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Edited by Adrian Pabst

The Good Life in Common

Europe beyond the crisis of instrumental reason

Reflections by Card. Scola and leading MEPs



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ASSET

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Presentation

This book is the outcome of a project launched by ASSET, the School for Advanced Studies on Society, Economy and Theology based at the Studium Generale Marcianum in Venice. Entitled ‘Beyond the Crisis: Political and Economic Reason in European Politics’, this project analyses the complex links between rationality, politics and economics in Europe following the crisis of 2008-9. One of the key objectives is to explore how to develop and foster reasonable practices in Europe’s economy and political system – with a special focus on debates and policy-making in the European Parliament.

Why reason? The current crisis is a crisis of ‘economic reason’. There was too much reliance on supposedly ‘rational expectations’ or ‘efficient markets’ and too little consideration for the intrinsic value of reason as a whole – not just the sort of instrumental rationality that dominated politics and the economy for much of the twentieth century. That is why Cardinal Angelo Scola has rightly remarked that “[t]he 2008 global financial crisis came after a long period of “slumbering reason””: agents, pressed by the aim of

reaching extraordinary results in the short term, neglected to consider the proper dimensions of finance”.¹ Seen in this light, the aftermath of the crisis raises fundamental questions about what reason is and what can be said to be reasonable.

As Pope Benedict XVI – in the address he intended to give during a visit to La Sapienza University in Rome on 17 January 2008 – reminds us, reason is inextricably intertwined with the desire for knowledge and the search for truth: “Man desires to know – he wants truth”. This statement has important implications for economic and political decisions, which should surely be taken in a reasonable manner. According to Benedict, such a “reasonable manner” in society involves a “process of argumentation sensitive to the truth”. As such, the ‘dictatorship of relativism’ that the Pope has rightly condemned is in fact a denial of reasonableness. Reason in politics, the economy and society requires notions of truth.

Questions like “What is reasonable?” or “How is reason shown to be true?” are not matters for philosophical speculation alone but ultimately concern the entire citizenry. Now that all the ide-

¹ Cardinal Angelo SCOLA, *Buone ragioni per la vita in comune. Religione, politica, economia* (Milano: Mondadori, 2010), p. 57.

ologies of instrumental reason have so manifestly failed, politicians and economic agents can no longer evade other fundamental queries, including “what makes a policy reasonable?”, “what is a proper understanding of political and economic reason?” or “when is a political action truly just?”.

Such and similar questions concern politics and society at all levels – local, regional, national, European and global. Growing economic interdependence around the world has mostly disembedded states and markets from the social bonds and civic virtues of civil society, but it also offers new opportunities for reciprocity, mutuality and solidarity among communities and nations. Post-1945 European integration and enlargement are grounded in a sense that the intermediary institutions of civil society within and across countries are more primary than either national states or transnational markets.

However, the EU – in its current configuration – has abandoned this vision in favour of political elites, market cooperation and bureaucratic regulation. As such, it has contributed to the centralisation of power and the concentration of wealth that is undermining democracies and market economies across Europe. In this process, abstract economic values linked to instrumental

reason and procedural fairness have supplanted civic virtues related to notions of reasonableness and substantive justice.

To promote an ethos of responsible and virtuous action, what is required is the full breadth of political and economic reason. Christian social teaching offers conceptual and practical resources that are indispensable to the search for broader notions of rationality. Among these resources are non-instrumental conceptions of justice and the common good in the social doctrine of the Catholic Church and cognate traditions in Anglicanism and Eastern Orthodoxy.

Closely connected to this is the idea of ‘civil economy’.² As Pope Benedict XVI has suggested in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate*, ‘civil economy’ embeds state-guaranteed rights and market contracts in the social bonds and civic virtues that bind together the intermediary institutions of civil society.³ In this manner, it links the ‘logic of contract’ to the ‘logic of gratuitous gift exchange’.

² L. BRUNI and S. ZAMAGNI, *Economia civile. Efficienza, equità, felicità pubblica* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2004), trans. *Civil Economy: Efficiency, Equity, Public Happiness* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007).

³ BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in veritate – Charity in Truth* (Dublin: Veritas Publications, 2009).

The logic of gift exchange translates into concrete practices of reciprocal trust and mutual assistance that underpin virtues such as solidarity and the pursuit of the public good in which all can share. As such, ‘civil economy’ reconnects activities that are primarily for state-administrative or economic-commercial purposes to practices that pursue social purposes.

So how can the EU help promote reasonableness in politics and economics? This challenge is at the heart of ASSET’s project on political and economic reason. As one of the key institutions of the EU, the European Parliament is uniquely positioned to shed light on the ways in which ideas translate into policy-making and how reasonable practices can be fostered.

Unlike other work on the crisis, this publication seeks to offer an overarching account of the nature of the ongoing economic turmoil, its political implications and concrete alternatives to hitherto dominant ideologies. Specifically, the various contributions explore in different ways how the idea of reasonable practices shape the debates and policy-making of the European Parliament.

The book has three particular angles. First of all, it raises fundamental questions about the crisis by drawing on Christian social teaching – in

particular the writings of Pope Benedict XVI and Cardinal Scola. For example, various contributors link the financial and economic causes that triggered the ‘credit crunch’ to the wider “anthropological and cultural origins”⁴ of the current crisis.

Second, the book focuses on broader forms of reason than the instrumental rationality that has been dominant in both politics and economics. Narrow notions of reason seem to be connected with the short-term maximisation of private profit which, in turn, undermines long-term growth and sustained prosperity for society as a whole. The emphasis of this project is therefore on reasonable practices that blend individual interest with a clear commitment to the common good.

Third, the publication seeks to link high-level ideas and academic research to political debates and concrete policy alternatives. Interviews with Members of the European Parliament from different political groups eschew conventional questions in favour of reflections on alternative policies that are grounded in reasonable practices.

⁴ Cardinal Angelo SCOLA, *Buone ragioni per la vita in comune*, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

These interviews provide fascinating insights into the discussions at the heart of the wider EU political system and they also offer ideas for future policy initiatives.

The book is the fruit of cooperation and friendship. We are deeply grateful to Cardinal Scola for his generous encouragement and for the gift of his work that has inspired this project. We would like to thank Sylvie Goulard MEP, Mario Mauro MEP, Jan Olbrycht MEP, Jaime Mayor Oreja MEP and Hans-Gert Pöttering MEP for their time, their critical engagement with the questions and their thoughtful reflections. We also greatly appreciate the advice of Fr Frank Turner and his colleagues at OCIPE in Brussels. Finally, our thanks to Professor Simona Beretta, member of ASSET's international Scientific Council, and Michela Sterpini, the Scientific Secretary of the Studium Generale Marcianum, for their help and support and for making this project possible.

ADRIAN PABST
FILIPPO NEGRI

London and Venice, 30 June 2011



CHAPTER 1

Card. Angelo Scola

*The Whole Breadth of Reason:
facing the challenge
of European political identity*

Angelo Scola was born in Malgrate (Lecco) in 1941; he was ordained a priest in 1970.

Doctor of Philosophy (Catholic University, Milan) and in Theology (Fribourg, Switzerland).

Since 1982 he has taught Theological Anthropology at the Pontifical Institute John Paul II for Studies on marriage and the family of the Pontifical Lateran University.

From 1986 to 1991 he was a consultant of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith. From 1991 to 1996 he was a consultant of the Pontifical Council for Health Workers. From 1996 to 2011 he has been a Member of the same Pontifical Council; since 1994 he has been a Member of the Congregation for the Clergy. Since June 1995 he has been a Member of the Episcopal Commission for Catholic Education, Culture, School and University of the Italian Episcopal Conference. Since 1996 he was nominated consultant of the Pontifical Council for the Family.

He was nominated Bishop of Grosseto on 20th July, 1991, and ordained on 21st September the same year. He exercised his ministry at Grosseto until 14th September 1995.

On 24th July 1995, the Holy Father nominated him Magnificent Rector of the Pontifical Council of the Lateran University in Rome, and on the 29th September of the same year, Dean of the Pontifical Institute John Paul II for Studies on marriage and the family.

Since January 1996 is President of the Committee for Institutes of Religious Studies. In this capacity he is interested in issues concerning the theological training of the laity in Italy. His second period in Rome enabled him to concentrate on more academic writings. In particular he published two volumes on *Theological Anthropology – Questions of Theological Anthropology*, 2nd edition, enlarged, and *The Human Person. Manual of Theological Anthropology* – and the monograph, in two volumes, dedicated to human sexuality and to questions linked to marriage and the family: *The Nuptial Mystery*, vol. 1 Man-Woman; Vol.2 Marriage-Family. Apart from these books, translated into several languages, Msgr Scola's bibliography amounts to about 120 contributions in collected works and international theological and philosophical periodicals.

On 5th January 2002, the Holy Father nominated him Patriarch of Venice. He officially entered the diocese on 3rd March 2002.

On 9th April 2002, he was elected President of the Bishops' Conference of the Three Veneto Regions (Veneto, Friuli, Trentino). On 28th September 2003 he was designated by the Holy Father Cardinal of the Holy Roman Church and confirmed during the public Consistory of 21st October 2003.

After being nominated Cardinal, on 10th November 2003 he was re-confirmed a Member of the Steering Committee of the Pontifical Council for the Family and Member of the Congregation for the Clergy.

On 14th October 2004 he was nominated of the Steering Committee of the Pontifical Council for the Laity.

On 9th January 2005, he was made a Member of the Congregation for Divine Office and the Discipline of the Sacraments. On 6th March 2005 he was nominated Member of the Prefecture of Economic Affairs of the Holy See, while on 18th March 2005 the Holy Father nominated him General Speaker for the XI ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October 2005 on the theme: The Eucharist: source and culmination of life and the mission of the Church. In January 2009 he was made a Member of the Pontifical Council of Culture. In January 2011 he was made a Member of the Pontifical Council for Promoting New Evangelization.

On 9th December 2010 he was granted a doctorate *honoris causa* by the John Paul II Catholic University of Lublin.

On 28th June 2011, the Holy Father nominated him Archbishop of Milan.

1. European identity and the crisis

The central topic of this work consists in raising fundamental questions that need to be answered positively in the face of the contemporary European political and economic crisis, drawing on Christian social teaching. Avoiding abstraction and rhetoric, we need to begin with a recognition of the sudden and often violent transformations that have manifested in the first decade of the twenty-first century that we have just been traversing: the process (I emphasise *process* and not prescriptive programme) of *hybridisation of civilisations*, the problems of terrorism, the energy and climate crises. These transformations are accompanying and accelerating the inner crisis linked to the urgent questions more closely connected with the present political and institutional structures of the European Union: the financial crisis with its worrying repercussions on the single European currency, the necessary adjustment of equilibria among European institutions, the growing Euro-scepticism that has recently developed in many countries of the area, the uncertainty into which the whole unification process seems to be falling. Last but not least, Europe is struggling to keep watch “outside its house”, in particular on the so-called MENA area (Middle

East and Nord Africa) which in 2030 will have 600 million inhabitants.

The change in the European religious panorama is another component to be considered in the analysis of the contemporary European situation. As Jenkins¹ has observed, who could have predicted the marked decline in Christian practice in Europe?² Who would have imagined such a significant Islamic presence in Rome and Madrid, let alone Paris and London?

Alongside the technical questions linked to the economic and institutional mechanisms for the functioning of the European Union there are indeed some broader cultural questions, such as the already mentioned process of *hybridisation of civilisations* and the general climate, characterized by the rapid fading of the conviction that for centuries has sustained western civilisation: a conviction ultimately founded in the vision of man as person, integral subject of rights and duties that are harmoniously embodied in a system of laws.

¹ P. JENKINS, *God's Continent: Christianity, Islam and Europe's Religious Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007).

² Cf. Ifop for *la Croix*, *Les Français, la laïcité et le rôle des religions*, March 2008.

Of course European identity has always presented paradoxical traits. On the one hand, the history of our continent has demonstrated a shared sense of belonging; on the other, it is equally evident that for many centuries the shared patrimony has always manifested in such a plurality of forms, cultures, and languages as to make it seem unjustified, to the superficial eye, to refer to some kind of original unity.

Trying to go deeper into the mechanisms of the contemporary economic and political European crisis implies a serious reflection on European identity, after the sixty years of journeying that, as Schuman had foreseen, “would not be completed overnight”. Given the complexity of the processes that are under way, we need, on the one hand, to acknowledge that no national state can cope with them on its own, so that Europe is not an option but a real necessity. On the other hand, we should also refuse to abandon an ideal of identity which functions in some way as a unificatory principle. In this sense I believe that the reading put forward by Cardinal Lustiger at the times of the origins of the ECSC (European Coal and Steel Community) points to us the method by which, even in the radically transformed contemporary scenario, European unity needs to be pursued. This method involves start-

ing from reality in all its pressing concreteness and allowing the ideal to emerge. The ideal, not a utopia. The ideal is in fact the truth inherent in the real, while utopia is, as its etymon says, the unreal. Just as in those days there seemed to be a disproportion between the instruments (common production of coal and steel) and the ideals of peace and prosperity for the entire continent (coal and steel as the raw materials of the war industry) so also today great realism and so great ideals fill the bill.³

From this point of view it is not enough, even though it is necessary, to study the roots of Europe that we know so well. Beyond the multitude of undeniable contributions that over the centuries have helped mould its face – I am thinking of Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome, down to the modern concern with the significance of the individual and social agents and the Enlightenment emphasis on equality – it seems to me that crucial elements of these roots can be objectively traced to the nucleus of Christianity. Christianity itself should be understood according to the criterion

³ Cf. J.M. LUSTIGER, *L'Europe à venir* (Paris: Parole et Silence, 2010).

of *secondariness* which, according to Rémi Brague, represents the realistic form in which to pursue European unity. The *Roman attitude* which received, preserved, and transmitted as its own patrimony the Hellenistic synthesis of Athens and Jerusalem was secondary. Secondary too is Christianity, for it knows it is second with respect to the First Covenant. Hence the singular critical capacity of Europe with respect to all civilisations and cultures, because it avoids conceiving itself as the foundation of itself.⁴

Without taking account of the anthropological, social, and cultural implications of the Trinitarian revelation – from the particular vision of the dignity of the person, to the conception of liberty and of its relationship with truth, and up to the salutary distinction between civil society and religious dimension and to the acknowledgment of the value of subsidiarity and of solidarity – it is difficult to explain what we are saying when we utter the word Europe.

In the end, all ethnic, national, linguistic, and religious differences consolidate rather than corroding a shared patrimony, in the etymological

⁴ Cf. R. BRAGUE, *Europe. La voie romaine* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999).

sense of the term. And yet it is not sufficient to consider the roots if we are to meet the challenge of today's historical reality.

To contribute to a plural Europe Christians ought to demonstrate the importance of the filial relation with God the Father, inconceivable before the Christian revelation. Benedict XVI himself stressed the *quaerere Deum* in his *lectio magistralis* at the *Collège des Bernardins*.⁵ Neither the Greek *polis*, nor the Roman *civitas* – with the sensational development of rights achieved by the latter – had ever understood society as *family* and as *home*. In both, the dignity of man and his liberty were subordinate to the recognition of his *status* as citizen. The reference to that transcendent and personal origin that constantly generates unity between the sons of a Father and constantly regenerates their freedom was absent. It is with Christianity that the notion of *citizen* is integrated with that of *person*, opening up to man his full identity.

⁵ BENEDICT XVI, Adress to Participants in the Meeting with Representatives from the world of culture, Collège des Bernardins, Paris, Friday, 12 September 2008, available online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2008/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20080912_parigi-cultura_en.html

Along this interpretative perspective, it is evident that the process of European integration, especially in the present moment of economic and political turmoil, does not stand as one possibility among others, but rather possesses in a certain sense the force of a destiny that European men have the mission to fulfil. To betray the process of integration would mean for our Continent a rejection of its own *traditio*, as well as probably representing, in the globalised world of today, a political suicide with unimaginable consequences.

With regard to the more specific contents of the action of Christians in the area of European integration, I would like to dwell only on one crucial point: religious freedom.

It is much more than mere prediction to state that religions are called to play a role in the future of Europe, for it is in fact a conclusion that anyone can draw from the simple observation of current circumstances. We cannot forget the fact that in European history religious, cultural, and socio-political events have manifested (beyond the necessary distinctions) as so interwoven as to be inseparable in reality.

We can observe a far from negligible difference between the two shores of the Atlantic on this re-

spect. From the United States, the presence of Methodist, Baptist, Pentecostal Christians is growing markedly within various areas of Africa, to Latin America, from the Middle to the furthest East. Leaving aside any judgement that may be passed on these new realities, what matters here is to note that they combine their strong “missionary” thrust and faith with an active participation in public life. In Europe, on the contrary, there prevails an attitude tending to assert that public debates must be independent from the religious roots of personal convictions. But this ultimately means obliging believers to behave as if they were atheists, which ends up depriving society of important resources. However some prominent thinkers – such as Habermas 2008,⁶ Böckenförde 2008,⁷ and Rawls 1993⁸ – have acknowledged in religious traditions, and definitely in Christianity, the expression of a cognitive poten-

⁶ Cf. J. HABERMAS, ‘La religione nella sfera pubblica. Presupposti cognitivi dell’«uso pubblico della ragione» da parte dei cittadini credenti e laicizzati’, in J. HABERMAS, *Tra scienza e fede* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2008), 19-49.

⁷ Cf. E. W. BÖCKENFÖRDE, *Cristianesimo, libertà, democrazia* (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2008).

⁸ Cf. J. RAWLS, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).

tial and a reference to a civil commitment which simply cannot be ignored.

Religions in fact possess the capacity to represent the universal in a concrete way. Contrary to what European culture has ended up postulating in the course of modernity, values are never given in the abstract (the Charter of Fundamental Rights itself comes close to being a pure and simple list of formal propositions), but only within lived traditions. Indeed, some axioms that are fundamental to our societies – I think for example of the idea of freedom or of the idea of equality – can derive fresh energy from the fitness of the faithful who live them within their own communal experience. Once this is recognized, political power ought to acknowledge the public subjectivity of religions.⁹ Hence the necessity that public institutions not only recognise, but actively promote an effective religious freedom.

Imagine what could happen in Europe, what potential could be released, if the climate were to grow more favourable to mutual discussion. Obviously, that is possible on condition that re-

⁹ P. DONATI, 'Pensare la società civile come sfera pubblica religiosamente qualificata', in C. VIGNA, S. ZAMAGNI (ed.), *Multiculturalismo e identità* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2002), 51-106.

ligions abandon both their self-interpretations as having a private nature, on the one hand; and their fundamentalist variety, on the other hand. This would create a space for mutual debate among themselves and with all the other cultures.

2. The whole breadth of reason: in search for a new secularity in Europe

Given the decisive importance of religious freedom in a plural society, what are the tasks, respectively, of politics and the Church in building the *civitas*, with special reference to the European context? How can Christians contribute to the overcoming of the contemporary dramatic difficulties in the process of European integration? What can the Christians of today do, not only for the sake of affirming their roots, but by virtue of their presence in the “here and now” of history, to deepen the process begun sixty years ago? How can they show themselves, at one and the same time, faithful to the original principles and able to rise to the new challenges of our age? What has the Christian inheritance, and indeed Christianity as lived today, got to do with Europe?

In order to reply to these questions, a significant *datum* needs to be stressed, which summaris-

es the phenomena briefly referred to above: we live in an ever-more plural society. The presence of an increasing variety of religious expressions and world visions seems to exclude the possibility of identifying a shared *Weltanschauung* as a way to make our shared life flourish. This applies within each one of our western societies, for all their local variations; but the situation is further complicated in Europe by the plurality of cultures and of juridical and political traditions that characterises our continent.

Nonetheless, Christians are surely well equipped to face up the inevitable tension between identity and difference, between unity and plurality, which is in reality proper to each historical epoch. In fact, in the mystery of the Trinity resides *par excellence* the principle of difference in unity. This principle, by virtue of the incarnation of Jesus Christ, becomes a criterion for comprehension and evaluation of every difference: those constitutive of soul-body, man-woman, person-community and individual-society; and also all the ethnic, cultural, and religious diversities. Historical events in Europe show this quite clearly. Obviously, it does not automatically follow that Europe can painlessly reach easy accommodations between so many actors: state and non-state, personal and communal, we find in the

field. Christians, however, can certainly count upon instruments that enable them to respond to the challenge of plurality.

Concretely, they must take on the task of rethinking the axioms on which our procedural democracies are based, and the principle of secularity on which they aim to govern themselves. In a plural society, by its nature tending to exhibit many conflicts, secularity prevails only if conditions are created that guarantee the narration and the content of all the personal and social subjects that inhabit it with a view to mutual recognition (Ricoeur 2004).¹⁰ Today Europe requires a *new secularity* valuing all the subjects that are actors in the plural society, guaranteeing the public expression of their deepest convictions.

Only thus it will be possible to have a cohabitation, harmonious in its tendency, that produces a good life. To pursue this complex harmony there needs to be a *practical acknowledgement* – I emphasise *practical* acknowledgement – of the material and spiritual goods to be shared. As Maritain argued in 1947 at UNESCO, it is not a question of formulating in the abstract a theoretical accord

¹⁰ Cf. P. RICOEUR, *Parcours de la reconnaissance* (Paris: Éditions Stock, 2004).

between different worldviews. It is necessary, through agreed procedures, to confer political value on the *primary social good of a practical nature: the fact of living together*. This social *datum* must be elevated to the level of *political good* by all, and promoted by institutions. There will not then need to be any preliminary accord about its foundation. Within this space, guaranteed to all, the dynamism of mutual dialogical recognition between person and social agents about the individual contents of value can operate, in a tight but always open debate between diverse worldviews. From this point of view, the practical political good of being in society could constitute that *political universal* which the process of secularisation has lost sight of all through modernity.¹¹

In this way the (sometimes acute) discrepancy between common political action and the various cultural identities ceases, at least in principle, to generate conflict. The various agents with their own identity must obviously live together under the guidance of the institutional establishment; while the latter, to carry out its sensitive regulatory role, must be a-confessional and impartial

¹¹ Cf. F. BOTTURI, 'Secolarizzazione e laicità', in P. Donati (ed.), *Laicità: la ricerca dell'universale nelle differenze* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2008), 295-337.

towards all, without however taking up neutralist positions. It can do this by guaranteeing the two constitutive levels of the *political dimension*: acknowledging the value of the practical-social common good of being together, and acknowledging those specific values that continuous negotiation will gradually recognise as such – according to the criterion formulated by Rawls of the *overlapping consensus*¹² – in an ongoing quest, as occasions demand for a *noble compromise* on specific goods of an ethical, social, cultural, economic, and political nature with all the other “inhabitants” of the plural society.

In the realistic horizon of the healthiest tradition of Catholic doctrine, the magisterial teaching of Benedict XVI restores to politics all of its dignity: ‘the just ordering of society and the State is a central responsibility of politics’ (*Deus caritas*

¹²J. RAWLS, *Political Liberalism*, *op. cit.*, 133-168. This is what Rawls writes about public reason: “[a] feature of public reason is that its limits do not apply to our personal deliberations and reflections about political questions, or to the reasoning about them by members of associations such as churches and universities, all of which is a vital part of the background culture. Plainly, religious, philosophical, and moral considerations of many kinds may here properly play a role” (p. 215).

est n. 28). The radical character that the phrase ‘just ordering’ has in the history of Christian thought is well known. The Pope recalls here the very severe phrase of Augustine: ‘If justice is not respected, what are States if not large gangs of thieves?’

Always in homage to Christian realism, the Holy Father does not fear, therefore, to emphasise that, as politics is an activity of man, it needs purification. It must be continuously liberated from ‘ideology’. Indeed, human freedom is not only limited because it is always historically located, it is also wounded by sin. This is a temptation that is more widespread in the opulent societies of the North of the planet. In them, indeed the illusion of being able to ‘solve’ the question of the good life of civil society and the institutional bodies that govern it through ‘the drawing up and the application’ of theories about the ‘ideal’ forms of social organisation has been proposed anew, understandably, with greater frequency. Obviously, awareness of this temptation does not undermine the ‘goodness’ of social and political commitment and of the balanced interdisciplinary research that is inevitably connected to it. On the contrary: in inviting people to have a correct relationship between practice and theory, its urgency is revealed.

3. Constructing a new European social order: the Christian noble compromise

What pathways exist then for the political engagement, in a narrow sense as well, of Christians and Catholics in particular in current European society, which has changed so deeply? In order to answer this question one should refer to some of the distinctive features of so-called 'globalised' society.

After 1989, when the inebriation caused by the sudden fall of the walls even led people to speak about 'the end of history', it perhaps became clearer that the journey of man along the complex pathway that goes from modernity to the post-modern world documents a gradual detachment from any transcendent vision of life, and even more from any kind of strong tie and membership, above all if of an ecclesial character. The outcome of this process, which was not interrupted by the collapse of utopias centred around claims of an absolute character about history (see the 'isms' of the short century), is suggestively captured by the cry by which Nietzsche, in refuting the claims of Kantian universalism, claimed for man an entrance into a new dimension separated from any reference to the truth: 'We wish to become', wrote that bitter

and brilliant prophet of the post-modern, 'what we are: the new, the unrepeatable, the incontestable, the lawmakers of ourselves, those who make law themselves, who create themselves'. Obviously, it was certainly not the thesis of Nietzsche that directly determined the thought and the action of peoples and above else of individuals. Certainly, however, it foreshadowed a climate in which man today is immersed. A climate that has meant that he lives floating almost in mid-air, rather like a boxer punch drunk in the ring, or like the famous drunk who talks to lamp posts.

And Christians? Is not a Christian perhaps also a man amongst men, a participant in this condition? From where, therefore, should Christians gain the energy to become engaged without transforming faith into utopia, action into hegemony, duty into militancy? If today man seems to have lost the conviction that stood firm for two millennia in the West – that based in the final analysis on his being a person, an integral subject of fundamental rights and knowledge wisely conjoined by the system of laws – and if this man is flattered by the idea that techno-science, with extraordinary effectiveness, is spreading, that is to say that man is nothing but his own experiment, on what should we base ourselves to achieve civil

engagement, and a civil engagement defined in Christian terms?

First of all we should look at the mutation that is underway with a dual certainty. Primarily, with awareness that this change is so radical that it cannot be defined solely by the word ‘epochal’. What is taking place at the level of the bios is absolutely unprecedented. Since man entered the stage of the great theatre of the world this is the first time that such mutation has been presented to him. And to the point of certain critics – for that matter intelligent ones, even if impregnated with an excess of Hegelian optimism – saying: “We are about to separate the human completely from the naturalness of the species. A kind of large-scale ‘rebellious effect’ is underway: the pressure of evolution has ended up by selecting a culture that is able to take the place, through its own technology, of that very natural selection that produced it. This is the authentic meaning of our present: the *technical totalisation* of nature. Life is really becoming “a mental state... Where to lead one’s own life – in the sense of self-awareness – will probably become a subjective choice, in relation to the social costs of its duration and the responsibilities that descend from it”.

Secondly, we should be very careful about seeing the tribulations of today in a way that allows us to be won over by the ‘psychology of the crow’: that psychology according to which when on the field of history there remains only a heap of corpses, Christians will arrive as winners to take it as loot.

The great resources of faith in a providing God who guides the human family and history, in Jesus Christ the Saviour who defeats sin and death, and in the Church – Mother and Teacher – who accompanies believers in the daily miracle of solidarity-inspired communion, does not remove the freedom of everybody from living the drama of existence in union with all fellow men and with their concerns. Christian truth is played out in history and history is not deducible *a priori*. With this fact of the exactness of history Christians, like others, have to come to terms. If anything, because of the child virtue of hope, paying in the first person, with commitment and witness, they peer into the ‘signs of the times’ in favour of everyone.

Here a ‘critical’ engagement with the historic processes of one’s own epoch is necessary. Whatever the case, the situation of today’s Catholics is not different from that of Catholics of all epochs. In this sense it may be useful to

remember the observation made by Augusto Del Noce – within the furrow of the lucid analysis produced by the French philosopher Étienne Gilson – on the origins of the political engagement of Catholics and the nature of their action during the epoch of Leo XIII. Del Noce wrote that the Catholic rebirth envisaged by that Pope had to be “inseparably religious, philosophical and political”. Today we could say in other words that the political role of Catholics must necessarily pass by way of the capacity of their experience of faith to generate culture (according to the perspective indicated by John Paul II). For this reason, the action of politicians must start from the needs/wishes that are specific to the constitutive experience of man. This is something that also requires a correct cultural interpretation of faith: a faith that is integrally experienced has an inalienable anthropological, social and cosmological relevance charged with rather concrete political consequences.

However, one should point out, to end, that for a Christian this civil engagement, above all political civil engagement, is nothing else but the extension, made up of due distinctions, of the logic of witness understood as an approach that is at one and the same time both speculative and practical (not as pure generosity but as a

conception and method of action). If one bears witness in every field of human existence, including the political and party field, to one's own convictions, one does not injure the rights of anybody. On the contrary: one promotes them and one sets in motion the virtuous search for 'noble compromise', with the realism of he who knows that there cannot be civil coexistence without sacrifices. On the other hand, the aim of political action, above all for a Christian, cannot be the achievement of a perfect society. This action, instead, is located on the horizon proposed a few years ago by Cardinal Ratzinger: "to be sober and actuate what is possible, and not to call with an inflamed heart for the impossible, has always been difficult: the voice of reason has never been as strong as the irrational cry. The cry that calls for great things has the vibration of moralism: to limit oneself to the possible seems, instead, an abandonment of moral passion, it seems the pragmatism of the unworthy. But the truth is that political morality consists precisely in resistance to the seduction of the big words by which one plays with the humanity of man and his possibilities. The moralism of adventure, which moves to achieve on its own the things of God, is not moral. But the loyalty that accepts the measurements of

man and carries out within these measurements the work of God is moral. Not the absence of any compromise but compromise itself is the true morality of political activity”.¹³

When principles that cannot be abandoned are at stake one must, as was said above, resort to conscientious objection.

¹³ J. RATZINGER, *Chiesa, ecumenismo e politica* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo, 1987), p. 144.

CHAPTER 2

Adrian Pabst

*Europe's Christian Polity:
mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity*

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He studied economics at Cambridge and European politics at the LSE before moving to Paris where he embarked on his studies of political thought at *Sciences Po* and then philosophy and theology at the *Institut Catholique*. After Paris he returned to Cambridge where he obtained a PhD in philosophy of religion. Thereafter he was awarded a Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship at the University of Nottingham where he is still a member of the Centre of Theology and Philosophy directed by Professor John Milbank.

He is the (co)-editor of several books, including *Encounter between Eastern Orthodoxy and Radical Orthodoxy* (Ashgate, 2009), *The Pope and Jesus of Nazareth* (SCM, 2010) and *The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Pope Benedict XVI's social encyclical and the future of political economy* (Wipf & Stock, 2011).

His first monograph on the question of individuation in philosophy and individuality in politics is entitled *Metaphysics: The Creation of Hierarchy*, and will be published by W.B. Eerdmans in early 2012. Currently he is writing *The Politics of Paradox*, a book on alternatives to the logic of left/right and state/market that has been dominant since the secular settlement of the French Revolution. His main research interests include the links between democracy and capitalism and the role of religion in the economy and the intermediary institutions of civil society.

From 1998 to 2009, he was a Research Fellow of the Luxembourg Institute for European and International Studies where he coordinated a number of international conferences and published several chapters on European politics. He is also a regular contributor to the national and international press, including *The Guardian*, *International Herald Tribune* and *The Moscow Times*.

1. Introduction

In the second half of the twentieth century, Europe came back twice from the brink of self-destruction. First, the 1950 Schuman Declaration and the 1957 Treaty of Rome ended the European Civil War of 1914-45. Second, the 1992 Treaty of Maastricht reconciled Europe's two 'lungs' – the East and the West – that had been linked by a common Christian history but arbitrarily separated during the secular age of the Cold War, as Pope Benedict XVI reminded us in 2007.¹ Over the past fifty years or so, economic integration has stimulated political unification and social convergence between divided and structurally different countries. It has also sustained the quest for an institutional structure that can balance the interest of its now 27 members in the wider European space while at the same time supporting the EU's aspiration to become a global actor on the world stage.

¹ BENEDICT XVI, Address to the Participants in the Congress promoted by the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community (COMECE) on the 50th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, 24 March 2007, available online at http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/benedict_xvi/speeches/2007/march/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20070324_comece_en.html

However, the Rome Treaty enshrined a functionalist logic that establishes the primacy of economic exchange and legal harmonisation over shared political ideas and common cultural practices. Over time, this has reinforced the modern ‘disembedding’ of the economic sphere from the social order and a re-embedding of the social in the economic.² In the case of Europe, this is exemplified by the construction of a single, bureaucratically regulated market that has taken precedence over social solidarity and environmental sustainability. Linked to the priority of the economic over the social is a tendency to subordinate the dignity of the human person and interpersonal relationships to the central state and the ‘free’ market that collude at the expense of the intermediary institutions of civil society. This, coupled with demographic decline and a growing disconnect of elites from the citizenry, has undermined Europe’s shared cultural identity that Christianity helped forge. That, in turn, has hollowed out the universal values derived from the Christian synthesis of ancient and biblical virtues

² K. POLANYI, *The Great Transformation. The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1944); K. POLANYI, *The Livelihood of Man*, new ed. (New York: Academic Press, 1977).

on which both vibrant democracies and market economies ultimately depend.

2. The limits of economic rationality

The European integration and enlargement process that was formally launched by the 1957 Rome Treaty is predominantly driven by a functionalist logic, which assumes that enhanced economic exchange and legal harmonisation produce closer political cooperation and unification. Up to a point, this assumption holds true. After all, the functionalist logic underpins the so-called Community method used by Jean Monnet and other post-war European leaders to bring about supranational integration. Among the major achievements of this method are, first of all, the decision in 1986 to create a single market; second, the agreement on establishing an economic and monetary union that culminated in the introduction of the euro in 1999; third, the commitment to a proper political union since the 1992 Maastricht Treaty.

The trouble is that the political union in its current configuration is largely a by-product of economics and law, notably the functionalist ‘spill-over’ effects of greater trade and new laws

that are increasingly uprooted from shared political values and a common Christian cultural heritage. Jean Monnet's method encapsulates this logic: unlike the other founding fathers of European integration such as Alcide de Gasperi, Robert Schuman or Konrad Adenauer who were all Christian Democrats, he eschewed religion and politics in favour of central administration and technical solutions. Monnet and other influential figures like Belgium's socialist leader Paul-Henri Spaak were primarily concerned with post-war reconstruction and economic growth through supranational rules. As such, Monnet's method consisted in centrally determined and enforced abstract standards and formal mechanisms that had the effect of weakening Europe's overarching political culture. In this manner, the actions of Monnet and Spaak ultimately drove a wedge between Europe's supranational institutions and the largely Christian identity of its citizens. By contrast, De Gasperi, Schuman and Adenauer sought to unite Europe around its pan-European Christian civilisation in order to mediate rival national interests and establish the primacy of international society over both nation-states and transnational markets.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, Monnet's Community method has been supplemented by other

mechanisms and instruments of closer integration, above all intergovernmental cooperation and, more recently, multinational governance and elements of a political system that is *sui generis*.³ However, the functionalist logic remains central to the process of European unification. All the main supranational institutions such as the European Commission or the European Court of Justice are technocratic in design. The Commission in particular combines bureaucratic regulation with a managerialist approach to policy design and implementation. In principle, both the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers are more political in nature, but their pursuit of the common public good is severely restricted by ideological divisions and sectional interests. Functionalism is so pervasive that it continues to structure the EU's entire ethos, developing "procedure as a substitute for policy"⁴ – a characterisation that applies equally to the failed 1999 Lisbon Agenda and the new European External Action Service.

³ S. HIX, *The Political System of the European Union*, 2nd rev. ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

⁴ D. ALLEN and W. WALLACE, 'Political Cooperation: Procedure as a Substitute for Policy', in H. WALLACE *et al.* (ed.), *Policy-Making in the European Communities* (London: Wiley, 1977), 227-246.

At the same time, the EU's *modus operandi* has led to an ever-growing degree of centralisation of decision- and policy-making and the concomitant transfer of competencies from localities, regions and nations to Brussels. For example, the imperative of common product standards as part of the single market entails a unitary, centralised system of bureaucratic regulation. That system is enforced by the Commission and policed by the Court of Justice. What this has done is to reduce the diversity of distinct goods and services and also to undermine self-regulation and mutual control within the framework of guilds or other voluntary professional associations – core aspects of a Christian understanding of subsidiarity.

Moreover, the functionalist approach championed by Monnet and his political heirs has favoured a concentration of wealth and productive assets. Broadly speaking, the single market puts a premium on economies of scale and thereby privileges large producers over small- and medium-sized enterprise. This is true for sectors as diverse as agriculture, manufacturing, industry, retail or financial services. Neither EU competition policy aimed at avoiding cartels and monopolistic practices nor EU subsidies have achieved a proper balance between small and large busi-

nesses – exactly what the Christian principle of subsidiarity requires.

The fundamental problem is that within the EU the notion of subsidiarity has been divorced from a substantive account of justice and reduced to a formalist sense of distributing power and competence between rival levels of decision-making such as the regions, the member-states or the supranational Community level. This conception of subsidiarity has been particularly influential since the late 1980s through the initiative of the European Parliament, the UK and Germany. As the only directly elected institution, the European Parliament has demanded more influence. By contrast, Britain fears a European federal super-state, and the German *Länder* want to preserve their exclusive powers as part of the German federation. To constrain ‘competence creep’, the UK and the German *Länder* have sought to place the burden of argument on integrationists. So in theory, subsidiarity provides a lock on centralisation by requiring Community institutions such as the European Parliament or the European Commission to justify new competencies in areas of public policy-making.

But in practice, subsidiarity has been used either to transfer powers to the EU or to renationalise them, disregarding lower levels such as re-

gions, localities and neighbourhoods. Instead of placing the person, the family and intermediary groups at the centre of politics, the Union and its members instrumentalise subsidiarity in order to promote the interests of the supranational centre or national states – or both at once. Paradoxically, it is precisely because the EU is *not* a proper, subsidiary federation with clearly defined powers that the threat of centralisation is so endemic. That, in turn, has reinforced the abstraction of Europe’s economy and political system from the culture and society in which it should be embedded.

In short, the economic rationality that undergirds the functionalist logic of Monnet’s Community method tends to favour a greater concentration of wealth and a growing centralisation of power. By privileging abstract standards and formal rules, it also crowds out concrete interpersonal bonds and informal, virtuous patterns of behaviour such as trust or honourable practices without which neither constitutional-legal rights nor economic-contractual ties genuinely work. For these (and other) reasons, ‘economic rationality’ needs be radically broadened and re-embedded in a political culture that views civil society as more primary than either the central state or the ‘free’ market, as the following section suggests.

3. Europe's Christian polity

The primacy of economic integration over a common political project that is implicit in the economic rationality of functionalism characterises the two dominant models of European integration and enlargement: Franco-German statism and Anglo-Saxon free-market fundamentalism. These models have championed apparently alternative visions of Europe, but both have embraced different forms of economic and social liberalism that has the effect of undermining shared substantive values and virtuous practices. By marginalising local and regional economies as well as transnational civil society, both models have reinforced a growing socio-economic polarisation and an increasing disconnect of the ruling elites from Europe's citizenry. Whether through bureaucratic control or commercial exchange (or indeed both at once), the Franco-German and Anglo-Saxon visions of Europe have favoured – or at the very least failed to mitigate – the commodification of labour, interpersonal relations and nature.

This, coupled with the growing financialisation of the economy, has subordinated the sanctity of life and land to the 'market-state'. By combining elements of public collectivism with aspects of

private individualism, the ‘market-state’ has sidelined the mediating role of groups and intermediary institutions. In the extreme, it has replaced intimations of the sacred with the secular sacrality of power and wealth. As such, both models are in some sense complicit with the “dictatorship of relativism which does not recognise anything as definitive and whose ultimate goal consists solely of one’s own ego and desires”, as Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger put it shortly before his election as Pope.⁵

Yet at the same time, the EU is neither a Franco-German federalist super-state nor a purely Anglo-Saxon glorified ‘free-trade’ area. Rather, the Union – despite its many imperfections – is best described as a neo-medieval polity with a political system *sui generis*. Europe’s polity is characterised by hybrid institutions, overlapping jurisdictions, polycentric authority and multi-level governance.⁶ As Cardinal Angelo Scola has remarked, the origins of this distinctly European model go back to

⁵ Card. J. RATZINGER, Homily during the mass *pro eligendo romano pontifice*, 18 April 2005, available online at http://www.vatican.va/gp11/documents/homily-pro-eligen-do-pontifice_20050418_en.html

⁶ J. ZIELONKA, *Europe as Empire: The Nature of the Enlarged European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

a long tradition that views Europe not as foundational but rather as the continuous unfolding of the Hellenistic fusion of Jerusalem with Athens.⁷ To understand Europe's distinctiveness, we need briefly to retell its history.⁸ After the fall of imperial Rome, three different forces vied for the Roman legacy and shaped the continent's emerging civilisation: first, pagan tribes from Germanic, Turkic and Slavonic territories; second, Christendom and its ecclesial 'body' of local parishes and transnational monasteries; third, Islam's creation of a caliphate from Arabia to the Iberian peninsula. Of these, as Rowan Williams writes, "the Christian Church is quite simply the most extensive and enduring, whether in the form of the Western Papacy or of the 'Byzantine Commonwealth', the network of cultural and spiritual

⁷ Card. A. SCOLA, 'The Christian contribution the European Integration Process', lecture delivered in Cracow, 10 September 2010, available online at <http://english.angeloscola.it/2010/10/07/the-christian-contribution-to-the-european-integration-process/>

⁸ The present section draws on arguments that I have developed in greater detail elsewhere. See A. PABST, 'The Shape of Post-Secularity: Why the United States is more Religious but less Christian than Europe', in L. LEUSTEAN (ed.), *Representing Religion in the European Union: Does God Matter?* (London: Routledge, 2012), chap. 10, *in press*.

connections in Eastern Europe linked to the new Roman Empire centred on Constantinople”.⁹

Following the final demise of Byzantium in 1453, the Protestant Reformation accelerated the slow disintegration of pan-European political Christendom and the rise to power of sovereign nation-states. However, this did not inaugurate a linear process of secularisation that has supposedly culminated in European ‘exceptionalism’. On the contrary, certain strands of Renaissance Humanism and the Enlightenment provided a religious corrective to secular ideas and practices such as the early modern doctrine of the ‘divine right of kings’.¹⁰ That doctrine was secular insofar as it departed from the patristic and medieval opposition to the sacralisation of secular power, as evinced by the writings of St. Augustine, St. John Chrysostome and St. Thomas Aquinas.

⁹ R. WILLIAMS, ‘Religion culture diversity and tolerance – shaping the new Europe’, address given in Brussels, 7 November 2005, at <http://www.archbishopofcanterbury.org/articles.php/1179/religion-culture-diversity-and-tolerance-shaping-the-new-europe-address-at-the-european-policy-centr>. Cf. D. OBOLENSKY, *The Byzantine Commonwealth: Eastern Europe, 500-1453* (London: Sphere Books, 1974).

¹⁰ Cf. J. N. FIGGIS, *The Theory of the Divine Right of Kings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1896).

In the 'long Middle Ages' (c500-1300), Hellenised Christianity integrated and transformed other European traditions such as Germanic law or the Celtic language. Connected with this blending of diverse cultures within an overarching framework is the Judeo-Christian distinction of religious from political authority. Based on this distinction, a 'free space' emerged between political rule and society wherein politics is not monopolised by the state but pertains to the public realm in which individuals and groups participate. Indeed, the Church – together with local communities and professional bodies like guilds or universities – tended to defend the freedom of society against political coercion. It thereby helped protect the autonomy of Jewish, Muslim and other religious minorities. In addition to complex debates about the relative balance of state and church or the 'mix' of different sources of law (canon, common and civil), the presence of Jewish communities and Muslim-ruled lands on the Iberian peninsula ensured that 'Christian Europe' was never a clerically dominated monolith but rather a realm of political argument within and across different faith traditions.

Moreover, Christendom in East and West blended the principle of free association in Germanic common law with the Latin sense of equity

and participation in the *civitas*. In this manner, European Christendom defended a more relational account (in terms of objective – not subjective – rights and reciprocal duties) that outflanked the dialectic of the individual and the collective that we owe to the American and the French Revolution. Ultimately, Europe's unique legacy of faith and reason provided the basis for European claims to an 'organically' plural universalism. The mark of this variant of universalism is that it avoids both moral relativism and political absolutism by offering a free, shared social space for religious and non-religious practice – the 'realm' of civil society that is more primary than either the central state or the 'free' market. As the 'corporation of corporations', the European polity rests on common civic culture and social bonds that are more fundamental than either formal constitutional-legal rights or economic-contractual ties.

In turn, this gives rise to the idea that the 'intermediary institutions' of civil society are more primary than either the centralised national state or the transnational 'anarchic' market. Intermediary institutions include groups and bodies like professional associations, manufacturing and trading guilds, cooperatives, trade unions, voluntary organisations, universities and religious communities. As such, the European polity really *is* neo-me-

dieval in this sense that it combines a strong sense of overlapping jurisdictions and multiple membership with a contemporary focus on transnational networks as well as the institutions and actors of 'global civil society'. Nor is this model limited to the sub-national level. Rather, modes of association and corporation apply to neighbourhoods, communities, cities, regions and states alike. The idea of Europe as a political union is inextricably intertwined with the notion that national states are more like 'super-regions' within a wider polity – a subsidiary society of nations and peoples rather than a centralised super-state or a glorified 'free-trade' area. Far from diminishing the importance of nations, such an account views nations as balancing the rightful claims of regions and the rightful claims of Europe as a whole.

This suggests that even nations can uphold and promote relations of mutual giving and reciprocal help. As such, Europe offers a vision of associative democracy and civil economy beyond the authoritarian central state that seeks to regulate the transnational, anarchical 'free market'.¹¹

¹¹ P. HIRST and V.-M. BADER (eds), *Associative Democracy: the Real Third Way* (London: Routledge, 2001); L. BRUNI and S. ZAMAGNI, *Civil Economy: Efficiency, Equity, Public Happiness* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007).

Such a vision is inspired by the twin Catholic Christian principles of subsidiarity and solidarity that underpin the entire project of European integration and enlargement. Ultimately, we owe such and similar principles to Europe's Christian heritage, in particular Catholic social teaching.¹²

With the advent of neo-liberalism that both the left and the right enthusiastically embraced, the European polity has failed to defend this legacy against the collusion of the central state and the free-market. However, twenty years after the collapse of state communism, the continuing crisis of 'free-market' capitalism provides a unique opportunity to chart an alternative path that re-embeds the state and the market into the relations of civil society. Thus, the principles and practices of reciprocity, mutuality and solidarity do not simply underscore Europe's Christian heritage but also offer an alternative future for the Union and the continent as a whole.

¹² W. KAISER, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

4. The New Politics of Reciprocity and Mutuality

Unlike the USA, contemporary Europe does not depend on the misguided notion of a revolutionary *tabula rasa* that grounded an absolute separation of power upheld by the constitution. Even post-1789 France retained many non-modern features such as the head of the executive being also the head of the judiciary and the importance of the *corps constitués* that pluralise the unitary state. Much of Europe still has constitutional monarchies that combine parliamentary democracy with non-democratic limits on the power of the executive branch of government – a configuration that paradoxically helps uphold democratic parliamentarianism. As such, the mark of the European polity is a ‘mixed government’ and also the fusion of Roman and Germanic law with Christian notions of justice and charity, as Pope Benedict XVI has argued in both *Deus caritas est* and in *Caritas in veritate*. Linked to this is the centrality of religious freedom and the defence of the ‘group rights’ of Christian churches and other religious bodies.

In some measure, contemporary Europe remains a vestigially Christian polity that reflects some of the principles and practices of reciprocity

and mutuality, as I have already indicated. For instance, the EU has numerous elements of communal and associational ties at all levels such as citizenship, voting rights, solidarity and mutualised structures within the common framework of the single market. Even the German constitutional court (*Verfassungsgericht*) – in a judgement rendered on 30 June 2009 concerning the compatibility of the Lisbon Reform Treaty with the German constitution – described the EU neither as a federalist entity nor as an intergovernmental arrangement but as an ‘association of nations’ (*Nationenverbund*). This is an implicit recognition that European nations are more like ‘super-regions’ within a wider polity. Here one can go further than Germany’s constitutional judges and suggest that the mutual, reciprocal ties binding together the people and nations of Europe cannot be reduced to economic utility or purely legal standards. Instead, these ties resemble the organic links of a medieval corporation with overlapping jurisdictions and a complex web of intermediary associations wherein sovereignty is dispersed and diffuse.

Another example concerns Europe’s economy. In many ways, the European economic space still represents an alternative to both state communism and free-market capitalism. Both these sys-

tem ultimately fail because they are based on a false account of human nature. Human beings are neither bare individuals who pursue private profit through market competition. Nor are human beings anonymous parts of a monolithic collectivity controlled by the state. The real, true account of the human person is not about unbridled freedom in the marketplace nor about our obedient dependence on the state, but about our social bonds which discipline us and make us the unique persons we all are. At their best, the social bonds of family, neighbourhood, local community, professional associations, nation and faith help instil civic virtues and a shared sense of purpose. Concretely, this means solidarity and a commitment to the common good in which all can participate – from a viable ecology via universal education and healthcare to a wider distribution of assets and other means to pursue true happiness beyond pleasure and power.

Unlike other monotheistic religions, Christian conceptions of God stress the relations between the three divine persons of the Holy Trinity (with the exception of Shi'ite/Sufi or a Kabbalistic/Hasidic mystics who are more at ease with the notion of 'relations' within the godhead than Sunni or Talmudic legalism). Therefore, the belief that we are all made in the image and likeness of a

personal, 'relational' Creator God translates into an emphasis on the strong bonds of mutual help and reciprocal giving. For true Christians, charity is never about handing out alms to the poor and feeling better about oneself. Rather, it is about an economy of gift-exchange where people assist each other – not based on economic utility or legal obligation but in a spirit of free self-giving and receiving by members of a social body greater than its parts.

Nor is this some sort of religious utopia. Guilds, cooperatives and employee-owned businesses in parts of Italy, Germany, France or Spain exemplify the concrete reality of a mixed economy that combines gift-giving with economic exchange. In Britain, there are even grassroots' initiatives to apply this approach to public services and welfare provision. The idea is to foster civic participation based on self-organisation, social enterprise, reciprocity and mutuality which help produce a sense of shared ownership. This approach seeks to balance liberty and responsibility as well as rights and duties. Whereas state models risk reducing people to needy recipients of public benefits and market models risk degrading citizens to passive consumers of private services, the Catholic Christian vision of civil economy is the real 'third way' that encourages active, vol-

untary membership of people who give as well as receive.¹³

There can also be secular intimations of this: mutualist arrangements like employee-ownership that share both ownership, profit and risk are in the medium- and long-term economically more viable than many ordinary businesses that seek to maximise short-term return for their institutional investors and the top management. For politics, that means going beyond abstract measures like GDP and instead creating the conditions for individuals and groups so that they can flourish in solidarity and cooperation with each other. The task for Europe's leaders is neither to restore the broken market nor to remake society through centrally imposed legislation and regulation. Rather, the most pressing problem for the EU as a whole is how to enable people to nurture and grow those bonds of reciprocity and mutuality.

¹³ Cf. A. PABST (ed.), *The Crisis of Global Capitalism. Pope Benedict XVI's Social Encyclical and the Future of Political Economy* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2011).

5. Popular Christian Democracy

Now that the secular ideologies of the twentieth century have so manifestly failed, it is instructive to revisit and renew the Christian Democratic vision of Luigi Sturzo. Building on the tradition of Catholic social teaching following the 1891 encyclical *Rerum novarum*, he argued for a European Christian ‘third way’ between the *laissez-faire* capitalism of the United States and the centrally planned state communism of the Soviet Union. Six aspects of Sturzo’s thinking are of particular interest for the purposes of this chapter. First of all, he criticised the liberal capitalist order, especially the American variant, with its “secrete monopolies [...and] capitalist speculation at the expense of the community”.¹⁴ Likewise, he opposed the statist communist system because it denies human beings their freedom and dignity that can only be exercised and protected as part of interpersonal relationships within the realm of civil society.

Second, the experience of statist corporatism of the extreme left or the extreme right led

¹⁴ L. STURZO, ‘The Bolshevist Peril’, *People & Freedom* Vol. 37 (1942): 1.

Catholic thinkers like Sturzo and his allies in the International Christian Democratic Union (IC-DU) to shift the emphasis away from the state towards voluntary corporatist institutions as intermediaries between private enterprises and publicly owned companies – with much more limited ties to central bureaucracy than the kind of corporatism linked to authoritarian or even totalitarian regimes. Indeed, he emphasised in 1939 that corporatist institutions had to conform unconditionally with political democracy in “the endeavour to realize the combination of *Authority* and *Liberty* in an *Order*, in which in different degrees and with different responsibilities all adult citizens, men and women, participate”.¹⁵

In a manifesto entitled *Devant la Crise Mondiale* published in 1942, Sturzo (and fellow Catholic refugees in the United States such as Jacques Maritain, Paul van Zeeland, George Theunis and the exiled Basque President José Antonio de Aguirre) made the same important point. As Wolfram Kaiser has documented, they wrote “that ‘the organic elements of the social order –

¹⁵ L. STURZO, ‘Democracy, Authority and Liberty’, in People and Freedom Group (ed.), *For Democracy* (London: Burns Oates, 1939), 105 (original italics).

the family, vocational associations, regions, cultural groups' should in the future play a central role in the European economy and society. But they strongly rejected the 'corporatist and paternalist state'. They argued that a clear distinction was needed between 'the political structures of the state and the economic organisation of society'.¹⁶ Their thinking echoes Polanyi's call for the re-embedding of the economy in civil society.

Third, here it is crucial to distinguish between two strands of Christian Democracy, one more 'organicist' and the other more atomistic. Both defend a greater separation of corporations from the state but they differ on whether this simply means a separation of the political from the economic – and of both from the social. For Sturzo it emphatically does *not*, since civil society and civil economy should themselves play a public political role which is not a state monopoly. As such, he sought a more genuine blend of corporatism with the more valid elements of liberalism such as the principles of liberality (including the notion of freedom in the sense of a measure of free speech and free enquiry). Figures like Mari-

¹⁶ W. KAISER, *Christian Democracy and the Origins of European Union*, 149-150.

tain, by contrast, opted for a more clearly liberal path that combines statist welfare through income redistribution with the free-market pursuit of private profit. For reasons that go beyond the scope of the present chapter, the second strand of Christian Democracy prevailed after the Second World War, which explains why the economic and the political were progressively disembedded from the social. This process gathered momentum when Christian Democrats first embraced the centralised, bureaucratic welfare state and then the unbridled free market (and in the 1980s and 1990s the globalised ‘market-state’).

Fourth, the distinction between the state and society ultimately goes back to Sturzo’s Augustinian argument that the state is an instrument of order and partial remediation of sin, whereas free human association both manifests and partially realises a supernaturally given *telos*, as John Milbank has shown.¹⁷ Connected with this is the point that faith and religious practice are neither about private belief nor abstract speculation but instead ‘action in common’. Such action binds us both to our Creator and the rest of creation

¹⁷ J. MILBANK, *Theology and Social Theory. Beyond secular reason*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2006), 226.

in more primary ways than either the modern social contract tying individuals to the central state (Hobbes and Rousseau) or equally modern ideas of consenting individuals who trade with each other (Locke and Smith).

Fifth, Sturzo's vision of Christian Democracy was strongly influenced both by the German model of socially embedded market economy and the Anglo-American emphasis on liberty. Yet at the same time, it would be misleading to characterise his account as somehow more liberal than organic. On the contrary, Sturzo views authority and liberty as relational and mutual precisely because ultimately they flow from divine revelation: "[j]ust as authority comes from God, so does liberty. There is nothing good but comes from God, and His imprint is in us always in all His gifts [...] they [authority and liberty] are two social factors which form a synthesis, for they both have the same limit which makes them operative moral, that is, right as correlative of duty, and personal responsibility in the exercise of right and the fulfilment of duty".¹⁸ On this basis, he promoted the idea of 'communalism', calling for strong local government and the devolution of

¹⁸ L. STURZO, 'Democracy, Authority and Liberty', p. 102.

highly centralised liberal nation-state towards localities, communities and even neighbourhoods. Crucially, he defended a kind of social reform (not 'state socialism') that is aimed at the benefit of industrial and agrarian workers organised in guilds. All this suggests that he was far more intellectually indebted to the organicist pluralism of Frederic Ozanam, Jean-Baptiste Henry Lacordaire, Guiseppe Toniolo, Charles Perin and Cardinal Manning than to the more individual pluralism of Lord Acton or John Neville Figgis.¹⁹

Sixth, Sturzo's thought does not wallow in mere nostalgia but is instead wholly futural, combining tradition with innovation. At the end of his reflections on the philosophical background of Christian Democracy, he calls for a transformation of modern, secular society in the direction of a Christian polity: "In view of the destructive effects of the second world war, a larger and more generous contribution must be drawn from the studies of ethics and the philosophy of society, which inform the ideals of Christian Democracy and which serve for a Christian reorientation of modern society, without laments for the past

¹⁹ L. STURZO, 'The Philosophic Background of Christian Democracy', *The Review of Politics* 9 (January 1947): 3-15.

and without anti-historical wishes for a return to the Middle Ages”.²⁰

6. Concluding reflections

Contemporary Europe remains a vestigially Christian polity that is to a large extent governed by the Catholic principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. This is true of the European Union that is neither a federal super-state in the making nor a glorified free-trade area but rather a neo-medieval empire, which pools national sovereignty and views states more like ‘super-regions’ in a wider subsidiary association of nations and peoples. In such a polity with overlapping jurisdictions and multiple levels of membership, states are key because they balance the rightful claims of localities and regions with the rightful claims of Europe as a whole.

Instead of harking back to bureaucratic statism or market liberalism, the 27 member-states and their partner countries in the wider European space such as Russia, Ukraine and Turkey should all retrieve the older and more genuinely European

²⁰ L. STURZO, ‘The Philosophic Background of Christian Democracy’, 15.

tradition of subsidiary federalism or federal subsidiarity – a distribution of competencies between the Community institutions and the member-states in accordance with the principles of a federal rather than a unitary political system, coupled with a radical programme of decentralisation to the most appropriate level (including regions, localities, communities and neighbourhoods) and a greater sense that European nations are indeed like ‘super-regions’ within a wider associative polity of nations and peoples.

In an increasingly post-ideological politics characterised by professed pragmatism, there is a void of fresh ideas and policies – a situation that according to Pope Benedict XVI bears great dangers.²¹ In conjunction with a Europe of local-

²¹ In his 2007 address mentioned above (n. 1), Benedict XVI states unequivocally that the professed pragmatism of many European elites masks a moral relativism: ‘A community built without respect for the true dignity of the human being, disregarding the fact that every person is created in the image of God ends up doing no good to anyone. For this reason it seems ever more important that Europe be on guard against the pragmatic attitude, widespread today, which systematically justifies compromise on essential human values, as if it were the inevitable acceptance of a lesser evil. This kind of pragmatism, even when presented as balanced and realistic, is in reality neither, since it denies the

ities that promotes political participation and civic structures, mutual political practices across the Union could help foster a shared identity. Subsidiary federalism, coupled with a greater emphasis on constitutional corporatism, blends some of Europe's best traditions which would transform her constituent nations in mutually beneficial ways. Paradoxically, a Europe that applies the principles of mutuality, reciprocity and solidarity will speak to its local needs and global responsibility – to 'function as a "leaven" for the entire world', as Pope Benedict XVI described it on the fiftieth anniversary of the Rome Treaty.

dimension of values and ideals inherent in human nature. When non-religious and relativistic tendencies are woven into this pragmatism, Christians as such are eventually denied the very right to enter into the public discussion, or their contribution is discredited as an attempt to preserve unjustified privileges. In this historical hour and faced with the many challenges that confront it, the European Union, in order to be a valid guarantor of the rule of law and an efficient promoter of universal values, cannot but recognize clearly the certain existence of a stable and permanent human nature, source of common rights for all individuals, including those who deny them. In this context, the right to conscientious objection should be protected, every time fundamental human rights are violated'.

CHAPTER 3

*Europe's Moral Compass:
the threat of relativism and the importance
of Christian humanism*

Interview with Jaime Mayor Oreja MEP

Jaime Mayor Oreja is an MEP since July of 2004. He is currently Vicepresident of the EPP-ED Group, and Head of the Spanish Delegation. He is a member of the Committee on Constitutional Affairs and of the Delegation for relations with Japan. He is also a Substitute in the Committee on Foreign Affairs and the Delegation for relations with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo.

In 1980 Mr. Mayor Oreja was elected as Autonomic MP of UCD. That year he served as Tourism Minister in the Pre-autonomous Government of the Basque Country, and was MP for Guipúzcoa. In 1982 he was Government Delegate in the Basque Country. From 1984-1986 he was President and spokesman of the Popular Coalition in the Basque Regional Parliament, and Member of Congress for Vizcaya in 1989. He was also the Popular Party (PP) national MP for Álava in the I, IV, VI, VII and VIII parliamentary terms, and President of the PP Group in the Basque Regional Parliament from 2001 to 2004. He was minister of the interior of Spain from 1996 to 2001. He is a Member of the National Executive Committee of the PP. Since 1996 he is Vice-Secretary-General of the PP. He is also Honorary President of the PP in the Basque country. Mr. Mayor Oreja was born in 1951 in San Sebastián (Guipúzcoa, Spain), and is and agricultural engineer.

Thank you very much indeed for your time and for your interest in this project. We would like to hear about your experience in the European parliament and its response to the recent financial crisis. In one of your speeches, you have said that this crisis is not just economic but has wider origins and implications. How would you describe the crisis that we are in?

This crisis is a crisis that is not only financial, and it is not going to be only a social crisis. Rather, it will be a real conflict. The multiplicity of faces that characterises the crisis is its main specificity. And what we find in the real roots of the crisis is a crisis of values. First of all, it is a crisis of values due to an issue of time. Time passes by and produces a lack of sense and meaning in relation to the values of a generation. A loss of orientation and the loss of our moral compass. The easiest way to tumble into a crisis is when you lose your moral compass and I think that we lost our moral compass some time ago. Why? Because well-being is our first and elementary objective, but our comfortableness is the main cause for losing our orientation. We have been living far beyond our means and far below our possibilities. The equilibrium is broken. I am referring to the equilibrium between the well-being we enjoy and the effort we need to do to achieve this well-being. We forgot the real value of essential institutions

that are elementary for our lives, and this led to the loss of our moral compass.

In Europe and the rest of the world the problem is not only excessive public spending, it is also a problem of personal choices... There are toxic assets in banking and finance because there are people who are interested in consuming them. There are subprime mortgages that are made for individuals. On the other hand, we have sovereign debt levels much higher than we expected. Why? Because we accepted to be indebted more than what was sustainable in the long run. This is the real manifestation of how a person or a society could and would lose their moral compass. I think this is the root of everything and the key factor in our present predicament. It is a crisis in which humanity is increasingly meaningless and human transcendence is in jeopardy. We are in a long crisis since 1945 when humankind started losing its moral compass. And in my opinion the crisis of values is the real catalyst that opened the door to the current financial crisis.

Since this crisis is more than political and economic, what is the role of culture? How can Europe's common culture help us fashion an alternative future?

In my opinion in Europe we have all been living in a state of illusion. People who once shared a

social model and a model based on common values abandoned the cultural and social battle. Nowadays it seems that the Berlin Wall, when it fell, led to political confusion. Many leftwing parties lost their common sense and perhaps even their *raison d'être*. That was a mirage. The dictatorship of the blue collar workers and the power of the lower classes of society was rapidly substituted by another dictatorship, that of relativism. It comes from a society that lives far beyond its means and far below its real possibilities. Thus the cultural battle was lost from the beginning. Parties from the right and the centre-right, such as my own, won easily against leftwing parties in the 1990s.

However, with our electoral victories we seemingly lost our sense of what represents perhaps the biggest and most common enemy – relativism. Relativism is both a collective and an individual problem, it can govern a society and its members. And it induces an illusion of calm and happiness, as well as a sensation that we may have rightwing parties in governments doing the right thing. However this sensation hides something else – a cultural relativism.

There is an important difference here between Europe and the United States. In the U.S., the battle has assumed a more conservative mask. In

Europe instead we defeated the left but we ignored the cultural battle. A large majority of citizens is uncritically consuming the output of the mass media and this is probably an important sign of the relativism in our society. What is it that we remember of the sixties, specifically from the 1968 revolution? Or the French Revolution? The modern revolutions in general? Our focus on 'progress' hides the loss of values and of traditional references in our society. We are left powerless in the face of the cultural battle.

Politicians have failed to respond to this new condition. We are all slaves of opinion polls. And as slaves of the polls, we only do what we have to do in order to win elections. And even if we think that there is a crisis in the 'architecture of values', we do not include values in our political programme. This, in turn, leads to a paradox: with our policies and our politics, we have helped bring about the crisis that is exacerbating the dictatorship of relativism.

Is there any relation between liberalism and cultural relativism?

My preference is to engage with other thinkers and politicians, including liberals. However, I have no doubt that the reality is this: if liberalism loses its moral compass and its direction, then it

becomes undoubtedly relativist and even extremely relativist. The key word here is what in Christianity is termed “the truth will set you free”. If we use this in another sentence, for instance, “Freedom will make you truly yourself”, then we risk losing our moral compass. If liberalism is the consequence of a “freedom [that] will make you truly yourself”, then liberalism is mere relativism. I think that there can be a form of liberalism where the key idea is not this one.

You have talked about freedom. How does this relate to more rational behaviour?

In my personal opinion, reason, natural right, natural law and everything, which is somehow in the pre-political area or in the ‘pre-architecture’, is linked to every person and their values. We must fight to recover this. If we defend this, then we are defending the meaning of democracy and a democratic politics. And there is much more ground to re-conquer. Furthermore, in recovering this meaning we assume the meaning of a person, of dignity, of reason and, of course, of natural law.

Christianity could contribute a lot to all these questions, but is it currently possible in the European Parliament to debate different values systems and build a common

position? Is Christianity helpful or harmful in such debates on ethics in politics?

We are living in a crisis or perhaps even in a new era. New times. The old times were characterised by a monopolisation of wealth, the establishment of state welfare and the expansion of the middle class across the West. That is now over. A burgeoning middle class, wealth and welfare are no longer confined to our countries in the West. Emerging economies exist. For a society like ours and for Western countries, to survive and prosper in a new era requires that individuals change themselves and their behaviour. Citizens have to change their personal orientation and, more than any other person, democrats must change their personal behaviour.

Catholics also have to change their personal behaviour. Catholics are responsible to live more authentically their beliefs and convictions, both religious and non-religious.

Having a crisis such as the current one, we focus our scepticism on economic and financial institutions, but this is a mistake. A crisis with these characteristics is the first crisis of its genre – in some sense similar yet also very different compared with the financial turmoil experienced in 1929. However our biggest and most fundamental mistake is that we have not yet changed our

behaviour and we never ask ourselves what kind of behaviour our society needs. I believe that the world we are going to live in will require a new humanist impetus.

In my opinion, to talk about humanism is to talk about Christianity. And precisely because of this, I think that something we must do is to review and renew the meaning of humanism and the meaning of Christianity. If not, then traditional parties will be the real losers in this crisis because their message will not be heard. This crisis is not going to be harmless. It involves victims. Those could be the euro, the Europe Union, traditional political parties or several institutions not involved directly in the crisis. Parties with Christian roots such as mine have the duty to fight in order not to be destroyed by the crisis. If they do not, then the future will be in the hands of 'extremists' without Christian values. These people have radicalized parties and a political discourse with violent messages that purport to represent the views of middle-class Europeans.

Why have many centre-right parties abandoned their Catholic roots?

Why does the mass media produce the sort of output we see day by day? Because our times are times of crisis – an ethical crisis and a crisis of

decency. When people live far below their own possibilities, they also search for low-quality products in TV. All of us have seen the consequences of a society without values. If politicians are slaves of this kind of society, then real debate does not exist any more. It so happens that politicians are only a reflection of what society is. Politicians are not much better or much worse than the society they are part of. What we are witnessing is a growing process of de-legitimation that discredits politicians and public officials. As I said before and would like to say again, this is a crisis of decency and also of confidence. Confidence in politics and politicians in European democracies is collapsing.

How do youth unemployment and closely connected social problems affect the politics of countries such as Spain? What can Europe do to help?

I am able to talk about my generation because it is mine and it is easier. However, how to talk about a generation that in some ways and at a certain point in time lost its moral compass? We grew up with the perception that being wealthy and rich is the only thing that really counts. We grew out believing that every few years our personal material well-being should be somewhat enhanced – as if this progress was a part of our

DNA. We grew up forgetting that in the societies of our grandparents there was no such expectation about automatic progress. And today everybody is surprised by what is going on with the financial crisis and the economic recession. We have been losing our moral compass, as I have already suggested. And this happened in my generation, in the generation before and the generations that will follow. I can't give a real description of the current generation. I have my sons with me every day but I am not able to describe them as a generation.

What I see is their problems and I know that ultimately all these problems will pass. My only fear is that this crisis will only pass with some kind of explosion. This kind of crisis is not cyclical. History shows that crises involve a tragedy at some point. We must avoid a tragedy but it will not be easy at all to do so. The problem is that when a crisis comes there is no leadership. People refuse leaders during turmoil, what they want and wish is to live better as soon as possible. Leaders tend to emerge in the aftermath of tragedies. Our commitment today is to try not to move from the crisis towards a tragedy. Being aware of this dangerous step is critical. Instead of loosing control and falling into a situation of unrest, we should look forward and try to do everything right. One

has to accomplish one's duty more than ever. It is the only way to avoid tragedy.

How we can include a dialogue and debate about values in politics?

This is the most important idea. How do we renew, reformulate and enhance our values? How do we do this for tomorrow? How could people with common ethical values and beliefs dialogue among each other? We need time. Do we spend enough time doing this? Do we know how to dialogue with the Church? I think the answer to all these questions is sadly no. I think that we do not know as yet how to engage and conduct a dialogue. How much time do we spend reading and having proper cultural debates? In my opinion this should be carried out by a vanguard among the laity holding the line against relativism. This is a task and responsibility that the Church cannot assume by its own. I mean the Church as an institution. This institution today has a powerful doctrine, especially its social teaching, and it should be recognized that this doctrine is well constructed, even if it is not sufficient. And it should be individuals free from the constraint of organizations who will assume the responsibility for waging this cultural and social battle.

In order to do this, a common dialogue is needed both within the Church and beyond. We also need to find people in the Church and elsewhere, including people whose beliefs do not coincide with our beliefs and faith but with whom we may agree on certain values. We need to find points in common. Common places. And all this requires a huge task in terms of dedication, time and conscience. The best way to fight relativism is to find a common way of understanding. We need to find the capacity to offer the best of our values. And what is clear is that we do not dedicate enough time to this.

Is the cultural battle that characterises Spain determined by the national context or is it part of a wider “culture war”?

To understand what is happening in Spain, we need to remember that it is a peninsula, and it seems to be the case that peninsulas become an expression of acceleration and exaggeration. Continents tend to represent the final expression of crisis and tragedy. But the first manifestation of a crisis and a tragedy usually occurs on a peninsula. Look at the Balkans, Italy or indeed Spain. We always tend to witness the acceleration of historical developments and also exaggerated responses to them. Since peninsulas are neither islands nor continents, their geographical fea-

tures make division and fracture in our societies more likely. It is a good reason to explain not just territorial problems in such countries but also a natural trend towards acceleration, which is in some sense our 'cancer'. Spain is currently suffering this illness and reacts to the crisis with exaggeration. My country lives the crisis from this sort of perspective. We are also witnessing effects and reactions unknown in other European countries, especially in relation to social issues.

The exaggerated radicalization is part of a relativism that is promoted by the current government of Spain. This is the real problem of Spain. Relativism is a cultural and also a social expression. It is a distinctly European illness. Nevertheless in Spain, it has acquired different dimensions and reached a new scale. Relativism becomes part of government policy and perhaps even a government project. This is a government dedicated to social engineering and not devoted to resolving the major problems of its citizens. Obviously this causes social tensions and unrest. By contrast, in much of Europe relativism is not a government-sponsored and -orchestrated project but rather the dominant trend at a cultural level. As such, it is not producing the same effects we see in Spain. So somehow we should assert that Spain is a vanguard of this kind of crisis.

Partly in response to the relativism that has spread since the 1960s, there is a growing number of charismatic movements in the Catholic Church that include many young people. What is the significance for Europe's cultural battle?

In Spain and Italy there are indeed many such movement. But I am a politician, not a philosopher, a theologian or a sociologist... What I perceive is that among clerical movements and political movements, there are growing differences day by day. Nowadays there are fewer and fewer politicians who have the courage to say that they are Catholic. Thus, the gulf between politics and religion in Europe is growing. Twenty years ago there were more individuals who were dedicated to politics and who saw no problems with their beliefs in the public sphere. Today it seems that the public sphere is not strictly political. And this does not work. It is increasingly difficult to find in a party such as mine a young man or a young woman of twenty years or so who have religious convictions and who intend to work and devote themselves to politics.

This is nothing short of a catastrophe. Because in politics we need new politicians with no fears of showing who they really are, combining their convictions and their personal beliefs with an ability and strength to work in the

public arena. If we abandon this goal, then the distance between the private and the public sphere will continue to grow and this will be pernicious for politics and society as a whole. The incapacity of having normal relations between religion and politics will leave politics to a certain kind of politicians – those with fewer convictions and fewer reservations to pursue their own benefits. This alone is a good reason to find new people who are disposed to fighting against relativism.

Thus it seems acceptable to organise lobbies in order to defend economic interests but when you have strong personal beliefs it appears that communication breaks down and all efforts to pursue this path are judged illegitimate. In my opinion, it could and should be the other way around. The stronger your conviction, the more powerful will be the idea you transmit to others and the bigger will be your effort to communicate your ideas. We should not only secure economic interest but also defend values and convictions such as democracy or freedom. If in the end the privatisation of beliefs and convictions restricts public debate and produces introspective citizens, then the result will be much the same. We will lose the battle on cultural and social grounds. Democracy needs a stronger defence ca-

pability in order to respect deeper convictions that are displayed by citizens.

The crisis of values is a word that I use most of the time in the plural. Why? Because the first consequence of relativism is a crisis of personal values such as our courage to defend our beliefs and convictions. There is now a strange sort of reverential fear in our society to be labelled an extremist or radical if we defend our ideals. Relativism makes moderates look like radicals or extremists and conservatives like retrogrades. Relativism has this effect: it radicalises our projection and our image. A person with convictions is seen as intolerant. That is why the crisis produces also a lack of courage. We must avoid this.

Is it easier to act in the political field by displaying our own convictions in the European context rather than at the national level?

To me, it is difficult in the European Parliament to see the sum of relativist societies because when you see them all together it is even harder. We know in our political group that most of us are Christian democrats, and when we come to an economic debate in the parliament it is easy for us to win some votes. However, when debates are focused on family, abortion or issues on human life such as euthanasia, then it is certainly

much more difficult because our group is divided in two.

In the European Parliament it is hard to defend values in public. I think we must start from this problem and begin from zero. In order to do this, we need people with the capability to defend values and to show their own ideas. Something we must do in all the European countries is to share values. Those values are at the forefront in the European socio-cultural battle. If not, we will be going backwards once again and we will be governors of societies without values.

Could Catholic social teaching contribute to a better dialogue on fundamental ethical issues?

Without any doubt. I think Catholic social teaching is a fundamental tool in order to promote humanism. In my opinion, the social doctrine of the Church is relevant for humanism. Is it a better choice either to cut some taxes by one percentage point or to raise the same taxes by one percentage point? I think there are certain questions where we should adopt a differentiated stance. A good Christian does not distinguish himself or herself from a bad one in deciding about the level of taxation. What is really relevant is that which Catholic social teaching has been articulating for over a century, and that is the

idea that the human being is – and should be – at the centre of everything. Being focused on one economic measure rather than another is not necessarily an indication of being more socially minded. The social doctrine of the Church is much more than that. It is a way of finding the real dimension of the individual person in everything human beings and societies do. In that sense, Catholic Christianity is the most optimistic religion in the world.

If we believe this, then it might be the case other individuals without these beliefs will not be as hopeful as we are. Because you see in a person both a body and a soul, and that person is not only alive in this world but also in the next life. This is a reason to be optimistic and it is also a strong source of hope. We should appreciate the person and his dignity, his transcendence and his reason to be. This is for me what the Church's social doctrine is all about.

So the expression of universalism could be a key way of fighting relativism...

We should always try to reinforce our moral strength through the power of being and acting together. There is no moral force in being divided. That is my personal reason to believe in nations and in the European Union, and my wish of see-

ing organizations binding people together. It is impossible to believe in the EU without believing in your own nation. My hope and my belief lies with people who are capable to being together with others who are not like them. You see, I am from the Basque country, but I am perfectly able to talk with a person from Madrid, Catalonia or Andalusia. And also with a French or an Italian person. I look for a project based in the power of this union of regions and nations. And this is also a key dimension of universality – trying to search every day for more fields of solidarity. A nation is a ground of solidarity. That is – or should be – true for the EU too. This is our common direction, is it not? We must reinforce projects that tend to gather people together.

In this sense, the EU is a global laboratory to bind people and nations together...

The EU is a big project, but the problem is that we think that the EU could continue surviving with a culture of minimum effort. That is totally absurd. It is such an important project that the effort should be as important as the project itself. It seems that the EU is a consequence of the sort of time that politicians devote to their hobbies. A politician works for his national government, in his region or city and when any time

is left, it can be spent on the EU. Is that a good way to see the future of the EU? After all, it is a project that is more ambitious than any other national project. Completing national projects, we must remember, has required unprecedented efforts. How can we build the EU weekends? When I was home secretary in Spain, I always asked other colleagues whether it was really possible to build Europe in the course of a brief meeting on Fridays for a few hours. The EU needs more time and efforts. How can we build a better Europe based on the current situation of electoral lists? The European lists do not match the necessary ambition and required effort to consolidate and expand the Union.

The EU should have the chance to regenerate itself. If it does not, then we will be devoured by radicals and extremists on both left and right. In that case, Europe would be dominated by ideologies based on sentiments of anti-immigration, xenophobia and nationalism. These sentiments would help bring movements to power that would replace political parties, such as my own, that have their roots in Christian values of neighbourly love, compassion and solidarity.



CHAPTER 4

On the Anthropological Reasons for Europe's Current Crisis

Interview with Mario Mauro MEP

Graduated in Philosophy (1985) at the “Universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore” in Milan and became an expert in organisation and economy of educational systems.

Since 2007 he's Contract Professor at the European University of Rome of “Human Fundamental Rights and History of the European Institutions”.

In January 2009 he's appointed as Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairmanship on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on intolerance and discrimination against Christians and members of other religions.

Co-president of MESEURO – Centre for Mediterranean Europe Foundations.

Member of the European Parliament (since 1999); Vice-President of the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly (1999-2004); Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Culture (1999-2004); substitute member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (1999-2004).

In the past legislature: EP Vice-President (2004-2009), Member of the Budget Committee and of the Culture Committee, Rapporteur for the TEN- T project. Member of the ACP/EU Assembly. Member of the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly. Substitute member (2007-2009) of the Foreign Affairs Parliamentary Committee.

In the current legislature (June 2009): Head of the Italian Delegation in the EPP Group; Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee; Member of the Policy Challenges Committee; substitute member of the Committee on the Economic Crisis; Member of the EU- US Delegation and of the UE-South Africa Delegation; Co-President of the social economy intergroup.

Latest Publications: Il Dio dell'Europa, edizioni Ares, 2007; Guerra ai Cristiani, edizioni Lindau 2010.

This project is mainly about responses to the economic and financial crisis in Europe taking into account some ideas from Pope Benedict XVI and Cardinal Angelo Scola. The first question is about your perception of the crisis. Would you say that it is only a political and economic crisis or would you also say that we can see a cultural and perhaps even an anthropological dimension that is about human behaviour and rival ideas about what human nature is?

Well, my point of view is very clear. For a long time in this institution, I have supported the point of view of an anthropological crisis for different reasons that are linked to different data. It is possible for me to give you a lot of indicators, very concrete evidence. In this manner it is possible to understand that the crisis is an anthropological crisis. I prefer to start from a judgment by Pope Benedict XVI. In one of his books, the Pope says that the most important dangers for contemporary society are fundamentalism and relativism. Now, the threat of fundamentalism is very clear: to use the name of God for a project of power. Here it is important to underline the Pope's definition because in this sense fundamentalism is an ideology and when you have an anthropological crisis you have at the same time an ideology.

Indeed, the great crisis at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century

was a crisis characterised by ideologies. The only difference was that for Fascism, Communism and Nazism the word used as a pretext of a project of power is the word “people”. Nowadays fundamentalists use the name of God but in the end we have the same result: a conception of power in which power is all and man is nothing. We are also very clear about the numbers of fundamentalism: 3.000 murdered in the tragedy of the Twin Towers, more than 100,000 killed in Algeria since 1992, 191 killed in Madrid’s Atocha Station in 2004.

But what are the numbers of relativism? So why did the Pope say that relativism is as dangerous as fundamentalism? We have to understand why. First of all, you can consider for example the number of abortions: every 11 seconds in Europe an abortion takes place.¹ Is that a number of deaths associated with relativism or not? You have 15-16 million young people every year linked to divorce in European families. Is that a number which is indicative of our anthropological crisis? If you consider for example a very rich region in my country, the region of Lom-

¹ *Abortion in Europe and Spain 2010*, Institute for Family Policies (IPF)

bardy, and the problems in a Lombardian area called Brianza: the characteristic of this area is the very close link between families and small enterprises. In the same place you have the family and the enterprise. But when you have a high rate of divorce, you not only divide the family but also the enterprise. Which are the economic and social consequences at this level?

If you consider the reality of contemporary Europe, you have another impressive set of data concerning demography. The EU has 27 member-states and about 530 millions inhabitants. Only 75 million are less than 25 years old. This is maybe a high number, but if you consider Egypt, with 80 millions inhabitants and 50 millions who are less than 25 years old. It means that a single country in the Mediterranean area has more than the half of the young people of the whole of Europe. In which sense is this data evidence of an anthropological crisis? In a very clear sense: it means that there is a generation that has no reason to build a family, to have children or to win “the battle of life”. There are two reasons for our current crisis. Clearly that are many reasons linked to financial mechanisms and the economic situation but at the origin or the roots of this situation you have anthropological reasons.

This a very important argument because it changes the public, political debate...

I can give you some articles of mine with all the data in relation to relativism. When it was possible for me to visit other countries such as Poland, this also became clear to me. Poland has been free for 25 years, no more. The Poles became a democracy after 1981 and they started their process of democracy in 1981. But when I discuss with young people, I hear that in this country which is at the beginning of its freedom and its renaissance, even young people do not have much hope. Is it clear that there are anthropological reasons for the current crisis.

Do you sense that after the events linked to the economic and financial crisis the debate in Europe is beginning to change? 20 years ago no one was talking about relativism, at least not the mainstream public. Pope John Paul II talked about a culture of death but this was rejected as reactionary. Is it your sense that public political debate is changing because of the sheer scale of the crisis?

I have a very clear opinion about this. Curiously my opinion is not so popular because I consider that at different levels in institutions we have a clearer judgement about the crisis that in society at large. Not in every institutions, not in

every case. By the way, I would include the churches as part of our institutions. It is true that if you go around various countries it is not so simple to find this judgement. When you are obliged to choose continuously in a consumerist vision, then shopping becomes virtually compulsive. That is a very simple example but nonetheless a dramatic one because in such a context it is not possible for you to focus on the underlying problem. I have met some people in different institutions who have a clear vision of the crisis. For example this morning I met the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt who was very clear about the contradiction of the situation in the Mediterranean. In countries like Algeria, Egypt or Tunisia you not have a crisis of hope. You have the temptation to transform the hope of young people into desperation and the desire for genuine reconciliation into hatred and into an attack against existing institutions.

On our side, in the West the situation is very different and you have a lot of indicators for the nature and depth of our crisis. One of the most interesting pieces of research I have recently read was from the *Compagnia delle Opere* in Italy. They investigated the relations between fathers and sons that have an enterprise in order to understand better why the son gives up the family busi-

ness to have a career in finance. This is incredible because only a man without hope decides in this manner. Without hope, he has no reason to try, to struggle, to fight for the enterprise and for the family. I have also met different realities in European societies that indicate profound changes. Normally the first element is the demographic issue: normally when you meet hope you meet families with children. In this sense Christian movements are interesting because normally this is their philosophy. It is also an economic philosophy, a philosophy of communitarianism. People try to improve their condition. There are different elements but it is clear that at this moment we do not have the sort of decisions and commitments that in the past produced positive effects...

Here one clear example is European culture at the end of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century when we have had a great movement of cooperatives. It was a very important economic movement, the consequence of a vision and of an anthropology – linked to another pope, Pope Leo X and also Pope Pius X and Pope Pius XI. Sometimes we have had the possibility in that situation to link immediately this judgment to the experience of people because there was education. Now we re-

turn to the supreme problem of all the problems: we need education because the real emergency is an educative emergency.

This is a very complicated issue because for example a common characteristic of the current system of education in Europe is the inability to educate pupils. Education is organised in such a way as to inform, to give instructions, to give data, to give facts. I have discussed with many teachers in European countries and I have met a lot of teachers who told me: “why I must educate? If truth does not exist, why I must educate? I have only to inform in a manner that the pupils are free to decide”. And when I responded, “if you are convinced that the truth does not exist, which is the subject of your information? What do you communicate?” Politics is the last step, it is only the last consequence because politics is cynical. If I understand as a politician that people are interested in shopping, I give them shopping...

...and if politicians give people more opportunities for shopping, the people will vote for them....

Normally politicians are not prophets because they know that the destiny of prophets is a bad destiny. Politicians are interested in solving problems. But to solve immediate problems and not

to solve problems for the next generation because the election are now and not in the next life. That is the reason why I consider politics to be the last step in a long process. Normally politics is no worse than what you can see in society. The real problem is in society because the real problem is in the heart of men. We live in a time in which we have a generation that has no reason to win 'the battle for life'. That much is clear.

Let us talk about political compromise. In a world characterised by the coexistence of different cultures, religions and opinions that sometimes clash violently with each other, how it could be possible to reach a "noble compromise" in favour of the common good?

I have a very clear example about this issue and we must consider the concept of dialogue because normally dialogue is a word in which the result may be a compromise. But normally we consider dialogue as follows: I give to you my reasons and you do the same with me and we realize what we call in Italian: "*io faccio un passo verso di te, tu fai un passo verso di me e ci mettiamo d'accordo*" ("I make a step towards you, you make a step towards me and we come to an agreement"). But if I said a stupid thing to you and you did the same with me and we find a compromise on this basis, we could bring about a disaster for a gen-

eration. What does it mean to have a dialogue, to find a compromise, to look for a ‘noble compromise’? We are obliged to link the word “dialogue” to the word “truth” in the sense that compromise is “*fare un passo avanti verso la verità*” (“make a step forwards in the direction of the truth”). The truth is neither mine nor yours, and it is not in my pocket, not something which anyone can possess. The truth is a reality that is outside of us, and it is possible for us to discover the truth. For this reason Greeks called it *aletheia* (ἀλήθεια), the unveiling of a mystery. So the difficulty today of referring to politics as the search for a ‘noble compromise’ is exactly because we pretend that politics must be far from the truth. But this is not reasonable or coherent.

Why politics must be linked to the truth? I would like to use an example: it is clear that the goal of a watch is to indicate the time. I am free to use the watch in this manner according to its nature but I could also use a watch as food for someone and I would kill him. More clearly, in this case I would use the watch against its own nature. Now it is very easy to understand the goal of a watch, or that of a bottle but it is not so easy to understand the goal of man. What is the goal of man? How we must organize a system of education that respects the goal of man and the

nature of humanity? How to organize an health system that respects the goal of man and respects his right to birth and death when his time comes? How to organize a system of production or a system of pensions? This is politics and this is exactly the reason why politics is linked to the truth. It is not possible for politics not to respect the goal of reality. And when politics does not respect the goal of reality, we have no politics, just ideology.

In history when Lenin and Stalin were in power in Russia before creating the Soviet Union, they wanted a society for the workers but at that time there were only farmers in Russia; so they killed the farmers, 20 million of them, the *kulaki*, in order to create a society that they had in their mind. When Hitler wrote his book *Mein Kampf*, he wrote “the man is the best in the universe” but in another page he wrote “Jews are not human beings”. So this is a sort of shock between logic and metaphysics, in a manner that you oblige reality to become what you want and thereby politics becomes ideology. When politics becomes ideology, it is not possible to search for a ‘noble compromise’ but it is only possible to realise a reality that does not exist in reality.

CHAPTER 5

The significance of Social Market Economy and Europe's Christian roots

Interview with Hans-Gert Pöttering MEP

Member of the European Parliament, President of the European Parliament ret., Chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Hans-Gert Pöttering never knew his father who was killed in the final days of World War II. This personal tragedy was instrumental in shaping his commitment to European politics aiming towards a peaceful future of a unified continent.

After his studies of Law, Political Science and History at the Universities of Bonn and Geneva as well as at the Institut des Hautes Études Internationales in Geneva (1968-1973), Hans-Gert Pöttering completed his PhD studies in Law 1975 with a doctoral thesis about Konrad Adenauer's Security Policy of the years 1955-1963 as contribution to the German-US-Relationship ("*Adenauers Sicherheitspolitik 1955-1963. Ein Beitrag zum deutsch-amerikanischen Verhältnis*"). In 1989, he was appointed as Lecturer and in 1995 as Honorary Professor at the University of Osnabrueck. Hans-Gert Pöttering became at first Chairman of the Young Christian Democrats regional committee (1974-1976, Osnabrueck county) and afterwards, in 1990, Chairman of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) in the district of Osnabrueck (1990-2010). Since 1999 he has been Member of the Federal Board of CDU.

Today, he is the only Member of the European Parliament who has served continuously since the first direct election in 1979 to present. From 1984 to 1994 he was Chairman of the subcommittee on "Security and Disarmament". In 1994 he then became Vice-Chairman of the EPP group in the European Parliament until he was elected as Chairman of the EPP-ED (christian democrats) group from 1999 until 2007. From January 2007 until July 2009, Hans-Gert Pöttering served as the 12th President of the European Parliament since its first direct election. He is currently Chairman of the Working Group on the Middle East and Member of the Committee for Foreign Affairs (AFET).

Furthermore, Hans-Gert Pöttering became Chairman of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in January 2010.

His various publications include "*Europas vereinigte Staaten – Annäherung an Werte und Ziele.*" (1991) and "*Von der Vision zur Wirklichkeit. Auf dem Weg zur Einigung Europas.*" (2004).

The current crisis seems to be a crisis of ‘economic reason’. Much of modern economics is based on the assumption of perfect rationality. Yet at the same time, the behaviour of markets in times of boom and bust is frequently irrational – examples include panic, herd behaviour and hoarding. This raises fundamental questions about what is reasonable, as Pope Benedict and Cardinal Scola have repeatedly stressed. More specifically, do individual interests and utility alone produce economically reasonable acts?

We need to relate our economic order back to our conception of the image of man. Our image of man suggests that human beings are responsible themselves but also for their community and society. That is our Christian conception of man as person. Each person has the duty of responsibility for him- or herself and in equal measure responsibility for their community. This Christian conception of man includes the twin principles of solidarity and subsidiarity. For our economic order, this means that we advocate a social market economy, as the Lisbon Treaty stipulates for the entire EU. In turn, this implies that we defend the market because market actors, i.e. people themselves, are in a better position to shape the market than the best bureaucrats in Brussels, Berlin, Rome or wherever else. But the market is no end in itself. Instead, the market bears respon-

sibility for people, it has a social dimension. For that reason, the market requires an order, that is to say, it requires rules. And it is on this principle that we must found our economic order and it is this that provides a reasonable basis for the economy.

In addition to rules and an emphasis on our conception of man, what else is required to promote a reasonable politics and to strengthen the social market economy model across Europe?

We need to be clear that we do not support capitalism. The problem is that capitalism means unfettered, unregulated markets. Nor do we defend any form of collectivism whereby markets are entirely controlled by the state. Instead, we promote a 'third way' and this must be translated into concrete legislation, for example competition policy. What we do not need are monopolies in the economy that determine everything. Rather, we require structures of competition. For the financial sector, this entails rules and regulations. In a European context, that means further EU legislation in the area of financial services. That is the work that is currently being done.

What role can the European Parliament play in this respect? The Lisbon Reform Treaty has expanded the EP's

powers and competencies. Is the Parliament in a position to shape the political debates, inject ideas and contribute to the decision-making process?

It is indeed a priority task for the Parliament to take position on the key questions in ways that I have just indicated. Of course the EP is also an important actor, as joint co-legislator together with the Council of Ministers. But it is only possible to assume this role of actor if the EP has taken position on the substantive issues. That is why we in the Parliament need to make sure that the EU's economic order is a social market economy model and not a model of unfettered, unregulated markets.

Do you see any potential for a consensus in the EP beyond party political lines in relation to the strengthening of the social market economy? Is there support in the EP for the idea of a civil economy (economia civile) along the lines of Pope Benedict XVI's social encyclical "Caritas in veritate"?

If by consensus we mean unanimity, then that is not the case. However, I do see a very large majority of the European Parliament in support of the concept of social market economy. In fact, an overwhelming majority of the Parliament called for the inclusion of this notion in the Lisbon Reform Treaty. It is the specificity of the EP

to reach a broad, majoritarian position on fundamental issues. Such a broad, majoritarian position is necessarily one that exceeds the dividing lines of political parties.

Do the actions of the European Parliament on fundamental issues such as the promotion of the social market economy model carry symbolic meaning as well as have practical consequences? Does the EP influence national debates in a positive way and can it therefore be said to play a pioneering role?

I would not like to use the notion of ‘pioneering role’. Rather, I would prefer to speak of our shared responsibility – the responsibility of the European Parliament and that of national parliaments to address important economic, political and social questions in our countries and societies. This should ideally be done through a good partnership between the EP and national parliaments.

The Lisbon Reform Treaty has modified the relations between the EP and national parliaments. What has changed in this institutional relationship? Or is it premature to draw any conclusions about the new dynamic?

Long before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty the cooperation between the EP and na-

tional parliament was strong and effective. As the head of EPP parliamentary group in the EP and subsequently as the President of the EP, I have always promoted these links in informal ways. Now that we have the Lisbon Treaty, my sense is that thanks to their growing cooperation, the EP and national parliaments see themselves increasingly as partners who promote the same interests and values – chief of all, strengthening democracy and the principles of parliamentary rule in the EU.

Do the cooperative relations between the EP and national parliaments contribute to a better institutional balance within the EU, i.e. between the legislature, the executive and the judiciary?

Each institution of the EU has its own role and each institution must assume this role responsibly. But it is imperative on all to cooperate and act as partners.

Does the Lisbon Reform Treaty allow the EP more generally to play a greater role, to contribute ideas to the policy-making process as well as to shape legislation and its implementation?

Absolutely. For many year, we in the European Parliament have fought for more competencies and powers. Now that the EP has been granted more such competencies and powers, we won't

allow any other institution to restrict our remit or constrain our role. On the contrary, we defend our powers and exercise our role with confidence and on the basis of European law.

I would like to ask you about the common values that can help bring about majorities in the European Parliament beyond the dividing lines of political parties. In relation to European debates on values, Cardinal Scola has repeatedly spoken of a “noble compromise”.¹ What conclusions or lessons can you draw from your long-standing experience of how the EP operates?

I think that the notion of a ‘noble compromise’ is most appropriate. Just like the notion of ‘social’ in the concept of ‘social market economy’, the notion of ‘nobility’ is an important complement. If we merely speak of ‘compromise’, then this is hardly something positive. But the notion of ‘nobility’ includes such a positive element. My experience in the EP – where I am by now the only MEP who has been a member on a continuous basis since the first direct elections in 1979 – teaches me that the EU, more so than other political communities, only has a future if all the key actors are prepared to come to a ‘noble compromise’.

¹ Cardinal Angelo SCOLA, *Buone ragioni per la vita in comune. Religione, politica, economia* (Milano: Mondadori, 2010), p. 53.

To be sure, each country has its own national interests. However, we need to recognise that ultimately the common interest of the Union as a whole offers the only genuine chance to defend and promote national, regional and local interests. This means that we need to pool sovereignty and exercise it jointly in ways and at levels that exceed the purely national context. Only on that basis are we in a position to preserve the diversity of Europe, which is a great asset and source of strength. What needs to be upheld and extended is Europe's unity-in-diversity. Such an endeavour will only succeed if all the participant member-states and other European actors recognise their mutual interests and achieve a balance between interests, values and conceptions of the future. Now that would be a 'noble compromise' in the European context. Whoever in Europe is unable or unwilling to reach a 'noble compromise' will ultimately destroy European unity. Europe requires decisions on the basis of a 'noble compromise'.

When it comes to attaining a 'fair compromise' in the EP, is this a matter of national and Community interests or do notions such as the 'common good' and the 'good life' also shape debates and policy outcomes?

I think that a more holistic view of politics and a focus on the common good of society will in

future come once again to the fore of debates and policy-making. We live in times of increasing social differentiation and atomisation. Many groups merely look to their own sectional interest. If this process of atomisation continues apace, then our societies won't exist for much longer as societies. For this reason we politicians have continuously to define that which binds us together and that which we share in common.

Let me illustrate this point with reference to climate change. If we do not manage to act collectively and protect the natural world we all inhabit but instead merely focus on the self-interests such as those of economic actors (whose behaviour often damages the environment), then politics will head in the direction and reach an impasse. What we need to do is to discern the common good, and that this the protection of our created order. In this context, the notion of common good is of great significance. Everyone of us needs to understand that we will only be able to defend the dignity of each if we defend the dignity of all. That is the basis of the common good.

Following the issues of the social market economy model and the role of the EP, I would like to touch on a second set of questions about the state of Europe after the recent financial crisis and also more fundamental questions

about the EU integration and enlargement process. The current crisis is not confined to finance or the economy but also affected Europe's political systems. This raises questions about whether the EU's integration and enlargement process can proceed unchanged or whether a new impulse is required.

The general policy underpinning the European integration process has been extraordinarily successful. It was so successful because our values within the European Community exercised a 'magnetic pull' on the formerly Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe. If today countries as diverse as the Baltic States, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Romania and Bulgaria have become members of the EU, then this clearly shows that our community of values has prevailed. The dignity of human persons, human rights, democracy, peace, the rule of law and other values have prevailed. This is a great success, which was hardly apparent back in 1979 when the European Parliament was for the first time directly elected by the citizens of the member-states of the then European Economic Community. Eastern enlargement was a vision, a wish and a dream. The fact that this has come to be true in our lifetime – including German reunification – had not been anticipated or predicted by anyone.

All this is a question of values and for this reason values are the centre of Europe – something we must never forget. Institutionally, the European integration process has been equally successful. With each treaty, integration has become stronger. Now that the Lisbon Treaty has entered into force, we need to remember that it is not the final treaty. It is however a very important treaty because its ratification and entry into force marks the triumph of democracy and parliamentary rule across the EU. In future the challenge is to match the legal and political opportunities and possibilities with substantive content and thereby to develop a series of common policy positions. Examples include energy policy, foreign policy and many other policy areas. All the instruments and institutions are in place. What we now require is political will and determination to shape and implement common policy positions for all 27 member-states.

Would you say that in future we might see a growing conflict between greater integration and further enlargement?

I do indeed foresee possible conflicts between integration and enlargement. The enlargement process that has taken place to date carries important lessons. The most important one is that

we cannot go on and enlarge the EU without limit. To be sure, the Balkan countries will gradually join the Union, namely those countries to the north of Greece and to the south of Slovenia. This is a long-term process, and each of these countries will have to be assessed on the basis of its own progress and in terms of the accession criteria and negotiations. But I am adamant that the idea of incorporating countries such as Turkey or the Ukraine is wholly incompatible with the principle of strengthening the Union. That is why I argue for good, constructive relations with neighbouring countries such as the Turkey and the Ukraine, including a privileged partnership – but not full membership in the EU. It is my firm conviction that such a move would stretch the Union politically, culturally, financially and geographically beyond breaking point.

May I return briefly to the cultural dimension of European integration and enlargement? Jacques Delors' notion of the European Community as a "Christian Club" has often been dismissed as unhelpful and exclusive. But could it not be argued that Europe's Christian identity can be a great asset in our attempts to integrate and incorporate other cultures and religions, especially in a context of pluralism and at a time when the model of multiculturalism is in deep crisis?

The roots of the EU, like those of Europe as a whole, go back to Christianity and also to the legacy and transmission of Judaism. To deny the EU its Christian roots would be to my mind a fatal move. However, this does not mean that the EU is a “Christian club” – if one wishes to make use of this notion. The reason is that there are many other convictions that are neither Jewish nor Christian in origin. However, it is hard to ignore just how strong Europe’s Christian origins are, not least because they have shaped Europe for many centuries. This legacy includes, in particular, the dignity of the human person, the protection of human life and many other core values. Peaceful dialogue with the Muslim world is much easier when one has religious convictions such as Christian (or Jewish) ones. This is so because people with religious beliefs have on balance a better mutual understanding of each other.

Of course we must reject all forms of religious fundamentalism. Religious fundamentalism always means that people are prepared to use force on behalf of their own faith. Renouncing violence is – and must be – an absolute condition that should never be compromised. Cultural and religious dialogue should be grounded in the absence of violence. Christians with their own beliefs and convictions are to my mind in a better

position to conduct a peaceful dialogue with Muslims than those who lack any religious beliefs or convictions.

For this reason, I recommend that we include our own religious beliefs and convictions in appropriate ways in the expanding dialogue with Muslims. It would be right to ground such a dialogue on the principle of tolerance. In my opinion, tolerance implies that people have their own positions and that they respect the positions of others but not necessarily accept them as such. In this sense, tolerance is not and cannot be a one-way street. It is for this reason that we defend the rights of Christians in predominantly Muslim societies, just as we defend the rights of Muslims in Western societies that are largely shaped by Christian values.

Are you seeing a difference in the current public, political debates on Europe's cultural and religious identity – compared with debates five or ten years ago? What has been the contribution by Pope Benedict XVI. and Angelo Cardinal Scola?

I reckon that the intervention and actions of Pope Benedict XVI and Cardinal Scola have been very significant indeed, not only for the discussion within the Catholic Church and Christian communities more generally but for the world as

a whole. On the basis of what the Pope and the Cardinal have conveyed, we Christians have become more aware of our own roots and values. In turn, on that basis we are in a better position to engage in peaceful dialogue with people of other cultures and other faiths.

In the course of this interview you have mentioned that the EU is not coextensive with the whole of Europe. In addition to closer economic cooperation, what are bases available for better ties with neighbouring countries such as Russia or the Ukraine? What is your assessment of the attempt by Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy to launch discussions about a security community with Russia at the summit meeting in Deauville on 18-19 October 2010? Could such a dialogue promote confidence-building measures and foster better mutual understanding?

With 27 member-states and about 500 million inhabitants, the EU needs peaceful and neighbourly relations with other countries on its borders and in its vicinity. Russia and the Ukraine are important countries, especially Russia with its nuclear arsenal. It is in our fundamental interest to establish good, neighbourly relations with Moscow. This is true across a wide range of issues and policy areas: security policy, energy supply, trade and economic exchange or the issue of

climate change. Without Russia it is impossible to face up to numerous challenges on the European continent in a meaningful way.

However, it is necessary to state that we want to encourage Russia to address its own Communist past. In Germany, it would totally unthinkable to try to present the awful and criminal period of national-socialism in a positive light or to portray Hitler in a positive way. But in Russia this is still possible when it comes to Stalin. While acknowledging the efforts that have been undertaken to begin to address the past, we need to encourage Russia to go further and engage more critically with the past and the crimes of Stalin and others. The path to a better future requires that countries come to terms with their history, as I think the Germans have shown in relation to national-socialism (even if I do not want to praise my country's efforts excessively).

In your opinion, are there signs for a “reset” in Russian-Polish relations? What chances do you see in relation to the efforts in the direction of a Russian-Polish process of reconciliation, which are encouraged and supported by Germany and the rest of Europe?

I would welcome wholeheartedly if Russia and Poland – whose shared history includes many tragic events – moved in the direction of greater

mutual understanding and an enduring partnership. This would also benefit the entire Union and its relations with Russia. All efforts, which contribute to a better understanding of history and help countries come to terms with their past – and thereby assist the quest for historical truth – promote a better, common future among nations.

In this context, can the rapprochement between the Roman-Catholic and the Russian-Orthodox Church support the political process of mutual understanding and reconciliation?

I believe that the Roman-Catholic and the Russian-Orthodox Church have an important task and role to play in this respect. We have common Christian roots and these encompass the principle of loving one's neighbour. If this principle and the principle of respecting the other are applied to communities and not just to the people closest to us, then what usually follows is peaceful cooperation between different churches. The principle of loving one's neighbour also has the potential to promote a politics of partnership, mutual understanding and cooperation.

CHAPTER 6

*Mutual Responsibility:
the priority of the common good over
common interests*

Interview with Jan Olbrycht MEP

Doctor of sociology, lecturer, expert, politician and social activist.

In 1990-1998 Mayor of Cieszyn and in 1998-2002 Marshal of Silesian Voivodeship. In 1993-1998 Vice-Chairman of the Association of Polish Cities, Vice-Chairman of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions from 1995 to 2001. Chairman of the Polish delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and member of the Management Board of the Assembly of European Regions from 2000 to 2004. Founder member of the Marshals' Convent of Poland and member of the National Council for Regional Policy.

Since 1979 lecturer at the University of Silesia in Katowice, then at the University of Bielsko-Biala, University of Economics in Katowice and Jagiellonian University in Cracow.

From 2004 (now the second term) member of the European Parliament on behalf of Civic Platform (Group of European People's Party in the EP). Vice-Chairman of the Committee on Regional Development in 2004-2009 and European Parliament's rapporteur on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. Currently member of the Parliamentary Committees: Regional Development, Budget and Budgetary Control, Policy challenges and budgetary resources (vice-chair). Founder member and the president of the EP Intergroup URBAN. He is committed to the work of the European Parliament to promote dialogue with churches. Chair of the working group "Values and Liberties" in the framework of the European People's Party think tank European Ideas Network.

What do you think the current crisis is really about? Is it just an economic and political crisis, related to the financial markets, possibly a lack of regulation or the wrong kind of regulation? Or do you think that we would be well advised to think about some of the cultural and perhaps even anthropological dimensions?

I don't think you can say that this is also an anthropological or in a way a cultural crisis. This crisis is one of the consequences of globalisation and global thinking, and I think it was inevitable that one day something would happen in the economy and in the world. For a while, we were thinking that we are facing global processes. Of course all this gave rise to "think globally, act locally" and slogans like this. But in fact we got used to thinking about globalisation as something normal, something which is maybe difficult, maybe complicated but something which in fact is something that is part of the economic "*paysage*", so to speak. But we should have thought that if something happens which is negative, the consequences would not be local but global. Maybe this is the first time that the people discovered that globalisation is something very real. Of course we can think that economic crises happened in the 1920s or 1930s but then it was different. Globalisation at that time was not a real process. Today everybody is aware that

if something happens, for example in the United States, the consequences could be felt around the whole world. If something happens in China one day, the consequences would affect all the EU members states and all the people around the world. Before, we had the tendency to think globally about wars, world wars, total wars, global wars. But the global crisis has very concrete local consequences because the consequences are not the same and these consequences are going on. So we can even see, like the tsunami, that if something happened in the United States, we wouldn't see the consequences until two or three years later. A member-state of the EU could collapse as a consequence of the crisis that happened two years ago. So I think it is something completely new and that people did not think about that. The problem of scale and the growing awareness of a global scale are very important elements of this crisis.

The second element is the problem of relation between morality and economy, and I think that the economy should be directly linked to notions of the common good, the good in general, not only profit. It was something obvious, something we were aware of from the very beginning, but I think this is the first time that everybody discovers that in fact the real basis or the real cause of

this crisis is not the typical process that happens in the economy, a typical recession, but something which is caused by the immoral way of thinking about the relation between, for example, the banks and the clients. Nor is that very new. Everybody knew that it is like this that someone who holds money has this tendency to treat his client in a very immoral way. We used to think about this in a local way, something that “happens”. But we never thought that it can cause a big process and have real global consequences. And I think that this is again a kind of shocking therapy: we cannot divide the problem of morality and the economy.

This is just one element that is integrated. For me, this crisis which we are facing is in fact based on this separation between morality and the economy. That means, according to the principle of how can we make profits and organize the economy, not just taking into account morality in the economy but also in each domain of human life. It is not that we should have adopt moral behaviour in all domains except the economy. I think that this way of thinking about profits and efficiency has collapsed. I think that the world after this crisis will be different; it does not mean that it will be better but I think it will be different. Everybody will be much more aware of

the consequences of decisions. I think this is the real problem of the crisis. I do not think that human nature has changed, if human nature can ever change, of course. I do not think that human character has changed or that something from an anthropological point of view has changed. I do not think that the cultural background has changed. Maybe it will provoke a different way of thinking. In this sense we will see changes in the culture and in the way of patterns of behaviour. But I think this is much more about discovering the real dangers, which exist in the economy if we are isolated from morality.

If I can ask you about your experience in EP both in terms of your own work and also the activity of the Parliament. Can notions like morality or a more rational and reasonable behaviour play a role in the Parliament? Do they affect debates on parliamentary committees or in discussions that you have? Can you appeal to reason to persuade colleagues that more morality is needed in economic policy-making?

Yes, surprisingly it is very common. We have a tendency as Christian politicians to think that by definition we use this kind of category and that others who are not Christian do not use it. That is not true. Non-Christians use it but in a different way because of course when there is a dis-

cussion about the crisis in the EP or in the special task force called CRIS (in which I do not take part) we can hear that the real problem is moral. Depending on political views the way of expressing is different because some of the colleagues that come from the left, for example, will use the expressions such as that “the rich people have cheated the poor people and they want to maximise their profit; the victims are the poor people”. They describe as immoral behaviour rich people who are not morally oriented because they just want to make profit at the expense of other people. Those on the right will not say “the rich and the poor”; they say blame instead “those people who have the possibility” and they call their behaviour absolutely immoral. It does not matter if they are rich or poor; politicians on the right look just at their behaviour. I do not think that this way of thinking about morality or ethics is absent. Everybody is aware that something is going wrong in all the decision-making processes. There are people who do not think about the consequences, or maybe think about consequences but mainly think about efficiency, profits, etc.

In my experience in the EP, speaking about the problem of ethics in the economy after the crisis is quite common for everybody. But the way of

interpreting this is based on different systems of values. The way of expressing such ideas is also different; it depends on which part of the EP someone is coming. The very typical element of using notions such as human nature is for us Christians different from the others. In general I think that there is something new after a crisis: the consequences are seen not only by the economy but also by the behaviour of the banks, governments, businessmen who are not honest in their behaviour. It is like the crisis in Greece which is not only a consequence of this crisis but also of the behaviour of Greece. Some say that “this is the Greek authority who are lying; they did not tell the truth”. Others would say that the problem in Greece came from the problems of German and French banks that are involved and they knew the truth and they did not share the truth with the others. This is something that is again completely immoral. It is not just about money. This debate is not only about money but is about the content: that which is behind the money, the behaviour and system of values. This is my experience and I think that we are not the only ones as Christians who are thinking those things in those terms. At the same time, I think that for our colleagues from the left this issue is more difficult because they do not have the same instruments

that we have. We have our system of values that is quite important. They are looking for the typical difference between rich and poor which can explain everything. But it cannot explain everything; it is not a problem of “rich and poor”.

When you interact with colleagues in the EP, do you discover a lot of common ground as well as differences? If there are differences, are they more ideological or more geographical?

I do not think that the differences among MEPs are primarily national, at least not in this case. It is much more ideological but not in terms of the real content. Rather, it is much more in the way of explaining and interpreting reality. This is the difference of ideological backgrounds because everybody is looking for an explanation according to his or her rational system because he or she could find the right instruments to explain what happens. These ideological differences are much more important than the national context.

Do you also find that religious beliefs also shape peoples' perception of the crisis and how they try to explain it? How does religion fit in to some of these ideological differences, both on the right and on the left?

Religion fits into this picture but not directly. When we read the social encyclical “*Caritas in*

veritate” by Pope Benedict XVI which touches directly on the problem of the crisis, we cannot say that the whole text is very religious in a single way. It is very deeply rooted in religious thinking but in fact they are non-religious arguments that can be used in this debate. People who share a religious background have a basis and instruments which make it easier for them. Christians are not afraid of entering in this kind of debate. A debate about morality in each domain of human life is something normal for someone who is coming from a religious background. The economy is just one of those domains. To be clear, it is not about using religious arguments because it is not the best way in such a case to explain the economic crisis. Rather, it is to use a way of thinking, a background and a value system.

Christians have the norms which come from religion and those norms are very clear; it is not very difficult to have a strong sense on what is the common good. It does not matter if others who are not Christian define it as the common good or not. But it does not change anything for us because we are educated like this. We are coming from this background which is based on responsibility vis-à-vis the other, vis-à-vis partners, clients, citizens etc. The notion of responsibility

vis-à-vis another person is something crucial. This is the way of thinking which in some sense is easier. The problem is not whether someone is rich or poor but that he or she is another person and I am responsible for them, just as they are responsible for me. It is much broader than wealth or poverty. This is why I say: religion does not affect our understanding of the crisis directly, but indirectly, it absolutely does.

How important do you think the idea of more rational, more reasonable forms of behaviour is? If we make the argument that the crisis reveals irrational and irresponsible behaviour, is it helpful to appeal to reason as a guiding principle, which is neither purely religious or exclusively non-religious?

When we return to the beginning of the crisis, you have the behaviour of someone who was rational in a way, using clients whose behaviour should have been rational but it was not. It was not the situation that both of them were not rational. Someone who is guilty can nevertheless be rational and even responsible in terms of his behaviour. The problem is that taking responsibility vis-à-vis other persons is to be responsible and also to make others aware of shared responsibility. Indeed, it is to make people aware of the possible consequences of their actions on others.

Everybody is responsible for his or her own life and free in his or her choice.

If we think in this way, we should help others become aware of all the consequences and all the possibilities of adopting rational behaviour, especially in the economy. For Christian politicians a strong sense of responsibility is very important. I think that now responsibility and rationality are much more valid because to be a responsible and rational person in the 21st century is to face all the new challenges which are completely unexpected and to make use of reason in a very clear way but also with a clear system of values. Without values, without thinking about dignity and responsibility, awareness and reason are necessary but not sufficient for actions to have positive consequences.

What you are saying is that paradoxically a more responsible use of reason might also involve a great awareness of things like dignity and compassion and care for others. So religious faith can actually help strengthen more responsible forms of reason.

It means that someone who has been educated with religion and lives according to their religious faith, then reason and responsibility mean taking into account the dignity of other persons. Taking into account the dignity of another person

is to be responsible for oneself and for others. If I want to be responsible for someone else, it means that I should make that person aware of their own behaviour. In such a manner religion is important because it shows in a very clear way why we should treat and love others like ourselves. Some of us say “just because”. Very often some colleagues who are not Christians use notions of human dignity. But for them human dignity is something abstract: human dignity means that a person is important. For us Christians, by contrast, human dignity is different. A person does not have dignity because he or she is important but because he or she is created according to another pattern. This is the difference.

You have mentioned that we need reason and responsibility. What would you say about the importance of truth in political action? Do you see a clear link between notions of truth and political actions? Does politics need some idea of truth?

Politics is nothing special, it is just an element of human behaviour like other aspects. It is not something special. Maybe the methods we use in politics are similar to certain games. The methods which are used are very often the repetition of the game “who wins and who loses”. But in fact is quite normal in human behaviour. In all

behaviour truth is the basis. Of course very often there is a tendency to think about politics which says that efficiency is the most important goal: efficiency is much more important than the instruments or even much more important than the truth. In fact, some even suggest that we can change the truth to reach our goal, that the objective or end is important, that the more you can reach the more your means can be forgiven. Of course this is absolutely wrong, especially in politics. But if we think that doing politics, being a politician or being in the public sphere means a service vis-à-vis the others, then it means that it is not possible to serve the others without appealing to the truth.

For example, if we think that others are not clever enough to understand the complexity of the world and as a politician I am much more aware of this, then it is equally possible to suggest that I do not want them to understand everything. So I just hide complex reality from them because I am responsible for them and so maybe I can lie from time to time for their good. Of course that is absolutely immoral and irresponsible.

And it is not a philosophical matter of asking “where is the truth?” A Polish politician tends to use the following, simple expression: “where is

the truth? The truth is where it is”. The truth is not just in the middle, some foul compromise. The truth is where it is. There are no two truths, or three truths. There is only one. The truth is the absolute basis for our service vis-à-vis others. So truth is an absolutely inevitable element of politics as service and responsible action vis-à-vis others. Once we start thinking that the truth is flexible, it is not politics anymore, it is *socio-technique* – just using others for different reasons and trying to explain to myself that all this is for them: “I am manipulating them but is for them, for their good, poor guys they do not understand”. This is delusion, not politics but manipulation.

You said in a speech in Slovenia to a meeting of the European People’s Party that truth and freedom need each other. Without truth we cannot be free, just like without freedom we cannot be true to ourselves or others. Again you presumably think this apply to all area of human activity including politics?

This applies especially in politics because politics is public behaviour, so the responsibility is bigger than in the private sphere. Of course in private it also very important but in public behaviour the responsibility of using the right method is key because it is also an example to others. Of course we know the expression “the

truth saves you” but I think that when you really think about it, freedom is absolutely based on truth and not on the possibility that there might be different solutions. Solutions are not the same as the truth. There are different interpretations but there is only one truth. The rest is just explanations or interpretations, but they are not methods of thinking about trying to find the truth.

Pontius Pilate had doubts, asking “where is the truth?” But for politicians, it is not about whether they know the truth but whether they know that the truth exist. That’s the difference. Maybe I do not know the truth but I know that the truth exists. This reference is important. It means that if I am wrong and the truth is different from what I think it is, I am responsible to say that I am mistaken. That kind of behaviour is crucial.

As you say, politicians may not know the truth but should not deny that the truth exists. This is also valid in contemporary European society that is often decribed as multicultural. In this context, people always says that “we cannot have strong common values because there is so much diversity and pluralism”; Do you think that preserving pluralism and diversity paradoxically needs a stronger commitment to truth?

Absolutely. It means that the more we want to understand others, the more we should un-

derstand our background and our reality. Even just to co-exist and live with others, it is necessary to look for the truth together with them, even if we have different ways of coming to the truth. Maybe we cannot agree. But in the philosophy of dialogue it is important to believe that it is possible that the others would understand me. It means that I take into account at the beginning that the other is able to share my views and I am able to share his views. This kind of opening means that I am ready to look for the truth with others even if I do not agree with them about different things and the origins of values. But I am absolutely aware of approaching the truth with them or trying to discover it.

I think that the pluralism in the modern world is absolutely new. Why? A good example from Spain: in the 14th and the 15th century in Cordoba and elsewhere in Andalucia, Muslims, Jewish and Catholics lived in the same place. What is very interesting that each of them was obliged to live with their own system of values. There were three kinds of judgements and three kinds of system, and everybody was obliged to live with their own system of values. Was this pluralism or was it just coexistence of different systems? I think that today is different, not coexistence but pluralism and it is much more difficult. How to live with

the others knowing that they have a completely different way of thinking and values? But knowing at the same time that the truth exists and hoping that they know also that the truth exists and hoping that one day we could live together? We could approach the same truth, maybe not engaging in the same action but pursuing the common good. Maybe the method would be different.

You have just mentioned the common good, which is my next question. Can notions of the common good, even if they come from very different traditions, actually help in policy-making? Can ideas of the common good inspire people in EP to come together or is this too abstract?

Of course for some politicians notions such as the common good are too abstract but I think that the real origin of the EU is based on the common good. Without the concept of common good, trade is just about transaction – different transactions with different kinds of goods. My goods compare to your goods; and we can even agree to exchange them. But I think that the real origin is the common good. We can be together, live together with all the problems we face but in fact we have something which is worth fighting for – a common good. In this way, it becomes an interest, but the common interest is not the same

as the common good. The common interest is a consequence of the common good, not vice-versa. The common interest and the common way of acting (and maybe from time to time common enemies) mean that agreements should be reached by different kinds of compromise. This is also a consequence of recognising the common good as our shared foundation.

If the common good is the most important, then we should maybe be more detached from something which is important for us personally because it is much more important to have a common position based on common thinking. In the social teaching of the Church the priority of the common good over common interests is clear. Other ideologies can be seen as far more sectional and divisive. For some of us and our colleagues the common interest is much more important than the common good. But we Christians do not want to say that they are wrong. To say that “it is not about a common interest but about the common good” means that the discussion would be over before it has properly started. Therefore it is wiser to try to find something which is important for all of us.

The real notion of the common good is always present in the EP. That in itself is very exceptional. In the EP we just try to find all the time a genuine

compromise – not like in national parliaments where someone wins and someone else loses and in fact all the time there is a battle about “who can win and who can lose”. In the EP we have 27 countries, we have a lot of politics about this; all the time there is a tendency to “try to find a common solution, a compromise”. It is a very interesting experience because it is not present in national parliaments. It is completely new, a new quality.

Unfortunately it is completely unclear for the inhabitants of Europe. Nobody is transmitting this to the people because nobody knows how it works. Everybody is thinking that we have here two parties, and one party wins, while another party lose, and all this is normal. No. The EP is much more based on compromise – compromise not in a way of surrender or withdrawal but compromise as a way of trying to find a common position. There are some fields where it is impossible, especially concerning values and the definition of values. But I think that in economy and politics is it possible and it works.

It is interesting what you are saying concerning the difference between the EP and national parliaments. Is it still the case that Europe – both as an ideal and concrete reality – is still very abstract for many citizens? They have some vague idea, partly because of media, partly because

of education, partly because of national politics, but ordinary European citizens do not really know much about the real Europe.

Most of them.

Do you also feel that the concrete 'ideal reality' of Europe will change perceptions over time? Or is it almost inevitable that the division between citizens and Europe will remain and perhaps become deeper?

It is true that there is a real break between the European polity and the inhabitants of Europe. Of course we can say that very often the citizens of Europe do not understand national politics either. But this is for different reason because they do not understand the game. Very often national politics is about an antagonistic game with very hidden principles, rules. People do not understand what is going on, "who is killing whom" or why something is going wrong. In that sense, the European polity is much simpler than the national one because it is not just about a battle but about how people come together and how can they work to find some kind of common position or common solution. But this is not very interesting for the media because there is no real tension or heated atmosphere.

As far as the perception of Europe is concerned I am optimistic. Why? Because the situa-

tion around Europe is very complicated. We have just had to face a world crisis where many of the consequences have spilled over into Europe. However, we will face new challenges concerning different kinds of dangers. For example in Iran with the problem of extremist Islam or the problem of China's growing importance. How will Europe behave? For the people it will be important. What about us? What about us as Europeans? Today we ask what about as the Poles, or the Spanish or the French, etc.? But the more there are global challenges, the more awareness will grow. It will take time but it is absolutely inevitable. Either we will have a growing awareness or all the structures will disappear, which is also possible.

I think that the situation will be much more difficult for individual countries that are faced with the growing challenges from outside. Very often we repeat as politicians that we need a "Europe of results". People want results. It is not always true if we assume that the people need that we will show them only how we spend their money. That is a very simplified way of thinking about citizens. Our fellow citizens are looking for concrete results but very often people are also looking for the rationale: "what reason can we derive from this?". It is much more complicated than

just pragmatism. I think that the situation will change the thinking about Europe. I am sure. Maybe it will take 20 years but what are 20 years?

You have just said that citizens want more than just concrete results, They want some notion of shared purpose. Does this also mean that in future Europe as a political culture and as a union of citizens will take greater interest in religion? Not just religion in general but Christianity in particular because Christianity does try to provide a narrative about a shared sense of the truth, freedom, responsibility? Rather than becoming more divided and more secular, could the desire for a common purpose help produce a religious revival in Europe?

This is not clear. I am not sure because the problem of de-Christianisation is a global one. It is not something that is typically European. There are so many different factors that influence this whole process. Logically, if the people of Europe will be rational in future, we would be much more oriented towards a clear vision of the world that includes religion and is in fact shaped by the Christian faith. But we are facing different processes. One is the secularization which is ongoing because many in the western world are afraid of any limits or norms that can restrict their life. They see religion and especially Christianity as a limit on their will. They say: “we do not

want restrictions, we are responsible for ourselves, we are free and we can assume full responsibility for what we are doing and we do not believe in life after death”.

So one process is secularization, the other problem is the growing importance of another, much stricter religion. For its followers, Christianity is very weak, it is flexible. Many Muslims say that “Europe will disappear because you do not have your norms; people are doing what they want; there are no norms at all”. The tendency of not being limited is mirrored by another tendency which is to limit almost everything. Europeans should not destroy our own system that is facing a much stricter one. But knowing the difference, we are nevertheless destroying our system. This is completely irrational in a sense. Maybe this is the way to come to the moment and say that we cannot live like this. It is a kind of self-destruction. And it is not the problem of Islam, we are doing it ourselves and we are doing it to ourselves. Most Muslims do not want to destroy our religion.

But I think positively because living in hope is the element of Christian thinking; being Christian without hope is quite impossible. So think that sooner or later people decide that we have a very clear system we can live with – a system that in

fact can help to live better and in a very open way because Christianity is very open and it gives a lot of freedom to people compared with other systems. I am not sure whether such a revival will be exclusively or even predominantly religious, but I think that the responsibility of people who are linked to religions and their awareness is bigger because we want all of us and everyone to live in a very moral way. This is the problem: how “not to lose faith and live with the others and not to destroy our identity at the same time”. That is of course one of the elements of the thinking by Cardinal Scola, which is very, very modern: “how to live with the others?” and “how to learn to live with the others not losing our own identity but trying to change and shape it in the world?”. Christianity is very modern and very, very challenging.



CHAPTER 7

The Spectre of Nationalism and the Importance of Supranational Community

Interview with Sylvie Goulard MEP

Sylvie Goulard MEP, is elected in the West region of France (Brittany, Poitou Charentes, Pays de la Loire). She is Coordinator of the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee (ECON) for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). She was rapporteur for the legislation creating the European Systemic Risk Board, one of the texts of the “packet” to reinforce European financial supervision following the crisis. She is currently rapporteur for one of the texts concerning the improvement of economic governance of the EU (sanctions applicable to Member States of the eurozone in the event of violation of the common rules). She is also a substitute member of the Agriculture and Rural Development Committee (AGRI). In September 2010 Sylvie Goulard was awarded the prize of MEP of the Year for the ECON committee by The Parliament Magazine (nominations by professionals working in the sector/vote by MEPs).

After her studies of law, political science and the ENA, Sylvie Goulard began her professional life serving as a diplomat in the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (legal department) and the French Conseil d'Etat. This was followed by a period at the French Policy Planning Staff (in charge of Franco-German relations and EU matters). She also worked as a Research Associate for the Centre d'études et de recherches internationales (Sciences Po, Paris). Between 2001-2004 Sylvie was a member of the group of political advisors to Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission. She teaches at the College of Europe (Bruges).

In December 2006 Sylvie was elected President of the European Movement, France and was re-elected in December 2008 until June 2010.

Her books include *L'Europe pour les Nuls* (2007), winner of the European book prize 2009, *Il faut cultiver notre jardin européen* (2008), *Le Coq et la Perle, 50 ans d'Europe* (2007), *Le Grand Turc et la République de Venise* (2004 – with a foreword by Robert Badinter, winner of European book prize 2005). She is also co-author with Francis Fontaine and Brune de Bodman, *La Mondialisation pour les Nuls* (2010).

Would you describe this crisis as exclusively economic and political or would you also include other dimensions?

May I ask a question first: which crisis? Because you know there are many different aspects. On the one hand, you have a financial crisis born in the United States for very specific reasons: the way they borrow and invest money, and then this crisis spread to the rest of the world partly for reasons linked to the market and partly due to the way technology is operating. And that is one aspect. Then you have the crisis inside the Euro zone which is another one in my opinion. Of course, the fact that we had faced the financial crisis has probably contributed to the difficulties we have in Europe. But in my opinion you have different reasons, and furthermore you have a broader crisis; not that of the Euro, not that of the Euro zone but a crisis of the European dynamic. Do you want to focus on a very specific narrow subject or do you want to open it up a little bit?

If you want to say something first about the financial and economic crisis, in particular the two dimension that you have pointed out: the financial crisis that originated in the United States and spread to financial markets around the world, and the crisis in the euro zone. What

role do factors such as irrational market behaviour or short-term profit maximisation play?

In the USA it is clear that it has something to do with profit maximization, even if the broader context is probably that when you have rising inequalities and you want people to keep a certain standard of living. In that case, you allow them to borrow and this is one of the aspects that you could also see in the southern part of the euro zone, but in a different context. So of course profit maximization is a major factor, specifically the fact that people have completely de-connected risk from the consequence of risk. Moreover, the appreciation of what is sustainable growth was not very rational. If you look carefully at some of the benefits you can get, some investment funds are not very rational.

But another element is probably also the fact that with technologies many people believe that new machines offer something that was not possible in the past, because of the unprecedented liquidity of the market. Technology has played a crucial role in all this. I do not know if you have ever heard about high frequency trading and the fact that some financial tools were not available 20 or 30 years ago, not even 10 years ago. So this is something we have to keep in mind: the relation between human beings and technology.

In the euro zone you really have a moral dimension in the actions (or lack of actions) of many governments. I include France to a certain extent in this. You have politicians who have made choices implicitly or explicitly not to adapt to the changes in the world but to maintain a certain living standard (*droit acquis*) by creating debt. That is a very irresponsible sort of behaviour that is not rational at all but instead focused on the short term, and this is another important element. You have technology, you have profit maximisation but you also have the fact that we are very much involved in short-term policies in many countries. People do not look beyond the immediate present, and the first effect is now something that you can see in Italy for example with youths in the streets: one generation has chosen to create debt to finance current expenditure and the ones who are going to pay for that are the people of the next generation.

So here you have a very strong moral problem and at the same time in my opinion one of the main European problems is now the rise of nationalism that we are seeing everywhere. And it has probably something to do with the fact that some big political groups like the Christian Democrats, on one side, and the Socialists on the

other, who in the past were more international (*P'internationale socialiste* or the universality of the values of the Church), have lost their universal, cross-border vision of humanity and are more focused on very national, narrow-minded issues and defend self-interest.

I remember the debate in France in 2005 about the so-called 'Polish plumber': the left party used the image of a worker from another country to scare the people. That's a big change if you compare it with Marx. In my opinion the Church has also lost the view. If you compare the part dedicated to social issues at the beginning of the 20th century in Catholic social teaching and you look at what the Church is focusing on now, even if there is an encyclical element, I am quite sure that the Church is not exactly playing the role it should play on social issues.

So is short-termism in economics and politics irrational?

I did not say markets are not rational. I have not used the word "irrationality" for everything. You could be cynical and say that short-term behaviour is very rational. I can say with John Maynard Keynes that "in the long run we are all dead". If people only look at themselves, they might be very rational.

But given that there is market panic and irrational its behaviour in the short term, how can we inject more reasonableness or more rationality into economic and political processes to secure at least the medium term? What tools are available to an institution like the EP?

If I knew that, I would try to get it patented! There are some elements that are nevertheless useful. I am an elected politician. Part of the problem of the short-term perspective has to do with the fact that politicians want to be re-elected and they lose completely even the medium-term interest, as you have said. So you have to combine democracy with technocracy. You have to make sure that you have an expertise which is as neutral and as objective as possible. Of course such knowledge is never 100% reliable, we are all human beings and therefore fallible. But on the other hand a strong democracy is crucial.

Look at the role of the ECB now or look at the role of the Commission in the past. Unfortunately I am not sure that the Commission is exactly playing the role it should be playing, even if there are many civil servants in the Commission who are excellent and reliable. You need in the system people who are capable of giving you neutral analysis and then you need time for political debate and a political decision, in my opinion there

has to be a much better dialogue between technocracy and democracy.

The second element is transparency. The more transparency you have, the better it is. Let's take Greece for example: they had some structural problems but they have also used accounting methods there were not 100% reliable (to say it in a polite way). We all knew it. The problem is that information that is only in the hands of a certain amount of people or specialists is not enough to make the European Union work as it should work.

Just one word on the Euro zone: when we agreed on introducing the Euro, we rejected national currencies and national policies and the idea that everybody is doing their own business. But we also rejected the closely related approach of creating a common government and a common budget. The whole euro zone was supposed to rely on national governments acting together in order to save the common interest and this year you needed more peer pressure and more naming and shaming – saying publicly that something is going very wrong. The fact that everything is between the Commission and the Council, and the fact that the Council remains behind closed doors, contributes to this culture of secrecy and non-transparency. The finance ministers have

clearly not delivered what they were supposed to deliver, which was mutual surveillance (according to the treaties).

Here I think we should try to have more public debate. As one of the *rapporteur* on the new Economic Governance package, I am convinced that at the very least we should make politics a little bit more transparent and make it possible to have public debate in the Parliament and in the public sphere if something is going wrong in one country. When you look at the press these days, it is obvious that there is a problem in Portugal and that they are all refraining from telling the truth. The Portuguese Government refuses to look at the reality and they are refusing to play their role because it is very intrusive, it is not something that anyone likes. Here we pay the price for a seemingly irreconcilable contradiction: by adopting the euro individually we are all in the same collective boat. National sovereignty does not exist anymore as it might have existed before. We have to admit that and we also have to accept that the other Member States scrutinise our finances.

You mentioned some of the institutional, structural changes. In your own work you have pressed for a greater supervisory role of the Central Bank and also insisted that

the European Central Bank chair the new pan-European macro-prudential supervisory mechanism. What about the political accountability of certain European institutions? Because people very often say “well it is fine to have a technocratic import, but what about their own legitimacy”. Do you think that more political legitimacy is needed?

May I ask you something very provocative? Why don't you ask yourself what exactly the accountability of the European Council is? The main problem in the institutional system right now is not the the so-called lack of accountability of either the Commission or the ECB. If you look at the way the Commission is designated and the fact the European Parliament can sack the Commission any day, that at least means that if there is huge problem we could show Mr. Barroso the door. As far as the ECB is concerned, we have a continuous dialogue (at least 4 times a year) with the ECB President Jean-Claude Trichet. I do not have the feeling that Mr. Trichet is really just floating somewhere, in Frankfurt or far away from the Parliament.

My big concern is the European Council. Some years ago I wrote a book about the Turkish accession,¹ and it is exactly focused on this prob-

¹ S. GOULARD, *Le Grand Turc et la république de Venise*, avant-propos de Robert Badinter, nouvelle ed. (Paris: Fayard 2005).

lem: where is the right of the European Council, behind closed doors, without consulting anyone, to take such a decision? Of course each of the members of the European Council is supposed to be elected in a democratic way and to be accountable in their own country. The problem is that they are not elected for European policies or politics. That is always one of the least important issues during election campaigns.

Secondly: who is collectively responsible for decisions they are making? And here you have the key: I am absolutely convinced that here you have the main current problem of the European Union – the fact that when the European Council was created, it was not supposed to be an institution but a place where the Heads of State and Government could discuss and exchange views, which is fine. When you now look at the way Herman Von Rompuy is working; for example, he chairs the Task Force on the reform of the euro zone which is not at his level. I genuinely do not know why he has done it. Moreover, he says that “I cannot come to the European Parliament, I refuse to appear in front of the ECON Committee”, but at the same he chairs the ECOFIN Council. It is a mess.

I am concerned because even if someone says that the problem is that the ECB is too in-

dependent, the real problem is that the Council is not accountable. If you look at all the decisions they are taking behind closed doors, whether on taxation or on the Irish crisis in October when the crisis was really triggered by the comments – against the expertise of the ECB. Look at what Lorenzo Bini Smaghi has written on crisis resolution. Look at what Jean-Claude Trichet has said during the session of the European Council.

So you are saying that disagreements that might exist within the Council do not break out in the open because at the end of the day all the discussions and negotiations happen behind closed doors.

We do not know, as they all communicate separately. When people say that “the Member States’ governments that compose the Council are legitimate” I say “yes and no”. If they are legitimate as a body, then they should have one speaker – one person speaking on behalf of everyone. They are all going back to their national constituency telling them what they want about what they have decided. In this sense, the European Council and the Council of Ministers are hijacking the European Union.

Do you think that the new post of President of the Council has made a positive difference?

I spent a lot of time at the European Convention as Prodi's adviser and I remember the discussions very well. You have two different visions of the job. One was the big one, the French one, with the President as the head of the European Council and the voice of Europe on the global stage. The other vision is the one we got. This conception, which is perfectly legitimate, envisages a chairman trying to achieve compromise. Of course, with 27 member-states, you need someone who is permanently there and tries to better coordinate the work of the Council. The problem is not the person of Mr. Van Rompuy, I have nothing against him but the job is an impossible one because the same Member States that were involved in the negotiation of the Lisbon Treaty simply refuse the authority of the President. Look at the recent Deauville Summit (18th-19th October 2010) and the agreement between Chancellor Merkel and President Sarkozy. It was quite symbolic. They expressed their views on European Economic Governance on the same day the task force chaired by President Van Rompuy was supposed to report. You cannot find a better signal coming from those Member States that called for a strong President of the Council.

Europe can only work if everyone accepts the leadership of one person. If you look at the Commission at the level of the G20: it represents only the small member-states, and the big ones pretend to be there in their own right. I have written an article on this subject in *Le Monde*,² and I really believe that this is one of the EU's biggest mistakes. Without proper external representation, we signal to the whole world that we do not believe in what we are doing within the Union.

This leads us to questions about common European values in an enlarged EU and an increasingly globalized world. What common values do you think can help Europe recover and extend a common vision and project?

Just take the European Charter of Human Rights. Only two countries rejected it for internal political reasons. If the EU had not existed, we should have invented it – as the saying goes. In my view, the main reason for which we should fight together and defend our values is that opponents to universal rights are really frightened across the world. Take the Charter of Human Rights, you have all the political rights: personal rights, indi-

² S. GOULARD, “G20: L’Europe en danger”, *Le Monde* 13 November 2010.

vidual freedom, safety and political rights since the 18th century. You also have economic and social rights, you have the abolition of the death penalty which is probably one of the main characteristics of Europe if you compare it with other democracies like Japan or the United States.

One of the trickiest questions is that in the history of Europe you had big movements defending universalism, as I have said before. First of all, the Church and, secondly, the socialist movement. To plead for universal values is something very European, and in fact this is difficult for Europe because when you are united on something that is universal you lose national and local particularity. I am a Catholic but I disagree with the position of the Church on issues such as equality and women's rights. The equality of men and women is central to Christianity. But at the same time, in the UN, the Church is making deals with Saudi Arabia and other countries where the rights of women are not respected. There is a big problem for common European values. If there is something very revolutionary in the Gospel, then that is the relationship of Jesus Christ with women, and the Church has completely lost this dimension. But I am also quite sure that this principle of radical equality has contributed to uniting Europeans, as part of Europe's values derive

of course from Christianity. Other rights originate with the French Revolution and the movements of the 18th and the 19th century. I am quite sure that Europeans share much more than they believe, but inside a polity that protects rights and upholds common values, you never realize just how fortunate you are.

Europeans really should organize charters for sceptics from Saudi Arabia, Iran, North Korea. People simply no longer know the foundations of their rights and values. Nor do they realize that many countries in the world are strongly opposing universalism and trying to defend their system that portrays universal values as western values or Christian values. We cannot pretend that there is not already a certain clash. Emphatically it is not a clash of civilizations, as Samuel Huntington suggested. Instead, it is a clash involving a minority of violent people, either religious extremists or secular fundamentalists. You have people in Israel right now who are extremists, you have people in the Church who are extremists. This is really worrying because of the growing perception in the population across Europe. The day you lose a commitment to genuine universalism you realize what you have had, but right now Europeans do not sufficiently realize what they have in common.

You have also mentioned at the beginning of the interview that there is a rise of populism, a rise of the extreme right and the extreme left. Are we seeing a return to an ugly past that seemed..

I do not say “a return to the past”. It seems to be the case that “the beast” is always regenerating itself in new forms. I would not say that it is the same as in the past, but we are witnessing rising nationalism and virulent regionalism in some countries, yes.

Do you think that to fight this phenomenon we need not only concrete actions such as creating jobs and providing more social justice but also again a stronger discourse on common values?

Not discourse, acts! Acts according to discourse, not discourse alone. One of the main problems in our societies is the lack of transformative policies. Let’s take, for example, the relation with Muslims. I have no sympathy at all for Islamism but they have a point where they say for example that the West has not lived up to its own principles. For instance, what about the number of women who are beaten? Victims of violence who are from our countries and have nothing to do with immigrant communities? Or the fact we do not have not a respectful environment? There are many such examples in different fields, and I

am aware that they are very different but the fact remains that we do not practice what we preach.

I have participated in *Sciences Po*'s initiative called ZEP. It is a project aimed at admitting students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Three years ago, I was on the selection panel, and it was fascinating because the French believe that they have an equal society and an equal system. Of course to a certain extent everybody has the right to go to school, etc. but the perception of inequality is so strong in some parts of society that you cannot deny that what is written in all the public buildings in France "*liberté, égalité, fraternité*" is not exactly true.

So we do not have to make speeches about it but we really need to act according to our speeches. It is exactly the same problem for the Church, with the very horrible problems of child abuse. You cannot say one thing and then behave in a different way. If you have children, you can understand easily that this is the best way of losing any kind of credibility. I would not say that we need to make great speeches. Of course we have to educate, we have to be very serious in the way we educate and then we have to behave according to it.

Let me give you another example. As a result of my book on Turkey, I have had so many con-

tacts with Muslims, both in Germany and elsewhere. A good friend of mine, who is a sociologist in Germany and has Turkish origins, tells me that courts in Germany have accepted that there is a cultural reason for murdering a young girl because it was a tradition – so-called honour killings. But in that case we no longer respect our own rules. Surely the rules have to be the same for everyone.

There are so many examples of mistakes that we have made in the last years – claiming something and then doing the contrary. So I do not want to make great speeches. That is the reason why I go to see how people are treated in jails. I am also a member of the parliamentary intergroup “Fighting against poverty”. If we want to show that we are sure that rules and values are universal and for everyone, then we have to enter in contact with those sections of the population who feel excluded. Not necessarily excluded on purpose but excluded in practice.

So it is really about living according to the values that we profess and acting according to these values.

Yes. At least we must all try to do so...

So if there is this common body of universal values, how do we make it a more concrete reality? Is this possible in

an age that is described as post-ideological, when everyone is a pragmatist and hardly anyone is really thinking about fundamental ideas and principles? What else is required and how else can the EP help this process? You have mentioned in many of your articles that people are hardly aware about what happens in the EP.

This is another issue and this is broader than the question of “what we do”. The national politicians have not admitted that they have created a European Parliament with key powers and competencies. It’s quite funny. The people who have negotiated and ratified the Lisbon Treaty have not acknowledged the EP’s new role. President Sarkozy and Chancellor Merkel exemplify this stance, and we at the EP have had experience of this in the discussions and negotiations regarding the new package on supervising banks and other financial institutions. The EP received powers from the Member States but they refused to admit that we are co-legislators, and thus on an equal footing. But of course it’s a long-term process and I am sure that we at the EP will win in the long run.

I am not very pessimistic at all because if you look at the history of parliaments you always have absolute executive power which refuses to be accountable and is eventually overthrown by parliament. The only question is that I do not

know whether we'll have two centuries to do so, like the British, or if we adopt a French approach...

... that consists in chopping off heads...

But the British did that first! I have the impression that education could be much better in so many respects. I do not want to engage in propaganda, but I would like people to have the opportunity to know what is in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The young generation needs to face the reality about the clash of universalism and particularism. We can also learn from the different churches that we have in Europe that respect each other. If you look at many of the messages coming from the Jewish tradition or the Christian or even the Muslim, you can find some important elements in common, for example charity. But it is not very easy to make such similar points to a wider audience because now you have an overload of information coming from internet, television, etc., Our societies are materialistic, short-term and very individualistic. So it is not very easy to make sure that everybody at some point in their life can grapple with these kinds of questions.

If I may, I recommend to everyone who is interested in these questions of universal values and

principles the excellent report written by the working group for the COMECE on the 50th anniversary of the Rome Treaty. It was a working paper written by some great Europeans who have tried to unearth and describe what is Christian in the European Union and what are the Christian values that have shaped Europe. The very interesting choice they have made was not to focus on the classical rights or on the question of human life but instead to highlight the influence of Christianity in general and of Catholicism in particular on the project itself: reconciliation, cross-border cooperation, financial transfers to poorer countries, etc. They concluded that it was much more important to focus on practices than to plead for the inclusion of Christian principles in treaties. In short, it is more important to live and act according to Christian principles than simply to claim to. If I remember well, Pope John Paul II was not very happy about this position, but I am quite sure that the authors of this report are right. It is the best paper I have ever read about specific European values.

So values such as solidarity and subsidiarity applied in practice...

Yes. People say that the EU is a political and cultural laboratory and a unique way of applying

some values concretely. First was reconciliation. The choice made after the Second World War was absolutely clear, I have written a book on the vision of the founding fathers,³ and it is clear that they have reflected on what went wrong in the 19th century and in the 1920s. There were people in France and elsewhere who were convinced that the Versailles Treaty would destroy Germany and Austria and that there would not be lasting peace. After 1945, they said that we needed to help rebuild Germany and to create a real sense that we live in a truly common house. And they got the result.

If you compare what Alcide De Gasperi wrote when he was in jail, what Spinelli wrote in jail, what Robert Schuman wrote in jail, what Jean Monnet was thinking while in the United States etc., it is very significant that they all came to the same conclusion. It is very interesting because they had the same experience in the post-1919 era, but after 1945 they tried to conceive something different. At least it has been working for 60 years.

³ S. GOULARD, *Le Coq et la Perle* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 2007).

Would you say that in an age of greater cultural pluralism, the founding values of reconciliation or solidarity paradoxically help EU to move forward and shape the future rather than reacting to events?

I am absolutely convinced that the problem is that you have to deliver a clear, consistent blend of both words and deeds. You cannot just communicate this; you cannot ask a communication or PR agency to run a campaign on European values. If I was the President of the EP, I would invite the whole the Parliament to go to Verdun. For the people who for example refuse to go to Strasbourg: you can refuse to go to Strasbourg thinking that it is too expensive but at least you have to know why the EP goes to Strasbourg, and the problem is now that many people simply do not know why we go to Strasbourg. If you are from Ireland or Finland, you do not exactly look at Europe in the same way as the founding fathers did. But nevertheless this is one of the achievements of Europe.

And the only positive thing in the current crisis is that France and Germany are essentially on the same page, even if there are many criticisms on both sides. The day this is no longer the case, I do not know how long Europe is going to last. I have had the opportunity to meet so many people who were engaged in the Franco-German re-

lationship, even during the war. Look at Joseph Rován; he was in the concentration camp of Dachau which he left in February 1945. He could have said “I have seen enough Germans in my life”. In September 1945, he wrote a fantastic text “*L’Allemagne de nos mérites*”, explaining that we will have the Germany we deserve. The evolution of Germany will depend not only on the Germans but also on ourselves. Of course I had the chance to discuss with him and with people who have experienced Franco-German reconciliation and the effects on Europe. This could be communicated much better than it currently is, but nevertheless we should do it. I have experienced something interesting with my children: I do not know anyone who is not transformed when they hear about post-1945 reconciliation.

The long division between east and west, which continues to shape European mentalities, is another case where this applies, isn’t it?

This is exactly what I wanted to say. Look for example at the role that Katyn is playing between Poland and Russia. I am always amazed by the fact that a completely artificial split of Europe is in virtually everyone’s head. The generations that made Europe, if you look at what Schuman wrote, were convinced that the east-west division

was artificial. Now in France or elsewhere you have so many people who look at the new eastern European Member States and ask “are they really Europeans?” This shows that we are all victims of a very strong ideology. Once again it is through culture that we can overcome this mental divide. For example, we could explain that Don Giovanni was created in Prague or that St. Petersburg was built by Italians. Even with Russia we have some very strong cultural links which many people have completely forgotten about.

Very often it is ideology rather than politics that gets in the way...

You also have the consequences of totalitarianism in Central and Eastern Europe. I have observed it with some colleagues in the EP. Some of them have become ultra-liberal because they consider EU rules and regulations as something unacceptable even after they have joined the Union. You know that one of Romano Prodi’s favourite rhetorical questions – in response to those people from Europe’s east who would say that “we have suffered a dictator, we do not want to have the same from Brussels” – “could you tell me the date of your accession request to the USSR?”. Here is the fundamental difference: if you have signed the Treaty and you want to stay

in the EU, that's fine. If you want to leave the Union, the door is open for you. No one is a prisoner of the EU in the EU. Jerzy Buzek, the current President of the EP has spent the longest part of his life under Communist rule. But I am absolutely confident that the new generations are going to look at Europe very differently. Even in Germany, after 20 years, you still feel a difference between east and west, so it takes time. There are also some countries in which there is a divide between north and south, after 150 years of unity.

Will it get worse before it gets better? In term of the growing divide between the core and periphery countries of the euro zone or the rise of nationalism...

To be honest I do not know. You know that in life you never know what is going to happen. Of course there are some warning elements right now on the agenda, but I do not know whether that means that things will get worse. I am really convinced that we always prepare for the future looking backwards. For example, the ECB is so proud to fight inflation; it is an important lesson of the past but what are the current challenges?

What I am trying to do here is to do my job. Going back to your concrete question "what can the EP do?", it seems to me that it is worth looking at what we have tried to do for the Swift

Agreement. The first version of the Swift Agreement with USA clearly violated European rights. Whether people like it or not, the battle in the Parliament was not easy. There was so much pressure from the USA and from elsewhere. But the EP stuck to its guns and gave a strong signal to the US authorities – not an unfriendly message but one that says that we believe in our own rules and the values they embody. And I am quite sure that they – and others – are going to respect us more now than otherwise would have been the case.

We have done it for the Roma. France bluntly violated the rules and France has always been the country calling not just for a single market but also for a community of values. The French government had the community of values and in the case of the Roma they seemed to dislike it. But it was our job to hold them to the rules and I think we were right. And we will do it again. I hope that we will do it with Hungary in relation to the new media law. We certainly tried to do so with Italy last year on its media law, and we lost it because the vote was tied. We will continue. In some ways, the EP's record is not mighty, and we are not well-known. But to act decisively as we have done recently is the only way to get more credibility.

One of the themes that lingers in the background of all this is the place of religion in European politics. What lessons does your experience carry for the Church and for Christians across Europe?

The only thing that I can say as a person is that religion is distinct from politics and that the Church's independence from the state is a good thing for both. I am not in a position to say to the Church what it has to do or not. Even if we have the impression that we are living in a world where difficult messages do not filter through, I would say that the Church has the huge adventure of pertaining to the heavenly realm of eternity, not the earthly realm of temporality. I am not joking. The Church is the only institution with a genuinely long-term vision. This is the first element and the first reason why the Church can play this role: because it is not interested in the next election, it is not involved in politics and it should not be involved in daily politics. At the same time, the Church needs to modernise if its principles are going to resonate more strongly again in the contemporary world.

The problem is not to know whether such or such a group of people are called at this time the socialists or the liberals but rather to stick to these two principles. First, the principle of eternity and, secondly, the imperative of modernising. On

the other hand, this sounds like a contradiction. I can tell you that I have spoken at the “*Semaines Sociales*” in France, to a public of more than 3000 people. I have always received so much support when I simply say that the Church should stop looking at sexual issues as if they are the most important ones. People don’t care, don’t listen and don’t obey.

But when the Church is taking strong and robust positions on issues like poverty, equality, defence of the planet as God’s creation, then you receive wide, strong support even from people who are not believers. In my opinion, the current structure of the Church is completely obsolete. What other institution in the world would work under that kind of hierarchy? In any institution in the world there is a constant need to renew and to modernize. At the same time, the message of the Church is one of the most modern you can imagine. You take the Gospel and you look at the promise right now. The way Christ has completely destroyed all the barriers of his time between religions and social groups is revolutionary. The way he enfranchised people who were marginalised or excluded. You have here many issues and discussions that concern our societies. I cannot understand how an institution that has such a modern and revolutionary message could become so closed...

This very interesting because it shows that the message and the values stand – even if the institution itself can be dysfunctional...

Yes. But not underplay the second part of my message. And when the Church is really acting for human beings, then the ‘ownership’ can be broader than the institution of the Church itself, which is exactly the message of the Gospel. Here we are concrete and if people take you seriously, then you have influence. It is exactly the same in this parliament: you can only have influence if you work, if you are credible and reliable. Because here in the EP there are so many barriers: nobody knows you exactly and if you try just to defend what you are, you are ineffective and politically damaged goods. But if you enter into a logic of the common good or the common interest and you are seen to be serving the common interest, then you are more respected.

So in a sense you feel that the Parliament is the most European institution....

I would not say that it is the institution itself which makes the EP the best equipped to play this role. I would not like to judge the people inside other institutions. Who I am to do so? In fact, I began my career working for the Council of Foreign Affairs Minister and I also worked for

Romano Prodi in the Commission. Everywhere you can find people who at least try to act as Europeans.

Here you have two elements: the first is that you have really to be crazy to be here in the EP. It's a fantastic life, but at the same time you have many constraints – you are travelling all the time, you are not at home, you take the risk to be completely forgotten. If you want to have a career, do not choose European matters because in that case you are far away from the real decision-makers, etc. So here you have many people who are members of the EP because they believe in it. Some of those will not have a bright future because it is really a choice you pay for.

The second element is that we have increased power because, as I have said, there was this tendency. If you look at all the treaty changes in the last 20 years, they are all in favour of the European Parliament. But for many people in the Member States, this is a kind of theory or “it's nice that the EP is more powerful”. The Germans have something very concrete in mind, but some other countries are unclear. For example, the French often do not know what the EP is. Now we have lot of powers and the Member States will certainly realize what they have done. In Paris nobody realizes that we are now going to decide

in co-decision. It is exactly like the enlargement: you have very nice speeches such as “it’s about peace, it’s the end of the Cold War”, etc. And then they suddenly discover that “Oh...now we have people from Lithuania, Slovakia and elsewhere in the EU”.

The Lisbon Reform Treaty creates closer links with national parliaments. Might that change both the EP’s perception and its real influence?

I do not know. To be honest, I consider it a very big step in theory and an important one in principle. But the question is as follows: are people going to work with us or not? And I remember the Convention: the majority of the Members of the European Convention came from national parliaments. That’s a fact that is always ignored. They were really “socialised” through the process. I remember that when the MEPs arrived – I was not an MEP at that time, as I was working with Romano Prodi – they completely dominated the scene. What we have experienced is that those who came from national parliaments were a very small minority. We will only win the battle if and when in the national parliaments of Europe consider Europe as an issue for everybody. What we have experienced until now is that this is not the case.

And what I said before is that I do not say that the EP has to control the European Council. But the problem is this: to whom or to which institution is the European Council accountable? Where is the European dimension of the Council? Where is the cross-border dialogue? If we do not answer this question, it won't work in the long run.

Let me conclude. The lesson of the crisis is the following one: we have to be more serious with budgetary discipline and with macro-economic convergence. This means that actually, like it or not, if we are serious we have to take decisions on common things like salaries, revenues, social protection, pensions, trade etc. There are very many issues that remain national which require some common action. I would not say that we need to harmonise all these areas of policy-making, that is not the purpose. If you have to go so far as to say to the Italians "well...your last law is not enough" or to the Germans "your policy on trade unions is not in the European interest", then you need to have democratic accountability. If not, then you will have Members States saying that "I do not care" – exactly as France and Germany did in 2003.

Once again, it's really a matter of experience. Our experience is already that it does not work if we are not more intrusive and here the national

parliaments are completely afraid. They are partly responsible for the crisis, at least in the case of France. Each year they have voted for a budget which was heavily unbalanced and now they pretend to be sovereign. And if I were Spanish, Italian or Portuguese, I would not trust national elites. Even in the UK if you look at the way the previous government spent money and money... If we want to be a little bit cynical, they have not even acted in the national interest – if you think that the national interest is not only short term.

Is it the case that mutualisation is not the same as communitarisation and that mutualism is the great untried alternative for the Union?

Would you call the Lisbon Strategy a variant of mutualisation? Because it was a complete failure, and one of the reasons why it was is because that we were too cautious in terms of structural reforms. We have to be less polite, more intrusive and to make clear publicly who is meeting the requirements and who is not. Of course, those countries which do must help those who make some mistakes. The purpose is not to crush anyone.

If you look at Greece right now, then it is the case that – although the changes demanded by the IMF and the ECB are very intrusive – the pop-

ulation is so calm. The people are not reacting so negatively. Right now many Greeks would reduce corruption if they could... The same goes for Italy or France. If, for example, we could reduce unemployment taking the right measures, then we would receive greater public, popular support. That is what people are asking for.

In the 1960s and 1970s, Europe was in some measure a beacon of modernity, but it is not always the case anymore. One part of our job should be to help Europe fulfil that role again. We did it for example for the environment, especially with the influence of northern countries. Germany has also had positive effects on France in relation to environmental issues. We have learnt a lot from them and without that in Europe we would not be so far advanced. Thank you.

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