote liegt bei Frauen (15 bis 59 Jahre alt) mit Kindern bei Alleinerzieherinnen mit 73,3% höher als bei Ehefrauen mit 68,1%.

Diese Zahlen geben zum Bedenken Anlass! Die Rechtspflicht zur Aufrechterhaltung der Ehe und Familie begleitet vorangehend der Gewissensanspruch, der aber nicht erzwungen werden kann, eine Ehe einzugehen und eine Familie zu begründen.

Ehe und Familie sind in ihrer präpositiven Bedeutung Teil der natürlichen Ordnung des Menschseins.

Gerade bei Ehe und Familie zeigt sich, wie *Gewissensanspruch und Rechtspflicht* sich ergänzen sollten, aber leider es oft nicht entsprechend tun. Es erweist sich nämlich nur all zu oft, dass nicht alles, was der Ordnung würdig ist, auch des Rechtes fähig ist, wie z.B. sich auf einen Mitmenschen verlassen zu können, auf Liebe zu vertrauen und ein Ja zum Kind in der Ehe und Familie zu sagen. Dies ist auch in Österreich in nicht ausreichendem Maß der Fall. So wurden 18.727 Ehen durch staatliche Gerichte rechtskräftig geschieden; das sind 43 von 100 geschlossenen Ehen. Die Gesamtscheidungsrate war mit 60,08% in Wien am höchsten. 88% aller dieser Scheidungen erfolgten im beiderseitigen Einvernehmen. Ein Drittel dieser geschiedenen Ehen waren kinderlos geblieben; das sind 36,6%.

Gleich der Privatrechtsautonomie als Freiheit im privaten Recht gibt es auch eine *Dispositionsfreiheit* in Bezug auf das Eingehen von Ehe und Begründen einer Familie.

Diese Freiheit soll aber nicht als Freiheit vom liebenden Miteinander weg zu einer *Situationsethik mit Gelegenheitsmoral* für einen Partnertausch auch auf Kosten des Kindes und Gefährdung der Familie missbraucht werden, sondern als Freiheit zu lebenslanger Treue und einem gegenseitigen Miteinander in Freud und Leid möglichst im Schutz der gesunden Gesellschaft und des Sakramentes der Ehe genutzt werden.

Die Achtung von Ehe und Familie drückt eine Verantwortung aus und Verantwortung tragen verlangt Antwort geben!

III.

Diese *Verantwortung* stellt sich für den jungen Menschen selbst sowie seine Um- und Mitwelt. Der heranwachsende Mensch sollte die Gelegenheit haben, sich *an älteren Mitmenschen* in seiner Familie und darüber hinaus ein *Vorbild* zu *nehmen* soweit diese ein *Beispiel geben*. Diese können Wege weisen, besonders wenn die Jugend von der Liebe einer Mutter begleitet ist, die Autorität des Vaters verständnisvoll erfahren und die Verbundenheit mit Geschwistern erleben. Wo dies aber nicht der Fall ist, kann die Folge später Lieblosigkeit gegenüber einem anderen Eheteil, Ablehnung gegenüber Autoritäten in Staat und Gesellschaft sowie Unkollegialität gegenüber Mitmenschen im Beruf sein. In dieser Sicht kann die Familie die erste und beste Schule für das Leben sein, welches die Eltern spenden und zu der Geburt des neuen Lebens, wie es schon *Kardinal Alfonso López Trujillo* ausdrückte, „die Ehe ... der angemessenste und erhabenste Ort“¹⁰ ist; er bezeichnet auch „die Kinder als wertvolles Geschenk der Ehe“.¹¹

Es gibt aber auch andere Situationen, wenn es keinen sich bekennenden, ehelichen, unehelichen oder geschiedenen Vater gibt. In diesem Fall sprach *Kardinal Franz König* von „der unvollständigen Familie“¹² und *Johannes Schasching S.J.* von der „vaterlosen Gesellschaft“.¹³

Die Folgen solcher Entwicklungen können tragisch werden, so wurde von einem Staat berichtet, in dem über 70% der männlichen Jugendlichen im Gefängnis aus Familien ohne Vater stammen.¹⁴ Weiters ist es hervorhebenswert, dass etwa 10% der Kinder von weissen und 14% der Kinder von schwarzen Eltern im ersten Jahr nach der Trennung ihrer Eltern in Armut geraten. 45% der Familien mit Kindern unter 18 Jahren, deren Erziehung allein der Mutter zufällt, sind arm. Im Gegensatz dazu ist in nur 7% der Familien mit Kindern die Erziehung Aufgabe verheirateter Eltern.¹⁵

Neben den Elternteilen sind auch andere ältere Menschen von Bedeutung für die Jugend, „denn“ wie auch das Kompendium der Soziallehre der Kirche feststellte, „sie können Werte und Traditionen ver-

¹⁰ *López Trujillo*, a.a.O., S. 17.

¹¹ *López Trujillo*, a.a.O.

¹² *König*, a.a.O., S. 325.

¹³ *Johannes Schasching S.J.*, Vaterlose Gesellschaft?, in: Apostolat und Familie, S. 437 ff.

¹⁴ *Don Browning*, In che modo negli Stati Uniti la famiglia è divenuta un 'tema liberale', in *Concilium* 2/1996, 54.

¹⁵ *Don Browning*, a.a.O., 52 f.

mitteln und das Wachstum der Jüngeren fördern, die auf diese Weise lernen, nicht nur das eigene Wohl, sondern auch das der anderen anzustreben“.¹⁶

Papst Benedikt XVI., hat auf diese Aufgabe, die ich als eine *Gemeinwohlverpflichtung der Generationen* bezeichnen möchte, hingewiesen, wenn er in seiner Enzyklika *Deus Caritas Est* feststellte: „Das Erbauen einer gerechten Gesellschafts- und Staatsordnung, durch die jedem das Seine wird, ist eine grundlegende Aufgabe, der sich jede Generation neu stellen muss“.¹⁷ Auf diese Weise kann auch *eine intergenerationelle Solidarität* zum Tragen kommen, durch welche die ältere Generation für die Jugend eine beispielgebende Wegweisung und später die Jugend dem Alter Hilfe sowie Beistand geben kann.

Die Entwicklung verläuft aber nicht immer und überall konsequent und aufeinander zu führend ergänzend.

Gleich der vielfältigen Pluralität der Gesellschaft gibt es auch eine solche Pluralität der Unterschiedlichkeit und Gegensätzlichkeit mit einer Formlosigkeit, die nur eine „milde Form des Terrors“ ist und sich auch im Verhalten einzelner Menschen in einem Rauditum äußert.

IV.

Allgemein kann man aber wohl feststellen, dass der Mensch in der Kindheit geradezu unverdorben und unbelastet *das Höhere empfindet und auch erfragt*. Erst kürzlich sagte mir am Dienstag nach Ostern diesbezüglich der Moraltheologe der katholischen Fakultät der Karlsuniversität in Prag *Georg Skoblik*, dass er gerade von Kindern die berührendsten Fragen zur Religion bekommt, was ich selbst erlebte; so fragte mich am Ostermontag ein sechsjähriger *Richard* am Friedhof meiner Geburtsstadt Baden bei Wien: „Wie viele Jesu Christi gibt es?“, da es so viele Kreuze mit ihm gibt; ich antwortete ihm einen, der alle Kreuze trägt. Auch meine achtjährige Enkelin *Fiona* stellte mir vor Ostern eine ähnliche Frage, nämlich sie wisse, dass Jesus Christus Gottes Sohn ist, aber nicht wer die Eltern von Gott sind. Sie fügte dann hinzu, sie wäre erst in der 2. Klasse, die Frage wäre sicher für ihr Alter jetzt zu schwer; deshalb erwarte sie sich erst eine Antwort in zwei Jahren in der 4. Klasse.

¹⁶ Kompendium der Soziallehre der Kirche, Nr. 222.

¹⁷ *Papst Benedikt XVI.*, Enzyklika *Deus Caritas Est*, Nr. 28.

Diese mit der Erfahrung der Lebensentfaltung durch den Heranwachsenden verbundene *Offenheit für Höheres* zeigt sich später oft bei jüngeren Menschen in einem besonderen Idealismus, so neben dem Sport in dem Engagement für soziale und religiöse Anliegen, wie für die Entwicklungshilfe und die Mission. Ein besonderes Kennzeichen war auch der von nahezu einer Million Menschen besuchte *Weltjugendtag 2005* in Köln,¹⁸ bei dem aus vielen Erdteilen angereist die Jugend begeistert eine Spiritualität erleben ließ, an der sich viele Erwachsene ein Beispiel nehmen könnten. Allgemein kann aber, wie erst kürzlich in der „Frankfurter Allgemeinen Zeitung“ zu lesen war, ein wachsendes Interesse an Glaube und Kirche festgestellt werden. So betonte dort *Renate Kocher* in ihrem Artikel über „Die neue Anziehungskraft der Religion“: „Die Überzeugung, dass der christliche Glaube ungebrochen aktuell ist, stieg Anfang 2005 auf 52% und hält sich seither ... Der Anteil, der aus den Glaubensüberzeugungen Kraft zieht, hat sich seit der Mitte der neunziger Jahre in der Altersgruppe zwischen 16 und 29 Jahren von 18 auf 26 % erhöht, bei jenen zwischen 30 und 44 Jahren von 27 auf 34% ... Die Bindungen an die Kirche haben zugenommen, überdurchschnittlich vor allem in der Altersgruppe zwischen 30 und 44 Jahren“.¹⁹ Konkret auf Österreich bezogen glauben laut einer im März 2006 veröffentlichten Studie 47% der Österreicher an Gott, 16% auch daran, dass er die Welt in sechs Tagen erschaffen hat, 40% bereiten sich auf ein Leben nach dem Tod vor, ein knappes Viertel auf die Wiedergeburt. 28% stellen sich einen Himmel vor, während 20% glauben, dass es Hölle und Teufel gibt. Diese Umfrage zeigte auch, dass für sie die Familie das größte Glück ist und sie kinderfreundlich sind.²⁰ Dieses Ideal ist aber in der Wirklichkeit wie die Zahl der Eheschließungen und Scheidungen sowie der Kinder zeigt, mit vielen Kompromissen und Ausnahmen begleitet.²¹

Neben dieser Mitmenschlichkeit in und außerhalb der Eltern und Familien sind für die *Persönlichkeitsentfaltung des jungen Menschen auch die Schule und die Medien von Bedeutung*, die Schule vor allem für die Wissensvermittlung und Gewissensbildung sowie die Medien für die Meinungs-, Willens- und Urteilsbildung.²²

¹⁸ Siehe L'Osservatore Romano, Sonderausgabe, Weltjugendtag 2005 in Köln, mit Jugendlichen auf den Spuren der Heiligen Drei Könige.

¹⁹ *Renate Köcher*, Die neue Anziehungskraft der Religion, Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, 12. April 2006, Nr. 87, S.5.

²⁰ Kleine Zeitung, 11. März 2006, S. 10 f.

²¹ Siehe Statistisches Jahrbuch Österreichs 2006, besonders S. 70 ff.

²² Dazu *Papst Benedikt XVI.*, Die Medien ein Netzwerk für Kommunikation, Gemeinschaft und Kooperation, Botschaft zum 40. Welttag der sozialen

V.

Die katholische Kirche kann mit ihrer Glaubenslehre sowie Individual- und Sozialmoral, auf letztgenanntem Gebiet besonders durch die katholische Soziallehre, Wegweisungen für die Entscheidungen geben, in welchen sich christliches Apostolat und politische Verantwortung verbinden. In dieser Verbundenheit ist es wichtig, dass die Freiheit und Würde des Menschen sowie die Grundrechte,²³ beginnend mit dem existentiellen Recht auf Leben und weiters Ehe und Familie²⁴ als *Vorgegebenheit jeglicher Gesetzgebung*²⁵ in dieser präpositiven Bedeutung Anerkennung finden.²⁶

Auf diese Weise können Maßstäbe für eine humane Ordnung durch die Politik und das Recht gesetzt werden. *Kardinal Joseph Ratzinger* hatte auch deshalb vor der „Zuflucht zu Scheinhoffnungen“²⁷ gewarnt und vielmehr darauf hingewiesen, dass das Christentum immer bemüht war, „das Politische in der Sphäre der Rationalität und des Ethos zu belassen“.²⁸ Er spricht sich daher auch für eine „moralische Erziehung“²⁹ und für einen Beitrag der Kirche als einer „Überzeugungsgemeinschaft“³⁰ aus. Das Bemühen um die Jugend gibt hiezu Anlass und zeugt auch erneut für *die „Bedeutung des Glaubens für den Staat und die Demokratie“*,³¹ für welche die heranwachsende Generation *Voraussetzung, Grundlage und Zukunft* ist.

Kommunikationsmittel, L'Osservatore Romano, Wocheausgabe in deutscher Sprache, Nr. 5, vom 3. Feber 2006, S. 9 und *derselbe*, Der Einfluss der Medien Zum Wohl der ganzen Menschheit nutzen, Ansprache am 17. Man 2006, L'Osservatore Romano, Wocheausgabe in deutscher Sprache, Nr. 13 vom 31. März 2006, S. 5.

²³ Siehe *Herbert Schambeck*, Grundrechte in der Lehre der katholischen Kirche, in: Handbuch der Grundrechte in Deutschland und Europa, hrsg. von Detlef Merten und Hans Jürgen Papier, Band I, Heidelberg 2004, S. 349 ff.

²⁴ Beachte *Wolfgang Waldstein* Das Menschenrecht zum Leben, Beiträge zu Fragen des Schutzes menschlichen Lebens, Berlin 1982.

²⁵ Näher *Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger*, Wahrheit, Werte, Macht Prüfsteine der pluralistischen Gesellschaft, 3. Aufl., Freiburg Basel Wien 1993, S. 7 und 17 ff.

²⁶ Beachte *Herbert Schambeck*, Der Schutz der Familie in den Grundrechten, in: Apostolat und Familie, S. 393 ff. und *derselbe*, Die Verantwortung des Politikers für den Schutz der Rechte der Familie, in: La famiglia, Vaticano 1998, 5 135 ff.

²⁷ *Joseph Kardinal Ratzinger*, Kirche, Ökumene und Politik, Einsiedeln 1987, S. 189.

²⁸ *Ratzinger*, a.a.O., S. 193.

²⁹ *Ratzinger*, a.a.O., S. 195.

³⁰ *Ratzinger*, Wahrheit, Werte, Macht, S. 24.

³¹ *Herbert Schambeck*, Fede, Stato e Democrazia: un contributo sul confronto tra il Cardinale Joseph Ratzinger e Hans Kelsen, in: 'Alla Scuola della Verità. I settanta anni di Joseph Ratzinger', a cura di Josef Clemens e Antonio Tarzia, Milano 1997, S. 319 ff.

**ROUND TABLE WITH YOUNG PEOPLE REPRESENTING
FIVE CONTINENTS OF THE WORLD**

DARIA DROZDOVA

Eccellenze, egregi professori, membri dell'Accademia delle Scienze Sociali!

Innanzitutto vorrei ringraziarvi e, in primo luogo, gli organizzatori di questa sessione plenaria e personalmente Mons. Sánchez Sorondo, per la possibilità che mi è stata concessa di partecipare a questa tavola rotonda a nome dei giovani del mio paese e di tutta l'Europa Orientale.

Io provengo da una piccola città della Russia centrale, da una famiglia abbastanza modesta che, però, ho lasciato presto, a soli 16 anni, per cominciare il mio percorso di studi all'Università di Mosca, alla Facoltà di fisica e di astronomia. Era la seconda metà degli anni '90, quando il paese si cambiava velocemente: i tempi erano duri per tutti, soprattutto per gli studenti, e la mia famiglia dovette affrontare grandi sacrifici per mantenermi durante gli studi.

Anche se i miei genitori non erano credenti (anzi, da due-tre generazioni nessuno nella mia famiglia veniva battezzato) io presto ho cominciato a interessarmi delle cose religiose. Durante i miei studi a Mosca mi sono convertita al cattolicesimo: è avvenuto circa 10 anni fa. Nella comunità cattolica di Mosca ho ricevuto la prima istruzione alla fede e ho cominciato la vita sacramentale nella piena unione con la Chiesa Universale. Non solo ho incontrato la realtà della fede, ma anche un ambiente favorevole alla riflessione intellettuale. Alcune conoscenze fatte (di altri intellettuali cattolici russi) mi hanno spinto a scoprire in me un desiderio della verità più profonda di quella scientifica e a dedicarmi allo studio filosofico. Per grazia di Dio e con l'aiuto del mio vescovo e di alcuni benefattori sono venuta a Roma per ricevere la formazione alla Facoltà di filosofia alla Pontificia Università Gregoriana dove attualmente sto proseguendo con la ricerca di dottorato.

In questa mia storia (si deve dire abbastanza atipica) alcuni punti possono dare l'idea più generale della situazione attuale dei giovani in Russia. E in primo luogo il fatto della mia presenza qui, a Roma. Qualsiasi valutazione possiamo ora dare al passato, una cosa è certa: prima degli anni '90 sarebbe stato difficile immaginare che qualcuno dei nostri giovani studiasse in una Università all'estero e, ancora peggio, in una università cattolica!

Questo semplice fatto – che oggi mi trovo qui con voi – può essere considerato come segno della maggiore libertà di cui godono le nuove generazioni dopo la caduta dell'Unione Sovietica. Negli ultimi 10-15 anni moltissime prospettive sono state aperte: si può costruire la propria vita senza guardare tutti nella stessa direzione indicata dal Partito, si può scegliere liberamente il tipo degli studi e il percorso professionale senza alcuna restrizione ideologica e politica. Non sei neanche costretto ad esercitare per alcuni anni la professione ricevuta, come era prima: il mercato è libero e tutto dipende dalle tue capacità, dalla tua iniziativa e dai tuoi desideri. E se si aggiunge che molti datori di lavoro preferiscono le persone di età inferiore a 40 anni perché non toccate dalle distorsioni ideologiche del passato, la situazione può sembrare più che ottimistica.

Purtroppo, con la libertà politica è nata una nuova discriminazione: quella economica. Sempre meno famiglie possono permettersi di dare l'educazione sufficiente ai loro figli perché li devono mandare nelle città più grandi, dove sono le Università, che sono anche più care per la vita. E anche realizzare la possibilità di studio all'estero, possibilità prima quasi inesistente, possono ancora soltanto in pochi: o quelli che hanno i genitori ricchi, una piccola percentuale della popolazione, oppure quelli che ottengono qualche borsa di studio, soluzione ancora non molto diffusa anche per mancanza di investimenti da parte del Governo. Avere le strade aperte e non poterle usare per mancanza di soldi! – questo produce in molti giovani un forte senso di ingiustizia e un forte desiderio di uscire dalla povertà in cui si trovano i loro genitori. A molti sembra che solo i soldi possono rendere felici, possono garantire la realizzazione di tutti i loro sogni. E il motto vitale della mia generazione e di quelli più giovani suona così: "Guadagnare!", per non sentire le umiliazioni della povertà, per non doversi limitare né nelle cose necessarie, né nei piccoli piaceri della vita, infine per sentirsi liberi e potenti. Veramente si deve dire che il desiderio del benessere economico non deve essere considerato unicamente come il segno del consumismo e dell'individualismo. Avere i soldi significa anche poter dare l'educazione ai propri figli, poter mantenere i propri genitori dopo la pensione, poter aiutare i bisognosi e partecipare alle iniziative sociali. Ma una cosa rimane vera: nella mentalità delle nuove generazioni la felicità viene identificata con la ricchezza. Come è stato giustamente notato dal prof. Mlčoch, un materialismo viene sostituito da un altro materialismo.

In mezzo a queste tendenze materialiste degli ultimi tempi appare poco chiaramente la carenza di altri valori: morali e spirituali. Cresce il numero di quelli che si sentono persi e frustrati di fronte al mondo dei lupi creato

dal mercato libero che misura tutto in denaro e guadagno. E soprattutto, il desiderio dell'Assoluto e del Divino non può essere completamente spento nel cuore umano (come 70 anni della nostra storia mostrano chiaramente). La mancanza dei valori forti viene sentita anche dai nostri governatori e politici i quali cercano di inserire i richiami morali e spirituali nella vita della società attraverso il discorso politico e con i mezzi amministrativi. Viviamo una situazione paradossale: mentre la vecchia Europa vuole a tutti i costi spostare la Chiesa ai margini della società laicale, in Russia sembra che le strutture statali si muovano verso una sempre maggiore collaborazione con la Chiesa Ortodossa. Però, nelle mani dei politici, la religione diventa solo uno strumento dell'integrazione nazionale al modello del vecchio Impero Russo e perde la stoffa di un messaggio cristiano vivificante. Ma i giovani (anche se qui comincio a parlare solo di una relativamente piccola parte dei miei coetanei, quelli che riconoscono in sé la sete per le cose spirituali) desiderano non la retorica vuota, ma la verità e i valori autentici, l'esempio vivo, quello che può toccare il cuore. Purtroppo, i cambiamenti avvenuti 15 anni fa hanno segnato una rottura tra le generazioni. Noi, cresciuti dopo il comunismo, dovevamo fare i conti con il fatto che i valori e gli ideali dei nostri genitori non erano più i nostri! Noi, cercando la fede, non potevamo contare sulle nostre famiglie. Così come io sono una cristiana convertita, lo è anche la maggioranza dei credenti di oggi. E come conseguenza, noi non abbiamo ricevuto la fede nella tradizione. Anzi, la tradizione spesso l'abbiamo scelta noi stessi. Essere ortodosso, cattolico, buddista, adepto di qualche setta *new age* non era la questione della formazione ricevuta nella famiglia ma della scelta personale, pur sotto le diverse influenze occasionali. Sì, certo che dopo il primo passo – la scelta preferenziale della tradizione religiosa da seguire, – il neofita deve mettersi all'ascolto dei maestri spirituali, dei catechisti, dei portatori della tradizione a cui aderisce, ma lo schema della ricezione passiva da generazione a generazione all'interno della famiglia già è stato rotto. Prima di essere un dono da accogliere, la fede per noi era il valore da ricercare attivamente. Nella nostra propria storia abbiamo scoperto e abbiamo affermato che la gioventù non può essere considerata solo come una massa inerte e ricettiva che deve essere formata, educata, protetta dalle influenze cattive della mentalità moderna, a cui si devono trasmettere i valori e dare gli esempi educativi, essa si manifesta anche come un soggetto attivo, capace di costruire da protagonista la propria vita. E per noi stessi, per la nuova generazione dei cristiani sorta nella terra dell'ateismo, questo pensiero rappresenta una sfida da affrontare: se noi abbiamo rifiutato i valori dei nostri

padri, chi può garantire che i nostri figli non rifiuteranno i nostri? Se noi non abbiamo avuto la tradizione cristiana nelle nostre famiglie, come possiamo trasmettere la nostra fede alle generazioni future? E se noi sappiamo che i giovani non solo ricevono ma scelgono attivamente i maestri da seguire (come noi stessi abbiamo fatto), ci chiediamo se saremo così convincenti nei nostri ideali vitali per poter essere ascoltati da quelli che vengono dopo di noi.

I nostri problemi, forse, sono abbastanza particolari. Forse noi ora viviamo il periodo in cui tutto il resto del mondo occidentale si troverà solo tra 30-50 anni, quando le famiglie cristiane spariranno completamente. Però ciò che possiamo testimoniare a tutti è che non si deve aver paura: la fede raggiunge i cuori anche nel deserto più disperato dell'ateismo, dopo gli anni delle persecuzioni, là dove tutte le strutture sembrano essere distrutte. Basta un piccolo seme...

Grazie.

PATRICK FLETCHER

Canada's problems are well known and similar to those of the US and Europe: individualism, relativism, and moral decline. What is necessary is a focused effort of evangelization. In my experience, the university years are very important in the faith development of young people. During this time many either embrace or reject their Catholic faith.

The evangelization of university students presents a tremendous opportunity for the Church. We already possess immense resources in the form of Catholic universities and Colleges across the country.

Many students attend these colleges primarily because they are Catholic, when in reality what they often realize is a less than Catholic education. What the Church in Canada needs is a renewal of its academia. If – starting with our Catholic institutions – professors were to teach their subjects in light of the Church's social teachings, we would begin to have well-formed graduates ready to enter society and to live those teachings.

As I stated in my brief address to the Academy, I believe that the power behind any positive social change will ultimately be an encounter with Christ. We are well aware of the social problems in North America. A renewal of society will start with the young.

Thankfully, the Catholic Church in Canada is already well positioned to accomplish this. This also holds true for the publicly-funded Catholic school system in several parts of the country, which is often nearly as large as the public system. University graduates who understand how their particular discipline fits within the world of Catholic faith will be indispensable as elementary and high school teachers in the future.

The Church in Canada possesses great ability. To reach tomorrow's youth with its message a rethinking of what Catholic education means will be necessary. But this renewed vision of Catholic education could be a powerful force for change in our country.

THE SITUATION OF THE YOUTH IN KENYA

JENNIFER GITAHI

I am the fourth born in a family of six children. Soon after Kenya gained independence in 1963, my parents moved to Nairobi from Nyeri, a town in the central part of the country very near Mt. Kenya. The six of us were therefore born and have been brought up in Nairobi. We all received elementary (8-year) education in a muslim primary school but ended up in different secondary schools. I was fortunate enough to study for four years in one of the best state secondary schools in the country which happens to run under the spiritual guidance of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). In both primary and secondary school I received classes of the Christian religion which were supplemented by the catechism I was receiving in the parish church in preparation for the sacraments of First Holy Communion and Confirmation. My father, a first generation catholic, and my mother, a convert, inculcated in us the sense of belonging to the Catholic Church. I, like many other children of my age, received the faith through my family. Indeed, as pointed out by Prof. Zulu in the regional paper on Africa, the family is still very strong in Africa. We grew up in a family where Sunday Mass was an important part of our life. We would go to Mass together as a family most of the times and we all received the sacraments of Christian initiation. I grew up proud to be catholic, but at the same time I was constantly faced with the challenge of defending my faith. This was because I grew up in a society where the majority are Protestants and there is a significant number of Muslims. The little doctrine I had received at a very young age was the only weapon of defence I had.

Kenya

Kenya has a population of 30 million, 55% ranging from 15 to 64 years of age. 45% are Protestant, 33% Roman Catholic, 10% indigenous beliefs, 10% Muslims and 2% belong to other religions. It is one of the few coun-

tries which have not suffered armed conflict since its independence in 1963 though it has had local tribal clashes instigated mainly by political reasons. These factors are: poverty, weak governance and HIV/AIDS. I would like to comment on two of the factors that have led to the exclusion of children from mainstream society: poverty and HIV/AIDS.

Poverty

Poverty in Africa is and continues to be an issue of growing concern. The majority of sub-Saharan Africans lives on less than one US\$ per day. There have been many initiatives aimed at dealing with this problem. *Foreign aid* is one of the most common ways through which the international community has shown solidarity with her suffering brothers in this great continent. Foreign economic aid has indeed gone a long way in resolving many problems related to poverty in Kenya. It is, however, a fact that the effect has only been on a short term due to the fact that these organizations have often opted to provide for the immediate needs of the people and have forgotten that for there to be real solidarity, it is of utmost importance to empower the people so that they can learn how to provide for themselves. It is a situation that has at times been graphically illustrated with the need not to only give fish to the hungry but to go further and teach them how to fish. This is a factor that should be taken into account in this noble endeavour of assisting the African continent.

The other aspect that will definitely go a long way to help Africa pull out of its poverty is *the initiative of the Africans themselves*. It is noteworthy that there has been a positive move by some foreign and local NGOs to help Africans who are involved in development and social projects that are aimed at helping their fellow Africans. Moreover, the formidable role that the young people can play in this undertaking cannot be underestimated.

The African youth grows up in a society where hard work is considered a value. I have been brought up in a family where I have been taught to work, and to work hard. My parents, like many others, have done all that is possible so as to give us, their children, the best education. Industriousness, a virtue that is very much part of African culture, is one of these bright lights that lie at the end of this tunnel. There are many young people who are determined to work hard but are often disillusioned by the adult world which often does not serve as a role model. There are also many problems related to unemployment (40% as at the year 2001) as well as to under-remuneration. The African youth need to be encouraged to draw from their

great aspirations and their desire to build a better world. It is necessary to make them aware that the means to change the future are in their hands: hard work, through perseverance in their daily work which primarily consists in studying. It is through this that they will be able to access the necessary tools to create a culture that is more human and therefore Christian.

HIV and AIDS

The other factor I would to address is that of *HIV and AIDS*. Prof. Zulu in his paper provided us with figures that illustrate the great extent to which HIV/AIDS has affected the African youth. The Kenyan youth have not been spared. Many have suffered the loss of parents, siblings, relatives as well as friends. The worsening situation has led to a great concern about the future of the country. A wide range of measures have been taken by the local as well as international community. There has been a growing concern for the need of finding means to deal with this scourge, especially among the youth. Unfortunately this endeavour has not been exempt from ideological influence. As a consequence, measures taken have not been directed to the root causes. Many who intend to show solidarity with the suffering population of Kenya have ended up employing the easier way: distribution of preservatives (as was pointed out by one of the interventions after the presentation of the regional paper). The youth would like to challenge those who are willing to help them battle against HIV/AIDS to look into ways that are in accord and respect their dignity as persons. They demand that the adult world treat them as young adults, as mature persons who freely and responsibly are capable of directing their lives to their end. This does not in any way mean that they can dispense with the material, psychological, emotional and spiritual support that the adult world constantly provides them. Many have even gone to the extent of setting up initiatives so the youth can have access to the truth about the human person and about sex.

The Faith

I shall now briefly say something about the youth and the faith in Africa with special reference to Kenya. The human person is religious by nature, he seeks to have a relationship with his creator and finds the deepest meaning of life in this encounter with God. John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus*, n. 24 affirms that: *At the heart of every culture lies the attitude man takes to the great-*

est mystery: the mystery of God. The African youth has a profound sense of religion. He grows up in a society where God is spoken about with naturalness.

Unfortunately this deep religious sentiment is normally left uncultivated and in many cases is not developed to its full maturity in a true act of faith. It is in light of this that John Paul II's call to the Church in Europe to 'devote ever greater attention to the education of young people in the faith' (in his Apostolic Exhortation *Ecclesia in Europa*) is also timely for the African continent. The fact that the faith was definitively brought to the continent at the time of colonialism has led many Africans to associate the two historical events to the extent that many have consciously or subconsciously labelled christianity as the religion of the West. At least in Kenya this continues to be the situation especially in the rural areas. This points to the urgent need for the Church to continue looking into ways of inculturation as is also brought to light in the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II, *Ecclesia in Africa*.

The transmission of the faith to the younger generations is an important aspect of the intergenerational solidarity between parents and the youth. This is because although the basic notions of the faith received in the family are supplemented by the christian formation given at schools, the family remains the ideal setting in which the faith is transmitted to the family. The family indeed is the first place where the young person discovers who he is and at the same time has that direct experience with the other, where he is listened to, understood and loved for who he is.

The role of the family in the transmission of the faith, though it applies to all human societies, is vital to the Kenyan society for various reasons: one of them being that it is a society in which Catholics, Protestants, Muslims, Hindus and people from various sects live together harmoniously, a fact that is very positive; however, it is true that it could lead to religious relativism especially due to the serious lack of Christian doctrine.

I conclude by encouraging the African youth not to cede to the multiple problems that life brings with it but rather to see them as opportunities to grow, as challenges and indicators that, yes, where there is a will there is a way.

POUR UN RETOUR AU SACRÉ (QUELQUES ASPIRATIONS DE LA JEUNESSE DE L'EUROPE OCCIDENTALE)

ALICE HOCHART

Voici quelques réactions face à ce que j'ai entendu pendant ces trois jours, prenant particulièrement en compte ce qui concerne la jeunesse de l'Europe occidentale que je représente. Je partirai du principe que l'Eglise s'intéresse à l'ensemble de cette jeunesse, et pas uniquement aux jeunes catholiques de bonne famille. C'est plutôt au nom d'une jeunesse "majoritaire" que je vais parler, m'appuyant sur mon expérience de jeune professeur en banlieue parisienne, où un large panel de jeunes est représenté.

1. UN ÉTAT DES LIEUX AUQUEL JE SOUSCRIS EN GRANDE PART

1.1. *Une jeunesse turbulente*

Comme cela a été dit ici, les jeunes se caractérisent souvent par une insouciance qui va avec une certaine irresponsabilité, un individualisme qui va de pair avec le matérialisme, et un refus de l'autorité qui prend ses racines dans la surestimation d'une "liberté" mal définie.

Mais cela ne doit pas être conçu comme un ensemble de "vices" (contrairement à ce que j'ai cru entendre ici). Tout au plus s'agit il de problèmes, intrinsèques à la jeunesse (doit-on lui demander d'être adulte? C'est l'impression que j'ai eue parfois d'entendre ici...). Ces problèmes sont accentués aujourd'hui avec la perte de vitesse de la famille (d'où celle de la valeur de l'autorité), la société de consommation et surtout l'inquiétude face à l'avenir et notamment au monde du travail qui ne les accueille pas vraiment à bras ouverts... D'où un certain fatalisme et une insouciance, une irresponsabilité, comme refuges!

1.2. *Mais qui présente d'autres caractéristiques à prendre en compte pour la comprendre*

Tout d'abord, j'ai été étonnée de ne pas entendre parler d'une réalité qui me semble être au cœur du malaise actuel de la jeunesse: l'augmentation considérable du niveau d'instruction pour tous. La démocratisation de l'enseignement a entraîné un développement général sans précédent de la conscience de soi, de l'esprit critique et de la conscience des possibles – qui ne seront pas atteints pour la plupart d'entre eux. Nous avons en face de nous une génération plus "intelligente", mais d'une intelligence impuissante, qui ne leur sert trop souvent à rien. D'où un désarroi et une remise en question de l'intelligence elle-même, qui crée une profonde angoisse.

D'autre part, j'aimerais nuancer le tableau qui a été parfois dépeint ici: non, les jeunes ne sont pas *que* matérialistes. Ils le sont davantage qu'avant, mais ils ne sont pas *obsédés* par les biens de consommation. Bien devant ceux-ci, leurs centres d'intérêt sont l'école et leurs relations familiales et amicales. Si l'argent est une valeur, elle n'est pas assumée comme telle, ce qui a quelque chose de rassurant et révèle des valeurs, des aspirations autres. Enfin, je précise que la majorité de ces jeunes est spontanément polie, respectueuse et soucieuse de bien faire.

Je conclus avec vous de cet état des lieux qu'il y a bien une nécessité de transmettre à la jeunesse les valeurs considérées comme catholiques pour tirer la jeunesse vers le haut et assurer la pérennité d'une société fondée sur ces valeurs. Mais toutes les propositions envisagées ici pour assurer cette solidarité intergénérationnelle m'ont semblé fondées sur la seule famille. Une telle stratégie me semble vouée à l'échec, et je vais expliquer pourquoi.

2. LA FAMILLE COMME SEUL LIEU DE SOLIDARITÉ INTERGÉNÉRATIONNELLE?

2.1. *Oui, la famille est un instrument efficace*

Certes, une institution familiale forte garantit une société solide, constituée d'individus solides sinon épanouis, la famille étant bien le lieu de transmission du respect de toute autorité – ce qui nous fait précisément défaut.

Mais, en quoi peut-on influencer sur la force de la Famille? Il faudrait en revenir à un mariage déconnecté de l'amour, à une famille comme sociale et non comme affective.

2.2. *Les limites de la famille comme unique modèle*

Il faut prendre en compte la baisse de la famille même si elle déplaît. C'est précisément parce qu'elle est affaiblie que la jeunesse a besoin de relais qui assurent la transmission des valeurs et de l'autorité.

La famille a une valeur sociale évidente, mais pas spirituelle. Il faut permettre la solidarité et la transmission par des "agents catholiques infiltrés" dans l'Etat, comme les associations et l'enseignement.

La jeunesse a soif d'autres valeurs, plus exaltantes que la famille.

3. PRENDRE EN COMPTE LES ATTENTES DE LA JEUNESSE

3.1. *Les valeurs "bourgeoises" sans écho aujourd'hui*

D'abord, par ce terme de "bourgeois", nous entendons un culte de la famille, de la bienséance voire du conformisme: rien ne doit dépasser!

Il faudrait plutôt s'appuyer sur des valeurs "nobles", tout aussi catholiques mais plus d'actualité, comme l'honneur, la générosité, la clémence, le pardon, le sacrifice...

3.2. *Le visage de l'Eglise que nous attendons*

Nous aimons son visage de paix, sa culture de l'humilité.

Nous souhaitons qu'il soit l'incarnation de l'autorité, c'est-à-dire aimant *a priori*, courageux, confiant et exigeant (et surtout pas craintif envers la jeunesse).

Nous attendons également plus d'aspiration à un sacré visible (insistance sur les rituels et leur beauté) et pour le catéchisme, un retour à la lecture des textes sacrés, particulièrement les évangiles (donc moins de discours lénifiants sur la dogue, le racisme, etc.).

LA FESTA: IL DONO DI UNA FAMIGLIA MESSICANA

PATRICIA MARTINEZ

Ogni mattina, abitando a Città del Messico, quando salutavo i miei genitori, mi trovavo con un uomo che baciava la sua piccola croce e pregava in silenzio, era mio Papà; mentre in cucina, mi aspettava la Mamma che ci faceva sempre ringraziare Dio per quanto veniva messo a tavola. Il cibo, il nutrimento: tutti gli elementi basici che ci forniscono quotidianamente nella vita, venivano riconosciuti come un “dono”, frutto dell’amore e dello sforzo di una famiglia. Poi, prima di andare a scuola, la benedizione della Mamma non poteva mancare mai! Così, avevo sempre la consapevolezza di avere una protezione a casa e una compagnia spirituale, nonostante la solitudine o l’allontanamento che vengono implicati in alcuni dei nostri impegni quotidiani. Nel percorso della storia personale, le diverse tappe di sviluppo si incontrano con la necessità di riportare dalla memoria il nostro senso di “comunione”. Il sentimento di sicurezza viene incarnato nei genitori e fratelli, e questi ci rinviano a una prima nozione di un Padre Eterno, che ascolta e comunica con noi spiritualmente. Grazie a questo nucleo familiare primigenio vengono edificate le fondamenta della nostra fede, la quale si esprime nelle esperienze sviluppate all’interno di casa. Mi ricordo che da piccola “credevo” poiché così dicevano “i miei genitori”, così, il primo riferimento per dare avvio a una “religione viva in me” risultava da una testimonianza, sempre vicina, durante i primi anni della formazione della mia personalità come bambina. L’immagine dei miei genitori non mentiva, perché sorgeva la garanzia dell’amore “in famiglia”. Questo frammento di memoria può illustrare un vissuto condiviso fra tante famiglie del mio paese: il Messico.

Quando usciamo da casa e cominciamo ad avere un rapporto più stretto con la gente di fuori, troviamo molti elementi per fortificare la fede come esperienza condivisa, per esempio: i compagni di scuola e la professoressa della catechesi o la suora che prepara la cappella per la messa. Ecco, tutti

ci trovavamo insieme; eravamo una comunità solida e solidale che condivideva ogni giorno il suo punto di vista della realtà e faceva della preghiera parte integrante e fondamentale della propria vita.

Questa quotidianità, col passare degli anni, è diventata l'incarnazione delle nostre tradizioni, dove uno riesce ad accorgersi della forza dell'esemplarità: un adulto che prega in Chiesa o in casa sarà sempre guardato dal più piccolo e dal giovane adolescente. Forse non si capirà in un primo momento la dimensione del vissuto nella memoria del bambino ma, piano piano, uno si inserisce nella tradizione e riesce a comprendere – nella sua affettività – quanto profonda è la voce interiore che ci sostiene nei nostri atti.

La Chiesa, la vita comunitaria della Parrocchia diventa un punto di incontro, dove vengono in concreto i valori di cui si sente parlare. Ogni sacramento si vive nella dinamica di un gruppo che si compatta, ossia stringe i suoi rapporti perché così possa sorgere "la festa". Per noi, ogni festa implica un donare e un ricevere umilmente. Questa solidarietà fa vivere il nostro concetto di Chiesa viva.

La lettura, la preghiera, le feste di ringraziamento, l'offerta ai nostri morti o un pellegrinaggio in bicicletta dal Nord del Messico fino alla Basilica di Guadalupe, formano un mondo di esperienze comuni. Tutte queste attività entrano nello spirito del popolo e lo fanno identificare come "messicani devoti". Durante le visite papali, l'aereo che portava Papa Giovanni Paolo II, sorvolava Città del Messico per farGli ricevere il nostro saluto che consisteva nella luce sorgente da milioni di specchi che – dalle finestre – puntavano verso il sole. Dopo la triste notizia della Sua morte, questa espressione la abbiamo ripetuta simbolicamente in forma di congedo. Così, ogni tradizione si rivela come un "evento" che costruisce la storia della gente comune (bambini, giovani, anziani). Mi ricordo che il Papa polacco diceva ai messicani: "Messico sa pregare, Messico sa cantare, ma soprattutto sa gridare". Ed ecco, cominciava la Festa!

Purtroppo, esiste anche l'aspetto negativo: la povertà, l'ingiusta distribuzione della ricchezza che ci porta al punto di domandare "Perché?" E ancora, più seriamente ci domandiamo: "come affrontare il problema?" Nelle comunità urbane l'insicurezza cresce, la paura e la sfiducia diventano un male quotidiano, difficile da superare, perché colpisce il punto più intimo della società: la stabilità della famiglia. Le persone trovano con tristezza che il frutto del loro lavoro si perde senza un motivo ragionevole che lo spieghi, e allora, ci si trova di fronte ad un bivio: faccio ciò che è giusto, anche se non mi apporta denaro o partecipo alla corruzione. Purtroppo il dubbio si risponde con il buio e la confusione della fame o la disperazione

di non poter pagare quanto richiede la vita di ogni nucleo familiare. In questa maniera, la società in generale vive in una crisi costante che colpisce soprattutto i giovani. Il colpo più forte alle nuove generazioni di coppie e famiglie viene rappresentato dalla disperazione e dall'incapacità di reagire, crollando la speranza nel proprio futuro.

Ancora più difficile è la problematica della società che vive dell'agricoltura o dell'artigianato. I paesini di campagna e le zone periferiche delle grandi città vivono in gravi condizioni di povertà, dove c'è bisogno di centri educativi e medici che siano adeguati alle esigenze odierne. Così, le nuove generazioni nascono in un clima d'incertezza, sprovvisti dei mezzi per assicurarsi e andare avanti. I giovani che emigrano nelle peggiori condizioni, lasciano la propria famiglia (moglie, figli) in una situazione precaria, sempre in attesa di aiuto da fonti esterne.

Questo problema lo ho capito meglio quando sono andata in missione nella periferia di Città del Messico, dove mi sono trovata davanti a donne, adolescenti e giovani che avevano a carico più di tre figli; abitavano in una casa sprovvista dei mezzi basici (non c'era acqua, gas, pavimento). La missione diventava un'impresa di costruzione, cioè, un "iniziare da capo" in mezzo ad altri problemi sociali: alcolismo, droga, prostituzione, lavoro infantile (bambini e adolescenti che crescono da soli e in mezzo alla strada, tra le macchine, vendendo dolci o facendo acrobazie, mascherati come pagliacci).

Nelle zone rurali ci sono anche i problemi come il "cacicazgo": la subordinazione al capo di un paesino, il quale approfitta dell'ignoranza e dell'assenza di legalità per corrompere gli abitanti e così arricchirsi a partire dalla sottomissione del popolo. In questo clima, ogni impresa missionaria diventa una sfida ancora più complessa, giacché si deve lottare senza la protezione della giustizia. Sembrerebbe piuttosto – da parte del missionario – un gioco di intelligenza e furbizia per portare avanti i progetti sociali di riscatto alla popolazione.

In questo panorama si trovano le nuove generazioni in Messico. La nostra realtà è condivisa in tutta l'America Latina. La sfida è sostenere la speranza in un clima di corruzione. La mèta che ci proponiamo guarda ai bambini che ci seguono, e ai nostri genitori che continuano una vita senza garanzie economiche sufficienti per arrivare con sicurezza all'anzianità. Sempre "mirare la dignità della persona umana come un valore da salvaguardare" diventa la nostra guida in ogni nuova impresa. Dare forza alle nostre tradizioni ci unificherà come società, continuando ad essere un popolo che vive la festa donando e ringraziando. Solo così, potremo arrivare alla domenica per pregare Dio la serenità della giustizia e l'amore.

THE CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA AND SOME TRENDS AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE

JAMES McCARTHY

The various themes considered by many of the speakers during this Plenary Session, are, in many ways, reflected in contemporary Australian life. I will attempt to highlight some background to the Church in Australia, the current situation confronting young Catholics, and some achievable goals for evangelisation from a young person's perspective.

Family life in Australia, in relation to faith formation, seems to be negative in many respects. Objectively, a majority of parents seem to give the moral and religious formation of their children a low priority. Many parents regrettably believe that wealth and prosperity are the biggest contributors to happiness and communicate this message to their children. Many Catholic parents have embraced the widespread indifferentism towards religion in Australia; resulting in sporadic Mass attendance, and casual regard for the teachings of the Church in their daily lives. It is in this context that parents do not assist in effectively passing-on or simply being witnesses-to the Faith to their children even if they send their children to Catholic schools.

The frequent distancing of young people from their parents during their teenage years, not just concerning faith, but in all aspects of life, can lead to some adolescents maturing without significant influence from their parents and other adults. Consequently, in these formative years, many young people are strongly influenced by their adolescent peer-groups, resulting in a situation where they often are unable to escape an adolescent state of mind until their late 20s. Many adolescents in Australia become part of friendship-groups or cliques, often manifesting their commitment through unusual forms of fashion, body piercing and tattoos, among other actions. Young people, as always, want to be part of something, to be accepted and to feel that they have friends with similar interests.

This concept of 'belonging' should be utilised by the Church to evangelise young people. Over the last 20 or 30 years, youth participation in the Faith, and to some extent participation of all the faithful, has been reduced to weekly Mass attendance. However, the offering of a complete vision, through an integrated Catholic way of life, through formation and through the establishment of what some have coined a 'Catholic sub-culture', which was previously highly successful in forming several generations of Australian Catholics in the knowledge and practice of their faith, is now extremely rare. Present experience is that without such supports, young people will rapidly become disinterested and uninvolved in the life of the Church.

The news is not all bad! Many young Australians are open to faith, and when committed, they are truly the treasures of the Church. The youth are not the source of faith problems, but can be the resource for solving these problems. Many committed young Catholics in Australia show initiative and try to integrate the Church's teaching into their lives. In fact, they want to see their Church and life in Christ expand and deepen.

One such example of the initiative of the committed young Catholic Australians is found in the original bid for World Youth Day for Australia. Three days after Archbishop Pell was installed as Archbishop of Sydney in 2001, he was presented with a petition (I was a member of the organising committee) with over 10,000 signatures requesting Archbishop Pell to support an application to the Holy See by young Australian Catholics for Sydney to host WYD subsequent to the Toronto 2002 WYD. A detailed submission was prepared and forwarded to Rome and there were subsequent meetings with Cardinal Stafford, then President of the Pontifical Council for the Laity, and committee members about the Sydney WYD bid.

Cardinal Stafford remarked to a committee member, that the Sydney bid was unique in the history of WYD. The bid represented the initiative and aspirations of young Catholic Australians and was not, as an initiative, the proposal of the Australian hierarchy, although this bid had at least Archbishop Pell's implicit approval. In other words, the Sydney WYD bid was 'bottom up' not 'top down'.

Further, this submission was uniquely written by, and from the point of view of, young Catholic Australians. The 'John Paul II generation' in Australia felt sufficiently confident to address the Holy Father directly in the expectation that they would be listened to with openness and not ignored. What was important for the organising committee in 2001, was that WYD needed to be held in Australia, so that the New Evangelisation could begin in Australia and would allow the Church to reach out to the younger generation in a completely different way.

As we know, the late Holy Father decided on Cologne as the venue for WYD after Toronto. However, Sydney was designated in 2005 by Pope Benedict as the venue for WYD 2008 following submissions by Cardinal Pell and the Australian Catholic Bishops' Conference.

To understand the background to the bid of 2001, it needs to be placed in the context of the wider Australian Church at that time. In 1998, there were the momentous Ad Limina visits of the Australian bishops with the Roman dicasteries. Led by the then Cardinal Ratzinger, there was an in-depth and critical analysis of the state of the Church in Australia. This led to the famous *Statement of Conclusions* of December 1998 in which it was acknowledged that there was a crisis of faith in Australia. This crisis was manifested by the rise in the number of people with no religion (16-17%) and a dramatic decline in regular Church attendance (for Australian Catholics, from 60% in the 1960's to about 17% in the late 1990's).

Moreover the renowned tolerance of Australians has led to an indifference about truth and an openness to all opinions and positions, resulting in a loss of confidence in the ability to know the truth and to have faith in God. Traditional Christian anthropology has faded and has been replaced by an extreme individualism and a concept of conscience, which elevates the individual to an absolute, and has developed a new level of moral relativism.

The *Statement of Conclusions* caused widespread dismay in sections of the Australian Church and there was extensive media debate about why Rome was being so critical of the Australian Church and whether the Australian bishops deserved to be regarded as ineffective.

The young Catholics on the WYD organising committee in 2001 read the *Statement of Conclusions* and wondered 'what the fuss was about', as Australians say. It seemed clear to us that there was a crisis of faith and that it must be addressed by the Church in Australia. With God's grace there was no fundamental reason to despair but both spiritual and social reality had to be confronted.

The organising committee perceived, through their own experiences, that while on paper the Catholic Church was the largest denomination in Australia (28%) and that a record number of young people had been educated in the extensive network of Catholic primary and secondary schools, there had been a virtual collapse of active interest-in and practice-of the Faith by a whole generation of Catholics since the 1960's.

In the 1970's and 1980's, many Catholic associations which supported the broader Catholic way of life disappeared, and until recent initiatives,

had not been replaced or encouraged. Many parishes, since at least the early 1980s, have had a reduced social and formational role, and many youth find little in the parishes to nourish them when the habit of regular Mass attendance is no longer a part of personal and family identity. All the features of the crisis of faith are present in Australia's younger generation of baptized-Catholics, from individualism, to materialism, to indifference.

With WYD in Sydney the organising committee believed a new era of youth involvement and organisation would be initiated. We envisioned the establishment of new and stronger Catholic associations, formed across the city and regions, absorbing many parish youth groups, which often have limited activities and are without a suitable 'critical mass' of members. We also identified the necessity for a renewal of a Catholic culture and way of life. As the Evangelicals and Pentecostals demonstrate in Sydney, strong active youth groups energise and attract more members and foster keener involvement.

The WYD submission of 2001 on behalf of young Catholic Australians, demonstrated that there are a significant number of young people who want to respond as faithful Christian witnesses and want to bring the wider Church, through the support of our bishops, the Holy Father and the Catholic youth of all the world, to assist us in the critical endeavour of proclaiming Christ to our contemporaries in Australia. WYD Sydney 2008 will witness the splendid vision of the new evangelisation, and with God's grace, will realise the hopes of the thousands of young Catholic Australians who first sponsored this great apostolic outreach in their homeland.

MICHELLE MUELLER

Being a spiritual daughter of John Paul II, I am convinced through the gift of the Holy Spirit he has truly transformed a whole generation of this new millennium. And, without of course foremost my parents, but also most significantly his teachings I truly believe I would be among some of the dramatic statistics that we have recalled in these days. I cannot deny the brutal reality of conditions in my country, but thinking of what Archbishop Rylko reminded us yesterday of John Paul's love for the young – I pray that I might not keep my youth for myself but be a hope for you in this Easter season as we remind ourselves – *Cristus Vincit*. And as a youth, our hope is not a nostalgia for some 'Golden Age' that most of us have never known, but it is *faith* in the living Truth that we believe can change our culture.

Our beloved John Paul II taught that the children are for the good of the parents, that is, for the very sanctity of the parents – the parents' very means to holiness. Seeing this as the paradigm for intergenerational solidarity, in these days I have been reflecting on how the older generation, the parent, the professional, the academicians here – need us – the young – for their *own* singular good, not *just* for the *goods* of the economy, or one's emotions, or for one's psychology, but for the very sake of sanctity. Because we are made in the image and likeness of the Triune God we are meant to be in relationship with each other. In the Divine Economy we were not sufficient for ourselves but are meant to *interact* with each other. And it is only in that relation that we begin to find who we really are in and of ourselves. So the concern of intergenerational solidarity is a concern of sanctification, that is, for example, in the very act of parenting, not only is the relationship important for the child but the role of parenting in and of itself is sanctify for the parent too.¹

So in the grand scope of the disturbing problems that we have discussed in these days – one phrase has echoed in my mind – *Do not be afraid!* And

¹ See *Gratissimam Sane*, for example.

I most humbly admit, in the simplicity of my youth, this is what I have wanted to say to you – the academicians, the professionals, the parents. *Do not be afraid! There is hope.* In a relativistic age where it is harder and harder to know the truth, young people need parents and teachers and examples that live the truth.

There are many ideas I have thought of that might help respond to the question posed to us as young people as to how the Academy can help us – such as Catholic professionals mentoring young professionals, or helping young Americans realize the impact of debt on a family, or evening reminding young people of such simple Catholic practices of tithing. But more over, I would like to reiterate what I said yesterday, that in order to begin to reverse the tide of problems facing young people I believe we must approach the ‘cell’ of society, the family, or more specifically, the next generation of parents. And the next generation of parents is found at universities. Here I provide more information of one particular program that has tried to begin to approach this area.

At the University of Kansas there is an excellent Catholic Campus Center called the St. Lawrence Catholic Campus Center. The Center varies from what might be considered a typical college Catholic campus center in the United States, in that it is not only a center to gather students socially, but its primary mission is higher education of the Catholic faith with the intention of conversion. The Center that exists today was begun by Monsignor Krische who profoundly felt that his generation continues to fail the young people today in the transmission of the faith. And responding to the fact that more than eighty-percent of college age Catholic students in the United States go to public universities, he passionately felt that no matter which subject students were studying, young people needed to be rooted in their faith so that, not only, they may respond to the call of the priesthood and religious life, but that they may also form holy families and evangelize the market place. With this as his inspiration, Msgr. Kirsche hired a lay man Mike Scherschligt who helped start the Catechetical Institute in 1998 which has now developed into a four year curriculum of classes on the Creed, virtues, theology of the body, salvation history, faith and culture, and more.

Most of the teachers have their license or even doctorates in theology and have a *mandatum* from the Bishop to teach. They teach *public* university students who come to the Center about their faith *free of charge*, and there are over two hundred students coming to class each week – that is – on top of the course load that they carry at the University. Many students

go to daily Mass, many have spiritual directors, and many are involved in other activities or retreats at the St. Lawrence Center and at the University. The Chancellor of our University has often praised the St. Lawrence Center because he notices a difference in student performances at the University after receiving formation at the Center.

Though it may just sound like another educational program, it is a model based not only on head knowledge, but also, in the true sense of catechesis, the Center teaches for conversion and instills participation and responsibility – teaching for truth – teaching to challenge – teaching for formation of a sacramental life. There used to be five of us students at daily Mass 6 years ago, now there are three Mass generally every day and almost a hundred students divided amongst those Masses. The older students after having gone through the program return to the previous classes they have taken and participate with the younger students, leading them in small group discussions each week. They are called – DOCs – Disciples of Christ – and they share in the responsibility of reminding people about class, helping them understand the class, and also making sure incoming students are finding what they really need at the university. When students complete the four year curriculum they are then identified as Certified Catechists of the Archdiocese, assuring local parishes of their formation. And then those students that graduate from KU and St. Lawrence and begin to work in the Kansas City area are often continuing the DOC ministry by helping adults in the parishes with the School of Faith program.

And for how it serves the community in a larger sense – starting with a group of business men in the greater Kansas City area who used to meet once a week to learn what college students were learning at the Center, there is now an offshoot program fully supported by our Archbishop Naumann – called School of Faith – where almost 350 people throughout the diocese participate in the same classes weekly for a small tuition. Also, as of next year two catholic high schools in Kansas and one in Missouri will be requiring their teachers – *no matter* the subject they teach – to go through the catechetical program of School of Faith. And through the age of technology, there was a gentleman from Singapore who ‘took classes’ through School of Faith via their website last semester.

And lastly as far as its effects on vocations, or at least the vocation of marriage and family – many of my friends who are former students have married in their early to mid twenties. And, even though many of them have still struggled through their early years of marriage, they have a support system. They have the knowledge of how to lean into their faith. They know

about prayer. They know about the sacraments. They have an understanding of the dignity of the person. And they know that God gives them the capacity to do what was so feared in older generation – that is the capacity to become parents. Just since I left the States last August I know 7 young couples who have had a baby or are expecting a child soon.

Lawrence is not just one isolated incidence – there are other very strong pockets developing in the country – such as Texas A&M and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. And I would encourage the academy to explore their methods further – because we have a large country to convert.

And, lastly, as a suggestion to the Academy – I want to ask the Academy, to help promote this intergenerational solidarity – how can we, young people, now help you in our countries when we return?

CONCLUSIONS

TOWARDS ACHIEVING SOLIDARITY WITH CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR GLOBALIZED WORLD

MARY ANN GLENDON and PIERPAOLO DONATI

At the end of our conference, my feeling is that our meeting has been very fruitful in many respects. I wish to express my appreciation to all the speakers and commentators. They all have done excellent work.

Let me try to draw some conclusions by summarizing what I believe are the most significant outcomes of this conference. I will present them in three parts: the analysis of the situation, the basic challenges raised by the conference, and the recommendations and proposals.

1. THE ANALYSIS OF THE WORLDWIDE SITUATION

As the session developed, the speakers brought to light more and more senses in which youth can be said to be 'vanishing' in today's societies. Children are quite literally vanishing due to rapidly falling birth-rates in the developed world, and extremely high mortality rates among the young in some parts of the developing world. At the same time, all too many children are being deprived of their youth by being forced to grow up too quickly. In countries suffering from poverty and disease, the childhood of some is cruelly curtailed by having to take on the responsibilities of adults, while in richer countries, many are pressured to adopt the life-styles and pre-occupations of adults without support or preparation.

Cardinal Alfonso López Trujillo, the President of the Pontifical Council for the Family, reminded us in his opening speech on the first day of how deep is the responsibility of humankind in giving life to children, i.e. in 'generating new generations', and how far our efforts should go in order to meet this responsibility, in particular by promoting the family as the basis of society, the primordial pillar, where the gift of children is received and where faith and culture are passed on from one generation to the next.

The Cardinal was followed by a second keynote speaker, Cherie Booth Blair, Q.C., who emphasized that young people, if treated with respect and nurtured in a loving environment, have the power to help us rediscover our own idealism, energy, generosity of spirit and natural compassion for the suffering and the dispossessed. That's a remarkable gift and one we must make the most of. Despite the specific challenges of this particular age of turbulence, Ms. Booth found plenty of reason for confidence and optimism. She exhorted us to have faith in our young people – as parents, friends, teachers or pastors, and to find time for them, to guide them, to care for them, even to let them challenge us. If we do, she said, if we can meld the marvellous idealism and generosity of the young with the wisdom and experience of the extended family, no challenge will be beyond us.

The introductory speeches by Cardinal López Trujillo and Ms. Booth were followed by presentations from two of the Academy's economists. In the language of economists, Partha Dasgupta pointed out, children in poor countries are both 'consumption' and 'capital' goods, whereas in rich countries they are mainly regarded as 'consumption' goods. (Of course, in both types of countries, children are also 'merit goods', but the real extent of this recognition depends very much on each culture and country). As Dasgupta noted, this historical trend should be questioned, since a society which considers the child as a mere consumption good (and/or a purely instrumental merit good) is bound to become more and more alienated from its own future.

Kenneth Arrow then focused on the social ethics of reciprocity between generations, claiming that: 1) there is a 'natural' obligation in the parent-child relation, which is automatically recognized by the parent; 2) the action of giving birth to a child creates an obligation, since otherwise the child wouldn't exist (this is different from point 1); 3) society has the right (and perhaps the obligation) to enforce the parental obligation, though usually enforcement will be unnecessary; 4) the parental obligation implies also power to the parents, not only for the sake of efficiency in discharging the obligation, but also as a reward to the parents. Arrow went on to suggest that we should develop new social policies in favour of children by relying upon a deeper consideration of the above mentioned four points in order to go beyond the strictures of utilitarianism and contractarian views. To quote him: 'there is a widely felt obligation that parents act as trustees for children. The concept of, "obligation", is not widely spread in ethical and economic discourse about social arrangements. Rather one talks about the achievement of happiness (even in the Declaration of Independence) or, as we frequently say, "utility", or even, as with Sen, "functionings and capabilities". Another language talks of "rights". I now have come to believe that there is a category of "obligations",

which cannot easily be reduced to either utilities or rights. (...) There is a need to enforce the trusteeship obligations of parents’.

The Canadian sociologist John O’Neill posed the question: ‘Who is subject to the law of intergenerationality?’ His answer was: everybody, as a human being, irrespective of his/her age, sex, ethnicity, nationality, religion, culture, social status.

A panoramic, worldwide survey of the demographic data bearing on the situations of children and young persons was provided by Professor Gérard-François Dumont of the Sorbonne as background to regional reports from Asia, Africa, East and West Europe, and North and South America. We discuss Professor Dumont’s findings below in Part 2 of these conclusions.

By all accounts, one of the most successful features of this year’s conference were the regional reports, each one organized around a single set of guidelines to facilitate comparisons.

The Asian report made it clear that many different factors affect the position of children and young people in this huge and multifaceted continent. Academician Mina Ramirez underlined that ‘It is a fact that lack of income (monetary poverty) is a threat to the lives of a great many children in Asia especially for the Low and Medium Human Development Indicators countries. (...) In High HDI countries, what people may suffer is isolationism and lack of quality of relationships. The elderly are increasing fast and the children are decreasing, which leads to a new kind of ‘poverty’ in the quality of relationships across generations. (...) The issue of Vanishing Youth revolves around the issue of Human Ecology that in many countries is being threatened either by the fact that there are so few children and youth to be able to support an increasing population of the elderly (see Japan) or an increasing number of babies that cannot be supported by natural and financial resources (see Philippines) and/or a discrepancy in a good number of males vs a disproportionate number of females (see India and China)’. According to Academician Hsin-Chi Kuan, the issues of intergenerational solidarity and vanishing youth in China should be studied in the context of the great transformation away from totalitarian rule, during which society is gradually resurrected and family as an institution revived. Within the changing relationship between society/family and the Party-State, the development of Chinese children and youth – themselves as well as in the nature of their relationship to the others – is expected to differ radically from that in the past.

As to Africa, Academician Paulus Zulu stressed the four main factors that are implicated in the social exclusion and invisibility of children in this

continent: poverty, weak governance, armed conflict and epidemics (especially malaria and HIV/AIDS). His report further states that, 'at the extremes, children can become invisible, in effect disappearing from view within their families, communities and societies, and to governments, donors, civil society, the media and even other children. Excluded children may not be only invisible, they are unprotected as well, and exclusion is not simply a matter of the present, it impacts severely on the life chances and, consequently, the future of children'. Academician Judge Nicholas McNally, ended his comment upon the Africa report with the stirring exhortation: 'Let the youth of the First World heal the youth of the Third World materially, while the youth of the Third World reciprocate on a spiritual plane'.

Reporting on East Europe, Professor Lubomír Mlčoch of Prague, and commentator Academician Bedřich Vymětalík, emphasized the fact that the main demographic consequence of economic transition in these countries has been the growth of the elderly population groups as compared with that of children and young people. The post-socialist restoration of capitalism has revealed a deep erosion of the family. Professor Mlčoch suggested that 'the phenomenon of "vanishing youth" has more subjective than objective, economic causes. It is a conversion of hearts what we need, not another drive for growth'.

Reporting on West Europe, Academician José Raga argued that behind the statistics of the intergenerational crisis 'lies dissatisfaction, difficulties in the creation of a family, difficulties in the satisfaction of needs, insecurity and lack of confidence with respect to the future. (...) One of the greatest challenges facing humanity in recent decades, and also in the developed countries of Western Europe, is that of gearing economic activity to the creation, with ever-greater conviction and efficiency, of the employment opportunities to enable the youth and the future society to find, without difficulty, the way in which to be useful to society, the manner in which to channel their personal and professional qualities for the common good, the way in which they can participate in the work of the Creation and feel themselves an inseparable part of their community and of the entire human family'. Commenting upon Raga's paper, Academician Vittorio Possenti developed a deep analysis of the ethical roots of the cultural crisis that West Europe is facing at present. He clearly pointed out that the main features of this crisis, namely individualism, narcissism and relativism, call for new efforts in the education of adults and young people, since an authentic intergenerational solidarity can be achieved only through a sincere search for truth and freedom.

In this connection, let me recall that the *Green Paper* on 'Confronting demographic change: a new solidarity between the generations', issued by the European Union in the year 2005, observes that:

Europeans would like to have more children. But they are discouraged from doing so by all kinds of problems that limit their freedom of choice, including difficulties in finding housing. It is also the case that families – the structure of which varies but which still constitute an essential part of European society – do not find the environment in which they live conducive to child-rearing. If Europe is to reverse this demographic decline, families must be further encouraged by public policies that allow women and men to reconcile family life and work. Furthermore, the family will continue to play an important role in solidarity between the generations. The Union therefore needs to find out more about families in the various Member States, in particular with regard to employment and income in single-parent families, access to housing, social benefits and care for the elderly.

Unfortunately, in this document the family is thought of as a historical survival and a residual byproduct of evolutionary processes, instead of being considered as a merit good (a relational good!) which deserves to be pursued and promoted in itself.

As to Latin America, Prof. Mariano Grondona of Buenos Aires identified the issue of generational equity in terms of the struggle against the huge social debt that impinges upon the new generations. This debt has two dimensions. In the *intra-generational* dimension, it is the solidarity debt that some have with fellow contemporaneous countrymen. Rulers and political, economic and social leaders, as well as those who are better off, are the carriers of a social debt with those unprotected in their same generation. To this debt another one is added, the *intergenerational debt*, i.e. the debt of the generation in a productive age with the several generations in an unproductive age: the elderly, minors and those still to be born. The Latin American social debt is so vast, so demanding, that – in his view – to the effort needed for its 'payment' by responsible Latin Americans, two other contributions should be added: (i) the one made by the unprotected themselves, so they try to take advantage of the opportunities that may arise, avoiding, as much as possible, the temptation of passively accepting the 'gifts' of political clientelism, and (ii) the one from the developed countries, that not only offer an insufficient international aid, but also severely restrict Latin American main exports. He remarks that, 'together with the intra-generational debt, the Latin American intergenerational debt accumulates a huge *social liability*, that calls for a vast *solidarity* movement'.

According to Grondona, Latin America conserves some characteristics of the traditional family, in whose bosom the intergenerational solidarity is, precisely, *born*. This is a merit of Latin Americans, because it is a value they have deliberately defended. Besides the *American way of life*, there is also a *Latin American way of life*, with its own cultural roots, its own order of values, that has to be supported and perfected, but in no way abandoned. Commentator Academician Juan Llach added that, to his mind, only in the context of the development of social capital it would be possible to get at the same time economic and political development and to create the adequate conditions for an effective practice of intergenerational solidarity.

Reporting on North America, Academician Kevin Ryan described the intergenerational crisis as an emergent effect of the three dominant factors affecting the lives of young people in this continent: the troubled and weakened family; the resource-rich, but uneven elementary and secondary schools; and the highly sexualized, media-driven cultural world of the young. Relying upon empirical surveys on the transmission of the faith in the U.S., Ryan underlined the serious breakdown of the current efforts of U.S. Catholics to transmit the faith to their children. Commentator Academician Louis Sabourin emphasized that Canada's situation is different from the U.S. in a few respects, and in particular that the relationships among the generations are confronted with the choice of a multicultural society instead of a melting pot; moreover, he proposed to add to the research agenda the issue of how young people are looking for new answers in the way they live the religious dimensions of their life.

On the basis of the analyses provided in these regional Reports, several important issues emerged regarding the situation of children and young people vis-à-vis the other generations on our planet. The discussion on these issues was enriched by the observations of a panel of young observers, one from each major region. They offered a valuable contribution to the final deliberations.

2. THE BASIC ISSUES RAISED BY THE CONFERENCE

The scenery is striking everywhere, from one point of view or another.

In terms of general trends, the most basic challenges raised during this conference were the following.

From the socio-demographic point of view, Gérard-François Dumont brilliantly drew our attention to seven challenges concerning the new gen-

erations: ratios of infant mortality still too high in many countries, the regressions in life expectancies, the gender inequalities in life expectancies, a certain refusal of the future in the countries afflicted by the 'demographic winter' (a term coined by Dumont himself), the increasing importance of one-child families, the abnormality of gender-specific demographic indicators, and the fact that a decreasing number of children are benefiting from a two-parent family.

According to John O'Neill, 'we are currently subject to excesses of culture that vanish nature, which is then reworked in the name of fundamental norms or benchmarks in a world of ephemeral cultural fashions. It is unavoidable that "the" family and its life-cycle – infancy, childhood, youth, adulthood, old age – are also caught in our revisions of nature, society and self or of our divinity, humanity and sacrament. (...) Our concept of ourselves and relations to one another are enormously expanded in a global narrative of development that simultaneously puts all relations to nature and society at risk. (...) On the whole, the fragmentation of intergenerationality must be regarded as one of the severest causes of poverty.

Partha Dasgupta warned us that conformism can be a reason for pronatalist attitudes that prevail in the poor regions of the world, but it can equally be a reason for the anti-natalist attitude in contemporary rich countries.

All the speakers have stressed the fact that the flourishing of children and youth is severely threatened by the weakening of the family almost everywhere.

Mina Ramirez has pointed out that 'any program for children, such as formal, non-formal and informal education, nutrition program, primary health care, should be family and community-based. It is movements among families, communities and institutions that should converge to influence the policy of the government towards making the whole country conscious of children's rights and of their being vibrant contributions not only now, but for the future. (...) To bring together atomistic individuals becomes a great problem in societies that should be fostering sound human relationships. The intermediary groups – youth and young adults – should delve into understanding the dynamics of their respective societies and should creatively help out in bridging gaps – generational, economic, political, cultural, social and digital. To fire the youth with a vision and mission will lead to self and social transformation in whatever level this is going for the balanced support of children and the elderly'.

Pedro Morandé has suggested the need to rethink in particular the role of parents in new extended families. I quote him: 'The Social Doctrine of the

Church has sustained ever that the main educational responsibility resides in parents and that the school has, to this respect, only a subsidiary role. This deep expression of human wisdom is the one that seems to be lacked at present time as an effect of the new demographic realities and of the educational policies of the States. Its loss represents one of the most serious problems in "human ecology" But on the other hand, how could parents assume their educational responsibility if one of them is not at home and sometimes is also unknown? Keeping in mind the past situation of Latin America, where one-parent families were not left alone but rather considered as a part of the extended family, inside which the children could get the adequate social protection for their growth, I think that the new cultural and demographic situation suggests us to do something similar. We have no more extended families but everywhere there are enough associations of volunteers which could act as substitutive extended families if they only orient their scope not to the reinforcement of the functional aspects of educational achievements but to the wiser transmission of human wisdom and cultural patterns, notwithstanding the legal rights of the biological progenitors which must be undoubtedly recognised. Many of us have had the experience of growing up, besides our family, in a religious community and we have certainly had the opportunity of a deep experience of filiation and paternity from other persons who complemented the education we had received at home. (...) It is time for civil society to do its own, to assume its human ecological responsibility. As all other ecological problem it demands from us to raise the view from the short run toward the medium and long run'.

Speakers and commentators agreed upon the fact that the challenging situation of children and young people all over the world is the result of multiple and complex causes – of economic, social and cultural character – that affect the human ecology of the intergenerational links. But they also agreed on the fact that the ultimate roots of this deterioration should be seen as moral and spiritual.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSALS

What can and should we do in practice?

We all agree on the idea that intergenerational exchange is embedded in the perspective of eternity. The utilitarian and contractarian perspectives that have dominated the issue of intergenerational equity so far have proved to be misleading. As Dasgupta reminds us, there is no chance to

avoid the question 'what should I value' if we are to see ourselves living *through* time, rather than *in* time. 'In examining our values, and thus our lives, we need to ask if the destruction of an entire species-habitat for some immediate gratification is something we can live with comfortably. The mistake is to see procreation and ecological preservation as matters of personal and political morality. It is at least as much a matter of personal and political ethics'. Perhaps the time has come to realise that children are capital and merit goods not only in poor countries, but also in rich countries, although in different ways.

O'Neill suggests that 'we must extend – rather than reduce – welfare state practices to include the reduction of ill-health generated not only by the self-contaminating products and hazards of global industrialism but also by its dereliction of civic well-being. This is the broader framework of any adequate concept of well-being in respect of the world's children and their families. It is possible that this global framework of risk may induce a certain solidarity between adults, children, and youth. For whereas in class terms *some* are never afflicted by the risks of poverty, *no one* escapes the afflictions of globalized risks to our air, water, food chain, forests, and heavens. Having said this, we have still to rework our cognitive and moral maps to rethink civic sustainability rather than continue to rely upon scarcity-thinking to ration out the unequal risks of the emerging global economy of industrialized hazards. We are obliged to *globalize our moral map* since it is increasingly impossible to set up national and class walls to protect privileged moral environments. It follows that the moral environment of children can no longer be isolated. We can no longer imagine childhood as a pre-political or pre-economic realm safe from the hazards of the adult world without indulging a fantasy of child-immunity that is constantly violated through the intrusions of generation, class, race, and nation'. But we must be aware that the welfare state should be understood and managed according to the principle of subsidiarity in order to promote the active citizenship of all intermediary bodies of civil society, first of all the family, as actors (producers) of intergenerational solidarity.

If it is true that many children, in many countries, nowadays are 'the children of the end of the family', then 'the *intergenerational family* may serve as a regulative notion in the derivation of social policies whose task is to sustain families in difficulties of one kind or another, but for which we need some benchmark of viability. It is only on an extremely narrow understanding of *procreation* that the implicit institutional concerns inscribed in the term *pro-(on behalf of) creation* can be ignored in favour of its biologi-

cal sense as sexual reproduction, any more than we should ignore the institutional trace contained in the word *re-(again) production*. If we undermine the distinction between the responsibility for life and the reproduction of life, we lose the civic assurance that goes with childhood and youth as inter-generational passages'. We must re-shape the world narrative, if we wish to give room to the new generations.

G rard-Fran ois Dumont presented five recommendations: 1) the need to improve the measuring of demographic realities keeping in mind their great geographical diversity, 2) the need to promote a better understanding of the educational mission of society vis- -vis the new generations, 3) the need to give priority to sanitary progress and the fight against poverty, 4) the need to improve equity between genders, particularly from the point of view of health and educational policies and 5) the need to adapt family policies to reality, keeping in mind, specially, the consideration of parents as their children's educators.

Following some suggestions by Mina Ramirez and Vittorio Possenti, we can recommend that experts, professionals and educators can awaken the political leaders and potential leaders to the significance of children, whether male or female, and the role of families, communities, institutions and the state in educating children in a holistic understanding of harmony between body, mind, and spirit, joy and learning, developing all their intelligences and nurturing a sense of justice, equity, peace and well-being. Policy makers and professionals have the potential to have a comprehensive understanding of the issue of 'vanishing or flourishing youth' and should be able to form their values and organizing principles of life, train themselves in skills/arts, and processes of caring for the survival of both children and mothers – protection, development and participation.

We must pick up the proposal, suggested by Jos  Raga, to think of the future society as a function of the youth of today, their attributes, attitudes, knowledge, preferences and ultimately their capacities, abilities and commitment to this mission. We must recognise the preoccupation of youth that moves them towards the highest ideals. We must accept their lack of conformity with injustice, with ineffectiveness and with phariseisms and we must direct all that energy so that they can satisfy their legitimate aspirations and achieve a better society through social reform. We cannot be amongst those who disappoint. Instead, we must be amongst those who accept the preoccupation and have the strength to act. John Paul II expressed his thoughts on this matter in the following terms: 'It is the nature of human beings, and especially youth, to seek the Absolute, the

meaning and fullness of life'. This is the true understanding of youth and its potential. Our solidarity must be aimed in this direction. It must be a solidarity that awakens and not one that anaesthetises. It should open the path to knowledge of what is substantial. It should focus on the distinction between what is permanent and what is transitory, what is material and what is spiritual. It should be a solidarity that gives the youth security in its ideals and hope with respect to the final result of its aspirations.

In the final section of his report, Kevin Ryan presented the blueprint of a Church-wide program to evangelize the young and, in the process, to aid in the revitalization of the faith of adult Catholics. He outlined in detail how such a program can be envisaged and implemented. We recommend that the Church take it into consideration carefully.

In dealing with the issue of children's rights, Ombretta Fumagalli Carulli provided us with a sound assessment of what has been achieved so far in international charters. Although the UNO *Convention* of 1989 on the Rights of the Child can be considered a milestone, since it is no longer a mere exhortation but binds the signatory States and compels them to introduce all the legal measures required in order to enforce it, she notices many deficiencies and shortcomings. For example, the Convention is silent on the subject of the rights of parents, the definition of the family, and the protection of prenatal life; and vague on the concept of the best interests of the child. As it stands, the Convention's emphasis on the individual rights of children can come into conflict with, and be detrimental to, the rights of parents and more generally the rights of the child's family. It is worthwhile noticing, that this conflict does not appear in other international charters (such as the *African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child*, adopted on 11 July 1990).

In conclusion, although the juridical perspective is in itself limited, a new cultural effort should be made in order to achieve a universal agreement on the rights of minors that can overcome these deficiencies. We must look for a sounder balance between the rights of the individual child, according to more accurate criteria of respect of the integrity of his/her personality, and the rights of the 'significant others' (primarily his/her family) in order to pursue the interests of the child within the framework of the common good.

We must always remember that, notwithstanding the international protection, in most countries the child today lives in a social context that experiences difficulties to relate with the children and to understand their needs and rights. This is especially so when the family is unstable or missing, and

when the child is subject to an accelerated process of growth. He/she is involved in the so-called 'adultization' process, by which he/she runs the risk of being deprived of the right to grow up according to the natural rhythms of life. On the other hand, the proliferation of single and fragmented rights poses the risk of loosening the connections between rights and duties. The problem of 'insatiable rights', which has become a concern of the most sensible European legal scientists, is applicable to children's rights too.

Neither in the UN Charters nor in the European ones is the child explicitly recalled to his/her duties towards his/her family. Without accusing the UNO *Convention* of putting children against parents, one may say that it would be wise, in the future, to be more explicit on the duties that children have towards their family. In the African Charters this is stated more clearly. In the Arabic Charters the constraints of the *Sharia* provide limiting principles.

We must take a new look at the fact that the fragility of the child faces increasing difficulties in rich countries as well as in poor countries, but for different reasons.

The major worries concern the denial of rights where prenatal life is concerned: abortion, disposal of frozen embryos, experiments on embryonic stem cells. UNICEF does not mention them. It is a deafening silence, and a worrisome one, broken only by the voices of the Churches. Yet everyone should understand that no investment in protecting prenatal life, as well as no investment in children, means no future for a country, in addition to despising humanity's most precious resources.

In the end, it is true that much of our contemporary youth, although cared for by the international community for more than 50 years, seems to vanish even before it can be born.

Generalizations are risky. Despite negative events, everyday comforting news is reported of young people involved in their families and societies and enabled to live in a positive way the rights that the international Charters grant to them. But in order to improve the outlook everywhere, it is necessary to find a remedy for the many educational inadequacies, the commercialization of society, the socio-economic problems of the poor countries, and the alienating lifestyles of the rich countries.

Moreover, rights must be enforced by amending, if necessary, the relevant legal instruments at appropriate levels, from international to regional, national and local. The question is not just to make justiciable those rights guaranteed to children but also to better define the competence of the organs currently established. For instance, a question to be solved, once and for all, is whether it is lawful or not that a technical organ devoid of any

political legitimation like the Committee (established for the control of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) may by means of interpretation endanger the right to life, giving such an endangerment the same dignity as that of inviolable rights. The impact of this practice on domestic law tends to modify the correct institutional design, according to which each norm is a product of democratic consent expressed by through the organs politically established for that purpose.

What to do? It is a duty to go on proclaiming children's rights in the international settings as well as within single States. But this is no longer enough. It is mandatory to clarify as soon as possible the ambiguities still present in matter of the right to life, parent-child relationships, the family model, and the role of the family in social life. This is primarily a political and cultural endeavour.

We cannot fall into the trap of a 'legalistic' perspective. Hans Zacher has clearly warned us about such a possible mistake. He has underlined that the difficulties in caring for children and young people are much more complex than the proclamation of legal rights and therefore the solutions must be sought by going beyond the perspective of mere legal protections. Zacher has underlined the most significant difficulties as follows: 1) the extraordinary complexity of the real and normative contexts in which children live and grow up; 2) the extreme uniqueness through which that complexity in ethnic or religious communities, in social classes, in local, regional or national units reduces itself to concrete real and normative conditions; 3. the maximum diversity and instability of the individual situations and developments which occur in spite or on account of the ethnic, religious, social, local, regional or national specifications; 4) the fractures, which may result at any time if the borders separating communities, classes, regions etc. from each other, are crossed, a fact which, however, especially comes true if children, parents, families or comparable groups cross national borders together or separately. The growing transnationality of human life gives that aspect special topicality.

As far as I can see, solidarity with children and young people requires us to envisage a 'human ecology', as defined in the encyclical *Centesimus Annus*. That in turn requires a leap into a new generation of human endeavours relating to children and young people. Such endeavours can be better understood by referring to what I would suggest calling *relational rights*. These rights (not merely legalistic) concern those relationships that meet the most basic needs of the child as a relational being who cannot develop without relying upon an adequate family and a nurturing environment sur-

rounding him/her. The child needs, first of all, human love, and can achieve authentic human growth only through relations of reciprocity, solidarity and freedom.

In order to understand the novelty of children's needs and rights, we must see them as a new frontier, coming after the various waves of rights that have emerged in modern society. The first generation of human rights referred to civil and political rights derived from the modern liberal revolutions. The second generation of rights was concerned with rights to education and culture, to work, to social welfare, derived from the nineteenth century movements that struggled to build up the institutional national welfare state. This second generation of rights has proved to be too bureaucratic and standardized to meet the needs of young people. That is why some thinkers and activists have begun to talk about a third generation of rights, such as the so-called 'rights to differences' (in gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.). However, if we want to achieve a true intergenerational solidarity, within a framework of a sound human ecology, we must search for a further generation of rights, i.e. those rights which refer not to the individual child *qua talis*, but to his/her personal being in relation to the 'significant others' in his/her lifeworld. First of all his/her parents, and secondly his/her kin, friends, neighbours, all the people linked to him/her in the web of the local community. These are the *relational rights*.

Of course, as Hans Zacher has pointed out, the concept of 'relational right' has to be studied and articulated in more details, in order to make it less vague and more operative. A possible task of the Academy could be to reflect on this issue in the future, in order to give its own contribution to the social sciences in the light of the idea that 'rights' must be understood, first of all, as norms which foster human virtues and guide people in terms of educational orientations.

At present in many countries, only a few (and sometimes none) of these generations of rights are really implemented. Let us think of the *favelas* in Latin America, soldier-children in sub-saharan Africa, child prostitution in some Asian countries, poor single-parented and underclass children in North America and Europe. Our hope is that a perspective that takes relational rights into account can give professionals, educators, policy-makers a new impetus and a new direction to struggle for a better intergenerational solidarity.

Perhaps we need a new *Pact in Favour of Youth*, as suggested today by some political leaders of the EU. But we must be very clear on the contents (ethics and goals) of such a Pact. The guide-lines of a *European Pact for*

Youth launched in 2005 by some countries (initially a joint initiative of France, Germany, Spain and Sweden) are strictly materialistic: the Pact has been thought of as a means for the implementation of an economic target, namely the ambition of the EU to become the most competitive and knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion (objectives set out in the Lisbon Strategy). Although these goals can be good and legitimate, it is evident that the issue of intergenerational solidarity cannot be reduced to the pursuit of a more competitive economy and higher standards of material welfare. The Intergenerational Pact, if it is to be set out, should go well beyond all that. It should imply a different view of what is most worthy to be pursued for our children and young people: i.e. a more humane society, opened to the transcendental world.

Msgr. Michel Schooyans has respectfully recommended to the Holy See that an inter-dicasterial working group be constituted with the object of integrating all the efforts of solidarity with young people emanating from the different dicasteries. It is clear that the issue of intergenerational solidarity concerns different dicasteries, notably, the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith, for the Evangelization of Peoples, for Catholic Education, for the Institutes of Consecrated Life, etc., as well as the Pontifical Councils for the Family, for the Laity, for Justice and Peace, for Health, the Pontifical Academy for Life, etc. In itself, such a working group would already be a witness of internal solidarity within the Church, but completely oriented toward the human community.

The Catholic Church possesses a network of agencies that is the most highly developed in the world. No public or private organization has such a worldwide network of universities, schools, youth movements and Catholic Action, charismatic movements, family movements, charitable institutions, hospitals, means of communication, etc. Impressive directories exist. No organization possesses such a large body of members ready to freely commit themselves to projects of solidarity.

In sum, this conference has offered many fresh data, insights and proposals which the Academy is willing to pass on to the Church, the national and international organizations and institutions, and all the people of good will who take care of children and young people in our age of turbulent changes. With many fears, but with many hopes too, I believe that the key-word to transform our fears into hopes is to see the child as a 'relational good', and to act accordingly: i.e. to treat the child as a human person whose dignity stands at the crossroad between

his/her vertical dependency on God and the horizontal reciprocity with his/her human fellows.

That is why we are convinced that, beyond the perspective of merely legal human rights, only a fullness of charity can be the essential pillar on which to build a better future for children and safeguard intergenerational solidarity. Only charity, as the Holy Father Benedict XVI has reminded us in His message to the PASS (*L'Osservatore Romano* – April 29, 2006), can anchor every human effort to build a civilization of love in the revelation of God the Creator: 'children and young people are by nature receptive, generous, idealistic and open to transcendence. They need above all else to be exposed to love and to develop in a healthy human ecology, where they can come to realize that they have not been cast into the world by chance, but through a gift that is part of God's loving plan'.