The Light and the De

Toward a Diasporic Peace T

Veronica Racc

Stand up against governments, against God
Stay irresponsible
Say only what we know & imagine
Absolutes are coercion
Change is absolute
Ordinary mind includes eternal perceptions
Observe what's vivid
Notice what you notice
Catch yourself thinking
Vividness is self-selecting
If we don't show anyone, we're free to write anything
Remember the future. Advise only yourself
Don't drink yourself to death
Two molecules clanking against each other require an observer to become scientific data
The measuring instrument determines the appearance of the phenomenal world after Einstein
The universe is subjective
Walt Whitman celebrated Person
We are an observer, measuring instrument, eye, subject, Person
Universe is person
Inside skull vast as outside skull
Mind is outer space
"Each on his bed spoke to himself alone, making no sound"
First thought, best thought. Mind is shapely, Art is shapely
Maximum information, minimum number of syllables
Syntax condensed, sound is solid
Intense fragments of spoken idiom, best
Consonants around vowels make sense
Savor vowels, appreciate consonants
Subject is known by what she sees
Others can measure their vision by what we see
Candor ends paranoia[1]

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[1] *Cosmopolitan Greetings* by Allen Ginsberg

THE LIGHT AND THE DESERT
Toward a Diasporic Peace Theory

Chapter IV

LOOKING BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

Chapter V

Shaping the world citizen: defending freedom through education

Introductive Reflections

As the title suggests, this seemingly schizophrenic research was born out of a singular sense of necessity. My individual experience somehow intermingled with what I see as a global psychological crisis. In the dark times of this Age of Stupidity[2] I found myself often puzzled in interpersonal relations and academic life, perpetually facing cognitive dissonances and hardly able to accommodate myself in the "common way of thinking". I've been haunted by obsessing doubts. Is there something wrong with me or the world is crazy and ill constructed? I could never accommodate in an Us, neither I felt animosity toward any definable Them. Notwithstanding the unsettling experience of constant disappointment, I was not ready to throw away the ancestral, maybe unjustified, trust on the ultimate possibility of men to dialogically cope with each other and live peacefully.

"Everything is vague to a degree you do not realize till you have tried to make it precise"[3]: my acquaintance with mainstream theories in social sciences and political philosophy eventually worsen my inability to reconcile conflicting tendencies and to provide an answer to a seemingly eternal quest, reformulated by Kant in the modern age. Can man be free and responsible, so that we can attain Perpetual peace? What sort of animal are we humans at the end of the day? *Homo homini lupus* or *Zoòn polikòn*? Similar to a God or a Beast? Moulded by Nature or by Nurture? Masters or Slaves? What is more relevant, theory or practice? Are we moved by reason or passion? Maybe we are *verbivores*, fed by words and stories, animated by the *Logos*. As a pendulum my opinion on man and on his evolutionary prospects changed endlessly, following the controversial feedback of this absurd moment in history. Every time I bet Earth was doomed of becoming a desert, as the moral desert will become physical unless we radically change our behaviour, here and there lights suddenly appeared. To echo Bertrand Russell, "I've made an odd discovery. Every time I talk to a savant I feel quite sure that happiness is no longer a

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[2] The Age of Stupid is a 2008 movie where Oscar-nominated Pete Postlethwaite stars as a man living alone in the devasted world of 2055, looking back at "archive" footage from 2007 and asking: why didn't we stop climate change when we had the chance? "We could have saved ourselves, but we didn't. It's amazing. What *state of mind* were we in, to face extinction and simply shrug it off?" See www.ageofstupid.net

[3] I thank Bertrand Russel for this and other inspiring insight

possibility. Yet when I talk with my gardener, I'm convinced of the opposite". Then, again, as Kant did, I asked myself, what can I hope?

I started a wandering journey around all possible ideas and theories. In the first instance perplexity only increased when I interrogated the Collective Mind[4]. It takes wisdom to transform information in knowledge, and an excessive amount of inputs can overwhelm the ability to orient oneself, as society at large is currently experiencing. My case makes no exception. I approached the vast repository of human ideas, a huge collection, searching an illumination, as the old Greeks used to do with their oracles. Somehow I received the same old response. I was confronted by the Know Thyself imperative as a preliminary condition toward the knowledge of the world. An unquestionable disgust and a deep antipathy for the status quo has constantly driven this research, and my biography, my position, played an essential role in orienting it. For example, as a Diaspora Jew, born out of an accidental half-way encounter of survivors from the East and the West, I always had a sort of a priori sympathy for cosmopolitanism and socialism, which I saw as the only embraceable political ideals; as an Italian citizen living under Berlusconism, I tend to be suspicious toward State institutions and fully aware of the overwhelming power that Communication Media play in the political arena; having studied John Rawls and Emma Goldman, I try to remember that peoples may be better than their representatives and do not coincide with states; as a modern European, I'm inclined to be confident in my reason, slightly arrogant and self-righteous; as a person who was lucky enough to get a good education and travel the world, thus being exposed to different realities and ways of life, I have seen with my eyes how many diverse declinations man and life can have. I asked myself whether my history, identity and subjective inclinations impinged upon my ability to be an objective analysts of the present, and I looked for external help in an honest effort to clean myself from the intrusive traces of what Hanna Arendt defined the vice of vices: the typical western hypocrisy.

Dark Times need people who can give us illumination and call them into the public realm, she would say. Herself such an illumination, Hannah Arendt wrote in

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[4] The development of the Internet may be considered a substantiation of the concept of Collective Intelligence, a virtual incarnation of the World Spirit, and it cannot be doubted that it is progressively archiving and incorporating all available knowledge, collecting it from individual, unique sources, realizing old dreams and satisfying the encyclopaedic aspirations of genuine enlightenment.

her sketches "that even in the darkest of times we have the right to expect illumination, and that such illumination may well come less from theories and concepts than from the uncertain, flickering, and often weak light that some men and women, in their lives and their works, will kindle under almost all circumstances and shed over the time span that was given to them on earth".[5] I looked for the wisdom I lack not only in neighbouring sciences of man as anthropology and media theory but in the work of those men and women that seem interested in saving our souls stimulating our minds. They are rare but always alive through their words, now collected in inspiring collections of quotes connected by a hyperlink. Their vocation of dissent offers the sight of the possibilities obscured by the priority we tend to give to the solace of a good night's rest, to use the words of Stuart Hall. I tried to enact a dialogical encounter with those voices I was waiting to hear, and to learn from within their idiom. Emma Goldman, George Steiner, Aldous Huxley, Stuart Hall (together with many ancient and modern heroes of human conscience I had the luck to meet for the first time or rediscover) put me in what I consider the right track to understand why, after more than two hundreds here from its kantian theorization, the goal of a cosmopolitan world has not been achieved.

The project outlined by Kant in his essay on Perpetual Peace is often referred to as "Democratic Peace Theory". This name highlights one of idea that shaped Kant's model: an international arena composed by democratic actors would be peaceful, as democracies do not fight each others. This hypothesis opened a large discussion, namely the Democratic Peace Debate, in which I do not want to enter. My point is that the spirit and the logic of Kant's project have been misinterpreted, in the sense that the reference point now should not be the issue of whether or not

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[5] Arendt, Hannah. *Men in Dark Times*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. New York, 1968. p. ix

statistics confirm or deny the validity of that hypothesis (eventually rejecting it because of the wars fought by so-called democratic states). The role of the individual has been underplayed. We should concentrate on the true essence of his teachings and see the idea of a cosmopolitan world as the only setting in which autonomous individuals can exist, and coexist as equal citizens with the same rights and duties. We should reflect on how to achieve the mindset Kant promoted, following his pedagogical instructions, to foster a change at the individual, psychological level. In this framework I place my ideal of a Diasporic Peace Theory. The basic idea behind the slogan is that global peace would be attainable if a "diasporic" attitude could inform the way of life, the way of thinking of all world citizens. A diasporic attitude is meant as a synonymous for fluid, open, integral, cosmopolitan identity. The adoption of a liquid identity could in fact impede the formation of any stable enemy-friend couplet. In this scheme, proper education and information are the means to attain the goal of a just and therefore peaceful global society.

My hope in the possibility to overcome ethnic and religious conflict and of nationalistic policies may be cynically dismissed and criticized as utopian, but as Noam Chomsky would put it "optimism is a strategy for making a better future. Because unless you believe that the future can be better, you are unlikely to step up and take responsibility for making it so. If you assume there is no hope, you guarantee there will be no hope". Thus my project may be viewed as a fresh contribution to the democratic peace theory debate, to which it is debtor and partially critic. In the present age the kantian articles would benefit from a re-designed. The stance I endorse addresses more explicitly the nationalist discourse as the edifice to dismantle, and advocate a more radical cosmopolitan policy. Kant's conception of

morality, politics and pedagogy sustained an ideal of man as a rational autonomous being whose dignity must be respected, always and everywhere.

In a virtuous or vicious circle, just citizens can exists only in just society and only the proper men create the proper societies, able to deal peacefully and reasonably with each other. As Archibugi clarified in his enunciation of the *Principles of Cosmopolitanism*, democracy is to be understood as an unfinished, endless journey which acquire its meaning in its historical context[6]. Under the tag *democracy* today are classified states that could hardly be defined *decent*. The quality of a democracy is something different from the formal respect of precast standards, it must be evaluated with other values and depends on the liveliness of society. Out there, in the empirical world, the liberal premises/promises has not been maintained and citizens have been misinformed and cheated. In my opinion it is not so surprising, as a nationalist and capitalist society could hardly become a truly democratic setting. By definition, I would say, not just empirically. To conflate the two models is to perpetrate a perfect murder in which the first victim would be Reason and the assassin would be Ignorance. Nationalists, corrupted and rotten politicians, sold a surrogate of good governance that people bought for decades, contenting themselves with a low quality substitute comparing to the freedom and dignity all humans deserve.

Evolution happened only thanks to non-aligned minds that put into action creative, unconventional ideas, not conforming to the tyrannical *status quo*, opposing and repudiating it. History tells, shouting, that billions of people, in many crucial episodes, had been deliberately led astray by mass media falsification. Moments of conscience are rare in a system manipulated by censors. It took the courage of Zola

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[6] Archibugi, D. *Principles of Cosmopolitanism*. Available at
www.danielearchibugi.org/downloads/papers/Principles.PDF

and his *J'accuse* for truth to be revealed in the civilised, anti-Semitic France of the nineteenth century; it took the brave spirit of Bernard Russell and his *Sixteen Questions*, in the sixties, to denounce the establishment's involvement in the murder of John Fitzgerald Kennedy, probably found guilty of desiring "man to be free and independent" (and willing to work toward it, thus menacing to encumber the interests of those hiding *behind the scene*). Roosevelt himself in 1933 denounced the existence of someone behind the scene in formally democratic settings. "The real truth of the matter is, as you and I know", he admitted, "that a financial element in the large centers has owned the government of the U.S. since the days of Andrew Jackson"[7]. In a rare video dating 1961 president Eisenhower warned Americans of the implicit risk following the emergence of a large military-industrial complex. "When the two meet, misplacement of power could endanger the democratic process. We should take nothing for granted. Only an *alert and knowledgeable* citizenry can compel the huge industrial and military machinery of defence with our peaceful measures and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together".

What happened next is known. Far from prospering together, security and liberty are now, more or less explicitly, presented as an antinomy, as if an unavoidable trade-off stands in between the two. Like *democracy*, *identity*, *truth*, *gender* and *experience*[8], security and liberty must be placed among those special words whose meaning is not definable, but their controversial significance is exactly the battlefields on which the political struggle is fought. Those terms are the 'keywords' of societies, in the sense intended by Raymond Williams in his

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[7] Franklin D. Roosevelt (1882-1945), November 21, 1933. Source: in a letter written to Colonel E. Mandell House. Available http://quotes.liberty-tree.ca/quote_blog/Franklin.Roosevelt.Quote.76BD

[8] An international series published by Other Press address the cultural specificity of words that are key to the understanding of the human condition; the central concepts the editor decide to explore in different cultural domains are: Truth, Identity, Gender, and Experience. Drawing from world traditions, these works show the plurality of human understandings and the wide spectrum of possibilities that exist outside the limited viewpoint of self-centeredness.

Vocabulary of Culture and Society[9] which focuses on the sociology of language, pointing to the way the words we use to understand our society take on new meanings, and how these changes in meaning reflect the political bent and values of a society. Given the unavoidable imprecision of languages and the slipperiness of meaning, we must forcibly employ working definitions that retain certain degrees of arbitrariness.

Revealing their relational nature, keywords remind that definitions matter, and we face on a daily basis a semantic battle in which things often are not called with their names, creating misunderstandings and fostering conflicts over opposed representations of the same realities. It is more vital then ever, I would argue, to understand that communication processes act on the very foundation of democratic life. Orienting public discourses, they impact on the "rational discussion" that "constitutes an essential precondition of reasonable law" and the "rational foundation of ethical principles": the rational discussion serves as "an addition to democratic theory, as well as to ethical philosophy"[10]. Meanings have been distorted, and contemporary men have been distracted, disempowered and stupefied, public opinion has been manufactured and excluded from political life thus we can hardly assist to any rational discussion about (and implementation of) laws acceptable by any reasonable person taking place in the countries we use to call democracies. Maybe a few happy northern islands may provide counterexamples, but still I would say that a real democracy does not exist. A perfect murder has been perpetrated when its meaning has been conflated with the dictatorship of majority and nation-states smuggled as liberal democracies. In my view an international setting constructed within the conceptual boundaries of nationalism resembles the global institutionalization of ghettos. Similarly closed is the resulting mentality, constructed through chauvinist identity politics. I checked on a vocabulary for the synonyms of the word "democracy". Amongst the results, (together with parliamentary government and consensus, democratic system and democratic organization) I found *social equality*, *egalitarianism* and *classlessness*. I checked on the Planet: countries

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[9] First appeared in 1976, the renowned Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* has been updated in 2005 to include the transformation of the last years. (*New keywords: a revised vocabulary of culture and society* by Tony Bennett, Lawrence Grossberg, Meaghan Morris, Raymond Williams. Wiley-Blackwell, 2005)

[10] Excerpt from Rawls's 1950 dissertation thesis, quoted by Joshua Cohen and Thomas Nagel in the article "John Rawls: On My Religion. How Rawls's political philosophy was influenced by his religion", The Times Literary Supplement, March 18, 2009

with those features are nowhere to be found. My humble proposal is that each society should start building a democratic setting by contrasting the illusion that it is already in place (or even the opposite illusion, the idea that the goal is impossible to attain and therefore we must accept the *status quo*).

"To produce, out of the society we have to live in, a vision of the society we want to live in"[11] is a preliminary step, and it requires a huge dose of creativity. Modern society, Frye argued, presents our imaginations with a social mythology that is its own substitute for literature. The purpose of social mythology, with its own folklore and literary conventions, is to persuade us to accept society's standards and values and to adapt to them, to *adjust*. Social mythologies may be more or less solid, depending on the pace of change in a society: when society change rapidly the large element of illusion entrenched in all social mythologies is recognised as just a matter of self-protection[12]. To oppose pernicious effects of externally imposed social mythologies, literature can play a strategic role because it is the place where "our imaginations find the ideal that they try to pass on to belief and action" and "the vision which is the source of both the dignity and the joy of life". Additionally, critical studies are fundamental to distinguish between mythologies and to appreciate the huge gap between the ideals proclaimed in our noble theories and the practices put forward in the empirical world.

An explanatory factor for the depth of this gap may be the improper use of language. Findings in Cognitive sciences suggest that the original evolutionary function of language, whose development required human species an impressive investment of energies, could have been reversed. It looks plausible that the use of that precious, double-edged communication tool would have been distorted. A betrayal of language[13] has been perpetrated. This explanation could make sense of the evident moral regression the human species experienced in the twentieth century: instead of being used as a tool to further improve relations and enhance empathy,

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[11] Frye, Northop. *The Educated Imagination*. Indiana University Press, 1964. p. 140

[12] Ivi, p.141

[13] American ethicist Paul Ramsey has used the expression "betrayal of language" in 1971 to denounce the employment of *category mistakes* and wrong use of terms in foreign policy discourses. More recently it appeared in the title of David G. Riede's book which focuses on the works of the Victorian poet and social critic Matthew Arnold (*Matthew Arnold and the Betrayal of Language*. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1988). As stated in the book flap, it "explores Arnold's attempts to find an authoritative language, and argues that his occasional claims for such language reveal more uneasiness than confidence in the value of 'letters.' According to Riede "Arnold's determined efforts to write with authority, combined with his deep-seated suspicion of his medium, result in an exciting if often agonized tension in his poetic language".

fostering an enlarged cooperation toward common future goals (through shared representation and mutual understanding), language and communications have been employed to deceive, distract and manipulate human minds playing with the enemy-friend atavistic distinction. In this way individuals have been disempowered, the public debate has been hindered and society's ability to progress have been undermined.

Looking for clarifications, I did not disdain any source. I soon came to realised that there is much more useful information about the nature of man hidden in poetry, drama, music, fiction, comics and arts, that in the majority of traditional sources. *Everybody knows*[14] that the hegemonic version of *the story* is a construction. The official records of our knowledge and history as humans are filled with omissions, wrong assumptions and patent lies, thus self-comprehension of society has been secluded. If scholars base their analysis on a misrepresentation of reality their results obviously risk to be inaccurate or flawed. The eternal epistemological questions should always keep us all vigilant, doubtful and suspicious toward our own assumptions. Conscience is very likely to bring insomnia as a side effect. Following Socrates, I admitted my ignorance and kept searching wisdom. Every theorist I met, every idea I found interesting, provided me a piece for this mosaic.

We are facing incalculable changes, as George Steiner wrote it in *Grammars of Creation*, especially when it comes "to licence of speech and representation, of direct dialogue and the formation of interactive communities of shared concerns, interests, ideologies and passions"[15]. Youtube, Wikipedia, Google Books, Project Gutenberg and other reservoirs that recall Malraux's universalistic dream, proved incredibly helpful in my studies. There are unbelievable collections of data online, offering unbound, alternative, first-hand resources. Miraculously, almost all our life as thinking animals is now archived, updated and accessible from the sofa. The hyperlinks enabled "a planetary noticeboard open to everyman"[16]. What the Net potentially offers is "the first totally unrestricted, totally uncensored communication

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[14] I use the expression referring to the song of Leonard Cohen: "Everybody knows that the dice are loaded. Everybody rolls with their fingers crossed. Everybody knows that the war is over. Everybody knows the good guys lost. Everybody knows the fight was fixed: The poor stay poor, the rich get rich. That's how it goes. Everybody knows. Everybody knows that the boat is leaking. Everybody knows that the captain lied. Everybody got this broken feeling. Like their father or their dog just died. Everybody talking to their pockets. Everybody wants a box of chocolates and a long stem rose…

[15] Steiner, G. *Grammars of Creations*. Faber and Faber, London. 2001. p. 248

[16] *Ivi*

system – *ever*. It is the living embodiment of an open market in ideas"[17]. Every aspect of our lives will be revolutionized, from economic analysis to schooling, programming, commerce, medicine and the arts of war:

A force of unimaginable power- a Leviathan, to use a biblical (and Hobbesian) phrase – is loosed on our world, and we are as yet barely aware of it. It is already changing the way we communicate, work, trade, entertain and learn; soon it will transform the ways we live and earn. Perhaps one day it will even change the ways we think. It will undermine established industries and create new ones. It challenges traditional notions of sovereignty, makes a mockery of national frontiers and continental barriers and ignores cultural sensitivities. It accelerates the rate of technological change to the point where even those supposed to be riding the crest of the wave begin to complain of 'change fatigue'.[18]

Since these predictions where made ten years ago, in the pioneering stages of the Internet, things have evolved: censors started their attempts to block the Reformation and the old world is (unsuccessfully?) trying to colonise the new virtual territories of the cyberspace to impede the way to what Gordon Graham called "metaphysical novelties"[19]. Those novelties challenge many of our assumptions. The emerging network society contrasts the old logic of separation active on many fronts. The separation of the mind from the body, the delimitation of the planet territory in closed areas inhabited by an arbitrarily defined portion of the population who claim exclusive rights on it, the compartmentalization of knowledge into separate domains and numb disciplines, appear as different faces of a same hegemonic logic, still ruling in the world: *divide et impera*. The time has come to fill those artificial gaps created through a, hopefully, temporary theft of Humanity[20]. The exemplary result of a century of man alienation from himself and nature, the outcome of "those evenings of the brain" as Emily Dickinson would say, has been the mood expressed by Camus famous saying: "The only serious philosophical question is that of suicide".

The human condition is regaining the attention of natural sciences. In humanist perspective it can be seen as the premise for a fertile dialogue leading to a new age. One of my goals was to illuminate and decode the actual *Zeitgeist* to evaluate the state of the art of human evolution, paying due attention to its communicative

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[17] Naughton, J. *A Brief History of the Future*, Phoenix.1999. p.22
[18] *Ibid*., pp. 44-5
[19] Graham, G. *Philosophy of the arts: an introduction to aesthetics*. Routledge, 1997
[20] I borrowed this expression from G. Harpham, see "Science and the Theft of Humanity", www.americanscientist.org

dimension and the entailed ethical dilemmas. Globalization, the improper name we gave to this confusing historical phase characterised by environmental, institutional, economic and spiritual crisis, poses in front of us innumerable obstacles and challenges. The pace of change is so rapid that hinders social adaptation to new conditions and deters even the human ability to tell reality from fiction. Since chaos is often both destructive and constructive, amazing perspectives and possibilities are emerging. A holistic trend in science is propelling an interdisciplinary convergence toward a new understanding of human cognition, of human relationship with nature, with technology and with other men and cultures. Quantum Physics is revolutionizing our concept of matter. A new Humanism looks for its way, and philosophy should help building its trail promoting intercultural knowledge exchange and global active participation in the market of ideas. In fact, Internet appropriate use would be leading to the establishment of a global public sphere, it could be the space where ideas are shared and confronted for the sake of individual empowerment, a place in which freedom, creativity and responsibility reign and respect is cultivated for common good purposes and public reasons.

In the last century many factors intermingled, creating a social turmoil. A moral and emotional emptiness, stemming from the void left by the decline of religion, afflicted modern societies. On its part, in a vicious circle, Western culture afflicted almost the whole world. Following George Steiner's examination of what he called alternate "mythologies"[21], we may look at Marxism, Freudian Psychoanalysis, Lévi-Straussian anthropology and fads of irrationality (astrology, the occult and others) as more or less unsuccessful attempts to fill that gap. A pervasive "nostalgia for the absolute" grew and deepened in modern conscience, as the decay of formal religion coupled with the failure of alternative definitions of truth.

On the political level, the declaration of Universal Human Rights bring up an alteration of the sovereign states structure, triggering a potentially global, cosmopolitan-oriented and bottom-up, revolution. The development of communications technologies allowed the re-opening of the *Pandora's Box* and we are put face-to-face with past and present mischief of humanity. In my understanding this is an inescapable, necessary and healthy process, to be explained (by other arguments) as an obvious by-product of the affirmation of Universal Human Rights

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[21] Steiner, George. *Nostalgia for the Absolute*. CBC Massey Lectures Series. Anansi Press. 1974

and the spreading of global communications. *What the eye does not see the heart does not grieve over*, but now we can't avoid watching and turn on the other side as the world's suffering will knock on our doors. The inclusive and pluralistic vocabulary of Human Rights stand in sharp contrast to the exclusive import that is intrinsic to the nationalistic discourse. In conflicts between words and facts, representation and language play an important role. Frustrations for betrayed expectations and a complex array of fallacies, moral conflicts and cognitive dissonances hamper the present situation. The recent financial crisis should definitely destroy our blind trust in the capitalist economy autonomy and ability to fulfil its promises of wellbeing. The idea of free market is a chimera. Thus another certainty swept away, leaving an old system of beliefs with no more stable pillars and weak moral justifications. As Breyten Breytenbach puts it "there's talk of fixing the system and not of recognizing the fact that the system is the problem"[22]. On such a slippery stage, the dramatic eternal conflict of enlightenment and obscurantism is taking place, once again, with a new guise. Our minds and our identities are at stake, and we need to readapt to fit the environment transformed by progress in science and technology. To revise our identities in a more flexible, *diasporic* direction, could prove to be an efficient psychological strategy to cope with present rapid changes.

What does the coined adjective *diasporic* exactly refer to? The term *Diaspora* is firstly found in Deuteronomy 28:25, were it is written "thou shalt be a dispersion in all kingdoms of the earth". The Greek etymology of the word comes from *diasperein*, *dia* meaning over o through and *sperein* meaning sow or scatter. In this sense, it does not unequivocally refer to a forced exile, it may also signifies a fertile *cultural cross-pollination*. Historically, in Jewish tradition, it has been often interpreted as a normative concept, a sort of precept to be disseminated, as seeds in the soil, in order to fulfil a mission. The mission would consist in being "a light upon all nations" (cf. Isaiah 49:6) aiming to globally spread a universal ethical message. When the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek its meaning crystallised and the word for centuries used to symbolize the population of Jews exiled from Israel in 607 BCE by the Babylonians, and from Judea in 70 CE by the Roman Empire[23].

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[22] Extract from Amy Goodman' interview "An Hour with the Renowned South African Poet, Writer, Painter and Anti-Apartheid Activist Breyten Breytenbach", available at
http://www.democracynow.org/2008/12/26/an_hour_with_the_renowned_south
[23] Kantor, Mattis, The Jewish time line encyclopedia: a year-by-year history from Creation to the Present, (New updated edition), Jason Aronson, Northvale NJ, 1992 p.81

Nowadays the word does not apply anymore to the singularity of Jewish dispersal. Given the wide range of global migrations it now suggests an emphasis on movement and migration over soil and settlement. It turned into a "diasporic concept"; it brings in mind other travelling concept as crossings, borders and routes. My idea of "diasporic peace theory" evokes this metaphorical meaning and is inspired by the prolific elaboration of this signifier made by Stuart Hall.

Ironizing with the rhetoric of origins and purity, Hall used the concept of Diaspora to challenge and create a tension with the notion of nation and national identity as unified, self-contained and pure. In his rich intellectual activity he has definitely spelt out how reality and identity are products of a narrative construction. In the present society visual representations, spread by different media with their own agenda, constitute the heart of the process of construction. In his analysis of 'Third Cinemas' (referring to the new postcolonial subjects) he investigated the way in which cultural practices and forms of representation put in question the issue of cultural identity[24], underlying the importance of the *positions of enunciation*. It may be shocking to realize what disasters can afflict humanity following the movements of what is essentially a "floating signifier": race. The movement of this and others floating signifiers has an impact on our identity, which "is not as transparent or unproblematic as we think.

Perhaps, instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact, which the new cultural practices then represent, we should think of identity as a production which is never complete, always in process and always constituted within, not outside, representation. This view problematises the very authority and authenticity to which the term, 'cultural identity', lays claim"[25]. As Breytenbach wrote, "just as you cannot survive without dreams, you cannot move on without the memory of where you come from, even if that journey is fictitious. Is what we call identity not that situation made up of bits and pieces which one remembers from previous encounters, events and situations? Is memory not hanging from the branches?"[26] Hall intellectual reflections are rooted in his personal experience of a Jamaican living in England, but his insights on Caribbean identity offer a good standpoint to understand

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[24] Hall, Stuart. Cultural Identity and Diaspora. p.1. The essay was first published in the journal Framework (no.36) and then reproduced online by kind permission of the editor, Jim Pines.
[25] Ibidem
[26] Breytenbach, Breyten. Dog Heart: A Travel Memoir. Cape Town: Human and Rousseau, 1998

identity formation mechanism in general and may be usefully applied to other realms of analysis. First of all he reminded us that discourse is always, inevitably, *placed* and that "heart has its reasons".

Cultural identity may be defined in many ways, but a common position, that Hall questioned, considers it as a reflection of a shared history and ancestry, constituting a sort of collective 'one true self' more important than other superficial or imposed 'selves'. It frames the *us*, the borders of 'one people' in a stable, unchanging way, providing reference and meaning. It is this oneness, this true essence that must supposedly be discovered and brought to light through cinematic representation of diasporic communities. All post-colonial struggles that reshaped our world were informed by such a conception of cultural identity. The rediscovery of identity by marginalised people plays a critical role and represents even today a powerful creative force. In the search of such an identity offended peoples put forward what Fanon called "a passionate research (...) directed by the secret hope of discovering beyond the misery of today, beyond self-contempt, resignation and abjuration, some very beautiful and splendid era whose existence rehabilitates us both in regard to ourselves and in regard to others". Post-colonial societies looked after new forms of cultural practice because the wounds left by colonisation are deep and inscribed in people's minds. As Fanon puts it, colonisation "is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it"[27].

It was important to me to understand that a similar distortion was inflicted on the Jewish people. The most radical assault they suffered in the twentieth century, in my opinion, was not the physical elimination of the majority of them but the corruption of their beautiful ideals, the closure of their openmindness and sensitivity. They were inoculated with the worst of viruses. Forcing them to wear the narrow nationalist dress, and to commit the sin of idolatry of the State as the only option to survive, this has been the most brutal of western crimes. Modern anti-Semitism tried to achieve in this way the auspicated conversion of the Jews that the Church was never able to attain. Totally erasing their historical cultural difference making them a nation like all the others, this would have been the real Final Solution. As Emma

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[27] Frantz Fanon, 'On National Culture', in *The Wretched of the Earth*, London, 1963, p. 70

Goldman immediately perceived in the beginning of the last century, the spectre of Nationalism under the guise of Territorialism visited the Jewish people, and like all spectres made "a lot of mischief (…) causing much confusion in the heads of the Jewish population".[28] Convinced anarchist and feminist, this unmatchable advocate of global justice and freedom for all humanity immediately criticised what she viewed as an unacceptable turn for Jewish identity.

"Natural science calls retrogression of species, which shows signs of a former state already overcome, atavism" – she wrote in 1906 – "The same term may be applied to the advanced section of the Jewish population, which has listened to the call of the Nationalists. They have retrogressed from a universal view of things to a philosophy fenced in by boundary lines; from the glorious conception that "the world is my country" to the conception of exclusiveness. They have abridged their wide vision and have made it narrow and superficial"[29]. She accurately pointed to the correlation of the Jewish question to a larger social question, and to the interdependence of Jewish fate to that of the evolution of humanity, when she wrote these prophetic words: "If we are to throw into the dust heap our hope that humanity will some day reach a height from which difference of nationality and ancestry will appear but an insignificant speck on earth, well and good! Then let us be patriots and continue to nurse national characteristics; but we ought, at least, not to clothe ourselves in the mantel of Faust, in our pretentious sweep through space. We ought at least declare openly that the life of all peoples is never to be anything else but an outrageous mixture of stupid patriotism, national vanities, everlasting antagonism, and a ravenous greed for wealth and supremacy"[30].

As every authentic humanist, she was deeply convinced that the efforts of all oppressed people and freedom lovers should not go after nationalistic scene shifting but toward the social reconstruction of society. She spent all her energies to promote an amelioration of human conditions through human brotherhood, refusing the means of separation and barriers and denouncing authorities assaults on liberty of thought. She opposed the retrogressive idea of nationalism rearticulating the idea of *chosen people* in a way that captures an essential trait of Jewish cultural identity: "In one respect the Jews are really a "chosen people." Not chosen by the grace of God,

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[28] See Goldman, Emma. 'National Atavism', in Mother Earth. No.1. 1906
[29] Ibidem
[30] Ibidem

nor by their national peculiarities, which with every people, as well as with the Jews, merely prove national narrowness. They are "chosen" by a necessity, which has relieved them of many prejudices, a necessity which has prevented the development of many of those stupidities, which have caused other nations great efforts to overcome. Repeated persecution has put the stamp of sorrow on the Jews; they have grown big in their endurance, in their comprehension of human suffering, and in their sympathy with the struggles and longings of the human soul. Driven from country to country, they avenged themselves by producing great thinkers, able theoreticians, heroic leaders of progress. All governments lament the fact that the Jewish people have contributed the bravest fighters to the armies for every liberating war of mankind. Owing to the lack of a country of their own, they developed, crystallized and idealized their cosmopolitan reasoning faculty. True, they have not their own empire, but many of them are working for the great moment when the earth will become the home for all, without distinction of ancestry or race. That is certainly a greater, nobler and sounder ideal to strive for than a petty nationality". This account shine an interesting light on the eternal issue of Jewish identity, on Jewish nationalism and on the effects of Western influence on *others*.

As Hall pointed out, the profound research of cultural identity does not entail a *rediscovery* but a *production* of identity grounded in the re-telling of the past. The act of imaginative rediscovery bear an importance that should not be neglected, as "hidden histories have played a critical role in the emergence of many of the most important social movements of our time - feminist, anti-colonial and anti-racist"[31]. The re-appropriation of a group image must be understood as a resource of "resistance and identity necessary to confront the fragmented and pathological ways in which that experience has been reconstructed within the dominant regimes of cinematic and visual representation of the West"[32]. From a related perspective we may recognize that cultural identity is not so much *what we really are* but rather *what we have become*, it is a dynamic process of becoming more than a matter of being, belonging to the future as much as to the past. Cultural identities are not a transcendent entity; they are located in place, time, history and culture and are therefore in a perpetual transformation. As Hall explained, "far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history,

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[31] Hall, cit. p.3
[32] Ibidem

culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past".

The continuous 'play' of history, culture and power is the proper framework to understand the traumatic experiences of groups who were positioned and subjected in the dominant regimes of representation. As Said denounced in *Orientalism,* the exercise of cultural power and normalisation within the categories of knowledge of the West allowed the construction and imposition of an image that was internalised to the extent that the subjects experience themselves as *Others*. This dynamic worked for many groups, for blacks as well as for Jews and for immigrants in various settings. An important epiphenomena of the larger revolution in global communication and of the new trends of cinematic production is the provision of tools that can give back to individuals their ability to represent and express themselves, and new ways to spread their creatively constructed image in the public sphere. What the fatal couplet power/knowledge, popularised by Foucault, reminds us is that every regime of representation is a regime of power and that knowledge is not external but internal. As Fanon taught in *Black Skin, White Masks*, the strength of representation lays in the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm that results in the inner expropriation of cultural identity and its deformation, if resistance is not opposed.

These considerations on identity amend the previously illustrated conception: clearly identity is neither a transcendental and universal spirit untouched by the marks of history nor a fixed origin to which we can hope to make a final Return. As Saramago explains, identity is something we need but at the same time we should guard its authenticity with suspicion, "since memory, which is very sensitive and hates to be found lacking, tends to fill in any gaps with its own spurious creations of reality, but more or less in line with the facts of which it only has a vague recollection, like what remains after the passing of a shadow"[33]. Nonetheless Hall reminded us that it is not a mere trick of imagination: it is *something*. This *something* has its own histories, and histories bear real, material and symbolic effects. In the construction of identities the past dialogues with the present through memory,

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[33] Saramago, Jose. *All the Names*. Harvill Press. London, 2000. p. 174

fantasy, narrative and myth; cultural identities become the unstable points of identification, or suture in Hall's vernacular. Within the discourses of history and culture those identities are not an essence but a *positioning* resulting from a politics of identity, that is, a politics of positioning that cannot be guaranteed by an unproblematic transcendental 'law of origin'[34].

These unsettling views call for the constant intervention of critics in order to understand the formation of a specific identity. Identity, as culture, has many layers. In the Caribbean case I'm referring to as an example, Hall proposed to understand it as 'framed' by two axes, or vectors, that are simultaneously operative and in a dialogical relationship. The first is the vector of similarity and continuity and the second is that of difference and rupture. In a never-ending movement, identities position and reposition according to the point of reference, signalling an impossibility to constrict them in a definition or category or taxonomy, as there will always be a leftover. As Bauman puts it, and Obama embodies, they are liquid entities.

While all African peoples in America share the experience of slavery, transportation, migration and colonisation, there are profound differences between them. As Hall reminded, "in the history of the modern world, there are few more traumatic ruptures to match these enforced separations from Africa - already figured, in the European imaginary, as 'the Dark Continent'. But the slaves were also from different countries, tribal communities, villages, languages and gods. African religion, which has been so profoundly formative in Caribbean spiritual life, is precisely different from Christian monotheism in believing that God is so powerful that he can only be known through a proliferation of spiritual manifestations, present everywhere in the natural and social world. These gods live on, in an underground existence, in the hybridised religious universe of Haitian voodoo, pocomania, Native pentacostalism, Black baptism, Rastafarianism and the black Saints Latin American Catholicism. The paradox is that it was the uprooting of slavery and transportation and the insertion into the plantation economy (as well as the symbolic economy) of the Western world that 'unified' these peoples across their differences, in the same moment as it cut them off from direct access to their past"[35].

Caribbeans, as the majority of humans, are both same and different; they all

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[34] Ivi, p.5
[35] Ivi, p.6

have singular, unique experiences but were united by a shared event, a position at a certain time in history. Similar considerations apply to the Jews, who reunited themselves, coming from the East and the West, under a unifying banner somehow imposed on them, and still maintain their peculiarities; or to the Thirteen Indigenous Grandmothers, who came from all over the world, from different traditions, but share the experience of expropriation of rights and dignity and the love for the Earth: they created an International Council in 2004 to promote their vibrant indigenous vision and protect not just themselves but humanity at large[36]. They really challenge us to rethink our diversity by comparison.

In and alongside continuity difference persists, but its boundaries are continually repositioned. The European Western position, now central to the system of representation, would possibly be renegotiated as a point of reference. Under new economic, political and cultural circumstances it could stand as the periphery and the marginal, the old and violent, an emblem of moral desert and not of the Enlightenment. An appreciation of the 'play' of different terms within the equation of identity, is exactly what the western Enlightenment was not able to achieve for its cultural blindness and its incapacity to understand the depth of human spiritual needs. While recognizing the tremendous advances of that intellectual event which freed us from superstition and constituted the rule of law as a fiction, "but a necessary fiction with real effects on binding people not to eat each other", Hall criticised its one-sidedness, remembering that "at the heart of the Enlightenment is the failure to deal with race. Of course it doesn't say what was said in pre-Enlightenment days about these other people being a totally different species, that they are less than human, that slaves belong to another creation. It did bring everyone into one creation. But it did so only within evolutionary differences, within the differences between the children of civilisation and those who were truly rational. And that difference has never been lost"[37].

To specify an understanding of difference, which is not pure 'otherness', Hall referred to Derrida's play on the translation of the words difference-*differance*. As Christopher Norris described it, in a sense *differance* "remains suspended between the two French verbs 'to differ' and 'to defer' (postpone), both of which contribute to

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[36]See www.grandmothers.com
[37] Stuart Hall Interviewed by Laurie Taylor in the New Humanist, available at http://newhumanist.org.uk/960

its textual force but neither of which can fully capture its meaning. Language depends on difference, as Saussure showed (...) the structure of distinctive propositions which make up its basic economy. Where Derrida breaks new ground (...) is in the extent to which 'differ' shades into 'defer' (...) the idea that meaning is always deferred, perhaps to this point of an endless supplementarity, by the play of signification"[38]. This view challenges the stability of representation, meaning, and identity. Differential terms reposition endlessly and definite meaning and identity are a sort of temporary break, contingent and arbitrary, in the infinite semiosis of language.

In the dialogical process from which meanings and identities arise, the *Presence Europeenne* is described by Hall as representing the site of exclusion, imposition and expropriation, of a complex dialogue of power and resistance, of refusal and recognition. As in the *Tale of Love and Darkness* of Amos Oz, Europe is a presence whose influence and attraction are somehow overwhelming and which generate ambivalent reactions in those who are identified as others in its racist palimpsest. The enigma to which Hall directed our attention is that of staging a dialogue in which all partners can be active without fear of *being placed*, is that of recognising the irreversible influence of the West resisting its imperialising eye. For example, every black filmmaker or writer in England will have to face the dominant cinemas and literature of West, whose avant-gardes represent an inescapable reference. The New World presence instead has historically been emblematic of *Terra Incognita*. America is the site of diversity and hybridity, it is *par excellence* the site of diaspora, but in a metaphorical sense that refuses the imperialising and hegemonising conception of ethnicity.

What Hall sketched is a forward-looking conception of the diaspora experience defined "not by essence or purity, but by the recognition of a necessary heterogeneity and diversity; by a conception of 'identity' which lives with and through, not despite, difference; by hybridity. Diaspora identities are those which are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference"[39]. This idea of identity, that seems the best fitted for a post-colonial and globalised world, encourages an appreciation for the mixes of colour, for the blends of tastes and for the aesthetics of the cross-overs, of the cut-and-mix. Artists have somehow always

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[38] Norris, Christopher. *Jacques Derrida*. Harvard University Press. London, 1988, p.5
[39] Hall, cit. p.14

explored the terrains of a diasporic aesthetics, critically appropriating elements of the master-codes of the dominant culture in a syncretic dynamic in which signs are disarticulated and their symbolic meaning is re-articulated. As Hall explained, and Jewish diasporas testified, an overwhelming nostalgia for lost origins cannot be fulfilled, but constitutes the activation of the symbolic, of representation. It is an infinitely renewable source of desire, memory, myth and discovery that nurtures our literary and cinematic narratives.

What Hall theorised is an identity constructed within representation. In his view, shared by Zizec[40], we should not understand cinema as second-order mirror that reflects what exists but as a powerful form of representation that shapes new kind of subjects. Moreover, it allows the re-imagination of communities, and, as Benedict Anderson argued, imagined communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined[41]. Our stories, books and movies are thus points of identification, constructing those positionalities that we will call in retrospect our 'cultural identities'. As Fanon defined it, "a national culture is not a folk-lore, nor an abstract populism that believes it can discover a people's true nature. A national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence[42].

The problem with identity is that hegemonic forces that may drive a national culture in dangerous directions invade the sphere of thought. The boundaries of national territories, in the physical and metaphorical sense, are challenged by the present global social dynamic. Confronted by alternative representations and unheard voices, someone may be tempted to go back to old secured identities, to look for the solace of closure[43] just to have a good night's rest: this has been the main preoccupation of Stuart Hall in his critical engagement which I so profoundly respect. This stance can be considered a "normative critic of normativity"[44] urging the public to *take* positions, not only to disavow them. Hall's voice called loudly for

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[40]In the documentary A pervert's guide to cinema, Zizec present his psychoanalytical perspective

[41]Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Rise of Nationalism.* London, 1982. p.5

[42] Fanon, cit. p.88

[43] On the "solace of closure," see, for example, Stuart Hall, "On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall," in Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies, ed. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen. Routledge. New York, 1996, p.137

[44] Scott, David. Stuart Hall's Ethics.   Small Axe - Number 17 (Volume 9, Number 1), March 2005, pp. 1-16

an ethical response to the abuses that grow out of self-righteous satisfactions, secure doctrines, frozen orders and sedimented identities.

As in the case of other authors who oriented my research, Stuart Hall's intellectual genius does not only distinguish itself for the depth of his outlook. Goldman, Huxley, Steiner and Hall are authors who provided guidance in *speaking ethics to politics*. The specific ethics that emerge from a fluid conceptualization of identity is *dialogical* ethics, in the sense of being *founded in* and *shaped by* responsivess to alterity, because there can be no morally guaranteed sovereign identity. As Noam Chomsky or Naomi Klein, they have all been active voices in the public realm. Hall brilliantly deconstructed contemporary popular images; quoted for coining the term "Thatcherism" in the '80s, he assessed New Labour as the "Great Moving Nowhere Show" (a definition that could be attached to the whole European left). Over the past forty years he produced politically engaged cultural analysis, addressing in a compelling way the issues of class, race, ethnicity, and identity. His contribution is inestimable in the difficult times in which we live, if we want to avoid a new routine of silencing and a new regime of submission and mortification.

Evading somehow the borders of disciplines, Hall and other illuminated authors exalted the importance of the contingency of the present. His typical *modus operandi* has been that of interventions and his favourite format the essay, the most fitted for a timing analysis of the present. Even when his writing took the shape of the book, as in seminal works like *Popular Arts*, *Policing the Crisis* or *The Hard Road to Renewal* and *New Times*, they constitute strategic interventions, provisional notes in which the distinctiveness of a particular present, is made visible[45]. His stance resembles that of another hero of the last century, Foucault, as both of them seem to embody a keen alertness of the present in which they find themselves and tend to consider thinking as a way of changing first of all themselves, preventing the hardening of an idea or identity into a dogma or an habit. Because habits, wrote Saint Augustine, soon become necessity, and Publius Terentius told us a long time ago "how many unjust and wicked things are done from mere habit".

Staying within "shouting distance" from Marxism, Hall gave an important contribution to its revision with his famous "without guarantee" essay on ideology, wrote for the centenary of Marx death. Addressing our way of thinking to

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[45] Scott, cit., p.3

determinations, he tried to rescue a conception of "determinacy" from the infamous "final closure" of "determination in the last instance", thus making room for contingency. The Althusserian idea of the "last instance" in his opinion was "the last repository of the lost dream or illusion of theoretical certainty." The structure of social practices, he argued, is "neither free-floating nor immaterial. But neither is it a transitive structure, in which its intelligibility lies exclusively in the one-way transmission of effects from the base upwards." The "terrain" of the present, therefore, cannot be defined by "forces we can predict with the certainty of natural science, but by the existing balance of forces, the specific nature of the concrete conjuncture."[46] In order to pay the tribute to the "contingency" of the present, as Hall has urged, the idea of history-as-teleology must be abandoned. As Scott underlined in his tribute to Hall, the anti-essentialist idea of contingency is important "because it helps to unsettle - indeed subvert - a naturalized idea of politics as the mastering and instrumentalist practice of securing and guaranteeing a preconceived community of the Good and the True. To hold open a space for contingency, to read the present conjuncturally, is to see in this conventional idea of politics the ideal of an antipolitics, in other words a politics conceived to pre-empt and foreclose the possibility of an ethics of politics as such. The point of contingency is that it promotes a conception of politics understood as strategic, as always earned rather than derived, as always a matter of ideological struggle, as an ongoing "war of position"[47].

Hall did not mean to affirm that politics is groundless, but that it must be conceived without any premises. Assuming the absence of Final Grounds means to give traction to a position and force to a claim. Enough grounds may exist, but such grounds must be treated lightly, as provisional rather than predetermined or ontological. Those grounds would be, in Judith Butler's paradoxical phrase, "contingent foundations"[48], having a horizon toward open-ended theorization.

The point of contingency is important to underline that we are all inevitably constituted by energies flowing beneath the threshold of rational self-consciousness and therefore we ought to control the *hubris* of reason. It means not to forget that the

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[46] Hall, Stuart. "The Problem of Ideology—Marxism without Guarantees," in *Marx: A Hundred Years On*, ed. Betty Matthews. Lawrence and Wishart. London,1983
[47] Scott, cit. p. 6
[48] Butler, Judith. "Contingent Foundations: Feminism and the Question of 'Postmodernism'," in *Feminists Theorize the Political*, ed. Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott. Routledge. New York, 1992

most enlighten intention can be tragically reversed and end up in a catastrophe. When we act in the world we expose ourselves to contingencies and may found ourselves unable to choose well. We can only try to be as receptive as possible to the given circumstances in which we act, giving priority to the ethical-political project of making provisional claims and negotiated settlements that can constantly be re-imagined. The legacy of Gramsci's idea of the intellectual life is precious to understand this stance that promotes the free appropriation of whatever resources the thinker needs in his contingent "field of work" from other "disciplinary terrains". The new ethics of knowing that Hall sustained somehow evaded philosophy in the sense that views the theorizing process as endless and challenges the hegemonic claims of existing disciplines. Evading the tyranny of Philosophy we can use theories in a mode of phronesis, of practical (and therefore ethical) reasoning[49]. As Deleuze put it, "theory is exactly as a box of tools"[50]. My question here is how can we use those tools to heal and fix the world.

I retraced Hall's ideas as they provide a useful framework to understand the process of identity formation as an unfinished suturing of fragments, a fluid and plural entity with no reliable core. This process is not totally random; it takes place in relations of power, in relation to institutions, apparatuses and disciplines that position the self in structured relations of inclusion/exclusion. Identities are mainly constructed through difference and "this entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its constitutive outside that the 'positive' meaning of any term—and thus its identity—can be constructed."[51] I wanted to stress the activity of cultural criticism as an essential practice of resistance against the hegemonic claims, a sort of ascetic endeavour. According to Arnold "The rule (for criticism) may be summed up in one world – disinterestedness. And how is criticism to show disinterestedness? By keeping aloof from what is called 'the practical view of things'; by resolutely following the law of its nature, which is to be a free play of the mind on all subjects which it touches."[52] This idea of criticism is

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[49] Scott, cit. p. 10

[50] Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, "Intellectuals and Power," in Foucault, M. *Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews*, ed. Donald Bouchard. Cornell University Press. Ithaca, 1977, p. 205–17.

[51] Hall, Stuart. "Who Needs 'Identity'?", in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), Sage. London, 1996. p. 4–5

[52] Arnold, M. *'Culture and Anarchy' and Other Writings*, Cambridge University Press, 1993. p.37

somehow consonant with the position of Harpham, according to which critic's business consists in the search for the best of what is known and thought in the world and then making this known with the goal of creating "a current of true and fresh ideas". What this sort of ascetic activity requires is inflexible honesty and due ability.[53]

Inflexible honesty and due ability in fact characterised the intellectual practice of Hall, whose cultural criticism became an idiom for ethics. Similar is the case of Edward Said, with which he shared the 'ethics of outrage'. The humanist intellectual commitment of those authors clearly has a Gramscian provenance, but their restlessness is peculiar. As Scott highlighted, Stuart Hall and Edward Said (like Emma Goldman) speak to us "as intellectuals 'out of place', intellectuals whose public and worldly relation to the world as lived-in, as thought-about, is never not oblique, never altogether at home, never completely centred in a theory, in a discipline, in an institution, in a nation, in a permanent enclosure of harmonious reconciliations and imagined satisfactions"[54]. The vocation of dissent is the attribute of the humanist intellectual, as Said powerfully remembered in his Reith Lectures: "At bottom the intellectual (…) is neither a pacifier nor a consensus-builder, but someone whose whole being is staked on a critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmations of what the powerful or conventional have to say, and what they do"[55].

The metaphorical conception of diaspora allowed me to foreground an anti-essentialist notion of identity and representation, to emphasize internal difference, to complicate supposedly unified categories recognizing fictional ideas and to refuse any oppositional logic that unwittingly repeats the binary them-and-us logic of racism. Moreover, the conception of a reality that is constructed in a narrative way suggests that storytelling is an important constituent of social life and a powerful agent of social change. The problem is that in the practices of daily life and in mainstream media that sort of logic seems still very much at work, and prejudices and fears are perpetually reinforced and exploited for political reasons. In order to

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[53] Harpham, G.G. *The Ascetic Imperative in Culture and Criticism*, University of Chicago Press, 1992. P. 244

[54] Scott, cit. p.15

[55] Said, Edward W. *Representations of the Intellectual*. Vintage. New York, 1996. p 23. More recently, in *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (Columbia University Press. New York, 2004), Said defended a robust humanism, to be pursued with generosity and self-reflexively criticism.

understand why hatred between groups continues to proliferate, attention must be paid to those who profit from it. An approach to conflict in the terms of the political economy of hatred[56] provide an interesting perspective to evaluate present ethnic and religious conflicts, denouncing the responsibilities of the sources of the stories that in turn produce violence among groups. From the analysis of identity's representation emerged that stories and images of the other are rarely *innocent*, they are inexorably inscribed in a system of power. The characters to which attention must be paid are the real directors of the show: they are the *moral and hatred entrepreneurs*, the *shock doctors* and the *gatekeepers* that influence our identity manipulating our understanding of the world respectively on the political, economic and cultural level.

Edward Glaeser, who created mathematical equations to explain the variation of the demand and the supply of hate-creating stories, has brilliantly addressed the activity of hatred entrepreneurs. Referring to the evolution of anti-black hatred in the United States, to the many episodes of anti-Semitism in Europe and to the rise of anti-Americanism in the Arab World, Glaeser managed to develop a model of interaction between the supply of hate-creating stories and the willingness of voters to listen. As Joseph Goebbels emphasized, the power of Nazi anti-Semitism stemmed from repetition, not accuracy: "If you repeat a lie often enough, it becomes the truth", and history demonstrated that the impact of the stories that foster hatred comes from repetition, not from truth. In fact, in the analysed cases, prejudices have often been fostered by counterfeit stories manufactured and spread by *entrepreneurs of hate*. In the post-bellum South, as Woodward described, race hatred "was furthered by a sensational press that played up and headlined current stories of Negro crime, charges of rape and attempted rape, and alleged instances of arrogance (…) Already cowed and intimidated, the (black) race was falsely pictured as stirred up to a mutinous and insurrectionary pitch"[57]. Glaeser pointed to the fact that hatred most of the times has internal consistency, in the sense that people do really believe that the object of hatred is evil, even if the criminality of the hated group is often minimal, because their fears have been influenced. The spread of resentment against Romanians in Italy is a typical example of fabricated hatred to which I had the displeasure to assist: every day a new episode of "construction of an enemy" was screened by Italian television and newspapers, and the strategy took just few weeks

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[56]See Glaeser, Edward L.,*The Political Economy of Hatred*. Harvard University mimeograph, 2004
[57]Woodward, C., *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, Oxford University Press. Oxford, 2002. p.123

to bear violent results.

Glaeser's model central predictions is that rightist anti-redistribution candidates will spread hatred against poor minorities, while leftist pro-redistribution candidates will eventually spread it against rich minorities[58]. If a change occurs in the relative economical situation of the minority comparing to that of the majority, the incentive to spread hatred increases because income distribution policies will have a greater impact on the resources of the minority. But income is not the only factor which can be manoeuvred to gain a political advantage: "If political divides concern issues other than income, politicians will build hatred against minorities that stand to gain from their opponent's platform. Thus, nineteenth century European rightists, who supported king, church and traditional restrictions on Jews, naturally used anti-Semitism against their liberal opponents who favoured religious emancipation. Policies that limit contact with minorities, such as bans on immigration, segregation, or genocide, will complement hatred, and their proponents, such as Hitler and Le Pen, will find hatred to be an attractive strategy"[59].

How can hatred be discouraged? Leaving aside the supply-side (obviously the solution would be a truly democratic political system where politicians do not try to exploit citizens feelings, but if that was achievable these problems would not subsist), the negative effects of stories spread by hatred entrepreneurs must be counterbalance acting on the recipients of the poisoned messages. According to Glaeser the demand-side of the political economy, the utility of in-group members, is shaped by the costs and private benefits of information about the out-groups. Therefore it can be foreseen that "hatred will not spread among groups who have private incentives to learn the truth about a minority and that integration may deter the spread of hatred as it creates a demand for correct information and reduces the costs of acquiring such information"[60]. Minorities who more differ from the majority along a policy-relevant dimension, are more tempting targets for hatred, while citizens' willingness to accept false hate-creating stories is determined by the costs and returns to acquiring information. Consequently, people who interact frequently with minorities in peaceful setting will be less likely to accept false stories. "Hatred is particularly likely when out- groups are politically relevant, but socially

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[58] See also Chua, A., *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability*. Anchor Books. New York, 2003
[59] Glaeser, cit. p.4
[60] Ibidem

segregated"[61]. The evolution of communications, making information cheaper, may bear a double effect on hatred trends. Cheap press and television reduced the costs of spreading hatred and helped the diffusion of prejudices; present technological developments would provide new channels to be filled with false stories but at the same time reduce the cost of information so that false stories can be easily unmasked.

Before analysing the social role of other manipulators of human perceptions, it may be useful to look into the nature of those feeling. Why do we hate? According to Darwin the roots of hatred lay in self-defence and vengeance: "if we have suffered or expect to suffer some wilful injury from a man, or if he is in any way offensive to us, we dislike him; and dislike easily rises into hatred"[62]. For Dozier hatred is the emotional response to the belief that someone is dangerous and/or violates social norms. In her words "hate is a primitive emotion that marks for attack or avoidance those things which we perceive as a threat to our survival or reproduction (…)"[63]. In his extensive overview of human evil Baumeister stressed that hatred stems from "seeing oneself under attack" and documented that people who "carry out the massacres see themselves as victims of mistreatment and injustice," and "bullies, wifebeaters, tyrants, and other violent people tend to think that other people are attacking or belittling them"[64]. In his Anatomy of human destructiveness[65] Erich Fromm describes aggression as a "defence against threats to man's vital interests." It is relevant to notice that in a modern account of psychological literature on hatred the role of "threatened egotism" or "identity uncertainty" has been emphasized. Supposedly "violence results when a person's favourable image of self is questioned or impugned by someone else"[66].

A leading role in orienting the performance of hatred is played by the *Gatekeepers*, who act as cos-stars. They collaborate with other actors in the internal decision making process of relaying or withholding information from the media to the masses. The filtering of information, the gatekeeping, is in fact an essential process in journalism and in human communication in general. The theory was

[61] Ivi, p.40

[62] Darwin, C., *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*, University of Chicago Press. Chicago, 1979

[63] Dozier, R., *Why We Hate*. Contemporary Books. Chicago, 2002. p.16

[64] Baumeister, R., *Evil: Inside Human Cruelty and Violence*, W. H. Freeman. New York, 1995

[65] Fromm, E., *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*, Owl Books. New York, 1973

[66] Baumeister, cit. p. 376

instituted in 1947, during the golden age of communication studies that followed Second World War by social psychologist Kurt Lewin[67] and then slipped into the language of many disciplines and different realms (see for example gatekeeping in organizations or in academic institutions). The regulation of the flow of information occurs at different levels of media structure, from the sources that are chosen to the decision to cover or print a story. To describe this activity Lewis applied the idea to the food chain and used the metaphor of a wife or mother who decides which foods end up on the family's dinner table. In the several processes of social life, the gatekeeper is the person who decides what shall pass through each gate section. In 1961 White seized upon Lewin's comments, solidly turning it toward journalism[68]. Looking at the effects of gatekeepers' decisions, in the seventies, McCombs and Shaw emphasised that the audience learns how much importance to attach to a news item from the attention given by the media place, thus pointing out that the gatekeeping concept is related to the agenda-setting[69].

Gatekeepers's role is fundamental because by letting some stories pass through the system and keeping others out they are able to control the public's knowledge of actual events. In any social system they decide which commodity (materials, goods and information) may enter and which may not. Individuals or institutions themselves may act as gatekeepers, and in a political system they are those who control access to power and regulate the flow of information and influence. Almost all communication planning include some aspect of gatekeeping, which is inevitable and useful under certain circumstances but can be very dangerous. Choices in gatekeeping activities include a complex web of motives, values and influences, and the risk of power's abuses is very high. It is easy to realize, for example, that the news we receive, especially from other countries, are just an arbitrary selection made by the editor, therefore if the gatekeeper's selections are biased, the readers' understanding will consequently be biased.

Another theoretical concept I found useful to understand the role of communications in the orientation of social dynamics (through the manoeuvring of

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[67] See Lewin, Kurt, "Frontiers in Group Dynamics," Human Relations, v. 1, no. 2, 1947, p. 145

[68] See White, David M. The 'Gatekeeper': A Case Study In the Selection of News, In: Lewis A. Dexter and White David M. (Eds). People, Society and Mass Communications. Free Press. New York, 1964

[69] McCombs, Maxwell E. and Donald L. Shaw, "Structuring the unseen environment," Journal of Communication, v. 26 no. 2, pp. 18-22 (Winter, 1976)

minds and hearts of the recipients of information) is the idea *moral panics*. The nature of the agency of *moral entrepreneurs* is similar to that of *hatred entrepreneurs* and *gatekeepers*. The expression was popularised by Stanley Cohen in his *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, but it was used for the first time by his colleague Jock Young, referring to the reaction to drug takers in Notting Hill[70]. Cohen instead first used it to describe press reporting and the reaction of the establishment to the behaviour of mods and rockers and the panic arose about youth gangs in Britain. Media attention in a couple of year turned to newly emerging subcultures, the hippies and the skinheads, and mods and rockers fade from public view. Definitions of *moral panic* differ between sociologists, as Kenneth Thompson pointed out. While British sociologists portray *moral panics* as crises of capitalism, Americans tend put more emphasis on the psychological factors[71]. Studying crime statistics in 1978 Hall and others theorized an ideological function that "rising crime rate equation" performs in relation to social control[72]. Thirty years of observation of such phenomenon support Hall's suspicion that crime statistics are manipulated for political and economic purposes. As he suggested in *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*, moral panics, over mugging in the example, could be ignited in order to create public support for the need to *police the crisis*. As media profit from lurid crime stories is high, they play a central role in the "social production of news". Goode and Ben-Yehuda[73] argued that moral panic has a typical structure, the main features being: *concern* (referring to the awareness that the behaviour of the group or category in question is likely to have a negative impact on society), *hostility* (meaning that hostility towards the group in question increases as they become *folk devils* and thus a clear division is marked between *them* and *us*), *consensus* (the group in question is depicted as posing a very real threat concerning society at large. In this phase *moral entrepreneurs* need to be vocal while the *folk devils* appear weak and disorganised), *disproportionality* (obviously the reaction is disproportionate to the actual threat) and finally *volatility*. Even if they may disappear as quickly as they appeared in news reporting, the prejudices and fears they instilled in people's mind

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[70] Jones, M, and Jones. E. *Mass Media*. Macmillan Press. London, 1999

[71] See Thompson, K. in Critcher, C. *Critical readings: Moral Panics in the Media*. Open University Press Berkshire, 2006

[72] Hall, S., et al. *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law and Order*. Macmillan Press. London, 1996

[73] Ben-Yehuda N. and Goode E. *Moral panics: the social construction of deviance*. Blackwell. Oxford, 1994. p. 57-65

may stay there, more or less consciously. This is the tragic, more or less intentional, consequence of moral entrepreneurship activities. Pogroms, purges, witch-hunts, various cases of individual and group persecutions may be cited as cases of moral panics. White slavery, satanic ritual abuse, war on drugs, rainbow parties and other urban myth polarized, excited and terrorized the public in the last years. Sometimes, the victims of misrepresentation and/or conspiracy have been rehabilitated later on becoming positive and tragic heroes of movies and musicals, but that counts as little consolation.

The profile role of the other social actors I mentioned, the *shock doctors*, has been popularised by Naomi Klein in her exposition of the *Shock Doctrine*. Informed contributor to contemporary democratic debate, the author of No Logo (the bible of the global-anti-global social movement), probably better than any other voice articulated the concerns and complaints of my generation about economic fundamentalism, the criminalization of dissent and the effects of Free Trade. Commenting the book, Rachel Maddow wrote:

Around the world in Britain, the United States, Asia and the Middle East, there are people with power who are cashing in on chaos; exploiting bloodshed and catastrophe to brutally remake our world in their image. They are the shock doctors. Thrilling and revelatory, The Shock Doctrine cracks open the secret history of our era. Exposing these global profiteers, Naomi Klein discovered information and connections that shocked even her about how comprehensively the shock doctors' beliefs now dominate our world - and how this domination has been achieved. Raking in billions out of the tsunami, plundering Russia, exploiting Iraq - this is the chilling tale of how a few are making a killing while more are getting killed.

The arguments Klein offered in her various works are compelling, and her ideas and style are challenging for the traditional academic paradigms. Is the academic canon adequate or an alternative, more open path, is to be embraced by scholars? Economists and politicians, for example, should pay attention to what the documentary 'The Take' has to teach. Avi Lewis and Naomi Klein movie in 2004 documented Argentina's movement of worker-run businesses. As they reported recently on their website, the conditions that in 2001 applied to Argentina are now common in other countries. "In the wake of the country's dramatic economic collapse in 2001, thousands of workers walked into their shuttered factories and put them back into production as worker cooperatives. Abandoned by bosses and politicians, they regained unpaid wages and severance while re-claiming their jobs in the process". Similarly, in Italy an industry abandoned by a Multinational Corporation has recently restarted its production under the guide of the workers, but they had to

create a cooperative society to buy it. These workers are making profits, demonstrating the capability to survive of small but efficient productive realities and presenting a case for the elaboration of 'best practices' based on cooperative efforts.

During their tours in Europe and North America (I had a chance to meet them in Venice), the authors met with public, and every Q&A session ended up with the question, "that's all very well in Argentina, but could that ever happen here?" The authors' answer was: "Well, with the world economy now looking remarkably like Argentina's in 2001 (and for many of the same reasons) there is a new wave of direct action among workers in rich countries. Co-ops are once again emerging as a practical alternative to more lay-offs. Workers in the U.S. and Europe are beginning to ask the same questions as their Latin American counterparts: Why do we have to get fired? Why can't we fire the boss? Why is the bank allowed to drive our company under while getting billions of dollars of our money?"

I guess It's time for those who proclaim themselves liberals to address those issues seriously and to fight back all those players who profit from the artificial opposition us-them. It's time for formal democracies to truly embrace liberalism and promote a globally sustainable ideal of the wellbeing of all individuals. A diffused *herd mentality* is what maintains old, inefficient and undesirable power structures in their place. Thus the regenerative function of democratic claims in society is contrasted and creative *autopoiesis* is impeded. Intellectual elites, if they are to deserve that label, should refuse to collaborate with *shock doctors* and *hatred entrepreneurs* sustaining their false claims and provide the public with critical insights and thought provoking stimuli. My proposal is to start limiting the damages of identity politics by radically revising the common understanding of culture and advocating an education which encourages individuals to be alert and knowledgeable citizens of the world. In the "global information society" the first human right to be protected and implemented is the right to express oneself and to seek information[74], as the freedom of thinking works as a foundation of the right to have rights. The freedom and the responsibility to express oneself, in my view, should be treated as the two faces of the same coin in democratic currency.

The scope of these introductive reflections was to make explicit the target of my research and to provide the matrix in which the arguments presented in the

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[74] Jørgensen, Rikke Frank. "The Right to Express Oneself and to Seek Information", *Human Rights in the Global Information Society*, edited by RF Jørgensen. MIT Press. Boston, 2006. Chapter 1

following chapters must be inserted. Kant taught us that we see things according to how we are, not as they are. We see things through lenses. I took theories from different fields and epochs as lenses to pursue a kaleidoscopic vision, a reflective understanding of the complexity of cultural reality. Each chapter is therefore self-reliant but interrelated to the others. The whole mosaic represents an attempt to conceive man as an *homo cooperativus* of a just global society and to highlight which are the obstacles to this evolutionary step. The fatal couplet "us – them" is dissected to explore the possibility to change the content of the "-" so that it will signify "us and them" instead of being red "us versus them". In the first chapter I will draw from anthropological accounts of culture to better assess the nature of that web of meanings which is the environment of human life and our main adaptive mechanisms. In the second chapter I will retrace the evolution of symbolic communication from simple signalling to sophisticated language referring to Gardenfors studies which connect cognition, communications and cooperation. In the third chapter I will use media theories to understand the television import on the enemy-friend representation and make the case for a progressive role of global satellite broadcasting in transnational dynamics. In the fourth chapter, through the prophetic insights of Aldous Huxley and other authors, I will address the relation of violence, science and technology and the threat posed by an undemocratic control of those resources on the very nature of man; an evaluation of modern techniques of propaganda and scientifically programmed manipulation of consciences would explain the apparent stupidity of modern societies. Finally, in the last chapter I will move back to Mill's powerful arguments in favour of freedom of thought and to Habermas account on the importance and fragility of the public sphere, to conclude with an appeal to Kant's pedagogical instruction as the way to shape a wiser future generation.

Chapter I

Understanding Culture

1.1 Relating the self to the Other

"In the past decades economic principles have come to reign in the development of globalization, and consequently, the significance of national frameworks has changed in the complex entanglement of worldwide issues and phenomena. Similarly to multinational corporations, states are now competing in the realms of efficiency and national interests, supporting and strengthening the mechanics of the global economy. At the same time, however, they are increasingly forced to surrender their power of decision to transnational bodies. Even if human cognitive systems seem to have evolved a more or less innate tendency to divide people in "us" and "them" – a division that often results in treating people according to radically different moral standards – increased self-understanding and perception of what it means to be human is necessary on the global level. *Analyses of the far-reaching social and cultural implications that are supported by the us-them mechanisms are number one on the working list.* Following close on the agenda should be concrete acts for eradicating acute material poverty and finding solutions to the population problem, pressuring corporations towards ethical practices and solving environmental challenges. Scientists provide a 'reality-check' on the current developments by exploring a range of issues and case studies (…). They are arguing, each from a different perspective, that in the struggle for a better future for the human culture at large we must be able to redefine our notion of 'citizenship' to encompass global solidarity. (…) The global economy needs to be counteracted with global ethics entailing a moral perspective on our political responsibilities and possibilities. Respect for humanity requires much more than formally ensuring democracy or accepting others as equal buyers and sellers in the mills of market economy. It should integrally be respect for the many dimensions of humanity and commitment to perceive every human being regardless of origin or status as an equal partner"[75].

In global intellectual circles, a large theoretical consent is emerging on the end of the nationalistic politics and rude free market economy era. Cooperation, solidarity, human rights, global justice, cosmopolitan rights, all these terms are becoming common currency of contemporary social debates. It seems evident to almost everyone that we are going through a difficult phase of transition, from an old to a *new age* whose contours are still veiled. Prophesies of all kinds tend to fill the gap of human anxiety toward an unknown future with imaginary scenarios, ranging from hell to heaven, to sci-fi. How the world will look like, how society will

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[75] Marketta Seppälä, Locating. Nationality in Context, Framework 7. June 2007

be organised, how the human will perform, these sorts of questions are necessarily open-ended. Can the existential challenges of both the environmental and individual values crisis be solved?

If it is true that we cannot exactly foresee "what's coming next", it is nonetheless undeniable that we, the humans as a whole, have now reached an admirable level of sophistication. The scientific progress in all field of knowledge seems to bring us closer to a reliable understanding of some features of the external environment we inhabit and of our internal functioning as living beings. Many of the assumptions on which the old system have been justified are falling, but at the same time we are gaining meaningful insights and probably in a not so far future we will be able to grasp even much more of the reality surrounding us. The multidisciplinary field of research and *analyses of the far-reaching social and cultural implications that are supported by the us-them mechanisms*, for example, has gone very far. The dynamics of those dangerous mechanisms have been carefully explored. A finger seems to point to cognition, language, communication and technology as the locus to dig in search for clarification and, possibly, solution of current dilemmas and conflicts.

If we imagine society as a triangle whose interrelated vertexes are economy, politics and culture, we can guess that embracing the cosmopolitan trend in political philosophy would involve a readjustment of the economical sphere in a more egalitarian shape. Many brilliant scholars are devoting their efforts to study the political and economical impasse that is following the crisis of old models. What about the third vertex, what sort of re-adjustments does globalization entail in the cultural sphere? In Darwinian terms we should adapt to the new conditions in order to survive, but envisaging the next step in the evolutionary chain is a challenging guess, as actually we are not seemingly fitting the environment in a proper way, neither it looks like we are biologically evolving. Eventually, it seems like we are regressing.

In my view the question should be posed in terms of which would be the ideal citizen of a fair global political arrangement. Another way to face the issue would be to ask how could cooperation be enhanced in fragmented and interconnected societies. In this puzzling epoch a proper role for philosophy and social sciences would be to illuminate a path toward a sustainable common living on this planet, for all forms of beings. In my understanding, liberal, postmodernist and

multiculturalist approaches have been somehow misleading. Therefore, it seemed hard to provide a universal ethics as well as a sound and coherent perspective on what is happening, what we should expect and how to orientate oneself in this world, because often in contemporary discourses the relevant categories and explanatory means to face actual human experience are missing. "Culture" has been very much debated; still the very definition of culture is controversial. One could argue that this constitutes part of the problem to solve.

1.2 Culture, the science of man and meaning

The definition of the word "culture" is surely a rather problematic one. It may bear a different meaning according to the context and the time in which it is used. As an example consider that for the majority of speakers and for the broad audience, it recalls an appreciation of good music, art, literature and food, while for a biologist it refers to a colony of bacteria growing in a nutrient medium in a laboratory Petri dish.

Among the first scholars to provide a trail, on which others would then build their theories, there was Edward B. Tylor, the putative father of anthropology. Back in 1871, in his book *Primitive Culture*, he defined it as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society"[76]. Thus, the main attribute of culture would be that it is something that is learned, acquired by interaction, not an intrinsic, genetic, quality of individuals. It is a precious survival kit for humans, its primary adaptive mechanism[77], and at the same time a very fragile phenomenon, as it exists only in our minds. Languages, organizations, buildings, arts and crafts in general, are mere products that reflect cultural patterns, knowledge and skills. What Tylor inaugurated was a fascinating, never-ending trip into humanity's essence, now put forward by National Geographic Channel.

Aware of the diverse ways of life that can take place in different times and spaces, the anthropologist (or the cultural theorist) tries to make sense of it. Relying on culture as its key concept, the "science of man" testifies the theoretical effort to

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[76] Tylor, E.B. *Primitive Culture*, 2 vols. 7th

[77] Cfr. The entry "adaptative mechanism" at http://anthro.palomar.edu/culture/glossary.htm

restore an understanding of human and its civilization by "pulling things together"[78]. The "study of humanity" therefore integrates biological, archaeological, cultural, and linguistic anthropology. For the scope of this research, the most interesting branch is obviously cultural anthropology, more specifically cultural evolutionism, a theoretical approach that draws on all subfields in order to describe and explain the long-term dynamics of cultural adjustments.

Following Tylor, three main layers of learned behaviour and perceptions may be identified. The first one pertains the body of cultural traditions. What distinguish and separates Italian and Japanese societies, for example, is the mix of shared language, traditions and beliefs that individuals acquired being raised in a certain context. As Mill pointed out, what makes you a catholic in Italy would have make you a Buddhist in India. In complex societies, where people having different worldviews coexist, identity may have a second layer of culture, namely, a subculture. Groups retaining much of their ancestral background and experiences may be identified in their new societies as subcultures sharing a common identity fostered by food traditions, music, dialect or language and other specific cultural traits. This is the case of Mexicans in the United States. Eventually the differences with national dominant culture blur of disappear, thus a subculture ceases to exist and members, even if still claiming a common ancestry, start identifying themselves as part of the dominant culture. As an example we can consider the large majority of German or Irish Americans today. A third level of culture consists of universals. All humanity, collectively, share some learned behaviour patterns, as Postman's magnificent survey on cultural patterns testifies. Independently from their location in the world, people share some universal traits. Universal human cultural traits may include:

1. communicating with a verbal language consisting of a limited set of sounds and grammatical rules for constructing sentences
2. using age and gender to classify people (e.g., teenager, senior citizen, woman, man)
3. classifying people based on marriage and descent relationships and having kinship terms to refer tothem (e.g., wife, mother, uncle, cousin)
4. raising children in some sort of family setting

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[78] Tylor, E.B. *Anthropology: An Introduction to the Study of Man and Civilization*. New York: D. Appleton Tylor 1909

5. having a sexual division of labor (e.g., men's work versus women's work)
6. having a concept of privacy
7. having rules to regulate sexual behaviour
8. distinguishing between good and bad behaviour
9. having some sort of body ornamentation
10. making jokes and playing games
11. having art
12. having some sort of leadership roles for the implementation of community decisions

Historically, each cultural group developed its own way to deal with necessities and to express itself, but a common basic structure of human organization remains; for instance, deaf subculture use signs instead of verbal language to communicate, however, sign languages have grammatical rules just as the verbal ones.

In informal talks culture is sometimes used as a synonymous of society, while it should be clear that they are different things. We defined culture as a complex of learned behaviour, meanings and patterns, while society is a group of interacting organisms. Not only humans create societies, many other animals perform similarly. For example flocks of birds and hives of bees are both societies. Still, the way humans interact with each other seems to be a characteristic human feature, together with people perception of their society as distinguished by shared traditions and common expectations. Here society and culture are inextricably connected, as society is the place in which culture evolves, is forged and spread. Out of people's interaction, patterns like language and politics would just make no sense.

Behavioural scientists speculate, without agreement, on whether animals may have "culture" or not. As is often the case in discussions among experts, the answer is just a matter of definition. In a narrow sense we may posit the answer to be negative and affirm man uniqueness, while if we use a broader definition of culture as a complex of learnt behaviour it obviously comprises many other animals. In several species parents teach their young what they have learnt in order to survive: the chimpanzees and other apes and monkeys are relatively intelligent. Mothers teach their children about several hundred food and medicinal plants and about the dominance hierarchy and the social rules within their communities; later on from adults they learn how to perform a sexual intercourse, males then acquire hunting skills while females learn how to nurse and care for their babies. All

they know is not hardwired into their brains at birth; they learn patterns of behaviour just like humans do. Even if many contemporaries do not seem to have significantly evolved from apes, still, what is amazing and unique of humans is, for example, the ability to invent a medium through which I may potentially have access to all the knowledge of the world without having to leave my sofa; and bring it in my pocket, just in case I want to listen to the audio version of *Beyond Good and Evil* on the train.

1.3 Mirrors of man

In the search of the essence of culture, Geertz's interpretative model provides relevant insights to move forward to a deeper understanding of social interactions and of the role of communication in human evolution. In his 1973 book *The Interpretation of Culture*[79], the expert ethnographer Clifford Geertz put the systems of meaning—the symbolic— at the centre of the anthropological analysis of cultural dynamics. His contention was not to perpetuate a particular methodology but rather to set a specific, debatable, agenda for social sciences. His theory applies a "thick description" toward anthropological studies (his own interpretative anthropology), but his aim is to provide social sciences with the same appreciation of the essentially semiotic nature of culture, an understanding necessary in his view because it bears relevant implications for comparative political science and political philosophy.

"Cultural analysis is intrinsically incomplete. And, worse than that, the more deeply it goes the less complete it is (…) There are a number of ways of escaping this - turning culture into folklore and collecting it, turning it into traits and counting it, turning it into institutions and classifying it, turning it into structures and toying with it. But they *are* escapes. The fact is that to commit oneself to a semiotic concept of culture and an interpretive approach to the study of it is to commit oneself to a view of ethnographic assertion as (…) 'essentially contestable.' Anthropology, or at least interpretive anthropology, is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of the consensus than by a refinement of debate. What gets better is the precision with which we vex each other."[80]

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[79] Geertz, T. *The Interpretation of Culture*, Basic Books, New York, 1973
[80] Ivi, p.29

From Clyde Kluckhohn's *Mirror of Man*, Geertz recovers a list of potential meanings of "culture":

1. the total way of life of a people

2. the social legacy the individual acquires from his group

3. a way of thinking, feeling, and believing

4. an abstraction from behaviour

5. a theory on the part of the anthropologist about the way in which a group of people in fact behave

6. a storehouse of pooled learning

7. a set of standardized orientations to recurrent problems

8. learned behaviour

9. a mechanism for the normative regulation of behaviour

10. a set of techniques for adjusting both to the external environment and to other men

11. a precipitate of history

12. a behavioural map, sieve, or matrix

As no standard can be established once for all, it is "necessary to choose."[81] Geertz arguments explicitly favour a "semiotic" concept of culture: "Believing, with Max Weber, that *man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs*, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretative one in search of meaning."[82] What Geertz was after was "an explication" that would allow to grasp the "construing social expression on their surface enigmatical".

The interpretation of culture's web of symbols, in Geertz proposal, should start by isolating its elements, then specifying their internal relationship and finally characterizing the whole system in a general way. The ordering criteria may be the core symbols around which it is organized, the underlying structures of which it is a surface expression, or the ideological principles upon which it is based[83]. From such hermeneutical approach, attention must be paid not to dissociate too much from the proper object of cultural analysis, that is "the informal logic of actual life (…)

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[81] Ivi, p.5
[82] Ibidem
[83] Ivi, p.17

Whatever, or wherever, symbol systems 'in their own terms' may be, we gain empirical access to them by inspecting events, not by arranging abstracted entities into unified patterns."[84] Coherence therefore seems not to be appropriate as a test for a cultural interpretation's validity. What the ethnographer does is to "inscribe" social discourse, transforming a transient event into an account and guessing a meaning. Ethnography (and therefore the understanding of culture) would be, by definition in Geertz understanding, a "thick description"—"an elaborate venture *in*." As an example he considers the action of "winking". To distinguish the winking from a social gesture, a twitch or something else, Geertz explains that we need to move beyond the action to both the particular social understanding of the "winking" as a gesture, the state of mind of the winker, his/her audience, and the way meaning of the action itself is constructed. While the winking is the "thin description", its implicit meaning, its symbolic import shared between communicators, is the "thick" part of the action. An ethnographic description is characterised by its being interpretive of the flow of social discourse in a way that try to rescue the 'said' of such discourse from its perishing occasions and fix it in perusable terms[85]. The method of the "interpretive anthropologist" (accepting a semiotic view of culture) can be compared with the method of the literary critique analyzing a text: "Analysis, then, is sorting out the structures of signification - what Ryle called "established codes" - and determining their social ground or import… Doing ethnography is like trying to read (in the sense of 'construct a reading of') a manuscript." It should be noted that once we approach human behaviour as "symbolic action - action, which, like phonation in speech, pigment in painting, line in writing, or sonance in music, signifies - the question as to whether culture is patterned conduct or a frame of mind, or even the two somehow mixed together, loses sense. The thing to ask is what their import is."[86] In this perspective, it is dangerous and misleading to approach culture with supposed social dichotomies as subjective/objective, modern/traditional, eastern/western; we should rather look at human behaviour as "symbolic action". What culture produces is a system of meanings, therefore culture is necessarily public, a collective property of a particular people. When "we", scholars or just simply human beings, fail to understand foreign persons' beliefs or

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[84]Ibidem
[85] Ivi, p.20
[86] Ivi, pp.9-10

actions, we should acknowledge our "lack of familiarity with the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs."[87] As Wittgenstein noted, when "We cannot find our feet with them" we cannot discover the culture's import or understand its systems of meanings.

Facing "a multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit", we should try to understand how and why behaviour is shaped in a way opposing another. Even if collecting data is inherent to every anthropological work, providing a "thick description" is, thus, much more than that. To distinguish its account of culture as a semiotic concept, Geertz enlists common flaws and mistakes concerning that concept:

- "to imagine that culture is a self-contained 'superorganic' reality with forces and purposes of its own; that is to say, to reify it."

- reductionist tendencies. Consider for example the consequences of present distorted view on Islam, as denounced by Zafer Senocak in an interview whose expressive title was "The reductionism of Islam must stop"[88].

- "The cognitivist fallacy—that culture consists of 'mental phenomena which can be analyzed by formal methods similar to those of mathematics and logic'—is as destructive of an effective use of the concept as are the behaviourist and idealist fallacies to which it is a misdrawn correction."[89] This is to remind us to be wary of defining what a group "really" thinks as settled in stone, and that subjective realities cannot be grasped simply applying formal models and algorithms to them.

- Mixing up the thick and the thin description

- Taking anthropological interpretations as first order interpretations—when they are at best second and third order interpretations (first order refers to interpretations by a community member living within the particular community in question)

- Falling into problematic models as the "Jonesville-is-the-USA microcosmic model" or the "Easter Island-is-a-testing-case natural experiment model."

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[87] Ivi, p.12
[88] http://www.qantara.de/webcom/show_article.php/_c-478/_nr-226/i.html
[89] Geertz, cit., p.12

In Geertz's words, "culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviours, institutions, or processes can causally be attributed; it is a context, something within which [interworked systems of construable signs] can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described". Exploring culture as a result consists in an attempt to uncover "the degree to which [an action's] meaning varies according to the pattern of life by which it is informed". What may be above all relevant to social sciences is that "understanding a people's culture exposes their *normalness* without reducing their *particularity*."[90]

The direction to which Geertz and other scholars pushed, is the appreciation of social actions as larger than themselves, as speaking to larger issues, and vice versa, because "they are made to."[91] "It is not against a body of uninterpreted data, radically thinned descriptions, that we must measure the cogency of our explications, but against the power of the scientific imagination to bring us into touch with the lives of strangers."[92] Gaining access to the conceptual world of foreign cultures, the goal of a semiotic approach is to seek communication with their subjects. Not being cultural theory its own master, it should be appreciated that the generality thick description "contrives to achieve grows out of the delicacy of its distinctions, not the sweep of its abstractions. (…) The essential task of theory building here is not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible, not to generalize across cases but to generalize within them."[93] Cultural theory does not claim to predict, but eventually its analysis may anticipate evolution. Decisively, "Our double task is to uncover the conceptual structures that inform our subjects' acts, the 'said' of social discourse, and to construct a system of analysis in those terms. What is generic to those structures, what belongs to them because they are what they are, will stand out against the other determinates of human behaviour. In ethnography, the office of theory is to provide a vocabulary in which what symbolic action has to say about itself—that is, about the role of culture in human life—can be expressed."[94]

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[90] Ivi, p.14
[91] Ivi, p.23
[92] Ivi, p.16
[93] Ivi, pp.25-26
[94] Ivi, p.27

Political science may not be satisfied with mere description or even explanations: it includes the search for causal variables crossing events and the attempt to determine their predictive value. We could therefore ask what is the import of Geertz's arguments for political studies and how cultural analysis and its infinite variables should be used. Do "thick description", "interpretation" and "meaning" have any utility from which political studies and social institutions can gain something? In my opinion the answer is, evidently, positive. In order to grasp reality and deal with social phenomena, an understanding of the underlying mechanisms is essential. For example, power and authority, central political features of social organization, may be properly defined and theoretically and practically handled only if we are able to appreciate their functioning as discursive constructions of given societies. Religion, a phenomenon that is spreading again in the political arena after having been challenged for so long, may be better dealt with if properly framed in context. Facing the pervasive presence of communication technologies in contemporary life, the necessity of a multidisciplinary approach to politics became even more stringent.

Since the beginning, cultural evolutionism and the hermeneutic understanding of culture stood in the field as an advantaged position to challenge (and eventually defeat) a degenerationist approach with pessimist, ethnocentric and racist imports. Following degenerationism, for decades the story of human culture has been told postulating that in the origin there was an "high" culture, then some cultures "degenerated" to "lower" levels while others "rose" to "higher" ones. Degenerationism was grounded on religion (referring in particular to the story of the Tower of Babel in the Book of Genesis), but it had testable implications and could therefore be rejected applying reason to empirical evidence. Its defeat constituted a great step toward equality. Science never claims certainty, but the accumulated anthropological knowledge, available already in 1865, provided Tylor with sufficient evidence to put degenerationist ideas aside. As he showed, "high" cultures most probably originated in a situation similar to that of the "low" cultures that we can still observe somewhere in the world. No evidence could be found that the latter were "degenerations" from "higher" state of culture[95].

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[95] Tylor, E.B, *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization*

What we find is an overwhelming support for the conclusion that only in the last ten-fifteen thousands years some humans started organizing their living in complex and larger societies. In the beginning humans lived in small, nomadic bands, surviving gathering wild food sources and hunting. From these small units social evolution begun, culture transformed in some times and places and consequently societies grew into villages, chiefdoms, nations and empires, for reasons that are still investigated. Anyway, in view of the ingenuity and durability of foraging culture, adding contemporary findings and a new understanding of popular culture, it does not make sense any longer to use the categories of "high" and "low" culture. This terminology is patently loaded with ethnocentrism, when the culture we refer to as "high" is our own. While anthropologists do not use this vocabulary anymore, politicians still exploit it in their speeches for its rhetorical appeal.

Tylor expressed optimism in the ability of science to illuminate what remained obscure to his view. He encouraged further research in ancient social evolution, "not merely as a matter of curious research, but as an important practical guide to the understanding of the present and the shaping of the future, the investigation of the early development of civilization must be pushed on zealously. Every possible avenue of knowledge must be explored, every door tried to see if it is open. No kind of evidence need be left untouched on the score of remoteness or complexity, of minuteness or triviality. The tendency of modern enquiry is more and more towards the conclusion that if law is anywhere, it is everywhere. To despair of what a conscientious collection and study of facts may lead to, and to declare any problem insoluble because difficult and far off, is distinctly to be on the wrong side in science; and he who will choose a hopeless task may set himself to discover the limits of discovery"[96]. As modern Ulysses, we are implored by the present contingency to push the border of knowledge toward new limits.

1.4 InterCulture

Recently, a new huge family of terms and concepts containing the word "culture" appeared as a product of global communication, of migrations flows, of the diversification of the ethnic composition of state populations and the subsequent

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[96] Tylor, E.B. cit. 1924 (orig. 1871) p.24

change in the traditional space borders of individual and social experience. To cope with the rapid alteration of context, terms as multicultural, multiculturalism, interculture, intercultural, interculturality, cross-cultural, transcultural, and others, have been used; each of these expressions carries a descriptive or prescriptive content referring to a possible understanding and interpretation of a relation between cultures on a national, supranational, interindividual or communitarian level[97]. Their use in common language is imprecise and extremely confusing; even supposed specialists, that is, scholars of social sciences, tend to make a promiscuous use of them. Their overlap is not only a problem of misunderstanding or ignorance; it may be explained as a consequence of the very fluidity of meanings and the sudden appearance of the described phenomena on social scenarios[98].

The most common terms, and the most relevant for democratic praxis in Ricca's understanding, are "multicultural" and "intercultural" and their varying declinations. As I said, each of these terms may be used in a descriptive or prescriptive acceptation. In its descriptive acceptation the adjective multicultural simply refers to the simultaneous presence in the same territory or to the communicative circle of individuals belonging to more than a culture. A "multicultural society" would therefore be a context in which social exchanges are characterized by cultural difference. In its prescriptive acceptation "multicultural" points to multiplicity, implicating difference. Here difference is not simply taken as a fact, a datum, but it is emphasized as a value to be preserved. Cultures are thus described as separate universes incapable of reciprocal integration, or better still, integration is interpreted as a disvalue, a negative and disrupting end, inevitably conducing to the erosion, if not the total loss, of cultural identity[99]. From this prescriptive interpretation emerged the term "multiculturalism", defining policies oriented by the normative assumption that cultural differences should be valued and perpetuated and that the fusion of original cultural heritages must be reduced to the lesser extent possible. Multiculturalism is therefore antithetic to cultural mediation[100].

"Intercultural" presents a double interpretation as well. In the descriptive one, it refers to the inescapable relativity of cultural factors flourishing in social relations:

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[97] Ricca, M. *Oltre Babele. Codici per una democrazia interculturale*, p. 7
[98] Ibidem
[99] Ricca, M., cit., p. 8
[100] Ibidem

relating to an *other* determines a more relative stance, a shift from one's own exclusive point of view. In a multicultural context the actual presence and contiguity of individuals from other cultures create conditioning factors operant also on the representatives of hegemonic or autochthonous culture. In certain sectors of social life this process may lead to interdependence. A relativistic position may thus be the starting point to involve the *other* into communicative relations oriented toward the fulfilment of a practical goal. From practical goals, the interculturality is then elevated from the communicative level to that of collaboration, resulting in a mediation of strategies of behaviour. The intercultural mediation emerging from this process is limited, topical, circumscribed by the initial scopes to be realized and can be characterised as unreflective. This means that *de facto* agents act in an *intercultural* way, but the involved subjects do not consciously conceive it in the terms of a reflection upon one's own cultural identity, its validity, congruity and effectiveness of assumptions. Explaining the prescriptive dimension of the term, Ricca describes "intercultural" as a *project-word*[101]; in this case it is employed to indicate "the creation of an organic code of communication" and of a practice for the management of relations between subjects coming from different cultures. Defining the contents of this communicative code requires a certain degree of relativism and mediation of the universes of discourse and of the comprehensive context of meaning generated by the different cultures. The mediation of an exclusive point of view for practical goals is replaced by the search of a platform of equivalence between meanings, values, ends that articulate the entire sphere of different cultural knowledge. Therefore "prescriptive interculture" does not refer to a static reality but rather points to the necessity of triggering a process of comprehension, translation and dialogic negotiation between cultural universes and their social projections[102]

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[101] Ivi, p. 9
[102] Ivi, p. 10

Chapter II
Relating to the Other

2.1 Symbolic communication: language and cooperation

Making a very long story short, we might say that our history as humans begun thousands of years ago. Previously, the Earth has been inhabited by various creatures and even by an animal very similar to us. Different kinds of *Homo* struggled over territory and resources without leaving traces of creativity until the first appearance of the *Homo sapiens*. Since then, manufactured inventions started proliferating. This new animal managed to exterminate other competing groups and established its primacy in the evolutionary chain, thus remaining the only species of *Homo* present on earth. The whole actual population comes from that same branch of the evolutionary tree. The physical structure of these new men did not differentiate very much from the stupid ancestors, the only relevant difference being the dimensions of the brain. What distinguishes this species is the invention of a symbolic language. In the perspective of evolution, some selective advantage fostered that development. Many ideas have been proposed to explain the evolutionary force that brought language among humans. This was the main theme discussed at the Altenberg conference on the Evolution of Communication Systems. The major proposals have been that "(1) language brings with it the ability to convey information about prey or other food or about dangers of different sorts; (2) it is a result of sexual selection;[103] (3) language replaces the social grooming found in monkeys and apes as an instrument for building coalitions and other social bonds (the so called "gossip theory" proposed by Dunbar)[104]; or (4) language is a "mother tongue" that evolved among kin for "honest" communication (Fitch[105])"[106].

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[103] Sexual selection theory was proposed for the first time by Darwin, in Darwin, C. *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*. William Cloves. London, 1896. p.87

[104] Dunbar, R. *Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. 1996

[105] Fitch, W. T. "Kin Selection and Mother Tongues: A Neglected Component in Language Evolution". In D. Kimbrough Oller and Ulrike Griebel (Eds), *Evolution of Communication Systems: A Comparative Approach*, MIT Press. Cambridge, 2004, p. 275-296

[106] Gärdenfors, P. Cooperation and the evolution of symbolic communication, in D. Kimbrough Oller and Ulrike Griebel (Eds), *Evolution of Communication Systems: A Comparative Approach*, MIT Press. Cambridge, 2004

In his deep exploration of human cognition[107], Gärdenfors found that these suggestions, despite all the merits, do not definitely solve the problem of "why language has *not* evolved among other apes or animals"[108]. He doesn't claim the existence of a unique explanation; conversely, he argues that there may be different evolutionary needs that different aspects of language fulfilled. He proposed that one important advantage of symbolic language, before evolving in manifold stages of communication, is that it made it possible to cooperate about future goals. Only humans, he underlined, are able to make plans for distant achievements. This being correct, it would imply that language is beyond the cognitive reach of other species. The primary function of symbolic communications, in his understanding, would therefore be to provide means necessary for advanced cooperation. Having analysed the cognitive and communicative prerequisites for common referential expressions, Gärdenfors argued that "the evolutionary gain of being able to communicate about referents that are not yet present is that more advanced forms of long-term planning become possible. However, the basis for it all is the notion of a representation"[109].

The debate around the appropriate meaning of "representation" in the context of high forms of cognition is far from settled[110]. For the scope of the present, limited, analysis of how animals and humans represent the surrounding world and its phenomena, it may be sufficient to point to the distinction between *cued* and *detached* representations. "A *cued* representation stands for something that is present in the current external situation of the representing organism. When, for example, a particular object is categorized as food, the animal will then act differently than if the same object had been categorized as a potential mate"[111].

This idea does not entail any awareness on the part of the animal; it only assumes "that there is some generalizing factor that determines its behaviour. In general, the represented object need not be actually present in the actual situation,

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[107] See Gärdenfors, P., *The Dynamics of Thought*, Synthese Library , Vol. 300. 2005, and *How Homo Became Sapiens. On the evolution of thinking*. Oxford University Press, 2006

[108] Gärdenfors, P. *Cooperation*, cit.

[109] Ibidem

[110] Cfr. Roitblat, H.L. "The meaning of representation in animal memory". Behavioral and Brain Sciences 5:1982. pp 353-372; Vauclair, J., "Primate cognition: From representation to language". In: *Language and Intelligence in Monkeys and Apes* (Parker ST, Gibson KR, Eds). Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1990. Pp. 312-329; Gärdenfors, P. "Cued and detached representations in animal cognition". Behavioural Processes 36:1996. pp 263-273; Grush, R. "The architecture of representation". Philosophical Psychology 10: 1997. pp 5-23

[111] Gärdenfors, P. *Cued and detached representations in animal cognition*. Behavioural Processes 36. Pp. 263-273. 1996

but it must have been triggered by something in a recent situation. Delayed responses, in the behaviourist's sense, are also based on *cued* representations according to this characterization". Conversely, "*detached* representations may stand for objects or events that are neither present in the current situation nor triggered by some recent situation. A memory of something that can be evoked independently of the context where the memory was created would be an example of a detached representation. Similarly, consider a chimpanzee who performs the following sequence of actions: walks away from a termite hill, breaks a twig, peels its leaves off to make a stick, returns to the termite hill, and uses the stick to "fish" for termites. This behaviour seems impossible to explain unless it is assumed that the chimp has a detached representation of a stick and its use". Even if there may be degrees of detachment, and the border between cued and detached representations is often vague, this distinction between the two major types is instrumentally useful to focus our attention to key features of the representational forms[112].

Detached representations may have an enormous evolutionary advantage comparing to cued ones, as Craik noted in *The nature of explanation*: "If the organism carries a 'small-scale model' of external reality and of its own possible actions within its head, it is able to try out various alternatives, conclude which are the best of them, react to future situations before they arise, utilize the knowledge of past events in dealing with the present and future, and in every way to react on a much fuller, safer and more competent manner to the emergencies which face it."[113] The representational power of this "small-scale model" quite obviously increased our chances for survival. Gärdenfors refers to it with the pregnant expression "*inner world*", whose tentative definition would be "the collection of all detached representations of the animal and their interrelations". While many animals seem to have inner world[114], probably unconsciously employed, the history of philosophy

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[112] A *caveat* concerning the use of the notion of representation I'm borrowing from Gärdenfors is that it does not imply any ontological claims. Representations here are not meant to possess any kind of reality status, they are rather to be intended as theoretical terms in a standard conception of philosophy of science, they are theoretical idealizations (cfr. Sneed, J. *The Logical Structure of Mathematical Physics*. Reidel. Dordrecht, 1971). In a way similar to "forces" in Newtonian mechanics, representations are introduced to predict and explain empirical generalizations (cfr. Lachman, R. and Lachman, J.L. Memory representations in animals: Some metatheoretical issues. Behavioral and Brain Sciences 5:1982. pp 380-381)

[113] Craik, K., *The Nature of Explanation*. Cambridge University Press. 1943. p.61

[114] Following Dennett (Dennett, D. *Kinds of Minds*, Basic Books. New York 1996) animals may be distinguished in Popperian beings (those with inner worlds) and Skinnerian beings (those who learn by trial-and-error and conditioning).

testify the immense effort on the side of men to understand its own mental construction processes. Long before Kant we started enquiries to comprehend how we orient ourselves in thinking[115] (and recently scientists are disclosing new perspectives). Featuring an inner world brought in the evolutionary chain the huge advantages of freeing animals from the risks of trial-and-error behaviour while trying to solve a problem. "Actions are driven by an internally represented goal rather than directly by the external world", Jeannerod noted[116]. Thus the animal can simulate alternative actions to foresee and evaluate their consequences exploiting its inner world; these simulations allow him to perform the most appropriate action in the external environment[117]. The success of this delicate operation, that is in a sense a form of translation, depends on the matching between the inner and the outer world. In the long run, the pressure of evolutionary selection (the progress of science, I would say) should produce an adequate correspondence between the inner and the outer world. "Reality is a hard shore against which the wave-borne dreamer strands", wrote Norwegian poet Olav Haugen.

The possibility to envision goals, actions and consequences made planning possible. Studying animal behaviour, ethologists found that certain animals are able of planning,[118] but only to cope with current needs: their motivation arises from a present state of the body. Oakley recalled the case of "Sultan, the chimpanzee observed by Kohler, was capable of improvising tools in certain situations. Tool making occurred only in the presence of a visible reward, and never without it. In the chimpanzee the mental range seems to be limited to present situations, with little conception of past or future"[119]. From Sultan stage, we are supposedly differentiate for a cognitive capacity that seems an exclusively feature of man: what Gutz calls

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[115] Kant, I. *What is orientation in thinking?*
[116] Jeannerod, M. *The representing brain, neural correlates of motor intention and imagery.* Behavioral and Brain Sciences 17.1994. pp 187-202
[117] Cfr. Grush, R. (*The architecture of representation.* Philosophical Psychology 10:1997. pp.5-23) and Barsalou, L.W. (Perceptual symbol systems. Behavioral and Brain Sciences 22:1997. pp 577-609)
[118] See e. g. Ellen, P., Thinus-Blanc, C.((eds) *Cognitive Processes and Spatial Orientation in Animal and Man: Volume I. Experimental* Animal Psychology and Ethology. Martinus Nijhoff Publishers Dordrecht, 1987. Chapters 5, 7, 8 and 9); Gulz, A. ("The Planning of Action as a Cognitive and Biological Phenomenon". Lund University Cognitive Studies 2,Lund, 1991. pp. 58–61); Hauser, M. (*Wild Minds: What Animals Really Think.* Allen Lane. London, 2002. Chapter 4)
[119] Oakley, K.P. On man's use of fire, with comments on tool-making and hunting. In: Social Life of Early Man (Washburn, S.L., ed.), Aldine Publishing Company, Chicago, 1961. p. 187

"anticipatory planning"[120].

Different experiments showed that human children from around the age of two years start overcoming apes planning limitations. The cognitive difficulty in planning for future needs is related to the representations required. As Gärdenfors noted, "when planning in order to satisfy current needs, one must be able to represent actions and their consequences, and to determine the value of the consequences in relation to the needs one has at that moment. But no detached representation of that need is required. To plan for future needs, on the other hand, one must also be able to represent these potential needs (and to understand that some of them will arise)". Imaging future wishes and planning for their attainment is ability that ethologists could not find in any other animal than man.[121]

2.2 From Signals, through Symbols, toward Language

The simulation of actions in the inner world in order to plan does not necessarily presuppose language, so it is probably a latecomer on the evolutionary scene. Gärdenfors underlined that language refer to a very intricate inner world and to clarify this point introduce a distinction between two tools of communication: signals and symbols. "The fundamental difference between them is that *the reference of a symbol is a detached representation, while a signal refers to a cued representation*."[122] Sinha describes their role giving a diverse but compatible account: "Whereas a communicative signal can be viewed as an instruction (perhaps coded) to *behave*, the use of symbols involves two emergent properties, *reference* and *construal*."[123] These emerging properties of symbols approximate language as it consists exactly of symbols that can be used to refer to absent things. Hockett introduced this idea with his notion of "displacement"[124] and Glasersfeld articulated the point: "We can talk not only about things that are spatially or temporally remote, but also about things that have no location in space and never happen at all (...) In order to become a symbol, the sign must be detached from input. What the sign

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[120] Gulz, A. *The Planning of Action as a Cognitive and Biological Phenomenon*. Lund: Lund University Cognitive Studies. Lund, 1991

[121] Ibidem

[122] Gärdenfors, P. *Cooperation*, cit.

[123] Sinha, C. The Evolution of Language: From Signals to Symbols to System. In D. Kimbrough Oller and Ulrike Griebel (eds.) Evolution of Communication Systems: A comparative approach. MIT Press, Cambridge. 2004. p. 220

[124] Hockett, C.F. *The origin of speech*. Scientific American 203(3). 1960. Pp. 88-96.

signifies, i.e., its meaning, has to be available, regardless of the contextual situation"[125].

Achieved thanks to symbols, linguistic communication, with few exceptions, differs from animal communication. As Sjölander explains: "Clearly, if you live in the present, communicating mainly about how you feel and what you want to do in the moment, the biological signals inherent in each species are sufficient. A language is needed only to communicate your internal representation of what could be, what has been, and of those things and happenings that are not present in the vicinity."[126] In order for communication through symbols to take place the listeners must have corresponding references in their inner worlds, the outer condition being irrelevant. The reference to the context is what distinguishes other animals from us humans. Bees and apes performances may be impressive, but they are not able to use symbols in a truly detached way. Conversely, at a very early stage human children begin to use language in commenting or in narratives, totally outside a context of request.[127] As Vauclair noted "the use of symbols by apes is closely tied to the achievement of immediate goals, because the referents occur in the context of behaviour on their objects."[128] This confirm Gulz' conclusion that humans are the only anticipatory planners. As long as we know, apes never told a story by the campfire.

2.3 Signifying common goals

Going deeper in the exploration of the origins of co-operation and communication, following Brinck and Gärdenfors reconstruction,[129] it emerges that the reason why animals (and humans) cooperate is the attainment of common goals. Evidence can be found among ants and bees that even simple animals, cooperating, build complex societies, but they differ from us as their cooperation is purely

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[125] Von Glasersfeld, E. Linguistic communication: theory and definition. In: Language Learning by a Chimpanzee: The LANA Project (Rumbaugh DM, ed), Academic Press.New York. p. 64
[126] Sjölander, S. "Some cognitive breakthroughs in the evolution of cognition and consciousness, and their impact on the biology of language". Evolution and Cognition 3.1993. Pp. 5-6
[127] Cfr. Tomasello, M. *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, 1999
[128] Vauclair, J. Primate cognition: From representation to language. In: *Language and Intelligence in Monkeys and Apes* (Parker, S.T., Gibson, K.R. eds). Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1990. p. 319
[129] Brinck, I., Gärdenfors, P. *Co-operation and communication in apes and humans*. Lund University Cognitive Studies 88. Lund, 2001

instinctive. Lacking a detached representation of the goal they are cooperating for, they cannot move forward creating new aims. They probably do not need this faculty, as available collaboration is sufficient to cope with the actual environment. To reach a detached goal, distant in time or space, for cooperative action to take place, it is crucial to produce a common representation. The authors therefore evoke symbolic communication as a requirement for the coordination of the inner worlds of the individuals involved in cooperation about detached goals (whose value has to be established by each individual estimating possible outcomes). With its intricate structure of general and interrelated meanings, human language assumes the role of prototype example of a symbolic communication system. It manifestly paved the way for long-term, future-oriented cooperation.

An ancestral attitude (summed up in the Italian motto "better an egg today than a chicken tomorrow") has been confirmed by the experiments of Boysen and Bernston's with chimpanzees, highlighting a common difficulty in giving up a good in possession for a future more precious one[130]. The possibilities offered by the linguistic medium gave humans the enormous advantage of freeing them from the immediate goals present in the environment, thus entitling them to progress in the evolutionary path. Cognitive scholars tend to presume that cooperation about future goals and symbolic communication co-evolved[131]. The use of representations as stand-ins for actual or imagined entities is the basis of language and replaced the use of environmental cues in communication. It became possible for humans to form an idea of what they desire and communicate their thoughts to others by language. We can *share a vision*, and this is an extraordinary leap forward! On a concrete level, sharing visions about common goals allowed the efforts of community members to be coordinate in order to reach benefits for all involved. Other visions, the authors underlined, "are more abstract and distant and their potential values are hard to assess. Many religions promise a heaven after death, if you just behave according to certain norms. Such a vision is a temptation to many, even though it is impossible to know whether it can be fulfilled. An eloquent leader can depict enticing goals and convince the supporters to make radical sacrifices, even though the visionary goals are extremely uncertain".

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[130] Boysen, S,, Bernston, G. "Responses to quantity: perceptual versus cognitive mechanisms in chimpanzees (Pan troglodytes)". Journal of Experimental Psychology and Animal Behavior Processes 21. 1995. P. 82-86
[131] Cfr. The so-called "ratchet effect" discussed by Tomasello (cit.,1999), pp. 37–40

Brinck and Gärdenfors theory, according to which the fact that humans can represent future goals and the inner worlds of others make them uniquely equipped for symbolic communication, is compatible with other perspectives on language development. Fitch "mother tongue hypothesis" affirm that it is more frequent that common goals exist among kin than among non-kin; the situation in which common goals exist fosters "honest" communication, "therefore it is more likely that a system of symbolic references develops in a kin group than in a group of unrelated individuals". Overcoming deception, cooperation constitutes also for Fitch an essential feature for the evolution of language. The "mother tongue hypothesis" weakness lays in its incapacity to account for the *uniqueness* of humans' symbolic language. In a similar way, "gossip theory" is useful but not fully satisfying, according to Gärdenfors. In his famous 1996 book[132] Dunbar proposed a theory of language building on the correlation between the dimensions of the cortex of primates and their group size. According to his view, social bonding requires time and mental effort proportioned to the largeness of the groups. The growth of human brains would thus be a consequence of the fact that ecological factors pushed hominids to live in larger groups. The bonding device of social grooming became insufficient roughly in the same time in which the Homo sapiens arrived. According to Dunbar language emerged as an efficient mechanism. The reason why it did not happen between apes is that they did not suffer the same pressure toward group enlargement. Gärdenfors accept this arguments but look deeper for an explanation of our uniqueness. To understand why chimpanzees' communication did not evolve in language he suggest to take into account the cost of the language device in terms of required brain capacity: "The fact that humans, but apparently no other species, can represent future goals and the inner worlds of others, make us uniquely prepared for symbolic communication. These features, which are necessary for the cooperative benefits of symbolic language, clearly presume a substantial brain capacity going beyond that of other primates"[133].

[132] Dunbar, R. *Grooming, Gossip and the Evolution of Language*. Harvard University Press. Cambridge, 1996
[133] Gärdenfors, P. *Cooperation*, cit

2.4 Evolving communication

"When an animal (or a human) communicates, it wants something from another individual (even if it is only recognition of its existence). In this sense, all communication is a sign of failure. If everybody is pleased with the situation, then there is no need for communication"[134]

Some reflections on the start of communication consider the communicative act itself and the context in which it take place as more relevant than the expressive form of the act.[135] From an evolutionary point of view the fundamental aspects of language to be taken into consideration are the pragmatic ones. It took time before communicative acts evolved in speech acts, became more varied and eventually conventionalized. Only when their contents finally detached from the immediate context, the possible meanings of the acts could be analyzed and *semantic* considerations became salient. Later on linguistic communication grew into a combinatorially richer and more conventionalized system, it thus became necessary to introduce certain markers, *syntax*, to disambiguate the communicative content. According to this view on the evolutionary order of linguistic functions, pragmatic and semantic features would be the primary ones, while syntax is supposed to emerge subsequently to express the subtlest aspects of communication. On the contrary, following the Chomskian school, mainstream linguistic studies considered syntax as the primary study object of linguistics; only when grammar is not enough semantic features are added, while pragmatics function as a sort of wastebasket for context and what else is left over. It seems promising to agree with Gärdenfors, when he express the necessity to explore the evolution of communication starting from pragmatics; only then it is possible to appreciate the evolution of semantics and syntax. To support his position that pragmatics come first, he points out that "most human cognitive functions had been chiseled out by evolution before the advent of language. I submit that language would not be possible without all these cognitive capacities, in particular having a theory of mind and being able to represent future goals". Other researchers contested that, on the contrary, it is human thinking that

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[134] Ibidem

[135] Cfr. Winter, S. *Expectations and Linguistic Meaning*. Lund: Lund University Cognitive Studies. Lund, 1998. Introduction.

cannot exist in its full sense without language and thus it is language the cause of sophisticated thinking (as for example concepts formation)[136]. But as Tomasello puts it, seeing language as a cause of human thinking would be like seeing money as a cause of human economics[137]. There has always been trading among humans, but a monetary system made pre-existing economic transactions more efficient and allow their expansion. In a similar way, before they had a language, hominids have always been communicating, but only thanks to language, knowledge could be efficiently exchanged. Carrying the analogy further, as the introduction of money in a society initially produces a quite stable system of prices, language bring individuals to share a quite stable system of meanings. Meanings are the parts of the inner world that communicators exchange between them; consequently a common structure of individuals' inner world has been fostered by language. Studies from other disciplines support this view on the regulatory role of language. Robotic experiments and a wide array of computer simulations demonstrated how iterated interactions between artificial agents create a stable communicative system: these systems emerge spontaneously, without anyone determining rules for the communication[138]. "A general finding of the experiments is that the more "speakers" and "hearers" are involved in communication about the same outer world, the stronger is the convergence of the reference of the "words" that are used and the faster the convergence is attained. Still, different "dialects" in the simulated community often emerge"[139].

Gärdenfors examination of semantics tends to view it as conventionalized pragmatics, therefore his concerns shifted to the cognitive structure of the semantic conventions. Part of the answer may be found in the area of cognitive semantics[140] according to which words' meanings are a sort of "image schemas" in the heads of people. A semantic theory needs to account for the crucial passage in which our

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[136] See Dennett, D. *Consciousness Explained*. Little, Brown and Company. Boston, 1991

[137] Tomasello, M. *The Cultural Origins of Human Cognition*. Cit. p. 96

[138] Cfr. Hurford, J. "The evolution of language and languages". In: *The Evolution of Culture* (Dunbar, R., Knight, C., Power, C., eds), Edinburgh University Press. Edinburgh, 1999. pp 173-193; Kirby, S. *Function, Selection and Innateness: The Emergence of Language Universals.* Oxford University Press. Oxford,1999; Steels, L. "Social and cultural learning in the evolution of human communication". In D. Kimbrough Oller and Ulrike Griebel (eds.) *Evolution of Communication Systems: A comparative approach.* MIT Press, Cambridge. 2004.

[139] Gärdenfors, P. *Cooperation*, cit.

[140] Cfr. Lakoff, G. *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things.* The University of Chicago Press. Chicago, 1987; Langacker, R.W. *Foundations of Cognitive Grammar, Vol.1.* Stanford University Press. Stanford, 1987

individual inner world representations become conventional meaning, clarifying how language can assist us in sharing visions with others. For identifying referents that are present in the environment, indexical or deictic reference, such as pointing, may prove sufficient. In the case of cooperative communication about detached goals, especially future ones, it is indeed necessary to be able to refer to distant or even not yet existing object: non-present referents in general therefore demand from communicators a more sophisticated representation ability. This capacity differ from Steels "guessing game" experiments (and Wittgenstein's language games) in which speakers and hearers are only concerned with identification of appropriate referents among particular present objects.

Following Olson, Winter and Gärdenfors[141] three main stages of abstraction may be identified in the process of communication and the establishment of referential expressions. These stages correspond to names, nouns and adjectives. At each passage we bear a cost in terms of memory, thus the effort of sharing inner worlds must be understood as improving the benefits of an efficient communication. Each object we perceive and communicate about is to be imagined as a point immersed in a conceptual space (consisting of a various "quality dimensions" that are properties of the object, such as colour, size, shape, texture, sound) that provide a framework. This framework, in which inner world individual representations fall, may be structured in different ways so there may be no immediate possibility to compare them. In this case chances to share knowledge obviously decrease.
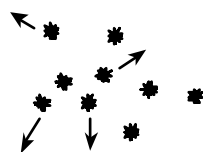
Fig. 1 As we can see points move freely in a conceptual space
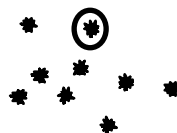
Fig. 2 Here we can see how names single out a unique referent

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[141] Olson, D.R. "Language and thought – aspects of a cognitive theory of semantics". Psychological Review 77: 1970. Pp. 257–273; Gärdenfors, P., Winter, S., *Evolving social constraints on individual conceptual representations.* Lund University Cognitive Studies. Lund, 1998; Gärdenfors, P. *Conceptual Spaces: The Geometry of Thought.* MIT Press. Cambridge, 2000

In figure 1 the points (representing properties of the objects) may move in the conceptual space, as these properties can change. The points may also appear and disappear in the representing space reflecting objects existence. Imagining a communicative dyad in which each individual possesses his own conceptual space and a private set of representational points, a first problem arises when a speaker wants to make the hearer identify a particular object. In symbolic language *names* achieve exactly this task picking out a particular object in the broader space, as represented in figure 2. "If both participants associate the same name with the same external object, then the hearer can identify the object that the speaker intends. It should be noted that the naming mechanism puts no requirement on the alignment of the conceptual spaces of the communicating individuals, but only that their inner worlds contain an appropriate referent for the name". This mechanism for identifying a common referent works only when both communicators have some acquaintance with the named object and make the same association; for a name to be established it is necessary a stable context in which entities are present in front of speakers. Given that the two kinds of long-standing entities in the evolutionary context are people and places, it has been speculated that language at its first stages consisted of names for people and places and words defining their relations[142]. Bickerton would call this communicative system a "protolanguage."[143]

To identify objects there cannot be named we need to move to a second level of abstraction within the set of points in the conceptual space, building on the fundamental assumption that the world is not random: objects' properties tend to go together. When we follow the evolution of human thinking we find a precious predisposition to detect such correlations of properties[144]. This ability may be the result of an evolutionary pressure: our perceptions of natural external objects show many correlations of quality dimension and we progressively developed the capability to discover them.

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[142] Cfr. Dunbar, (cit. 1996) and Worden, R.P. (*Primate Social Intelligence*. Cognitive Science 20: 579-616. 1996)

[143] Bickerton, D. *Language and Species*. University of Chicago Press. Chicago, 1990

[144] Cfr. Kornblith, H. (*Inductive Inference and Its Natural Ground: An Essay in Naturalistic Epistemology*. MIT Press. Cambridge, 1993); Holland, J.H., Holyoak, K.J., Nisbett, R.E., Thagard, P.R. (*Induction: Processes of Inference, Learning, and Discovery*. MIT Press. Cambridge, 1995)
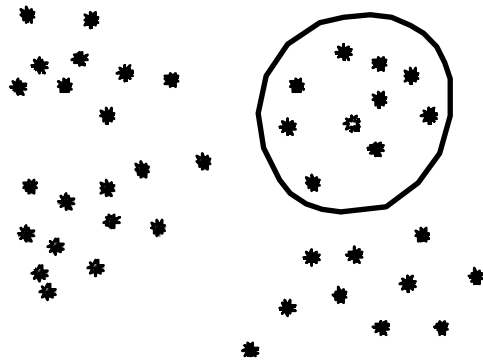
Fig.3 A noun corresponds to a cluster of correlated properties.

Correlations may be seen as a cluster of points in the conceptual space (figure 3). Unlike the points representing single objects that may move or disappear as their properties change, the cluster will remain stable, thus constituting a much more reliable reference of words than the single objects. Moreover, it is easier that individual have similar clusters thus making understanding more likely. Individuals who interact with same kinds of object and share socio-cultural practices will have no difficulties in matching their clusters and eventually identify the object of collaboration. The main linguistic tools to refer to a cluster are nouns. A noun refers to a point representing a possible object that functions as a stand-in for the entire cluster. This stand-in point (the white star in figure 3), function as the *prototype* of the cluster. Nouns and names basically share the same grammatical function. The speaker indicates by using a noun what elements in the cluster she is talking about (by default a prototypical element), and this is often enough for the hearer to identify the appropriate object in the context. Objects differentiate fundamentally from prototypes as, in principle, the latter may be an infinite number of objects with diverse combination of properties; on average, we work only with a small number of clusters and their relative prototypes. The result of focusing on nouns has been the "discretization"[145] of the space, which is also a necessary feature for the development of a finite vocabulary. Even if a prototype is represented as a central point in the cluster associated with a noun (and therefore do not need existing object anybody has encountered), it will be automatically assigned the properties correlated to that particular region of the conceptual space. Mentioning a noun generates the

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[145] Petitot, J. "Morphodynamics and the categorical perception of phonological units". Theoretical Linguistics 15. 1989. p. 27

expectations of these properties: if I say "bird" you will normally expect something small, flying, singing and building nests. An individual conceptual space in which objects are represented is structured in different layers of clusters. The space may be partitioned more or less finely, but a trend can be found that tends to privilege the generation of *basic categories.*[146] Generally, the set of clusters that is chosen is the one that provides the most "economic" way of partitioning the world. The choice of the setting is influenced by many factors, especially by the practices of a given community, and its economic efficiency tend to coincide also with the learnability as demonstrated by the fact that the basic categories are the first learned by children.

Nouns partition the conceptual space at a very basic level and the use of nouns necessitates that speaker and hearer share the representations of the same cluster. Comparing to acquaintance with the same individuals needed to use names, this is not a severe assumption; still it can in some contexts restrict the communicative capacities as for example in the case in which the class of objects the communicators are facing fall under the same noun. To identify an object for which the speaker has no name there are two solutions. The referential issue may be solved introducing what Gärdenfors called "a finer level of granularity" in the identification of clusters. The result of this strategy is the introduction of *subordinate* nouns, as for example spelling Volvo instead of car. In the logic of cognitive economy the same discourse made for names is valid: a larger number of subordinate nouns demands a richer memory. The expense in memory must be justified in terms of benefits obtained in terms of problem solving. De facto we may observe that to be an expert of something means to deal with a high number of subordinate concepts, that is, to have a "finely partitioned set of clusters".

An alternative strategy for identification is to move to a third level of abstraction to distinguish the points within a cluster. Having a cluster determined by correlated features, we identify a property that does not co-vary with the others. This is a fundamental generative mechanism for the dimensions of communication. In natural language the domains that are singled out by this process are expressed by adjectives[147].

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[146] In the sense of prototype theory. See for example Rosch, E. "Prototype classification and logical classification: the two systems". In: Scholnik, E., (ed.), *New Trends in Cognitive Representation: Challenges to Piaget's Theory*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. Hillsdale. 1978. pp 73–86.

[147] Givón, T. *Syntax – a Functional-Typological Introduction, Vol. 1*. John Benjamins. Amsterdam. 1984
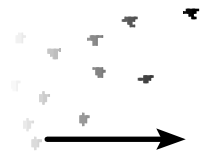
Fig 4 Adjective example: the colour dimension

In the logic of cognitive economy the most useful adjectives are the ones that may be applied to the largest number of objects (nouns), such as those defining the dimension of colour or size. To combine a noun and an adjective is a more economic strategy than using subcategories of nouns as by combination they multiply their referential power. Adjectives are highly valuable in the cognitive economy of communication. When multiple potential referents are present in a given communicative context, speakers generally show to be very skilled in picking up the maximally informative dimension within the cluster representing the noun. The use of adjectives presupposes a closer alignment of the conceptual space of communicators, a higher level of abstraction, that is the cost of sharing dimensions. Studies of children language tend to support the idea that adjectives, as communication tools, require more abstraction than names and nouns: "There is a *dimensionalization* of the knowledge system. (…) Children's early word acquisitions suggest such a trend. Among the first words acquired by children are the names for basic categories – categories such as *dog* and *chair*, which seem well organized by overall similarities. Words that refer to superordinate categories (e.g., *animal*) are not well organized by overall similarity, and the words that refer to dimensional relations themselves (e.g., *red* or *tall*) appear to be understood relatively late."[148]

The dimensional structure of the representations generated by social interactions would tend to have the smaller possible number of values, as the common polarity pairs of dimensional adjectives demonstrate (tall-short, light-heavy etc.). According to Freyd the fact that knowledge about the world is shared in a language community restrains individual representations[149]. In her account the

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[148] Smith, L.B. "From global similarities to kinds of similarities – the construction of dimensions in development". In: Similarity and Analogical Reasoning (Vosniadou S, Ortony A, eds), p. 146-178. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge. 1989. p.59

[149] Freyd,J."Shareability: the social psychology of epistemology". Cognitive Science 7. 1983 p. 191-210

reason why the structural properties of individuals' knowledge domains have evolved is that "they provide for the most efficient sharing of concepts". The smaller the number of values in a dimensional structure is, the more it is "shareable". Individuals and social structures are eternal co-evolver absorbed by an ongoing process of creation of shared meanings. Simulations by Steels and others suggest that where many communicators are simultaneously involved in this interplay, the effects are magnified. In this dynamic new representational domains are available before an explicit awareness of the domain arises, that means that in linguistic communication a domain is exploited before individuals are able to refer to it. The number of dimensions in which perception could be articulated in conceptual spaces is potentially infinite; the class of adjectives is open ended; these facts could create (and often created) insuperable obstacles to the coordination of the inner spaces of numerous individuals. The number of dimensions of linguistic space is, nevertheless, more narrow. The more relevant features in a peculiar society are highlighted by cooperative communication and largely depend on societal practices. If the communicative process in a community is successful, the perceptual dimensions of individuals can be shared in a community, leading to their stabilization. As money, language too is a social good.

2.5 The chicken and the egg?

There may be more than a few origins of the conceptual spaces dimensions, still, has we have seen, communication works as a fundamental catalyst for geometrically structured meanings. In contrast to other linguistic theory accounts that consider word classes in terms of syntactic features, following Gärdenfors' analysis, the semantic function of word classes has been appreciated. His arguments imply a strong connection between cooperation and communication. Cooperation about future goals depend to a large extent on shared knowledge; for knowledge to be shared a common dimensional structure is required. In his understanding conceptual spaces are at the same time prerequisites for and products of a successful communication, and this may seem puzzling. The clear point he made, and the most interesting from a political perspective, is that the search of more advanced forms of cooperation triggered a process that led to the evolution of language (and to the new chances it introduced in human life). Studies of animal cognition that focused on

social complexity and sophistication highlighted the deceptive capacities of various species[150] and a so-called Machiavellian intelligence[151] in many animals. Spilling over on the domain of human cognitive studies, these insights pushed for a reflection on man itself. The fact that advanced cooperation demanded access to detached representations, and the capacity to share them, made the efficiency of communication a bottleneck in changing the strategic situation of a group. We would not have shared visions about the future without the aid of symbolic communication; without a share vision we cannot convince each other – Gärdenfors conclude - "that a future goal is worth striving for (…). The key question for cooperation on the basis of symbolic communication is thus: How do we communicate the detached representations of our inner worlds? In my opinion, the emergence of sharable conceptual spaces provides the first steps of an answer. I believe that the benefits of advanced cooperation are so extensive that they are the major evolutionary forces behind the emergence of symbolic language. In this sense, cooperation begets language".

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[150] Cfr. Byrne, R. *The Thinking Ape: Evolutionary Origins of Intelligence*. Oxford University Press. Oxford, 1995

[151] Whiten, A., Byrne, R.W. (eds). *Machiavellian Intelligence II: Evaluations and Extensions*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge, 1997

Chapter III

We / them. Media and the other

"World War III will be a guerrilla information war, with no division between military and civilian participation." Marshall McLuhan

3.1 Conflicting news from the global village

The present society has been defined as a "global village", a "global theatre", and an "information society". The electronic revolution brought about the possibility to spread an incredible amount of information that is continuously increasing in its quantity and variety, while the pace of its transmission becomes faster than thinkable. These developments where reached through the broadening use of the "old" Mass Media (papers, radio, television) and the New Media (Internet in general, weblogs and social networks in particular). As Daniela Conte[152] underlined in a recent publication, actually the role and influence of the media are huge. They are a powerful socialization agent and offer a potentially unlimited flow of news and entertainment, thus gaining a dominant position in the setting of the political, economical and cultural agenda and the orientation of public debate, both at the national and the international level. Moreover, the media system can contribute to the preservation of existing power structures but can also promote modernization processes and reforms of a given society. They also signify the mirror through which the audience relates to the environment and often embody the only means by which it enters in contact with other realities, cultures and societies.

Through the use of a shared system of language, symbols and images the Media forge a common perception of reality that functions as a mediator between objective reality and personal experience. Conte argues that all media are implicitly and explicitly embedded in a specific cultural-semantic milieu, they reflect a certain set of rules and symbols, and as a result the nature of the representations created by them is inevitably limited and partial, corresponding to the perspective of a particular social context.

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[152] D. Conte, *I Media e lo scontro di civiltà. Il mondo raccontato da diverse prospettive:quale realtà è reale?*, Working Paper, n. 10, 2007, Luiss Guido Carli

The locution *global village* made its first appearance in 1949. In his book *America and the cosmic Man* Wyndham Lewis wrote about the earth having evolved into a *global village* featuring phones, planes, health and security around the globe[153]. His friend and colleague Marshall McLuhan in the following years focused on the new electronic media as the creators of a new dimension of global interdependence, an electronic age that somehow reproduced the world in the shape of a global village[154]. According to him, mass media bear a key role in defining social relationships as they can compress classic concepts of space and time and define the modalities through which peoples communicate with each other. This approach, known as *technological determinism*, holds the medium itself more relevant than the message it conveys, given that telecommunication technologies act upon and influence the very content of communication as well as the modalities, timing, frequency of communication itself and the typology of linguistic codes to be employed.

The above thoughts are shared by Neil Postman. In his reflections he defines "Technopoly" as a society that believes that "the primary, if not the only, goal of human labour and thought is efficiency, that technical calculation is in all respects superior to human judgment ... and that the affairs of citizens are best guided and conducted by experts."[155]. In a society in which a culture of objectivity and measurability of phenomena prevails, television, he predicts, becomes the main source of information, entertainment and cultural representation, to the extent that watching it is perceived as a real need in order not only to get the daily news but, above all, to feel in touch with one's own culture and society, enacting a sort of ritual in which the images and symbols of a particular way of thinking are shared. As a result of this process, television logic prevails in the relevant areas of society, determining the way not only politics and economy, but also religion and education are led. This phenomenon seems to create a new *orality* in the communication processes, one in which the medium privileges images and symbols over words and rational thinking, which are features more typical of a typographic culture.

In a visual exchange flow, people's arguments are based on good appearance, recognizebility and advertising. The very nature of the means makes each

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153 Lewis W., *America and Cosmic Man*, Doubleday & Company Inc., NewYork,1949, p. 21
154 McLuhan H.M., *The Gutenberg Galaxy: The Making of a Typographic Man*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1962, pp. 1-31
155 Postman, N., *Technopoly: the surrender of culture to technology*, Vintage Book USA, 1993.p.51

communicative experience diluted through entertainment, even in the case of journalistic information[156]. "Television is altering the meaning of "being informed" by creating a species of information that might properly be called disinformation. Disinformation does not mean false information. It means misleading information - misplaced, irrelevant, fragmented or superficial information - information that creates the illusion of knowing something, but which in fact leads one away from knowing"[157].

No common position can accommodate the many theories that in the last years dealt extensively with the role and effects of media on society; however, following the scheme proposed by McQuail[158], four different groups may be identified. Each group focuses on a peculiar kind of consequences of the action of media on the audience and on society in general. He then proposed these categories: intentional, involuntary, long term and short term effects.

The most interesting and debated theories tried to give a scientific explanation to involuntary and long term effects: processes like socialization, the definition and construction of reality, the spiral of silence, the involuntary distortion and the *structuration* of reality, social control and cultural change. According to these approaches, mass media tend to strengthen prevailing opinions while alternative visions would fall in a spiral of silence[159] and, moreover, media logic is deemed to be pervasive to the extent of distorting events. Television holds in this scheme a predominant position, acting as a cultural agent in the industrial apparatus and overarching the symbolic world in a process in which personal experience is replaced by a given representation of reality[160]. These accounts suggest the existence of a "television image" of truth able to influence our common perception as well as our surrounding "imaginary world"[161].

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[156] Postman, N., *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Viking Penguin, NewYork, 1985, pp.92-93.
[157] Postman, N*., Informing ourselves to death.* Talk given at the German Informatics Society-Gesellschaft fuer Informatik on October 11, 1990 in Stuttgart
[158] McQuail, D., *Sociology of mass communications; selected readings*, Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1972.
[159] Noelle-Neumann, E., *The Spiral of Silence: Public Opinion - Our social skin*, University of Chicago,
Chicago, 1984.
[160] Gerbner, G., *Communications Technology and Social Policy: Understanding the New "Cultural Revolution"*, Interscience Publication, NewYork, 1973.
[161] Conte, D., *I media e lo scontro di civiltà*, cit., p.5

3.2 The TV culture

Internet is undoubtedly the most powerful and comprehensive source of information in the world, however nowadays television keeps being the prevailing means of news and entertainment. According to Derrick De Kerckhove, television stays as "the world culture's dominant information-processing device"[162]. This primacy is probably going to face a sudden change and Internet alphabetization is fated to reach a much larger population, but today its rate is still very low in many non western countries and most of the websites are available only in English. Television, on the contrary, features many benefits that explain its advantages comparing with other media. First of all, it can overcome the analphabetic and economic limit of access, being possible to watch it in public spaces; moreover, thanks to satellites, television can overcome geographical borders reaching an extremely large audience.

Watching TV became an established common practice in daily life; on the one hand, it contributes to spreading information and knowledge but, on the other, it can create or reinforce in the viewer a particular system of beliefs and opinions, an imaginary conception of the rest of the world. Carrying on its socializing function in a locally oriented context, television becomes active in the identity construction progress. It is thanks to the use of a common language and a shared system of symbols and icons that TVs allow each spectator-viewer to recognize aspects and features of his own society. The word "media" itself recalls the implicit function of *mediation* between personal experience and objective reality common to communication means; media create a shared past, a proper perception of space and time as well as a sense of belonging to a community and of affiliation[163].

Thanks to their ability to reproduce and multiply symbolic messages and meaning categories amongst the public, communication means inevitably turn into *the source* of cultural-ideological power. Theorizing the existence of four main sources of power (economic, political, military and ideological), Michael Mann underlined that man cannot understand (and therefore act upon) the world simply through sensorial faculties. Concepts and categories of meaning on perceptions of

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[162] de Kerckhove, D., *The Internet Enters Television, A Trojan Horse in The Public Mind*, 2002, available at http://www.utoronto.ca/mcluhan/article_internettelevision.htm

[163] McQuail D., Media performance. Mass communication and the public interest, Sage Publications, London, Newbury Park, Calif., 1992

sense are needed[164]. In this view, mass media in general and television in particular (until now), design the map of our identity, constitute a major part of social reality, outline what is to be considered *normal* defining models, norms and social standards[165].

If we admit that media shape our understanding of the world, an enquiry of this process of representation becomes urgent and necessary. Many scholars showed a lack of confidence in the ability of mass media to grasp reality properly and to reproduce it in the most objective way possible, which means without being themselves both victims of bias and partisans. Critics argue that mass media outlook tends to be reductive, misleading (if not deceptive), mainly because of the practice of extreme simplification of complex realities and the reduction of information into too narrow and rigid categories. In this perspective, a medium like television can easily become a perfect way to convey prejudices, stereotypes and a certain kind of identity: static, historically determined and difficult to transform[166].

3.3 The mysterious case of Al-Jazeera

In the wider framework of the global revolution brought about by satellite television, Al-Jazeera represents a unique phenomenon. It was born in 1996, funded by Qatar sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani with an investment of 137 millions dollars. At a regional level, this challenging enterprise represents a revolution in the informative apparatus of the Arab world; at a global level it constitutes the first alternative source to Western Media. Al-Jazeera proved to have an unusual editorial independence, harshly criticizing many Middle Eastern governments and tackling taboos on a daily basis. It faces arguments like the role of women in society, the role of religion in politics and the issues of democracy and human rights in the region. This "progressive" editorial line allowed the channel to become the most credible source for Arab populations and inaugurated a new way of providing information, definitively breaking a tradition of rebuking and journalistic self-censorship.

On October 7th 2001 Al-Jazeera broadcasted Osama Bin Laden first video-declaration on September 11 terror attacks, thus the Arab channel became a main

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[164] Mann M., *The source of social power*, Vol. I, Cambridge University Press, 1986, p. 22
[165] McQuail D., *Media performance*, cit.
[166] Corte M., *Comunicazione e giornalismo interculturale. Pedagogia e ruolo dei mass media in una società pluralistica*, Cedam, Padova, 2006

source of information for the western world and the most watched channel in the Arab world, followed by the more recent Al-Arabyia, Abu Dhabi TV and Al-Hurra. Since its inception the channel popularity and audience kept growing even outside the referring area[167]. This growth was supported by a renovated global interest for the pan-Arab region resulting from international events as the Second Palestinian Intifada, the Afghan war and the exclusive airing of Al-Qaeda video statements; at the same time the success of this experiment is based on its truly innovative character[168]. Its novelty may be acknowledged first of all in its contents, secondly in a totally new way to provide information through cross-examination, finally in the introduction of a new point of view on the global media scene.

Even if the debate on Al-Jazeera social function is still open, it seems indisputable that the channel created a "new area open to dialogue"[169] where all issues bring back to the common problem of modernization, democratization and the necessary reform of Arab societies. In its popular talk shows the democratic deficit, human rights and conflicting interpretation of Islamic visions are basic arguments together with how to live religion in a modern society, the role of women in politics and inter-religious dialogue (mainly with the Jewish and catholic world). The controversial shows *Religion and Life* (*Sharia wa Hayat*), *Countertrend* (*al-Ittijah al-Mu'akis*), *More than One Opinion* (*Akthat Min Rai*), *Open Dialogue* (*Hiwar Maftuh*), are samples of the editorial line summarised in the well-known formula "The Opinion and the other Opinion".

The common practice of assuring the presence of at least two opposed views on the same argument functions as a guarantee for the impartiality and objectivity of the information, leaving the autonomous judgement to the viewer. Qatar television moreover uses to host American and Israeli representatives in order to intensify and deepen the debates. With these credits, it is now considered a powerful vehicle of transnational social communication[170], able to involve the audience, keen to active and direct participation of the public in the debates through phone calls or emails to

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[167] Etefa A. Transnational television and the Arab diaspora in the United States, in "TBS Journal", n.12, Spring/Summer 2004, available at http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring04/etefa.htm

[168] Miles H. Al-Jazeera. The inside story of the Arab news channel that is challenging the West, Grove Press, NewYork, 2005

[169] Lynch M., *Voices of a new Arab Public. Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today*, Columbia
University Press, NewYork, 2006

[170] Alterman J.B., *Transnational media and social change in the Arab world*, in "TBS journal", n. 2, Spring/Summer 1999, http://www.tbsjournal.com/Archives/Spring99/Articles/Alterman/alterman.html

the editors of the shows. Not only political forces, but also religious ones, are partially loosing their monopoly on what is to be published or broadcasted and as a consequence concepts of justice, political power and authority are put in doubt, discussed and redefined in an innovative transnational public debate.

Muslim traditional authorities are thus forced to adapt their strategies, searching (and finding) new means and instruments in order to keep control on society and direct public opinion. A sort of counter-reaction is going on, and it tends to employ new multimedia means to spread its *credo*: audio and video cassettes, dvds with sermons and stories of the prophet, books, pamphlets and finally internet, the paramount instrument to reach the entire *Umma* (Islamic community). Obviously other religious groups are adopting the same strategy. As Marc Lynch underlined, Islamism developed a counter-public, a growing parallel sector characterized by its own language, its own terms of reference and priorities[171]. What is happening in the "arab society"[172] undoubtedly resembles the emergence of an habermasian public sphere[173], a third sphere between state and society that is neither a political organization nor a social structure but is a window from which political and social institutions may be observed and their significance and legitimacy are critically scrutinised and communicated[174].

As Conte argues[175], for a public sphere to bear real effects on a political and social level, it is necessary that some actualisation mechanisms are put in place: democratic institutions, political participation and civil society involvement in decisional processes are needed. Television is nonetheless an entertaining device and increasing market competition pushes editors in favour of sensationalism and "no matter what" scoops in order to attract the widest audience possible. Having viewers rather than active participants as a target, it is not surprising that television often favours a passive reception of messages rather than a critical analysis of

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[171] Lynch M., *Voices of a new Arab Public. Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today*, Columbia
University Press, NewYork, 2006, p.83
[172] Il termine società araba è in parte una forzatura, in quanto esistono molteplici società arabe con caratteristiche molto diverse ma, allo stesso tempo, molti dei dibattiti ai quali si assiste nelle televisioni panarabe coinvolgono tutta la regione che grazie anche allo strumento di una lingua comune e sempre più standardizzata, assume comunque una dimensione regionale con aspetti comuni
[173] See also Section 5.2
[174] Eder K., *The construction of a transnational public: prerequisites of democratic governance in a transnationalizang society*, in Ruzza C. - Della Sala V., *Governance and civil society in the European Union*, Manchester University Press, Manchester.
[175] Conte, D. *I media e lo scontro di civiltà*, cit., p. 8

contents. Using McLuhan's terminology, it is a "hot medium", that means, it doesn't require user participation and inhibits user involvement.

The transnationality of Al-Jazeera allows it to reach a broader audience, but it makes the establishment of a link between public opinion's perception and its referring governments it much more difficult. The phenomenon of satellite television can therefore be considered responsible for putting forward a process of reform and for fertilizing new ideas, first stages of political accountability and critical reason, new spaces for competing opinions, but the whole process could lose its momentum in favour of an excessively commercial attitude or a populist political stance. The future improvement of the level of freedom of information and the creation of a modern journalism able to take the role of Fourth Power or Political Watchdog depends on many variables. The most relevant among them will be the ability of the (in the example Arab) system to open itself to new logics of democratic participation.

3.4 The Clash of Words

In the larger process of identity construction, mass media contribute to the definition of the essential, dangerous dichotomy "we-they", following somehow the demarcation lines between indigenous and stranger cultures, by means of simplified images like "us" and "them", "the Self" and "the Other". Pintak underlined its relevance in today's world. Arguing on the "communication gap" between America and the Arab world he stated that this fundamental dichotomy of human existence, a concept engaging psychology, anthropology, political science, communication and many other disciplines, became on September 11 the expressive feature of international relations[176].

The new feeling of threat spread by the terrorist attacks of September 11 made Islam emerge as the essential *Other* in the American society, thus substituting the Soviet Union in the role through which American citizens size their collective Self[177]. Since then, mass media played an undeniable role in reinforcing this kind of

[176] Pintak L., *The Communication Gap between America and the World's Muslims*, main speech at the international conference on "Muslims and Islam in the 21st Century: Image and Reality", International Islamic University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 6 agosto 2004, p. 4, available at http://www.pintak.com/Malaysia.htm
[177] *Ibidem*, p.4

perception. American television channels became much more polarised in reporting events about the Arab world, and in 2002 Fox News, famous for its sensationalism, prevailed over CNN. On the other side the Arab world experienced for the first time the growth of Arab satellite televisions, headed by Al-Jazeera, which proved capable of telling international events in a new independent style, showing the entire world an "Arab perspective" of reality. The ability to use symbols and images in order to strengthen an idea of pan Arab identity managed to overcome the deep differences between the many nation states of the region.

Arab information channels rapidly succeed in overcoming the information flow monopoly of the western world and became direct competitors of international broadcasters like CNN and BBC, in particular for their ability to offer a distinct worldview. According to scholar Iskandar Al-Jazeera successfully built for itself the image of an "alternative means", one which offers a more indigenous, different perspective, the "native voice of the Arab world" [178]. Al-Jazeera has an impact on hundreds of millions of residents in the Middle East and North Africa, on many other millions of emigrants in the rest of the world, and thus is fundamentally redesigning the map of the Arab world and transforming both the self-perception and the foreign understanding of the region[179]. Moreover, Qatar channel reaches now a truly global audience: in 2004 it was considered the fifth most influent brand in the world[180].

This phenomenon shined a light on the fact that every narrative, even when theoretically informed by objectivity, suffers from an inevitable partiality and is defined by its specific cultural context. For the first time in the TV era, other broadcasters challenged western hegemony in the definition of a universal narrative; they started a process of de-westernization of media and communication studies thus menacing media imperialism. Arab broadcasters acted upon informative asymmetries between the north and the south, reduced the amount of imported news thanks to new autonomous press agencies and brilliant reporters. Many Europeans followed the last Gaza War on Al-Jazeera and kept referring to that channel for international newsgathering, as it proved to be an excellent news provider. Arabs

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[178] Iskandar A., *Is Al Jazeera Alternative? Mainstreaming alterity and assimilating discourses of dissent*,
in "Transnational Broadcasting Studies Journal", n. 15, 2005
[179] Cassara C.- Lengel, L., *More over CNN: Al-Jazeera' view of the world takes on the west*, in "Transnational Broadcasting Studies journal", n. 12, 2004
[180] Conte, D., *I media e lo scontro di civiltà*, cit., p. 10

don't tune on BBC anymore to find credible news on their region, they eventually watch Al-Arabyia or Al-Jazeera. These TV stations managed to redefine the criteria of "newsability[181]" and the sense of priority of news according to expectations of their public, distinguishing themselves from western channels. Dave Marash, anchorman of Al-Jazeera International, clarify this point explaining that, even if every journalist may agree on the ten main news of the day, when a order of priority between them has to be established each region demonstrates a different opinion on what event is more important and which are the most relevant features of the same event[182].

To grasp this alterity of the Middle East media experiments is crucial for our understanding: selective and interpretative criteria differs not only from medium to medium but also between similar media in diverse regions, therefore what make an event a significant piece of news in an area may be irrelevant for another audience[183]. There is obviously a common matrix in western and Arab journalism, thus several news values and main factors are identical, for example factors like general interest, personalization and identification, preference of "bad news" over "good news"; still the existence of typical criteria is patent. All-news televisions like Al-Jazeera treat facts of national interest as secondary, comparing to those involving the whole region. As a result information about Qatar events is very rare while plenty of time is devoted to political crisis of the other countries in order to relate to a transnational public. Much space is dedicated to Islamic religion, translated it means a constant attention not only to Arabs but also to countries with large Muslim communities, like Pakistan. Many studies illustrate that even the tiny minority of talk shows that do not deal directly with arguments pertaining the Arab-Muslim world, face them from an "Arab perspective"[184]. Another relevant difference lays in the fact that western media tend to support predominant social models, showing facts that conform to a mental image pre-existent in the society, while Arab media were born as a revolution, challenging traditional models and giving space to previously unknown or censored voices. They are not part of an established

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181 According to www.urbandictionary.com "Newsable" means : Capable of being picked up by mainstream media.

182 Marash, D., anchorman of Al-Jazeera International at Washington Bureau. Interview at the conference "Al-Jazeera and the new Arab media", University of California, Santa Barbara, may 2007. Quoted in Conte, D., *I media e lo scontro di civiltà*, cit., p. 10

183 Papuzzi A., *Professione Giornalista. Tecniche e regole di un mestiere*, Donzelli, Roma, 2003.

184 Lynch M., *Voices of a new Arab Public*, cit., p. 79

productive and cultural setting whose values and standards are to be reproduced, as is the case with western TVs, on the contrary, the Arab ones embody an attempt to renovate the public debate agenda and to specify a new, alternative, cultural model, against the establishment.

3.5 War on ideas and conflicting theatres

The double effect of Arab channels was the creation of a shared media image of the Self, on the one side, and the corroboration of the perception of living a "war on ideas", on the other. Media coverage of the Afghan war, the Iraqi and the Israeli-Palestinian ones exacerbated the conflict between different approaches to (and narratives of) the same events. While the American administration, supported by national media, was trying to present itself as the global champion of democracy facing the Islamic terror threat, Arab channels focused the attention on civilian suffering and war damages, reinforcing the unity of Arab nations opposing American policy. Their deeper connection with local political and social forces and their easier access to war zones guaranteed Al-Jazeera and Al-Arabiya a considerable advantage. The clash between different visions emerged on many levels: first of all in the selection of news, then in the adopted perspectives, the journalistic analysis and the visual representation of conflicts. If the American media focused mainly on terrorism, presenting the war as an inevitable action to free the oppressed Arab people, the Arab ones showed the cruelty of war with brutal bloody images of civilian victims. The power of visual representation of events becomes evident, as in an example told by Dave Marash. Staying in Iraq, watching TV news, he realized that it was hard without the audio to distinguish American troops in Iraq from Israelis in the Palestinian Territories. He found out that the visualization, the typology and choreography of the two events were nearly identical, thus explaining why people in the Arab world tend to identify Intifada and the second Iraqi war. Through a process of extreme simplification "these events looked exactly the same"[185].

The media approach to events may at least partially explain the raising Arab hostility for the United States, viewed as the western evil, as well as the stereotyped

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[185] Marash, D. cit.

image of Arabs and Islam amongst Americans, that tend too often to pair them with terrorism, performing a similar error of oversimplification. This competition between media agents and polarised opinions bolstered the perception to face a clash of civilizations, where televisions fight a war on ideas to impose their worldview. Satellites and Internet are the new instruments of such a battle, thus the connection of media and international affairs grows stronger. Much attention has been devoted to media in a larger effort to regain *soft power*. In the 2003 Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, analysts considered television the most effective means to spread idea in the Arab and Muslim world, and referred to American efforts on this issue as largely insufficient[186]. In the same year a new diplomatic strategy was put in place to balance the success of the Arab channels, to "win the battle for hearts and minds", increasing the information about American policies in the Middle East. The main initiatives to be taken were: the creation of a new network in Arabic, the increase of foreign cooperation to sustain reforms in the information system, the purchase of advertising space on Arab networks, the enlargement of the presence of American officials on media and the favouring of the more moderate channels, the encouragement of media privatization[187]. Soon after the government launched a new satellite channel, Al-Hurra, and a radio, Radio Sawa. In a situation in which the State, government representatives or royal families own most of the channels, it is not surprising that media are used as diplomatic means on both regional and international levels. In 2006 Qatar network launched Al-Jazeera International, opening offices in Doha, Kuala Lumpur, London and Washington, with the explicit ambition of presenting an alternative point of view for global spectators[188]. As Strober puts it, we are assisting to a sort of Tele-diplomacy employing new means, a new trend in which diplomacy

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[186] Report of the Advisory Group on Public Diplomacy for the Arab and Muslim World, *Changing Mind. Winning Peace. A new strategic direction for U.S. public diplomacy in the Arab & Muslim world*,
2003, p. 21, available at www.state.gov/documents/organization/24882.pdf
[187] Sharp J.M., Middle East Policy Analyst Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Division CRS report for American Congress, *The Al-Jazeera News Network: Opportunity or Challenge for U.S. Foreign Policy in the Middle East?*, Middle East Policy Analyst Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Division, 2003.
[188] Alterman J.B., *The challenge for al Jazeera international*, TBS 14, Cairo-Oxford, Adham Center for Television Journalism, The American University of Cairo & Middle East Centre. St. Anthony College,
University of Oxford, 2006.

and international relations intersect the field of mass media communication[189].

In the evaluation of the influence of media on society it is necessary to take into consideration the role of the audience. The re-interpretation of media messages depends on the personal experience, the background knowledge and the psychological approach to events. Many sources of knowledge inform our perceptions and opinions, not only mass media. The peculiarity of the relation/communication between the western and the Arab-Muslim worlds is that mass media constitute the main source of information. Due to the difficulty of acquiring direct knowledge of a geographically and culturally far culture, misunderstandings and distortions are common. On the one hand, the public often lack the necessary background to complete and interpret correctly the news, while, on the other hand, the media system, television in particular, is prone to oversimplification and generalization.

When it comes to the Middle East scarce connections and knowledge of the area, the absence of experts or of a permanent staff (due also to the cut in expenses by American networks), worsens the reports[190]. The Lebanon War is another case in which media superficial outlook once again reduced the complex issue to black or white, the good ones against the bad ones, because journalists lacked the necessary background knowledge. When a reporter starts referring to Hezbollah or to Hamas as "the terrorist organization…" whatever he will say later is irrelevant, as the image of the "bad ones" is already automatically imprinted in the audience mind[191].

The so-called "Al-Jazeera effect", on the other side, polarised the debate on American and Israeli politics. All-news channels showed extensively to their public the sufferings of the Palestinians and the tragedies of the Iraqis, thus creating a sense of common fate and solidarity between Arabs and a sort of identification and convergence of the United States and Israel in the image of enemy.

In the rage for profits or audience, news suffer sensationalism and dramatization. While western news were emphasizing the hi-tech employed in the American war, military successful campaigns and Saddam statue falling with Bagdad in a theatrical style, Arab media focused on the people problems and the

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[189] Strobel W., *Late-breaking Foreign Policy: The News Media's Influence on Peace Operations*. U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, 1997
[190] Pintak L., interview with Daniela Conte, "Reset, Dialogue on Civilizations", n. 103, p. 73.
[191] Ibidem, p. 74

brutality of war, on the resentment and hatred of the Arab population[192].

3.6 Stop playing with fears. Toward an intercultural dialogue

As the case illustrates, an understandable and eventually justifiable emotional approach to events indirectly fed the perception of a clash of civilization amongst the involved peoples and governments. Good news is that critical reason is still performing its function. According to a poll conducted by BBC World on a sample of 28,000 world citizens, the majority accounts economic and political factors as main responsible factors for the clash between West and Islam, not depending on religion[193]. Results hence suggest that the world is not moving toward the inevitable clash described foreseen by Samuel Huntington.

Excluding the perception of a clash created by conflicting political rhetoric and polarised media representations, the telecommunication system embodies a huge chance for reciprocal intercultural understanding. Media effects are subject of personal interpretation of each individual, so it would be possible transform newspapers and television into windows to observe and better understand different cultural systems. Each individual belongs to a specific semantic/cultural system, yet it is theoretically possible to reach a level of multiple intelligences[194], that is the ability to explore the same material from diverse conceptual perspectives.

Man can employ different symbolic systems through an effort of cognitive flexibility[195], thus enlarging its knowledge domain. The result of every communicative experience depends on the way in which it is used by both senders and receivers of a message. Technological developments offer humanity an incredible opportunity to spread knowledge, freedom of information and global communication between cultures. What path will follow depends on which ends will inform these means, as they may be instrumentals to contrasting goals.

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[192] Lynch M., *Voices of a new Arab Public. Iraq, Al-Jazeera, and Middle East Politics Today*, Columbia
University Press, NewYork, 2006, p. 188
[193] Regan T., *Global Poll: There is no clash of civilization*, 20 febbraio 2007, in www.csmonitor.com.
[194] Gardner, H., *Frames of mind: The theory of multiple intelligences*, Basic Book, New York, 1983
[195] Spiro, Rand J. Feltovich, J.P. Jacobson, J.M. e Coulson, L.R. (1991) "Cognitive Flexibility, Constructivism
and Hypertext, Random access instruction for advanced knowledge Acquisition in ill-structures
domains", in *Cognition, education, and multimedia: Exploring ideas in high technology*, Nix, D. and
Spiro, R. J., Eds., Hillsdale, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

Nowadays political and commercial reasons transformed TV and newspapers into political instruments and means for futile fights, but Iskandar underlined that keep defining mass media system a potential "battlefield" is counter-productive, as reality tell us that each channel only try to be reactive to its audience representing it and reflecting its worldview[196].

Hopefully, at a global level a trend seems to emerge: the Arab satellite revolution pushed both the demand and the offer of more detailed information about international politics, facts and events about the east and the south of the world[197].

On the suppliers' side, CNN, BBC, France 24 and a Russian network recently decide to launch a channel in Arabic. Concerning the demand of information, there is an evident search of news by a new global audience that is going through a process of globalization, internationalization and mobility, a public that needs access to a wider and faster system of spreading information. In this growing information flow many people can now have access to more information from different sources and perspectives. A so-called multicultural journalism is growing in the western world as a answer to the need of presenting the complexity of actual societies without stereotypes and prejudices. With this goal in mind, Pintak suggests that we start trying to understand that others may not look at the world the way we do. Only then there will be space for dialogue and comprehension[198].

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[196] Iskandar, A. Speech given at the conference "Al-Jazeera and the new Arab media", 5 Maggio, 2007, University of California-Santa Barbara

[197] Conte, Daniela,(2007, May 5) *The influence of satellite televisions on freedom of the press and global flow of information*, paper given at the conference "Al-Jazeera and the new Arab media", University
of California-Santa Barbara, from www.cmes.ucsb.edu/papers/conte_paper.pdf

[198] Interview to Pintak, L. on NPR, San Francisco radio programme on Arabs and Politics. Available at www.kqed.org/epArchive/R705101000

Chapter IV

Looking back to move forward

4.1 Huxley's visions: violence, science and technology

Famous among the larger public for his role as spiritual father of the Hippies movement, for his advocacy of the use of psychedelics and for his 1932 fiction novel Brave New World[199], by the end of his life Aldous Huxley came to be considered in some academic circles "a leader of modern thought and an intellectual of the highest rank".[200] He has been a prolific and eloquent essayist in diverse fields, spanning from academic essays to novels, poetry, drama and screenplays. He was a convinced pacifist promoting non-violent struggle and a profound connoisseur of human nature, perfectly aware of the risky dynamics of power and technology. "His uniqueness lays in his universalism," and as other, few great masters, "he was able to take all knowledge for his province"[201].

For one year he also taught French at Eton, having among his pupils Eric Blair and Stephen Runciman. Remembered by someone "as an incompetent and hopeless teacher who couldn't keep discipline" he nevertheless impressed Blair and others by his use of words[202]. Blair was to become famous with the pen name George Orwell, authoring the book Nineteen Eighty-Four. In a letter wrote on 21 October 1949 Huxley congratulated the ex pupil Orwell underlying "how fine and how profoundly important the book is", and predicted that "within the next generation I believe that the world's leaders will discover that infant conditioning and narco-hypnosis are more efficient, as instruments of government, than clubs and prisons, and that the lust for power can be just as completely satisfied by suggesting people into loving their servitude as by flogging them and kicking them into obedience."[203]

Among his immense intellectual production, the theme of human knowledge and his control through different techniques is often present. The most interesting

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[199] The novel, together with Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four and Yevgeni Zamyatin's We, is a cornerstone of the anti-utopian or dystopian tradition in literature.
[200] Thody, Philipe (1973). Huxley: A Biographical Introduction. Scribner.
[201] Julian Huxley 1965. Aldous Huxley 1894–1963: a memorial volume. Chatto & Windus, London. p22
[202] Crick, Bernard (1992). George Orwell: A Life. London: Penguin Books
[203] Huxley, Aldous (1969). Grover Smith. ed. Letters of Aldous Huxley. Chatto & Windus.

works, for the scope of the actual research, are those dealing with communication, technology and peace, which reveal his forecasting genius and help understanding what happened and what is happening in modern societies. In the prologue of Technology for Nonviolent Struggle, Brian Martin pays his debt to the "vision" of Huxley[204]. His book opens with an explicit appeal to 1946 essay entitled "Science, Liberty and Peace"[205], a work full of illuminating insights about the relations between science, violence and non-violent culture. In the beginning of his essay, quoting Leo Tolstoy, Huxley underlies that if in a society few people hold power, nature will be controlled over, through science and technology, and exploited to increase power inequalities. He also points out that back in the 1800s armed liberation might have been possible, as government's cavalry and cannon could reasonably be resisted by barricades and sporting rifles. Facing the development of weapons of mass destruction controlled by the state, this expectation is no longer available, since people's weaponry cannot nearly match state violence. At the same time, mass persuasion methods developed and the press and radio (now we should add the TV) became powerful tools in the hands of oppressors, consenting to the few to manipulate the many. This course was facilitated, Huxley argues, by the very foundation of industrial society, that is, mass production. Both governments and big business favoured centralised production, putting obstacles to the possibility of decentralised production. At each stage of development, science and technology played a critical role in the area of weapons, media and industry. Thus, the propulsive force of science and technology served oppressors and stalled the expansion of peace and freedom.

The guiding principle of Huxley's analysis of society and science is simple: power is corrupting. The reference is clearly to Lord Acton view on power, synthesised in the aphorism "power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely."[206] As Popper taught us, we should not search for the best rulers, but for

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[204] Brian, M., *Technology for Nonviolent Struggle*, War Resisters' International, London, 2001

[205] Aldous Huxley, Science, Liberty and Peace (New York: Harper & Row, 1946; London: Chatto & Windus, 1947). It has been reprinted by the A. J. Muste Memorial Institute, 339 Lafayette Street, New York NY 10012, USA. Freely available on the WWW

[206] Since Huxley wrote this essay, several authors have written about the corruptions of power, including Alex Comfort, Authority and Deliquency in the Modern State: A Criminological Approach to the Problem of Power (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1950); David Kipnis, The Powerholders (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); David Kipnis, Technology and Power (New York: Springer Verlag, 1990); Pitirim A. Sorokin and Walter A. Lunden, Power and Morality: Who Shall Guard the Guardians? (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1959). Kipnis' work reports on psychological experiments that provide strong evidence for Lord Acton's insight.

the best way to restrain rulers' power. For this reason Huxley advocated the path of decentralisation, which reduces the potential for abuses. In this line of thinking, technologies and social arrangements that promote or permit concentrations of power should be resisted. Perfectly aware of the overwhelming violence and mass persuasion held by the "ruling oligarchy" (as he calls it), Huxley still believed in and favoured a change of his society, trusting nonviolence as the only way toward it. Gandhi's methods, the non-violent action called *satyagraha*, was his hope and inspirational guide; the resistance by the German people to the French and Belgian occupation of the Ruhr in 1923 was also among his references. He supported nonviolence as an independent principle of action and as a logical consequence to complement his analysis based on the corrupting nature of power and the strength of the oppressors by means of science and technology. Encouraging widespread participation, the non-violent method of struggle limits the power of each individual over others and is thus compatible with decentralised activity and less prone to corruption.

From this analysis Huxley gained actual and penetrating insights that is worth remember. He noted, for example, that the very erratic distribution of oil throughout the world render it susceptible to monopoly control. Therefore Huxley predicts wars fought to acquire and maintain that control[207]. He also extrapolates the obvious implication that an energy system built around oil constructs a society prone to inequality and war. The complex and potentially destructive nature of nuclear power pushes Huxley to consider it a bad solution. His favoured option in the issue of energy is the development of regional energy self-sufficiency, which would minimise the social power held by any group. The actuality of his thought is evident and fortunately many projects are presently being launched in this direction. Assisting to World War II, Huxley learnt that a population consisting largely of rootless and propertyless employees, who depend on the state for vital services, is easy to control; and that big industry, from the point of view of the state, is much easier to tax than small decentralised manufacturing. Moreover, Huxley expresses grief for the disastrous effects of nationalism, noting that preparation for war is useful to the holders of centralised political power (the socialist states in his view are to be blamed as they combine the worst aspects of centralisation of power).

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[207] Godfrey Boyle, In *Living on the Sun*, has also made the same point. See Godfrey Boyle, In *Living on the Sun, Harnessing Renewable Energy for an Equitable Society* Calder & Boyars. London, 1975

After more than fifty years, we are to recognize that he was pointing in the right direction as an abundance of facts demonstrated. And as Brian Martin puts it "even when Huxley's specific concerns have not been borne out, his general analysis still provides a fruitful perspective". His critique of science and technology is deep and inspiring. In his view they have been developed to serve power-holders and must be redirected in order to serve liberty and peace. As a concrete proposal he suggested that scientists boycott harmful work and that political action is taken to foster positive scientific research. A good example of political action on scientific progress, would be the development of regional self-sufficiency in food and energy. Huxley's visions were far-reaching and perceptive, while the strategies he proposed are still among the most promising ones.

Martin's debts to Huxley, which I now share with him, rise above the content of the essay. "It has no footnotes and only mentions a few sources in passing. It is an essay in the traditional sense, not a scholarly paper. In a world in which science and scholarship have become increasingly specialised, jargonised and professionalised, it is salutory to know that crucial and lasting insights can be derived from a few sound premises"[208]. The immediate response to "Science, Liberty and Peace" ranged from the mildly critical to the openly hostile. It does not come as a surprise as his time was not mature for developing the link between science and nonviolence[209]. We are now in a good position to endorse his vision and fully appreciate Huxley's suggestion to promote science and "technologies that allow people to control their own lives as the ones best suited to enabling a community to use nonviolent methods to resist aggression or oppression"[210].

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[208] Brian, M., *Technology*, cit.

[209] Reviewers pointed to faults about satyagraha, decentralisation or the strategy of relying on scientists to bring about change. See Some P. W. Bridgman, "Science and social evolution," New York Times Book Review, 24 March 1946, pp. 3, 28; R. Brightman, "Science and peace," Nature, Vol. 160, 29 November 1947, pp. 733-734; R. T. Cox, Science, 31 January 1947, pp. 134-135; Anne Fremantle, The Commonweal, 7 June 1946, pp. 197-198; Joseph Wood Krutch, "The condition of man," The Nation, Vol. 162, No. 14, 6 April 1946, pp. 402-403. Excluding a favourable citation and quotation in Godfrey Boyle, "Energy," (in Godfrey Boyle, Peter Harper and the editors of Undercurrents, Radical Technology, Wildwood House, London, 1976, p. 58), Huxley's essay does not appear in the fields of both peace research and the critique of science

[210] Brian, M., *Technology*, cit.

4.2 De Propaganda

A very relevant theme, on which Huxley's contribution may prove once again to be illuminating, is the issue of propaganda. I would define as the field on which is fought the battle between empowering-informative and deceptive-manipulative information. Nowadays the term bears an alleged negative connotation that was not intended in the original Latin meaning (that refers to things "*to be propagated*"). Its first context of use was the religion sphere, in which it appears in the name of the Sacra Congregazione *De Propaganda Fide* (around the XVI century), and only from 1792, in France, the word *propagande* entered the political discourse[211]. Since then it became a "keyword"[212] of political criticism, many epistemic models have been theorised and different techniques for its exploitation evolved within the fields of Public Relations and Mass Communications. On the free encyclopaedia Wikipedia it is defined as follows:

"Propaganda is the dissemination of information aimed at influencing the opinions or behaviours of large numbers of people. As opposed to impartially providing information, propaganda in its most basic sense presents information in order to influence its audience. Propaganda often presents facts selectively (thus lying by omission) to encourage a particular synthesis, or gives loaded messages in order to produce an emotional rather than rational response to the information presented. The desired result is a change of the attitude toward the subject in the target audience to further a political agenda". It constitutes a form of communication that deliberately and systematically "attempts to shape perceptions, manipulate cognitions, and direct behaviour to achieve a response that furthers the desired intent of the propagandist"[213].

In the book *Propaganda and Persuasion* the term refers to the misuse of language and meaning. The authors capture in the very first page the difference between the two forms, "persuasion is interactive and attempts to satisfy the needs of both persuader and persuadeee. A model of propaganda depicts how elements of informative and persuasive communication may be incorporated into propagandistic

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[211] See the entry "Propaganda" in Zanichelli, *Dizionario etimologico della lingua italiana*

[212] I use here the term "Keyword" referring to Williams' use. A keyword is a term that is familiar but yet confusing. Instead of etymology, he proposed a cultural approach to language and points to the political struggle for the identification of "the meaning". Cfr. Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*. See also section…

[213] Jowett, G. S. and O'Donnell, V. *Propaganda and Persuasion*, Sage Publications, 2006

communication, thus distinguishing propaganda as a specific class of communication." Although propaganda techniques have always been appreciated as an essential political tool, and even if abundant references may be provided by old theories of rhetoric, few systematic theoretical treatments appeared until the 20th century. Since then studies on public opinion and behavioural change started flourishing. As Jowett and O'Donnell pointed out, there may be many perspectives on the issue of propaganda. Beside the interdisciplinary approach, propaganda may be studied as history, leading "to examine the practices of propagandists as events and the subsequent events as possible effects of propaganda". In the light of political science, to examine propaganda would be "to analyze the ideologies of the practitioners and the dissemination and impact of public opinion", while from the sociological position one should "look at social movements"; the psychology practitioner would deal with psychological warfare, and so on. It seems clear that a cogent "analysis kit" for this subject should include some rhetorical background, linguistics, cultural studies, a certain degree of awareness of human cognitive mechanisms and of collective memory formation processes.

(Economist and media analyst) Herman and (philosopher and linguist) Chomsky gave an important contribution to the debate introducing "the propaganda model"[214]. Their theory, firstly advanced in their 1988 book "Manufacturing Consent: the Political Economy of the Mass Media", explains mass media alleged systemic biases in terms of structural economic causes. "The 20th century has been characterized by three developments of great political importance: the growth of democracy, the growth of corporate power, and the growth of corporate propaganda as a means of protecting corporate power against democracy"[215]. In this model private media, mainly relying for their sources on government, corporate information and propaganda, are viewed as a business selling the product "audience-readers" to an other businesses, that of advertisers and public relations.

According to the authors, there are "filters" that determine what kind of news is presented by the media. Their theory postulated five general classes of those "filters": ownership of the medium, the medium's funding, sourcing of the news,

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[214] In the same years Chomsky wrote *Necessary Illusions: Thought Control in Democratic Societies* (South End Press, 1989), which is probably an essential introduction to the "propaganda model" of media analysis. Reminding us that resistance is possible, necessary and effective, the book offers a message of hope

[215] In "Letter from Noam Chomsky" to Covert Action Quarterly, quoting Alex Carey, Australian social scientist. http://mediafilter.org/caq/CAQ54chmky.html

flak, anti-communist ideology. The first three features are considered the most relevant ones, and even if the model was based on the American system it may be applied to all contexts that share the same basic economic structure and principles. Regarding the fifth filter, Chomsky appropriately argued that terrorism and Islam would replace communism in that same function. (In the Italian public discourses the communist ghost is still sometimes exploited as a trumpet card in president Berlusconi political statements).

Concerned about too narrow, misleading definitions of propaganda, Sheryl Tuttle Ross recently developed another model. Exposed in an article entitled "Understanding Propaganda: The Epistemic Merit Model and Its Application to Art"[216], the method for understanding propaganda she conceived contrasted the ideas of Pope Gregory XV, the Institute for Propaganda Analysis, Alfred Lee, F.C. Bartlett, and Hans Speier. Judging their respective discussions of propaganda too narrow, Ross proposed a threefold communication model to appropriately discuss the issue. Following her arguments, we should consider the levels of Sender-Message-Receiver. Propaganda involves the Sender, the one who is *intentionally* persuading, the Receiver, that is the target for such persuasion, and finally the means of reaching the target, namely, the Message. Different conditions must be fulfilled for a message to counts as propaganda in her definition. The intention to persuade is clearly involved, and propaganda is often sent on behalf of a sociopolitical institution, organization, or causes as well. A third condition regards the recipient of propaganda, which in the model is supposed to be a socially significant group of people. The last, eminently relevant, condition that Ross poses to messages is to be *an epistemic struggle to challenge other thoughts*.

What she argued in favour is a deeper understanding of the issue that does not end up in misleadingly account propaganda as simply false or conditional to a lie. As she noticed, the propagandist often believes in what he/she is propagandizing (in some cases falling in fallacies similar to those of the "true believer"). "The aim of the propagandist is to create the semblance of credibility", therefore someone who creates propaganda to persuade another of the view he actually holds is not necessarily lying. He is appealing to a weak or defective epistemology as "false statements, bad arguments, immoral commands as well as inapt metaphors (and

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[216] Ross, S. T. *Understanding Propaganda: The Epistemic Merit Model and Its Application to Art.* Journal of Aesthetic Education, Vol. 36, No.1. 2002. pp. 16-30

other literary tropes) are the sorts of things that are epistemically defective (...) Not only does epistemic defectiveness more accurately describe how propaganda endeavours to function (...) since many messages are in forms such as commands that do not admit to truth-values, but it also accounts for the role context plays in the workings of propaganda". History illustrates that art has been widely exploited by those who have wished to persuade in order to get their message out. Artists have been directly hired to accomplish the express aim of propagandizing or new meanings invested previously non-political work. What we should look at with attention, Ross states, are "the conditions of its making (and) the conditions of its use".

4.3 The Ultimate Revolution: autonomy versus hypnosis

In a speech given at Berkeley Language Center in 1962[217], titled The Ultimate Revolution, Aldous Huxley denounced the fragility of the individual ability to form autonomous critical thinking in the face of modern techniques of manipulation and persuasion. He pointed the finger at the possible use of pharmacological methods of thought control "so that people will in fact have their liberties taken away from them, but will rather enjoy it, because they will be distracted from any desire to rebel by propaganda or brainwashing, or brainwashing enhanced by pharmacological methods. And this seems to be the final revolution." In his previous conference at the Institute for the study of Democratic Institutions in Santa Barbara and at the University of California Medical Center he focused audience's attention on the mind control, on the development of new techniques by which to control and direct human behaviour, on technology in general and its possible effects, on the problems related to the transplanting of technology into underdeveloped countries. The possibility to suppress individual freedom, he recalled us, has been traditionally achieved with different means: applying physical coercion, appealing to ideologies, manipulating man's physical and social environment and, finally, in recent times, through the techniques, "the cruder techniques" of psychological conditioning. The Ultimate Revolution to which Huxley pointed concerns the development of new behavioural controls, which directly drive the psycho-physiological organisms of

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[217] Transcript of "The Ultimate Revolution", March 20, 1962 Berkeley Language Center - Speech Archive SA 0269

man. External constrains could be thus replaced by internal compulsions. Moreover, we will see, in this lectures Huxley anticipated the critics of biopolitics.

All past revolutions, according to Huxley, "have essentially aimed at changing the environment in order to change the individual. I mean there's been the political revolution, the economic revolution, in the time of the reformation, the religious revolution. All these aimed, not directly at the human being, but at his surroundings". Goals were achieved by modifying the surroundings, leaving the human being intact. The ultimate revolution instead would deal with man, acting directly on the mind-body of his fellows. Since the beginning of time some sort of direct action on human mind-bodies has been going on, but it was generally of a violent nature. "The Techniques of terrorism have been known from time immemorial and people have employed them with more or less ingenuity sometimes with the utmost cruelty, sometimes with a good deal of skill acquired by a process of trial and error finding out what the best ways of using torture, imprisonment, constraints of various kinds". But when any population must be controlled for any length of time, some measure of consent becomes necessary, as pure terrorism can hardly function indefinitely. In the history of totalitarian regimes we may find examples of elements of persuasion introduced as "an element of getting people to consent to what is happening to them". Huxley feared the approximation of a "process of developing a whole series of techniques which will enable the controlling oligarchy who have always existed and presumably will always exist to get people to love their servitude". This malevolent revolutions occupied its interest for years and was expressed thirty years before this speech in the fable Brave New World, which was "an account of society making use of all the devices available and some of the devices which I imagined to be possible making use of them in order to, first of all, to standardize the population, to iron out inconvenient human differences, to create, to say, mass produced models of human beings arranged in some sort of scientific caste system". What happened since then is that an increasing, shocking, number of predictions, which were purely fantastic, became true, many others seemed in process of coming true. Reading on newspapers about the new biometric security devices that are being invented (soon they will be introduced at the USA borders), we should be seriously scared. Security seems to be the new tag for control, and people has been accepting "a state of affairs by

which any decent standard they ought not to enjoy". This process of enjoyment of servitude, following Huxley, has gone on for over the years.

Two similar parables have been described by Huxley in Brave New World and by his pupil George Orwell in Nineteen Eighty- Four. When Orwell wrote his book the Stalinist terror regime was still in Full swing, while the Hitlerian terror regime had just collapsed. His book "is a book of very great talent and extraordinary ingenuity" that projects into the future what was for the author the immediate past and the immediate present, "it was a projection into the future of a society where control was exercised wholly by terrorism and violent attacks upon the mind-body of individuals". In 1932, when Huxley was writing his book, only the mild dictatorship of Mussolini was in existence, therefore, not being overshadowed by the idea of terrorism, he was free to envision other methods of control, non-violent methods. Huxley was inclined to think that in the future there would have been scientific dictatorships in many parts of the world and they "will be probably a good deal nearer to the brave new world pattern than to the 1984 pattern, they will a good deal nearer not because of any humanitarian qualms of the scientific dictators but simply because the BNW pattern is probably a good deal more efficient than the other". If one can get people to consent to the state of affairs in which they're living, transforming "the state of servitude" in "the state of being", "having their differences ironed out, and being made amenable to mass production methods on the social level", it is likely "to have a much more stable and lasting society". That society would be much more easily controllable than the one available "relying wholly on clubs and firing squads and concentration camps".

Terrorism and dictatorships, methods to run society, may all acquire different faces, and it is interesting to realize that the kind techniques which Huxley imagined and described in his novel became realities, thus bringing about the actual possibility of the ultimate revolution. In the sixties he "foresaw it", without exactly knowing "when and where and by whom they will first be applied in any large scale". We are probably, more or less unconsciously, living exactly in the middle of that system.

4.4 Pavlovian Humans?

As Huxley once again prophetically noted in the speech given at Berkeley, there have been huge technological improvements in the art of conditioning human choices. At that time, to better explain its mechanisms, Huxley recalled some of Pavlov's extremely profound observations that apply not only to animals but to human beings too. Among other things, Pavlov founds "that conditioning techniques applied to animals or humans in a state either of psychological or physical stress sank in so to say, very deeply into the mind-body of the creature"; this conditioning were extremely difficult to get rid of and seemed to be embedded more deeply than other forms of conditioning. "This fact was discovered empirically in the past" and we know that these techniques have been widely used, "but the difference between the old empirical intuitive methods and our own methods is the difference between the, a sort of, hit and miss craftsman's point of view and the genuinely scientific point of view". The Santa Inquisizione activity in the 16th century was different from our present sophisticated tortures as "we know much more precisely what we are doing than they knew and, because of our theoretical knowledge, we can extend what we are doing over a wider area with a greater assurance of being producing something that really works". Since the second half of the twentieth century many studies addressed the issue of the psychology of brainwashing. One of the first books on this issues, published in 1957, was William Sargant's "Battle for the Mind"[218], subtitled a "Physiology of Conversion and Brainwashing". Sargant worked extensively with Secret Intelligence services and took part, together with Dr Ewen Cameron, in the Project MKULTRA[219], sharing and exchanging views and information on brainwashing and de-patterning techniques and their mutual researches in this area[220]. The aim of their researches was to find a way to obliterate the memories of an allied spy ('de-patterning') and implant false memories at a deep level (in this way even if the spy was captured in his adoptive country, he would be incapable even under torture of revealing his true American/British allegiance,

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[218] Sargant, W. *Battle for the Mind; A physiology of conversion and brain-washing* (2nd ed.). Malor Books. Cambridge, 1997. p. 300

[219] Officially closed in 1977, Project MKULTRA was the code name for a covert CIA mind-control and chemical interrogation research program, run by the Office of Scientific Intelligence. More precise information are still highly classified.

[220] Collins, Anne. *In the Sleep Room*, Lester and Orpen Dennys, Toronto, 1988. p. 39, pp. 42-3, p. 133.

because he would only be able to reveal the falsely implanted memories that supported his assumed persona). After the famous novel by Richard Condon, this concept was termed 'The Manchurian Candidate'. In the last years many Hollywood movies brought these stories to popular attention[221].

Massive amounts of different drugs were used in combination with Deep Sleeps Treatment (narcosis), in a procedure designed to induce catastrophic memory loss, which would then supposedly be replaced with false memories and ideas (via tape loops, hypnosis, LSD or conversations while the person was drugged). Obviously, Sargant's aim was to elucidate the processes involved rather than advocate uses. Its reference to religious phenomena is particularly interesting with reference to the supposed conflict between religion and democracy. In the book he refers to the case of Christian Methodism. He emphasised the apparent need for those who want change people's minds to first excite them, that is exactly the technique adopted by John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. "Though men are not dogs", Sargant advices us, "they should humbly try to remember how much they resemble dogs in their brain functions, and not boast themselves as demigods. They are gifted with religious and social apprehensions, and they are gifted with the power of reason; but all these faculties are physiologically entailed to the brain. Therefore the brain should not be abused by having forced upon it any religious or political mystique that stunts the reason, or any form of crude rationalism that stunts the religious sense."[222] He connected Pavlov's findings to the ways people learned and internalized belief systems. Stimulated stresses beyond a dog's capacity for response may condition behaviour patterns change, essentially causing a breakdown. Depending on the initial personality, even the use of intense signals, longer than normal waiting periods, rotating positive and negative signals and changing a dog's physical condition could possibly cause a new belief system. This new belief system may be then held tenaciously, as demonstrated by findings in religion and politics. Regarding methods of placing false memories into patients, Sargant was a pioneer. He attested at the 1977 U.S. Senate hearing, "that the therapist should deliberately distort the facts of the patient's life-experience to achieve heightened emotional

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[221] The Manchurian Candidate was made into a movie in 1962 (directed by John Frankenheimer and starring Laurence Harvey, Frank Sinatra, Angela Lansbury, and Janet Leigh) and then again in 2004 (directed by Jonathan Demme and starring Liev Schreiber, Denzel Washington, and Meryl Streep).
[222] Sargant, *cit*., p. 274

response and abreaction. In the drunken state of narcoanalysis patients are prone to accept the therapist's false constructions."

Huxley was very impressed by these studies, and they should not be forgotten; in particular, there are chapters in which Sargant pointed out how intuitively some of the great religious teachers/leaders of the past employed the Pavlovian method. The case of Wesley shows how, on purely intuitive and empirical grounds, a skilled natural psychologist, as Wesley was, could discover and employ these Pavlovian methods. What worried Huxley, and we should be worried even more than him, is that "we now know the reason why these techniques worked and there's no doubt at all that we can, if we wanted to, carry them much further than was possible in the past. And of course in the recent history of brainwashing, both as applied to prisoners of war and to the lower personnel within the communist party in China, we see that the pavlovian methods have been applied systematically and evidently with extraordinary efficacy.

I think there can be no doubt that by the application of these methods a very large army of totally devoted people has been created. The conditioning has been driven in, so to say, by a kind of psychological iontophoresis into the very depths of the people's being, and has got so deep that it's very difficult to ever be rooted out. These methods are a real refinement on the older methods of terror because they combine methods of terror with methods of acceptance that the person who is subjected to a form of terroristic stress". As a result of this conditioning the subject voluntary accept "the psychological state in which he has been driven and the state of affairs in which he finds himself". The very internal functioning of armies in general is an example of the power of distorted logic. Moreover, the intrinsically absurd and violent logic inflict traumas and/or insensitiveness to those involved, as known. Recent Israeli movie Waltz with Bashir and documentary Z32 well illustrated this point).

4.5 Taking suggestion seriously

Along with the improvement of terror-based techniques, other methods, non-terroristic techniques, have been implemented for inducing consent, maintaining stability and eventually making people love their servitude. Huxley himself mentioned the more obvious methods, based on (at the time available) scientific

findings. He primarily took into consideration those connected with straight suggestion and hypnosis. It is sufficient to consider present-day marketing techniques and on the massive use of subliminal messages in advertising to appraise that we know much more about these subjects than was known in the past. Half a century ago Huxley could already say "People of course, always have known about suggestion, and although they didn't know the word 'hypnosis' they certainly practiced it in various ways. But we have, I think, a much greater knowledge of the subject than in the past, and we can make use of our knowledge in ways, which I think the past was never able to make use of it". One fact we must acknowledge is "that there is of course an enormous difference between individuals in regard to their suggestibility. But we now know pretty clearly the sort of statistical structure of a population in regard to its suggestibility. Its very interesting when you look at the findings of different fields, I mean the field of hypnosis, the field of administering placebos, for example, in the field of general suggestion in states of drowsiness or light sleep you will find the same sorts of orders of magnitude continually cropping up". The percentage of people who can be hypnotized223 with the utmost facility is about 20%, while about a corresponding number of subjects at the other end of the scale are almost impossible to hypnotize. In between these two groups lies a large mass of people, nearly 60% of the population who can gradually be hypnotized if one work hard enough at it. Similar data emerged in relation to the administration of placebos. Huxley reported of a big experiment carried out in the general hospital in Boston on post-operative cases. Several hundred men and woman suffering comparable kinds of pain after serious operations were given injections whenever they asked for them whenever the pain got bad. The injections were 50% of the time of morphine and 50% of water. Among those who went through the experiment, about 20% of them got just as much relief from the distilled waters as from the morphine. About 20% got no relief from the distilled water, and in-between were those who got some relief or got relief occasionally, confirming the distribution previously supposed. Similar consideration inspired what Huxley called in BNW "Hypnopedia", the sleep teaching. Huxley recalled an interesting, funny, story about a man manufacturing records that people can listen to during the light part of sleep (those sort of records for getting rich, for sexual satisfaction or self-confidence in

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223 The term "hypnotized" may be referred in generl to people who are easy target for various forms of deceptive influence.

salesmanship, and so on). These records were sold on a money-back basis, and the manufacturer said there was regularly between 15% and 20% of people who wrote indignantly asking for money back as the records didn't work at all; on the other hand, there were over 20% who wrote enthusiastically, eventually buying other products, saying they were much richer, their sexual life enhanced etc, etc. In between stood those who did not get much results.

That is to say, there are basis to believe that the human populations can be categorized according to their suggestibility, and we may suspect that this percentage stay the same in all cases; moreover we may quite easily recognize "who are those extremely suggestible and who are those extremely unsuggestible and who are those who occupy the intermediate space. Quite clearly, if everybody were extremely unsuggestible organized society would be quite impossible, and if everybody were extremely suggestible then a dictatorship would be absolutely inevitable. I mean it's very fortunate that we have people who are moderately suggestible in the majority and who therefore preserve us from dictatorship but do permit organized society to be formed. But, once given the fact that there are these 20% of highly suggestible people, it becomes quite clear that this is a matter of enormous political importance. For example, any demagogue who is able to get hold of a large number of these 20% of suggestible people and to organize them is really in a position to overthrow any government in any country".

Hitler provided the pivotal example of what can be done by efficient methods of suggestion and persuasion, and his life provoked, as Huxley put it, a sort of "horrified admiration for this infernal genius, who really understood human weaknesses I think almost better than anybody and who exploited them with all the resources then available". For example, he knew intuitively "the pavlovian truth that condition installed in a state of stress or fatigue goes much deeper than conditioning installed at other times. This of course is why all his big speeches were organized at night". He had discovered, intuitively and by trial and error, many human features that we now know more clearly, almost scientifically.

When we think about democratic government, this differential of suggestibility, this susceptibility to hypnosis, should be taken into account very seriously. As Huxley argued, "if there are 20% of the people who really can be suggested into believing almost anything, then we have to take extremely careful steps into prevent the rise of demagogues who will drive them on into extreme

positions then organize them into very, very dangerous armies, private armies which may overthrow the government".

Staying in the field of pure persuasion, the TV and the radio provided mechanisms for multiplying the demagogues voice and image in a quite alarming way. Not by chance Hitler was making enormous use of the radio, and he would have probably failed his mission before without a means to speak to millions of people simultaneously. The difference in means creates a colossal gulf between the modern and the ancient demagogue, as the latter could only "appeal to as many people as his voice could reach by yelling at his utmost", while the former "could touch literally millions at a time, and of course by the multiplication of his image he can produce this kind of hallucinatory effect which is of enormous hypnotic and suggestive importance".

Another method that could possibly be used, to which Huxley referred in BNW, is the pharmacological method. In its fiction he invented an impossible, hypothetical drug called SOMA, whose effects were simultaneously stimulant, narcotic and hallucinogen. To have all these effects with one substance is unlikely, but actual practices by drug-addicted show that applying several different substances one could get comparable results. What Huxley found really interesting about the new chemical substances, the mind-changing drugs that are so widely diffused, is what they say regarding man. Looking "back into history its clear that man has always had a hankering after mind changing chemicals, he has always desired to take holidays from himself" and before the dawn of history primitive man had discovered the most extraordinary effects of almost every natural occurring narcotic stimulant, sedative, or hallucinogen. None of these naturally occurring effects was discovered by modern science, whose contribution was to find better ways of extracting the active principals of these drugs and the discovery of numerous ways of synthesizing new substances of extreme power. As a curious comment on human culture, Huxley recalls the findings of digging in a Neolithic site in Switzerland were poppy-heads have been found. It suggests that "people were already using this most ancient and powerful and dangerous of narcotics, even before the days of the rise of agriculture. So that man was apparently a dope-bag addict before he was a farmer". Huxley differentiated between more or less harmful substances: "the difference, as I say, between the ancient mind-changers, the traditional mind-changers, and the new substances, is that they were extremely harmful and the new

ones are not. I mean even the permissible mind-changer alcohol is not entirely harmless, as people may have noticed, and I mean the other ones, the non-permissible ones, such as opium and cocaine, opium and its derivatives, are very harmful indeed. They rapidly produce addiction, and in some cases lead at an extraordinary rate to physical degeneration and death".

The new substances in his opinion are somehow extraordinary as "a number of these new mind-changing substances can produce enormous revolutions within the mental side of our being, and yet do almost nothing to the physiological side. You can have an enormous revolution, for example, with LSD-25 or with the newly synthesized drug psilocybin, which is the active principal of the Mexican sacred mushroom. You can have this enormous mental revolution with no more physiological revolution than you would get from drinking two cocktails". In the same time Huxley was aware that pharmacologists were "producing a great many new wonder drugs where the cure is almost worse than the disease. Every year the new edition of medical textbooks contains a longer and longer chapter of what are Iatrogenic diseases, that is to say diseases caused by doctors. And this is quite true, many of the wonder drugs are extremely dangerous. I mean they can produce extraordinary effects, and in critical conditions they should certainly be used, but they should be used with the utmost caution. But there is evidently a whole class of drugs effecting the Central Nervous System which can produce enormous changes in sedation, in euphoria, in energizing the whole mental process, without doing any perceptible harm to the human body, and this presents to me the most extraordinary revolution. In the hands of a dictator these substances in one kind or the other could be used with, first of all, complete harmlessness, and the result would be, you can imagine, a euphoric that would make people thoroughly happy even in the most abominable circumstances".

The half century that separate us from Huxley writings, even when things took a slightly different turn, endorses the soundness of his arguments, as antidepressants are widely used and drug addiction is still tacitly encouraged in autocratic regimes. In a documentary featuring two prostitutes living in Iran, one of the women explained that opium addiction is tolerated as it guarantees stability of the regime neutralising the will to rebel. Huxley told of a housemate who, after reading Milton's Paradise Lost, remarked "And beer does more than Milton can to justify God's ways to man". Beer is of course, an extremely crude drug compared to the very hard or

sophisticated ones. We could repeat with Huxley "that some of the psychic energizers and the new hallucinants could do incomparably more than Milton and all the Theologicians combined could possibly do to make the terrifying mystery of our existence seem more tolerable than it does".

In another scenario, it could happen that we will be somehow artificially distracted. There is an "enormous area in which the ultimate revolution could function very well indeed, an area in which a great deal of control could be used not through terror, but by making life seem much more enjoyable than it normally does" to the point where it could be possible that "human beings come to love a state of things by which any reasonable and decent human standard they ought not to love". How can we be sure that this is not our present case? Huxley was worried about the development in the sphere of neurology. At his time the new experiments regarded the implantation of electrodes in the brain of animals and in a few cases on hopelessly insane people. "Anybody who has watched the behaviour of rats with electrodes placed in different centers must come away from this experience with the most extraordinary doubts about what on Earth is in store for us if this is got a hold of by a dictator. (…) The whole picture of the absolute control of the drives is terrifying, and in the few cases in which this has been done with very sick human beings, the effects are evidently very remarkable too".

The progress of science in the field of human mind has gone far, in the meantime even more extraordinary, revolutionary techniques, are made available. Once again we should be guarding on science and technology, for their potential to harm or help is one of the most delicate political issues. Even if new techniques are not being used except in an experimental way, we should remember Huxley advice to "realize what is happening to make ourselves acquainted with what has already happened, and then use a certain amount of imagination to extrapolate into the future the sort of things that might happen. What might happen if these fantastically powerful techniques were used by unscrupulous people in authority, what on Earth would happen, what sort of society would we get?" He exhorted us to exercise forethought, as a rapid look back in history shows that we, the humans, have too often acritically allowed advances in technology, and we were surprised by their results. They found themselves ill-equipped and therefore negatively affected by the profound change technology induced in the social and individual life. As an example Huxley refer to what happened "during the late eighteen-early nineteen century,

when the new machines were making possible the factory situation. It was not beyond the wit of man to see what was happening and project into the future and maybe forestall the really dreadful consequences which plagued England and most of western Europe and this country[224] for sixty or seventy years, and the horrible abuses of the factory system (…) If a certain amount of forethought had been devoted to the problem at that time, and if people had first of all found out what was happening and then used their imagination to see what might happen, and then had gone on to work out the means by which the worst applications of the techniques would not take place, well, then I think western humanity might have been spared about three generations of utter misery which had been imposed on the poor at that time".

The present technological advance, much more impressive than thinkable, raises a vast amount of issues to be publicly discussed. Those issues require appropriate attention and knowledge by all the population. As Huxley taught us, it is our business "to be aware of what is happening, and then to use our imagination to see what might happen, how this might be abused, and then if possible to see that the enormous powers which we now possess thanks to these scientific and technological advances to be used for the benefit of human beings and not for their degradation".

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[224] It is referred to the American public

Chapter V

Shaping the world citizen: defending freedom through education

We can expect no fresh start, until we again assert our mental freedom

5.1 Mill's Wisdom

In his renowned essay On Liberty, published (as Darwin's On The Origin of Species) in 1859, Mill provided a rational justification for the freedoms of the individual, to be protected not only from the coercion directly imposed by the state but also from the more subtle and moral control of public opinion. After more than a century, the topicality, relevance and soundness of his subject and arguments are shocking. He himself would probably be astonished by the actual situation. As Harry Weininger wrote in his eulogy for freedom activist Emma Goldberg in 1940, "the plea for liberty has been made a thousand times, aye, ten thousand times, but always need repeating"[225].

Recognizing the prominence of the human right to conscience, Mill devoted the second chapter of the illustrious essay to "the liberty of thought and discussion"[226]. Mill's argumentation in favour of liberty of expression starts from the assumption that opinion is not to be understood as a private good but rather as a precious collective one. In his view, establishing obstacles to its free circulation would count as an offence to the entire society, not only to the present generation but also to the future one. In particular, those who do not share a certain opinion would paradoxically suffer a bigger loss than those who accept it. In order to demonstrate his thesis supporting freedom of thought, of discussion and free press, the great British thinker takes into account different hypotheses. Considering the case in which an opinion may be false, those who want to ban it, and have the faculty of doing so, would justify their action negating its truth. According to Mill (and more recently robustly underlined by Popper) neither a man nor a theory can claim infallibility, so censors would be wrong in assuming absolute certainty of their arguments and in silencing conflicting opinions.

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[225] Weinberger, Harry. *Emma Goldman*. Berkeley Heights: The Oriole Press, 1940
[226] Mill, J.S., *On Liberty*, freely available on the World Wide Web ☺

Problems arise because even if in theory the "fact" of fallibility of mankind is almost generally accepted, this acknowledgment does not really influence practical judgments. Even those who are aware of their own fallibility still tend to repose with unlimited trust on the infallibility of "the world". But each individual has access only to a partial section of this world through "his party, his sect, his church, his class of society".

Moreover, man tends to keep its faith in certain authorities even in light of their past errors. "He devolves upon his own world the responsibility of being in the right against the dissentient worlds of other people; and it never troubles him that mere accident has decided which of these numerous worlds is the object of his reliance, and that the same causes which make him a Churchman in London, would have made him a Buddhist or a Confucian in Peking. Yet it is as evident in itself as any amount of argument can make it, that ages are no more infallible than individuals; every age having held many opinions which subsequent ages have deemed not only false but absurd; and it is as certain that many opinions, now general, will be rejected by future ages, as it is that many, once general, are rejected by the present."

In the absence of absolute certainty man still has a duty to search the truest opinion possible to guide his action, so the real question for Mill becomes how a man, a group, or society at large, can reach wisdom. The wise man, he argues, is the one who always practices listening and keeps his mind open to criticism, "because he has felt, that the only way in which a human being can make some approach to knowing the whole of a subject, is by hearing what can be said about it by persons of every variety of opinion, and studying all modes in which it can be looked at by every character of mind. No wise man ever acquired his wisdom in any mode but this; nor is it in the nature of human intellect to become wise in any other manner. The steady habit of correcting and completing his own opinion by collating it with those of others, so far from causing doubt and hesitation in carrying it into practice, is the only stable foundation for a just reliance on it".

There are opinions, or better said "beliefs", that are considered inherently essential to society, constituting a common good, so that public authorities assume their protection as a duty, comparing them to a constitutionally guaranteed social interest. In this case their truth would be irrelevant as they are accepted as such by the majority. Another case of problematic assumption of infallibility would be the

one in which a judge credit himself with the authority to establish acritical judgments on whether an opinion should be expressed and spread. For example, the idea of the State as necessary to society is protected as a dogma and anarchists has been often silenced by authoritarians as well as by liberals.

Recalling the emblematic cases of Socrates and Jesus, Mill commits readers to memory that the judges in those cases where not viewed as lacking any ethical feelings, culture or moral integrity, on the contrary, they were estimated authorities whose wisdom was only later on denied by time. Discussing these cases of patent injustice helps Mill to demonstrate the impossibility of human infallibility, both for the common or the wiser of men.

Given that humans are irreducibly fallible, it is unconceivable to stifle or hinder the freedom to publicly express one's own opinion, not only because it would impede the flourish of a discussion but also because neither a judge nor a political authority can claim absolute certainty on the wrongness of an opinion. In any case, it follows that "truth gains more even by the errors of one who, with due study and preparation, thinks for himself, than by the true opinions of those who only hold them because they do not suffer themselves to think. Not that it is solely, or chiefly, to form great thinkers, that freedom of thinking is required. On the contrary, it is as much, and even more indispensable, to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of".

5.2 Fragile and precious as a crystal: Habermas and the Public Sphere

The place in which individuals come to shape, share and collect their private ideas in modern societies can be referred to as the Public Sphere. For a long time the main concerns occupying the cultural theorist Jürgen Habermas has pivoted on the idea of "the public" and of its power in a representative democracy. To answer the questions about how does "public opinion" shape political power and policy and how is the system of political power maintained in a democracy in 1962 he wrote The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere[227]. From the perspective of the Frankfurt School of Social Research, which advanced a Marxist critique of western

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[227] Habermas, J., *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*. Trans. Thomas Burger with Frederick Lawrence. MIT Press. Cambridge,1991

capitalism and its discontents, Habermas explored "the status of public opinion in the practice of representative government in Western Europe"[228].

In his understanding the public sphere is a virtual or imaginary community not necessarily existing in any given space. Ideally, it would be "made up of private people gathered together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state"[229]. The public sphere, through acts of assembly and dialogue, gives rise to attitudes and opinions which serve to verify, challenge and guide public affairs, that is, the affairs of the state. Every "legitimate authority in any functioning democracy"[230], in ideal terms, should be sustained by public opinion, emanating from the public sphere.

Later on, Habermas would distinguish the "lifeworld" from the "system". While the public sphere falls within the lifeworld, defined as the immediate milieu of the individual social actor, the "system" refers to economy and the state. Detaching his position from a rigid determinism that consider the system as dominating the whole society, seen as mistaken analysis, he points to the negotiation of political power as the result of the interdependency of the system and the lifeworld[231]. Democratic societies aim is to "erect a democratic dam against the colonizing encroachment of system imperatives on areas of the lifeworld"[232].

In Habermas reconstruction the first emergence of a public sphere dates back in the 18th century. It was the product of the growth of press, of coffee houses, of literary societies and voluntary associations. Since then, the Parliament and other agencies of representative government sought to manage this public sphere in order to control the State. For the public sphere to succeed many factors must be taken into account: the extent of access should be as close to universal as possible; it should be autonomous, that means that the citizens must be free of coercion; it should reject the principle of hierarchy and allow each individual to participate on an equal footing; moreover the rule of law (particularly the subordination of the State) and the quality of participation (the common commitment to the ways of

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[228] Soules, M., *Jürgen Habermas and the Public Sphere*, Malaspina University-College, 2007 available at http://www.media-studies.ca/articles/habermas.htm
[229] Habermas, J., *The Structural Transformation*, cit., p. 176
[230] Rutherford, P. *Endless Propaganda: The Advertising of Public Goods*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000. P.18
[231] See "Further Reflections on the Public Sphere". In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Ed. Craig Calhoun. Trans. Thomas Burger. MIT Press. Cambridge, 1992.
[232] Ibidem

logic) are seen as necessary features[233]. Habermas insisted on this latter point as he considers rational-critical discourse, the discourse in which everyone is an equal participant and the supreme communication skill is the power of argument, as the basis on which the public sphere would be build. It is probable that never in reality the ideal shape was fully achieved, nonetheless it approximated more closely to the model in the 19th century, when traditional ethnic, gender, and class barriers to participation were removed.

At the same time, according to Habermas, advancing social welfare, growing culture industries and strong private interests started reformatting the dimension of the public sphere. With the spreading of large newspapers devoted to profit, the press turned into an agent of manipulation, becoming "the gate through which privileged private interests invaded the public sphere"[234] thus creating a "refeudalization" of power in which the public sphere stay as an illusion and is only maintained to give sanction to the decisions of leaders. The present Italian situation would provide him a very sound case of the public sphere degeneration. Still, in Soules view, "behind Habermas' analysis lies an oral bias: he believes the public sphere can be most effectively constituted and maintained through dialogue, acts of speech, through debate and discussion"[235]. Habermas himself in "Further Reflections" points to groups of concerned citizens, grassroots movements, trade unions, voluntary associations, social organizations, churches and sports clubs, as the places where the communication emanating from the authority can be re-discussed and challenged.

In his understanding the role of the public sphere is undermined by the misuse of publicity, by the "manipulative publicity"[236] widespread in this day and age. In his words "even arguments are translated into symbols to which again one can not respond by arguing but only by identifying with them"[237]."Authorized opinions"[238] are thus conveyed in a propagandist effort to direct views and nurture political theatre. "Showy pomp"[239] and "staged display"[240] are employed by those in power to legitimate their authority and its emanations.

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[233] Rutherford, P. *Endless Propaganda*, cit. p. 18
[234] Habermas, J., In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, cit., p. 185
[235] Soules, M., *Jürgen Habermas and the Public Sphere*, cit.
[236] Habermas, J., . In *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, cit., p. 178
[237] Ibidem, p.206
[238] Ibidem, p. 245
[239] Ibidem, p. 195

Jacques Ellul reaffirmed the same concerns in his book on propaganda[241]. In his words, biased newscasts, misinformation, political education and other sources of "the propaganda of integration" are used to shape the individual according to the social mechanism requirements. Admitting that it creates zombies out of citizens, still, in the sixties, Ellul argued that in a democracy propaganda is necessary. "Propaganda is needed in the exercise of power for the simple reason that the masses have come to participate in political affairs". In his *Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society[242]*, Herbert Marcuse analyzed the "voice of command" brought into play by experts, politicians, managers and educators. Visual display and the style of address borrowed from advertising aggravated the hypnotic effect to which Aldous Huxley referred in his speech on *The Ultimate Revolution[243]*.

Messages may be fixed into people's minds through the exploitation of the effects of an abridged and condensed syntax, direct and assertive language, the use of an emphatic concreteness, constantly addressing the target as "you" and "your" and endlessly repeating images. Immersed in this sort of narcotizing rhetoric, the citizen becomes, in Marcuse's terms, "one-dimensional", incapable of dissent or repudiation. Many theorists pointed to the techniques of advertising and publicity as responsible for corrupting and poisoning the public sphere, and therefore our minds. When a style of authoritative discourse and image management and substitution mingle, chances of dialogue rarefy. As Rutherford maintained, the puplic sphere "remains a site for the production of public opinion that is given concrete form by surveys and polls which, to a degree, actually fashion the opinion through the process of asking certain questions (and not asking others). Because of an excess of goods and risks competing for attention, the sphere continues to be a contested arena; however, much of the excess is manufactured by people and institutions with money, moral clout, or other forms of power. The mass media play out a double roll here, both as the vehicle for competitive spectacles and as the source of news, a

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[240] Ibidem, p. 206
[241] Ellul, J. *Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes*. Trans. Konrad Kellen & Jean Lerner. Knopf, New York.1965
[242] Marcuse, H. *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*. Beacon Press, 1966
[243] Huxley, A., *The Ultimate Revolution*, speech given at the Berkeley Language Center, March 20, 1962 - Speech Archive SA 0269, audible at http://www.lib.berkeley.edu/MRC/onlinemedia.html#huxley

different kind of discourse, though again a monologue and now contaminated by the ubiquity of publicity"[244].

Employing a medical analogy Rutherford characterized the invasion of the public sphere by systems of authority: as "a kind of virus which debilitates the body politic"[245]. Propaganda and persuasion might not kill the public but for sure would make it less effective. To counterbalance the negative influence exerted by external authorities, by the many enemies of our minds, it is fundamental to strengthen individual resources for autonomy and creativity. This human enhancement can be achieved only through a proper education.

5.3 Old-new thoughts on education

More than two thousands years ago Lucius Annaeus Seneca wrote, "no man was ever wise by chance". In a recent speech given in a London girls' school Michelle Obama made a plea, making a passionate, personal case for each student to take education seriously, as it is the mean through which new, brilliant generations, would close the gap between *the world as it is* and *the world as it should be*[246]. There can be little doubt today that man is, to a large extent, the product of the received education, shaped by the process of information to which he has undergone. I use here the term "information" in its literal significance of "shaping within": to *in-form* means *to give inner shape to*. It therefore refers to a process of trans-formation of a pre-existing something. Implicit in this definition is the idea of an environment external to, or separate from, the thing to be informed. In this understanding information is a dynamic, fluid phenomenon, whose essential features are transference, perception, and cognition/integration. The main sources of information in this understanding are parents, teachers and the media.

The importance of education has been historically stressed by political philosophers: in a sense we might assume that behind a political project there is a pedagogical project designed to achieve a proper citizen to fit in the outlined scheme. In the *Republic* of Plato the just man and just society are interdependent, and the polity outlined by Rousseau in the *Social Contract* was supposed to be

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[244] Rutherford, P. *Endless Propaganda*, cit. p. 274-5
[245] Ibidem
[246] Available at http://www.ted.com/talks/michelle_obama.html

inhabited by the citizen raised according to the teachings described in the *Émile*, which draws on Locke's *Some thoughts Concerning Education*, whose bulk is the explanation of how to instil virtue in the youth. It is interesting notice that Locke's letters were originally written for an aristocratic friend but his advice had a broader appeal. He offered an explanation of how to educate the mind, and the application of his principles allowed women and the lower classes to aspire to the same kind of character as the aristocrats for whom Locke originally intended the work[247]. His recipes for liberty involved the use of three distinct methods: the development of a healthy body, the formation of a virtuous character and the choice of an appropriate academic curriculum.

The relevance of a good education for the development of human qualities and virtues had been endlessly underlined but not always implemented. Many people raised their voice to accuse the present schooling system of frustrating human potentialities, reducing both creativity and critical thinking instead of promoting them. Emma Goldman explained that it is in the very nature of the nation-state system to limit human flourishing, thus the attempts to shape the most stupid, blind and irresponsible citizen restraining the acquisition of higher faculties that would be intrinsically incompatible with the overpowering nationalist setting should not come as a surprise.

The greatest German philosopher, Immanuel Kant, never underestimated the importance of man formation for the achievement of autonomy and morality, which he considered the fundamental foundation of a peaceful global society. Not by chance he lived in the Germany of the eighteenth century, a moment in history marked as 'the age of pedagogics'. Kant's own ideas on education, whose significance is to be appreciated against the more general background of his philosophy, were influenced by those of a much less famous colleague, Johann Basedow. Philosopher, theologian, and educational theorist, Basedow represented an important figure of Jewish German Enlightenment and invented a model for non-denominational educative institution that was soon imitated by similar projects in Germany and Switzerland. Son of a poor wigmaker, he had the chance to study thanks to a benefactor who financed him in Hamburg and Leipzig. He then became a private tutor in the family of Herr von Quaalen in Holstein. During his experiences

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[247] Yolton, John. *John Locke and Education*. Random House. New York, 1971, p.6.

as a tutor, his attention turned to educational problems, which were the subject of his master's thesis at Kiel University in 1752. Later on he was appointed professor of philosophy and rhetoric at the Knightly Academy at Soro, Denmark, where an heterodox work, *Practical philosophy for all states* (Copenhagen, 1758), led to his dismissal. His position in the gymnasium at Altona suffered a similar fate, and his writings were prohibited. Having left theology, thanks again to the support of a benefactor, he published his first significant work on education, which met with a tremendous response, the *Appeal to the friends of mankind about schools, with a plan for an elementary book on human knowledge*[248]. Several influential people from within the Jewish community helped him to finance the publication of other textbooks, for adults as well as for children, the most important being his *Methodology for fathers and mothers of families and nations* [249]. Imbued with the new scientific spirit, he thought out a plan for a reform of the schooling system in which the ideas of Rousseau would be put in practice. In 1768 Basedow issued his *Address to Philantropists and Men of Property on Schools and Studies and their influence on the Public Weal* to appeal for funds[250]. Invited by Prince Franz Leopold Friedrich of Dessau to organize an experimental school in Dessau, Basedow accepted. In 1774 the school, called the Philanthropin, opened. Returned to theology in 1776, he wrote the book that he considered his masterpiece, the *Examination of the old most natural religion*. Inspired by the English and French deists, he advocated a natural religion, rational and practical, refraining from dogmas and rejecting every kind of orthodox Christianity.

Inspired by Crusius, David Hume, and the French philosophes, his work on theory of knowledge and metaphysics, *Philalethie* (Lübeck, 1764), was one of the most significant books on methodology of its time and profoundly influenced Kant, whose work would then retrace some of Basedow's ideas. He supported a moderate skepticism based on common sense, and, out of skepticism concerning causation, denied the possibility of reaching absolute demonstrative truth in natural philosophy, in rational psychology, or in theology. Modern historians have underrated the theoretical importance of this revolutionary popular philosopher. Kant's enthusiasm

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[248] Basedow, J. *Vorstellung an Menschenfreunde für Schulen, nebst dem Plan eines Elementarbuchs der menschlichen Erkenntnisse*. Hamburg, 1768
[249] Basedow, J. *Methodenbuch für Väter und Mütter der Familien und Völker*; Leipzig, 1770; edited by T. Fritzsch, Leipzig, 1913
[250] Cubberley, Ellwood P. The History of Education. Kessinger Publishing, 1991. p.344

with Basedow educational theories is explicit in his own comments on the 'Philantropin', which he saw as the road conducive to a peaceful world society, ascribing to the Dessau institute a cosmopolitan, revolutionary and continental significance. "Each ordinary being, each individual citizen of the world" Kant wrote, "must have an infinite interest in gaining familiarity with an establishment which is laying the foundations for a whole new order of things". Basedow's Philanthropin School "must of necessity attract (...) the keen attention of Europe. In the well-ordered countries of Europe, an 'early revolution' must be put in hand in the shape of school reform. This reform had been set in motion and was admirably exemplified by the 'Dessau Educational Institute"[251].

The model of education advocated was cosmopolitan, free from any confessional imprint, equal for all classes, and aimed at enabling men to live useful and happy lives as good citizens. Instruction should appeal to the child's sensibility rather than to his understanding and the acquisition of knowledge should be encouraged by games and colloquial intercourse. Notably, Basedow insisted on the fact that images are more effective than words, and abundantly illustrated his textbooks.

5.4 Insights for a Kantian cosmopolitan education

Historians certainly did not underestimate Kant contributions in general, but his pedagogical concerns do not receive adequate attention by contemporary political philosophers. In my opinion, a wider diffusion and deeper understanding of its pedagogical premises would be beneficial not only to the reception of Kantian philosophy but also to human evolution in a large sense. His advises has gone unattended in modern practices, as well as the Secret Article for Perpetual Peace, where he recommended that politicians hear the voice of philosophers. Despite the fact that he is mentioned in the introduction[252] (along with Luther, Melanchthon, Friedrich August Wolf and Schiller), Scheuerl's famous portrait of the Classical exponents of pedagogy omits Kant from the list. Nonetheless, he is explicitly

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[251] Kant, I. "Essays on the philanthropists", in *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Pädagogik und ihrer Begrundung* [Selected writings about education and its foundations] (edited by Hans Hermann Groothoff and Edgar Reimers), Paderborn, Schöningh, 1963. p. 61

[252] Scheuerl, H.(ed.) *Klassiker der Pädagogik* [Classical exponents of education], Beck. Munchen, 1979. Vol.I, p.11

referred to by other pedagogical traditions. In 1954 by the well-known existential 'pedagogical' philosopher Bollnow dealt directly with the topic 'Kant and pedagogics'[253] and a Unesco publication of 1993 recognized the relevance of Kant's view on education to foster present day reconciliation spirit[254].

As Heinrich Kantz argued in his reappraisal of Kant pedagogics, written few years after the Wall felt, the creation of spiritual reconciliation between the continents of the world is a major task we face, "but that is only possible by defining the profile and true historical identity of particular groups or regions such as Africa, America, Asia, Australasia or Europe. From the European standpoint, this requirement means that Europeans must make reference to their human responsibility for others and for themselves, and reinterpret their own history in such a way that both its negative and positive factors are placed in their true perspective. What is more, each continent must make its own pluralistic, individual and concrete contribution to the new world ethic"[255]. Kant's relevant intellectual achievements, in particular reference to education, deserve a re-examination in the wider context of equal partnership in a future world society. As Kantz proposed, it may be very useful today to reconsider some aspects of his professional career with a bearing on education. His own biography and curriculum provide elements to better understand how he arrived to develop his open worldview.

Born in Königsberg on 22 April 1724 in a lower middle class family, Immanuel Kant was brought him up in such a way that he remembered his parents with a 'feeling of the utmost gratitude'[256], confirming that he could have received no better moral education. Having attended the Collegium Fridericianum Grammar School, he lamented the oppressive presence and emphasis placed on theology and religion in the teaching syllabus and school life. At the same time those extensive studies allowed him to develop his subsequent personal religiosity, founded on a rational sense of responsibility. He came into close contact with the philosophy of Leibniz at the University of Königsberg, and in1755 he graduated and qualified in the same year as a university teacher with his dissertation on 'New light on the first

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[253] O.F. Bollnow, *Kant und die Pädagogik*. [Kant and education] in: Westermanns Pädagogische Beiträge
[Westermann's educational contributions], vol. 6, 1954, no. 2, p. 49–55
[254] Kanz, Heinrich. *Immanuel Kant*. Prospects. Unesco. Paris. Vol.XXIII, no. 3/4, 1993, p. 789-806
[255] *Ibidem*
[256] For a collection of Kant's biographies see Gross, F. *Depiction of the Life and Character of Immanuel Kant*. Deutsche Bibliothek. Berlin, 1912

principles of metaphysical cognition'. In his own words, it was the analysis of the work of Newton, Hume and, above all, Rousseau who, had 'put him on the right track' and sparked off 'a revolution in his personal thinking'[257]. During his brilliant professorial career Kant wrote philosophical works that became milestones of his era. He often confronted and challenged the cultural opinion-shapers in the Europe of his day, as with the famous 'Answer to the question: what is Enlightenment?' wrote in 1784. His last lecture was given in 1796. Having embraced a theistic religious dimension he overcame the fear of death, and when he died in 1804 his last words are reported to have been: 'It is good'.

Kant's intellectual undertakings may be framed by the famous questions he posed in 1793: What can I know? What am I to do? What may I hope? What is man? He answered those dilemmas adopting a wide-ranging and critical approach. On a first plane of thought, through an enlightened positive interpretation of human reason, he rationally and personally assessed the human potential and limitations of reason. He confined the potential experiences of all human beings (phenomena) in the Critique of Pure Reason, written in 1781. Reducing the ideological sophisms ad absurdum he pointed out that scientific knowledge of things in themselves (Noumena) is unattainable. Not satisfied with a somewhat reticent assessment of human reason, on a second level of thought, Kant went on to identify possibilities for a moral dimension of freedom, immortality and religious fulfilment for man. In the Critique of pure reason he himself expressed 'unwavering' belief in the 'existence of God and a future life'[258]. Nonetheless he issued critical warnings against the supposition that this belief might be proved, and stated clearly that the belief in 'God, freedom and immortality', which brings happiness to man and fosters world peace, cannot be rationalized, indoctrinated and turned into a dogmatic ideology that undermines man's intellectual freedom. In order to pave the way for corresponding moral certainties in human existence, Kant criticized reason in this spirit, writing 'I therefore found it necessary to abolish knowledge in order to leave room for belief' in the Preface to the second edition of his Critique of Pure Reason in 1787[259]. As repeated in the Critique of Practical Reason, pure reason simply holds out the 'prospects of articles of faith'. In his conception of human freedom, human

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[257] See Kantz, H. cit.

[258] See Kant, I. 'On opinion, knowledge and beliefs' in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (Transcendental Methodology. Second Chapter, third section)

[259] p. 26 of the Philip Reclam edition (Leipzig,1878)

dignity makes the recognition of that freedom an inherently subjective matter. This point is stressed with particular force in the famous beginning of the conclusion of the Critique of Practical Reason: 'Two things fill my mind with ever-growing wonder and awe, the more often and persistently I turn my thinking to them: the starry firmament above me and the moral law within me'. It reminds me of a comment made by President Obama, which wisely pointed out that "a world of all math but no poetry is not fit for human habitation"[260].

Fundamental, in Kant's educational statements, is the emphasis on subjectivity, which became a basic principle of education in the modern world. Applying the quintessential principle of his philosophy, that all men are subjects who should not exploit each other as means to an end, those involved in the process of education and upbringing are defined as subjects who must not make use of one another as 'instruments.' A debt of gratitude in the general world context is owed to Kant for his insistence on this idea, which spread, in a philosophical rephrasing, the eternal ethics expressed by the Golden Rule.

What then is the educational significance of Kant's philosophy? While many insights are immanent in his philosophical production, we can also refer to statements explicitly made by him. In the Berlin Monthly and other organs of publication the leading German intellectuals of the eighteenth century exchanged their views on relevant topics, including educational matters. Kant expressed the didactic relevance of his university teaching duties and made an effort to adopt a pedagogical attitude towards his audience. It results clearly in the announcement of the nature and purpose of his lectures in 1765/66, whose scope was to train listeners to become comprehending, reasonable and scholarly persons. The young people entrusted to him must be 'taught to acquire a more mature insight of their own in future'.[261] He gave many lectures 'on pedagogics' (as a requirement of his position as a professor in the philosophical faculty, in the 1776/77 winter semester, in the 1780 summer semester and in the 1783/84 and 1786/87 winter semesters) but never published himself the text of these lectures.[262] In the same time of the compulsory lectures, he made revealing comments in its production on ethical, aesthetic,

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[260] Reported by Frank Schaeffer, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/frank-schaeffer/president-obama-bad-news_b_141342.html
[261] Establishment of his lectures during the winter semester of 1765/66, quoted in Kantz, H. *cit*.
[262] A collection of them was edited by Rink at the publishing house of Nicolovius in Königsberg in 1803

historical, anthropological and theological issues. Relevant publications include *The idea of a general history for the purpose of a citizen of the world*', (1784), *The presumed beginning of the history of mankind* (1786), *What is Enlightenment?* (1784), *Perpetual peace* (1795) and *Anthropology from the pragmatic viewpoint* (1798). His fundamental text on religious philosophy, *Religion within the limits of pure reason* (1793), is another good source, for example where he comments on the way in which education responds to the problem of good and evil: 'What man is, or may be destined to become, in the moral sense, good or evil, is of his own making, both now and in the past'.

As the UNESCO article reminded, positive suggestions with a bearing on the global structure of education that we should advocate today can be derived from the educational ideas, assumptions and reflections scattered in Kant's texts. The main relevant questions to which Kant's texts provide answers regard the nature of education, the subjects to whom education is directed and the question of questions, the most interesting for the scope of my project: how can education, which leads to enlightened reason as a source of peace, be imparted or received? Kant accepted the fundamental pedagogical position according to which education is imperative for the development of mankind. Humans have 'such a strong inclination to freedom' that they must be 'accustomed from an early age to accept the dictates of reason'[263]. The very concept of man, as a collective designation, is nothing more than what education makes of him, and 'It will be noted that man is always educated by other men who have themselves been educated previously'[264]. He firstly consider education in empirical terms, as the way in which the educational process takes place in a given real situation and then in its anthropological profundity, referring to its normative idea as the yardstick for its practice. In fact 'an idea is nothing other than the concept of a perfection which has not as yet been experienced'[265]. It is the normative idea that allows the critique of actual education, schools and training. We may try to approximate the 'idea of an education that develops all the natural gifts of man', because good education 'holds the great secret of the true perfection of human

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[263] Kant, I. *Ausgewählte Schriften zur Pädagogik und ihrer Begrundung* [Selected writings about education and its foundations] (edited by Hans Hermann Groothoff and Edgar Reimers), Paderborn, Schöningh, 1963. p. 10
[264] Ibidem, p.11
[265] Ibidem, 12

nature'[266]. For all people committed to this world it is 'delightful to imagine that human nature can be increasingly enhanced through education and that education can be shaped in a manner which is appropriate to mankind'. A 'cosmopolitan' spirit with a commitment to all that is 'best in the world' should be followed in planning education as 'good education is itself the source of all that is good in the world'. The meaning of education and culture somehow conflate in the intention to collect the best of the world, and very similar positions have been expressed in the statement offered by Matthew Arnold in the preface of his famous essay *Culture and Anarchy*:

"The whole scope of the essay is to recommend culture as the great help out of our present difficulties; culture being a pursuit of our total perfection by means of getting to know, on all the matters which most concern us, the best which has been thought and said in the world, and, through this knowledge, turning a stream of fresh and free thought upon our stock notions and habits, which we now follow staunchly but mechanically, vainly imagining that there is a virtue in following them staunchly which makes up for the mischief of following them mechanically"[267].

A problem often encountered by authors concerned with the education of the youth is that limitations to free thinking are firstly imposed by the family. 'Parents generally only brought up their children to equip them to 'fit in with the world as it is today, however bad it may be', contrasting the conceptual principle that 'children must not be educated simply to achieve the present level but towards a possible better future level of the human race, in other words taking account of the idea of mankind and the universal destiny of man'.[268]

A similar spirit is to be found in the objections to the state of affairs made by Emma Goldman in her article *The child and its enemies*:

"Is the child to be considered as an individuality, or as an object to be moulded according to the whims and fancies of those about it? This seems to me to be the most important question to be answered by parents and educators. And whether the child is to grow from within, whether all that craves expression will be permitted to come forth toward the light of day; or whether it is to be kneaded like dough through external forces, depends upon the proper answer to this vital question. The longing of the best and noblest of our times makes for the strongest individualities. Every sensitive being abhors the idea of being treated as a mere machine or as a mere parrot of conventionality and respectability, the human being craves recognition of

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[266] Ivi
[267] Arnold, Matthew. *Culture & anarchy: an essay in* i
[268] Kant, I. cit.(1963), p.14

his kind. It must be borne in mind that it is through the channel of the child that the development of the mature man must go, and that the present ideas of the educating or training of the latter in the school and the family--even the family of the liberal or radical--are such as to stifle the natural growth of the child".

Pointing to the implicit danger posed by the very personality of inapt instructors and teachers, who "with dead souls, operate with dead values" she denounced the standardizing attitude:

"Every institution of our day, the family, the State, our moral codes, sees in every strong, beautiful, uncompromising personality a deadly enemy; therefore every effort is being made to cramp human emotion and originality of thought in the individual into a straight-jacket from its earliest infancy; or to shape every human being according to one pattern; not into a well-rounded individuality, but into a patient work slave, professional automaton, tax-paying citizen, or righteous moralist"[269].

All humanists tend to view the improvement of the world as a task for successive generations, to be achieved through the amelioration of mankind brought about improving education strategies directed to 'better proportioned and expedient development'. In this sense happiness and misfortune of the individuals depend on the individuals themselves. 'Education is therefore the greatest and most difficult problem with which man can be confronted, since insight depends on education and education in its turn depends on insight'. As a consequence, pedagogical activity should be assigned a prominent position among cultural activities, which Kant considered as a reflection of the totality of the human being, to the extent that he established a direct relationship between education and political activity: 'Two inventions of man must surely be viewed as the most difficult: the art of government and the art of education'[270].

In Kant's view the main tasks for education are: disciplined thinking, creation of a cultivated outlook, enhancement of civilization and imparting moral rectitude[271]. More than two centuries ago, believing that the age of discipline, culture and civilization was in place, he lamented that the age of moral rectitude was 'lying in the distant future'. The use of the moral concept made by Kant has been sometimes misunderstood and it is probably illuminated by his definition of the functions of education. In his thinking morality is connected to a commitment to a

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[269] Goldman, E. *The child and its enemies*. In Mother Earth, April 1906. Vol.1, no.2. Available at http://www.gutenberg.org/catalog/world/readfile?pageno=7&fk_files=920594
[270] Kant, I. cit.(1963), p.14
[271] Ibidem, p.16 e ss.

future world ethic, and moral education should develop in the educated persons an attitude to choose 'good purposes only'. The purposes are defined as good if they can meet the criterion of universal approval and may be ' the purposes of everyone'. He therefore stressed the moralizing function of educational processes promoting the 'moral character' of the youth because the dignity of all human beings it is indissolubly bound up with it. It is important to notice that the references to the 'citizen of the world' justify an interpretation of Kant's ideas as strongly anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist and anti-élitist. As in the case of Locke, education is seen as the emancipative path for all human beings.

The idea of duty is central to Kant's moral conception, and children must be trained to perform both their duties to themselves and their duties to others. 'The duty to oneself, however, resides in the fact that the human being preserves the dignity of mankind in his own person'[272] and each person, in all his actions, must keep in mind the fact that 'the human being bears within him a certain dignity that makes him more noble than all other forms of life'. We all therefore share a duty not to belie the dignity of mankind in our own person and to insure 'respect for, and compliance with, the rights of men'. This respect for others must be imparted to the child at a very early age, for example, Kant instructs a richer child to show the same human respect to his poorer coevals as to others like him. As in the case of morality, even with the concept of duty it must be kept in mind that Kant considered the principle of obedience in education always to be applied in the context of enlightened reason, rejecting any imposition. 'Adopting a particular course of action from a sense of duty means obeying the dictates of reason'[273].

The process of education through which one learns to obey his own reason is intended as an ongoing learning process; therefore Kant's ideas do not refer only to youth formation. Many of his statements appeal to adults as well. In his view, man, in general, potentially possess all the necessary attributes to become an autonomous moral being. 'Man must first develop his attributes for good; providence has not imparted them to him in a definitive form. Man must better himself, improve his level of culture and, if he is bad, acquire morality'[274]. The traces of his theological background are evident in his warning that a human being may be 'highly cultivated

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[272] Ibidem, p.51
[273] Ibidem, p.46
[274] Ibidem, p.13

physically (…) and have a highly trained intellect, but his morality may be low and he may still be an evil creature'[275]. The scheme sounds similar to one of the most beautiful passages of the Bible, where St. Paul, in an homage to the commandment of reciprocal love, is credited to have said that even if he could speak all the languages of men and angels, and had not love, he would be as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal; and even had he the gift of prophecy, knew all mysteries and had faith to move mountains, but had not love, he would be nothing.

Force of mind and understanding are reflection of the true human nature. In Kant's words, 'understanding means recognition of general principles. Judgement is the application of the universal to the particular. Reason means the ability to perceive the relationship between the universal and the particular'[276]. Depending on their age, Kant states that children must be neither over- nor understretched, as the nature of the child is manifested in individual observations. 'A child must only be as clever as a child' and his essential nature must not be distorted by precociousness or slavery to fashion: 'Children must also be open-hearted, their gaze as bright as the sun'[277]. Kant provided many instructions about how to deal with children: 'Assuming that the child has a natural inclination to go its own way, which may be assumed to be only most exceptionally what is wanted, the best attitude to adopt is this: if the child does nothing to please us, we in turn shall do nothing to please it', 'neither should children be intimidated', 'they must not try to reason out everything' but 'it is extremely harmful to accustom the child to treat everything as a game'.

When it comes to the core issue, that is how to educate a child in order to acquire that enlightened universal reason which promotes the cause of peace, Kant advocates the 'judicious' further development of the 'art of education or pedagogics' so that it may be 'transformed into a science'[278] Moreover, a distinction must be drawn between true problems of education and those problems which are only apparent, being rejected in a spirit of criticism of ideologies. Inter alia, Kant examined the issues of compulsion in education, learning methods and the notion of duty. With regard to the first question, it should be assessed how to reconcile the obedience to legal and social constraints, without which life is impossible, with the

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[275] Ibidem, p.33
[276] Ibidem, p.36
[277] Ibidem, p.46
[278] Ibidem, p.14

ability of the individual to 'make use of his personal freedom'[279]. The child cannot know the complexity of self-preservation and personal independence unless he feels the 'inevitable resistance of society' from an early age, therefore Kant indicated three pedagogical rules of conduct for the progressive development of freedom:

1. The child must be allowed to enjoy every possible freedom from infancy, except in things where it may do harm to itself and provided that it does not inhibit the freedom of others through its actions.

2. The child must be given to understand that it can only achieve its own objectives if it also permits others to achieve theirs.

3. The child must realize that it is under an obligation to make use of its freedom and that it is being educated in such a way that it may one day attain freedom, i.e. will not be dependent on the care of others[280].

Disciplinary measures must be taken in a way that does not impinge upon the child awareness of its own freedom and that do not obstruct the freedom of others, and children should be accustomed to work without having to abandon play. In brief, 'education must be made obligatory without becoming a form of slavery'[281]. On the issue of learning methods, the basic concepts that Kant reminded us are: 'The individual learns most thoroughly and best retains those things which he learns, as it were, for himself'; 'The principal need is to teach children to think' and not to train them like animals. The best way to learn how to think is the use of the Socratic method as opposed to the mechanical-catechetic method. 'The education of the future must be based on the Socratic method.' Even when external help is fundamental to children understanding of certain propositions, 'it must nevertheless be recognized that the perception of reason cannot be drummed into them, but must be arrived at from within themselves'[282].

Many meritorious statements formulated by Kant bear a practical relevance and assumed a central position between the extremes that were highlighted in his day, for example, the contrast between play and work, freedom and compulsion, etc. More important is his insistence to the compulsory, character and conscience-

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[279] Ibidem, p.20
[280] Ivi
[281] Ibidem, p.35
[282] Ibidem, p.40

forming dimension of education. In his conception, duty and conscientious action do not oppose the 'joy of the heart', which comes about when the individual has nothing for which to reproach himself[283]. Inclination, interest and pleasure are welcomed as long as they do not impinge upon the commitment of the individual to love of other human beings and to the well-being of all men. This theory of duty is evidently rooted in Kant's notion of world citizenship. It is not the correspondence to one's own inclinations that should make an action seem worthwhile but the fact that it reflects one's duty of neighbourly love for others and also the awareness of world citizenship. Children must be familiarized with interest for the rest of the world, which will be a source of warmth for their own souls. They must take pleasure in that which is best in the world, even if it does not correspond to the advantage of their own fatherland and does not bring them personal profit[284]. It is easy, and depressing, to measure the distance of the ideal pedagogic setting for cosmopolitan citizens from the practises of indoctrinations put forward in national states both by the education and information systems.

Let us remember Kant's own method of philosophical research, incontrovertibly defined by the formula 'transcendental-critical'. As he himself states, he overcame 'dogmatic sclerosis' of previous philosophical methods and contents, discovering his own method of philosophical reflection. Kant indicated the implications of this critical position, which Kantz suggested to reduce to a brief formula: by drawing a distinction between ideas and the material of 'empirical' research, Kant paved the way for one fundamental position of modern enlightened educational science that starts out from the principle of the freedom of its subjects. Since Kant's day, this normative notion of freedom fought for his existence and persisted miraculously surviving an impervious empirical history, marked by negative empirical factors and realities of repression.

Kant defended the 'non-empirical' ideas inherent in human existence confining scientific knowledge to its own specific subject area and providing an intellectual prop for human freedom of thought. His approach to teaching, and the methods he applied in the university study context, made his students look for him as both a teacher and a counsellor. In his pedagogics, aside from the transcendental-critical approach, Kant made use of traditional means of acquiring knowledge, such as

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[283] Ibidem, p.59
[284] Ibidem, p.59

observation, the study of literature and consideration of the opinions of enlightened contemporaries (often quoting Basedow and Rousseau). His impact as an educator can be classified under the headings of basic education, family education, school education, university education, general adult education and senior citizen education. Without entering the professional debate on the correct interpretation of Kant (I take as erroneous any formalistic and nationalistic interpretations), the impact of his educational theories may be highlighted in the perspective of its positive connotations and, secondly, from that of its negative attributes.

Some keywords to refer to are *enlightenment*, the *individual*, the *ethic of duty* and *world peace*. Acknowledged exponent of enlightenment, Kant is described, for example, in all the relevant German school textbooks, as the source of the spirit of enlightenment conceived in the international sense. Dealing with the meaning of enlightenment, his answer is, namely, that each individual must find the courage to make use of his own understanding despite the obstacles of cowardice and idleness: this seems today a proper definition for the horizon of enlightenment in a global world. The same consideration applies to his contribution to the concept of individual, which had a long history of philosophical, juridical and theological meanings. Since the days of Kant, the term 'person' somehow reflects the acceptance of each human being as an 'end in himself', regardless of his class, world view, religion, race, nation, etc. From the start of his existence, despite the obstacles standing in his way, each human is a reality in his own right and with his own dignity. Together with Rousseau, Shaftesbury, Leibniz and others, Kant gave a basis to the idea, entered in European teaching syllabuses down the centuries, that 'the inclinations and forces dormant in the individual must be allowed to unfurl freely, viewing the individual not as a means but as an end in himself, as a being in whose spontaneity our trust must be placed'.

The ethic of duty has been a controversial issue among professional philosophers and diverse interpretation may be given of this subject which, once again, can be simply be considered a rephrasing of traditional religious thinking. When he posits the idea of a duty to love our fellow men and the need to train the individual to resist egoistic consumerism and nationalistic isolation, the aspect of all-round education is particularly prominent. Kant's categorical imperative, which states that all men are obliged to act in such a way that the principles of their actions may be binding on all other men, obviously refer to a humanity which spans the

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world and places all men on an equal basis. Paying attention to the course taken by the history of the ethic of duty in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, with astonishment its death must be acknowledged. But it is probably being given a new rebirth in the positive assessment of Kant that has been made in the area of theoretical and practical peace education, where the ideas of his philosophical essay 'on eternal peace' are widely discussed. Against those who are 'mouthpieces of the prevailing violence' he envisaged a future union of politics, justice and an ethic of peace. 'Justice must remain sacred to man, however great the sacrifices to the prevailing violence which this may entail'. It is a 'duty, even if justified hope also exists' to advocate the notion that 'eternal peace based on what have previously been called peace treaties (which are no more than truces) is not an empty idea but a task which must be gradually attained by moving constantly closer to the underlying objective (because the periods in which such progress is made will, it is to be hoped, follow in more rapid succession)'. The relevance of Kant's heritage is evident in the scientific orientation known as the neo-Kantian transcendental philosophical school. Here Kant's philosophy in its idealistic fundamentals is the yardstick of pedagogical thought processes. This educational current, incorporating the notions of a subject, I myself, conscience, a dialogue, etc., spread the normative dimension of an education which seeks to preserve human dignity everywhere and at all times.

Kant's contribution to the moral and normative development of a future world society stands in his impressive and decisive arguments against intolerance, indoctrination, cowardice and idleness. Thanks to him philosophy can candidate as an important contributor to the contemporary development of a positively structured world society[285]. Let us recall once again Kant's answer to What is Enlightenment:

Enlightenment means man's emergence from an immaturity for which he has only himself to blame. Immaturity is man's inability to use his reason without the guidance of others. He is himself to blame for that immaturity if it is attributable not to a lack of understanding but to the absence of sufficient resolve and courage to take charge of himself without guidance by others. *Sapere aude!* Have the courage to use your own understanding — such is the byword of the enlightenment.

The return to Kant, and hence the reconstruction of his 'evolutionary' concept of enlightenment, is a fundamental mission of contemporary intellectuals facing the

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[285] Kantz, H. cit.

transformation of the European continents and of the global context. His manifold conception of the functions of education (discipline, culture, civilization and moralization) should be reappraised once again in its original terms after a succession of misinterpretations, and finally applied in practice. It took many years for his philosophical conception of man to be officially affirmed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which basically remained just a declaration. When and how those noble principles will be embodied in our practices is today's issue. The appeal to the absolute duty of all men, everywhere and at all times, to subscribe to the cause of peace must be given a louder voice and spread amongst younger generations. The theory of the categorical imperative is still today a suitable groundwork for a solution to the contemporary problem of peace and the peaceful coexistence of all peoples and cultures. It may still function as a universal norm of ethics, a calling for a mature freedom of responsibilities as contemporary ethos, protecting the dignity of men who enact laws as part of the order of a society that recognizes the ultimate self-purposefulness and non-availability of its subjects.

What is particularly interesting for the scope of my work is that the notion that each man is an end in himself put forward by Kant and his numerous followers bear a great significance for the cohesion of human beings in the world network society here advocated, and it is also resonant with the findings emerged in neighbour sciences. As Kantz put it, it corresponds to basic anthropological needs and enables co-operation between different cultures to be developed. 'The claim put forward by each reasoning being includes a recognition of the same claim by all other reasoning beings, if they are all to be able to coexist simultaneously as such beings'. It also corresponds, as already recalled, to a basic principle of reciprocity which 'has already left a profound mark on the moral conscience of all peoples in one way or another in the form of the Golden Rule' on which human religiosity has historically been founded. It functioned from immemorial time as an heuristic principle successfully orientating meaningful human action, where applied. To shine a light over its practical significance let us remember the homage that Kurt Huber, executed by the Nazis, paid to the categorical imperative in his last address to the People's Court on 19 April 1943:

"What I tried to do was to arouse student circles not through any organization but through the mere force of words, not to perpetrate any act of violence but to gain

a moral insight into the serious damage that has been done to political life. A return to clear moral principles, to the constituted state, to mutual confidence between people, is not something illegal but represents on the contrary the restoration of legality. Applying Kant's categorical imperative, I ask myself what would happen if this subjective maxim of my action were to become a general law. There can be only one answer to that question: order, security and confidence would then return to our constituted state and to our political life"[286].

It may be useful to subscribe to the call made by UNESCO on every institution that has at its disposal experts in religious and ethical questions to 'place their joint creative energies, in conjunction with experts drawn from other religious and ethical institutions, in the service of this world ethos'[287].

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[286] In: Die Weisse Rose. Ausstellung uber den Widerstand von Studenten gegen Hitler, Munchen, 1942–43 (The White Rose: exhibition about the student resistance to Hitler, Munich, 1942–43), p. 63.Organized by the Weissen Rose Stiftung Munchen e. V., Genter Str. 13, 8000, Munchen 40, n.d.
[287] UNESCO today, vol.39, no.1, p.17

Further Meditations

Here's to the crazy ones.

The misfits.
The rebels.
The troublemakers.
The round pegs in the square holes.
The ones who see things differently.
They're not fond of rules.
And they have no respect for the status quo.
You can praise them, disagree with them, quote them, disbelieve them, glorify or vilify them.
About the only thing you can't do is ignore them.
Because they change things.
They invent. They imagine. They heal.
They explore. They create. They inspire.
They push the human race forward.
Maybe they have to be crazy.
How else can you stare at an empty canvas and see a work of art? Or sit in silence and hear a song that's never been written? Or gaze at a red planet and see a laboratory on wheels?
We make tools for these kinds of people.
While some see them as the crazy ones, we see genius.
Because the people who are crazy enough to think   they can change the world, are the ones who do.

This inspiring quote is very representative of our times. It is powerful message, and it is a commercial. It is the text of one the most beautiful and successful advertisement campaign ever realized, and its endurance is remarkable. Playing with the IBM Think motto, The Think Different slogan was first used in 1997 in a 30 second Apple commercial featuring Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King, John Lennon with Yoko Ono, Martha Graham, Muhammad Ali, Alfred Hitchcock, Mahatma Gandhi, Jim Henson, Maria Callas, Picasso, and Jerry Seinfeld. It was followed by numerous revivals, tributes and parodies. Alongside the slogan, Apple homepage featured on three different occasion notable figures that were not originally part of the campaign. In 2002 it have been dedicated to Jimmy Carter in the occasion of his Nobel Peace Prize, in 2005 it celebrate Rosa Park death while 2007 was the turn of Al Gore Nobel Peace Prize. Recently, Youtube has been filled by updated versions of the video featuring president Obama freely created by his supporters. In my view it tells us something relevant about our era, for example that the smarter minds, those who really know how to touch human heart and stimulate

its mind are working in marketing and video making. And they are not all bad just because they want to sell us something, because in this case their products are really great and are empowering young innovators providing them the tools to express themselves.

I did not want to switch from Windows to Mac in the first instance, because of habit and mental laziness. Then I did it, and I love it. It is simpler because do not require the user to choose everything, it is intuitive and give the best option as standard. The truth is that there are things we do not need to choose. As Hall said, when it comes to school and healthcare for example, they would all simply desire the best. Similar considerations apply to political arrangements. If we consider the State as a sofa it is presumable that each of us may desire it in a different size, a particular fashion, a specific colour and fabric according to her taste and needs, but we may be almost sure that everyone prefer it to be solid and comfortable. Notwithstanding differences among cultures, I would dare to state that all people desire, and deserve, to live in a democratic setting and that none would choose to be ruled by a egotist dictator or a corrupted gang. The fact is that opportunity to choose is not given.

Since a few years ago, when I began studying and observing for my PhD, the global scenario has shifted in the direction I was auspicating. There is more light and less desert I would say. My investigation began in the horrible Bush era, when the desertification of souls and lands seemed to me an inexorable outcome of his absurd policy. It was difficult to listen to a reasonable discourse in the framework of the "war on terror", a milestone in the gallery of hatred entrepreneurship. In the meantime a miracle happened, and the bright light that the election of Barach Obama symbolizes has inaugurated a new season in international relations. Even if it the future is still unpredictable, and my expectations could eventually be crashed on the empirical level, the signal he sent to the world with a radical change in language is already a triumph for all reasonable peoples. Pragmatism and innovation of language are the most brilliant features of this extraordinary figure emerged by a country that, thanks to the valuing of hybridity, demonstrated to have spare resources of democratic vitality. He represents a change of paradigms and is one of those voices I was desperately waiting to hear. Being the most *liquid* and *diasporic* president one could ever think of, in my perspective he arrived as the Messiah, signalling the beginning of a new era. He embodies the ideal man of the future and his success was brought about by the most imaginative political project *ever*. His electoral campaign

was an amazing event that reconciled a disillusioned youth with politics, encouraging civil contribution to his program through the website MyObama.com.

He is the president the global Internet community would have elected, and the resources of political imagination that he spent in his first speeches are a lesson to the apologists of the *Ancient Regime* still filling the cadres of the Old Europe. I listened to them with tears in my eyes as I where disillusioned to the extent that I would never expect to hear a politician speaking that way, wisely and intelligently. And he seemed to me so honest that I could not believe he was true. When I first heard him, in the night of his election, he immediately remind me of Plato ideal, it seemed to me an exemplary philosopher-king, an illuminated prince that prefers to be loved instead of dreaded.

As far as I understood in these years of studies and analysis, words are building blocks in the architecture of society and language is a fundamental ingredient for man survival. Merleu Ponty wrote that "language is not just a means of communication. It is a way of human body to live and celebrate the world". The fact that the dangerous rhetoric of the Clash of Civilization will not be exploited anymore to hide will of power and predatory foreign policies, the fact that religion and politics can be discursively reconciled in a reasonable position, these are big steps forward. As Javier Solana defined it, President Obama gave in Cairo a "remarkable speech" to Muslim and to the world. He brought on the global table the hope and change that many peoples were waiting for. In a video on Youtube a young Egyptian girl argued that people in the Arab world yearned his victory, as he looks like an open-minded person; "he will change, he does not judge" she said to explain why she prayed for his victory, and remind me of Russell advice to be always curious and not judgemental, a stance very rarely adopted.

The global enthusiastic reactions at Obama's election show that an overlapping consensus among different people is certainly possible if the offer of dialogue seems genuine, but we cannot expect a single man to act as a *deux ex machina* and suddenly solve the big challenges humanity have to face. His election offers us some chances, but a larger re-evolution, what Emma Goldman would call a *transvaluation of values* at the individual level, is necessary to cope with contemporary metaphysical novelties. The present Globalization is the nth historical attempt to reunite humanity overcoming artificial opposing identities, we did not discover yesterday that we share the same planet. What is really innovative of these times is the revolution in the

communication system fostered by the Internet. The change in the information ecosystem is global and is already reverberating on the whole system. Our difficulties to cope with it lay, as Polak would put it, in the atrophy of our capacity to visualize a wholly different future. There can be no doubts that modern western civilization, as we knew it, is in crisis and fails to reproduce a positive image of itself, and as Polak famously argued, "the rise and fall of images of the future precedes or accompanies the rise and fall of cultures. As long as a society's image is positive and flourishing, the flower of culture is in full bloom. Once the image begins to decay and lose its vitality, however, the culture does not long survive"[288]. Learning from the past, conformity should be fought and radical ideas put forward by thinkers, academics and journalists as "almost without exception, everything society has considered a social advance has been prefigured first in some utopian writing"[289].

Watching the world through the lens of theories, what can we learn from technological determinism? The impression is that Internet is the most powerful extension of its abilities man has ever crafted. In light of McLuhan famous statement "the medium is the message", the new medium, forged by the nascent peer-to-peer cooperative ideology, would announce the dawn of a democratic era, a global social revolution. When it comes to power structures, its bottom-up organization could really turn the tide and bring about radical changes. It has already happened with the first lamp, the book, the radio, the television, the train and the car… Each means we introduced in our daily life had an impact on society, reverberating on its political, economic and cultural spheres. It is widely recognised that totalitarian control of society and modern forms of authoritarianism would have been unattainable without the telegraph, the radio and the television. What sort of scenarios does the Internet prefigures for us? Nightmares and utopias confront each other while in the backstage the real war is fought on the issues of copyright, right and duty of information and thought, access, censorship, privacy. If we are to believe in democracy it is mandatory for our societies to become self-conscious, that necessarily means to have autonomous, critical and active citizens. When one trails the history of the "copyright

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[288] Polak, Frederik Lodewijk. *The image of the future: enlightening the past, orientating the present, forecasting the future.* A. W. Sythoff, 1961

[289] Cooperrider, David L. *Appreciative inquiry handbook*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2003. p.381

cartel"[290] critically, what emerges is an attempt to establish a 'pay per thought' society. Whenever art, literature, music, culture in general is at stake, as a consequence democracy itself is at stake. From generation to generation, we have been warned and given advices: we should have questioned our own institutions constantly in order to check their health.

Clay Shirky, an expert on the cultural, political, and economic consequences of the Internet, argues that Twitter, Facebook and social networks in general could radically change history. A network of collaborations could substitute a system based on Institutions. It is already happening, but those who hold power will do whatever they can to avoid it. The more efficient censor by now was the Chinese government, who managed to build what someone ironically called the Great Firewall of China to preclude access to foreign media as BBC or CNN, thus the young generation would never find out what happened in Tiananmen Square, for example. They initially downplayed the role of peer-to-peer communication and citizen's journalism, and, when they realized it, they decided to totally shut down Chinese access to social networks. Will they manage to keep the population out of the world? That is the big issue of our times. Peace among different people is an achievable goal; the obstacle is the State power. Bloggers are silenced on a daily basis and liberticidal laws are implemented to block an evolution that menaces hegemonic powers in a radical way. The battlefields of the present-future (I really want to stress this point) will be about the laws of copyright and the free access to information.

In a video called Blogging on the Nile young Egyptians denounced the repression of dissent and the limits imposed to freedom of expression. The large majority of people still leave under *de facto* authoritarian regimes imposed on them during the Cold War. The legacy of dark times is still at work; this is the meaning of the biblical idea that the sins of fathers visit the children. A "progressive redemption" could liberate us all from the ungracious inheritance of nationalism and capitalism only if people creative initiatives will not be frustrated. Unfortunately, American enlightenment did not yet reverberate on European societies, which seem less enlightened than ever. In the framework of the political economy of hatred to which I referred at the beginning of this work it is easy to recognize what is happening. The

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[290] For a critical appraisal of the historical evolution of copyright laws and their cultural import see Vaidhyanathan, Siva. *Copyrights and copywrongs: the rise of intellectual property and how it threatens creativity*. NYU Press, 2001

recent return to the use of explicit anti-Semitic codes in Hungary, coupled with other forms of xenophobia flourishing in most European countries, is part and parcel of a political crisis that favours the extreme rightist anti-redistribution parties who manipulate the lower instincts of populations. They have a incentive to use those cheap profitable mechanisms on people who still rely on hegemonic sources of information. And thus bad politicians perpetuate their power. Civil society should educate and foster discussion in order to mobilise people, make their voices louder and heard so that the State would become responsible and accountable for the provision of basic goods and responsive to legitimate citizens' claims. We should ask European representatives and intellectuals the same political audacity, reasonability and real modernity that Obama is demonstrating. The problem is that they are the same nationalists of ever. Or, maybe, the problem lies deeper, in the very idea of the State. Maybe anarchism is the political philosophy of the future.

In a recent lecture a professor of political philosophy recognised the existence of "multiple modernities". He realized it in light of the resurgence of religion, and assuming *stability* as a *necessary idea*, he repurposed tolerance as a foundational principle for global justice. I was glad he acknowledged the presence of different narratives (!) but I profoundly disagree with this analysis of the problem and the solution he presented. I oppose the *necessity of stability* and with the same conviction I refuse to consider private property and the state as a *numen.* If we are honestly pursuing global justice, stability is exactly what we should fight in order to reform the present unjust *status quo*. Understanding and solidarity are the keys to a peaceful world. Those striving to get the flowers instead of chains would not accept the old hypocritical offers. The auspicated global overlapping consensus may emerge from social dialogical dynamics fostered by the Net, certainly not from conservative policies. All people are the same when it comes to their needs, and the employ the old deceptive language of a *Moving Nowhere Show* will not protect us from the justified claims of oppressed peoples.

Is it possible that we did not grasp the real dimension of religious phenomena? To make an example, when I was analysing the Middle East political history I found a striking presence of former communists leaders now standing in the ranks of religious fundamentalists: isn't it the case that they are just adapting and rearticulating the same claims in a different fashion? I would propose to understand the resurgence of religion in its complexity. Its background is a broader and

comprehensive crisis of civilization, marked by the failure of politics to provide justice and make sense of life, representing a clash of values that is not to be conflated with the misleading theory of a clash of civilizations. A first step would be accepting that dynamism, not stability, exemplify human relations. This picture would lead us closer to a proper solution, which entails a big change in attitude by powerful actors and by common citizens. Certain intrinsic features of organised religions may impinge upon human mind making democracy impossible, but the 'true believer' is a syndrome, a psychic disease that makes people unreasonable and should therefore be cured. Genuine religious feelings instead have been the driver of the search for justice, as Kant and Rawls biographies attest.

To satisfy a growing demand of Global Justice, more global justice ought to be offered, not surrogates. The status quo is the obstacle to be removed in order to achieve a sustainable equilibrium in the global market of Justice. Consequently I consider the idea of stability and tolerance as inadequate to grasp the real problems we are facing on the path to a less miserable world. A choice must be made between two opposite accounts of the role and functions of political thinking: in one case it provides a theoretical ground on which stability is maintained (i.e. it justifies the present structure of power and authority), in the other its aim is to elaborate models for human flourishing through the promotion of active citizenship (through proper education). I obviously side for the second option. The burden of proof, the requirement of a justification, should be definitely removed from cosmopolitan advocates and turned to those defending the nation state, the present financial system and multinational corporations leading capitalist economy.

Assuming culture as the powerful weapon of democracy and diversity as its intrinsic condition, I would like to offer a new account of cultural diversity to reflect on. I refer to the notion of *Ethnosphere* presented by Wade Davis. Having met some of the most fascinating, and often unknown, indigenous cultures, he constructed, in my advise, a really powerful and convincing argumentation.

"The world in which we live in does not exist in some absolute sense but is just one model of reality, the consequence of one particular set of adapted choices that our lineage made albeit successfully many generations ago. And of course we all share the same adaptive imperative, we are all born, we all bring our children to world, we go through initiation rights, we have to deal with inexplicable separation of death so it shouldn't surprise us that we all sing, we all dance, we all have art. But what is interesting is the unique cadence of the song, the rhythm of the dance in every culture. Together the

myriad cultures of the world make up a web of spiritual life and culture life that envelops the planet and that is as important to the well being of the planet as indeed is the biological web of life that you know as the biosphere. And you may think of this cultural web of live as being an ethnosphere. You may define the ethnosphere as being the sum total of all thoughts and dreams, myths, ideas and inspirations, intuitions brought into being by the human imagination since the dawn of consciousness".

An alarming erosion is going on:

"Just as the biosphere is being severely eroded, so too is the ethnosphere and if anything at a far greater rate: No biologist would dare suggest 50 percent of all species or more of them are on the brink of extinction, because it's simply not true. And that, the most apocalyptic scenario in the realm of biological diversity scarcely approaches what we know to be the most optimistic scenario in the realm of cultural diversity and the great indicator of that is language loss.

What Davis blame as responsible for the damage of its integrity is not change or technology but power. And the model of our modern society, he warns, could prove insufficient down the road:

"It is humbling to remember that our species is perhaps being around 600,000 years. The Neolithic revolution which gave us agriculture, at which time we succumbed to the cult of the seed, the poetry of the shaman was displaced by the prose of the priesthood, we created hierarchy, specialization, surplus, is only 10,000 years ago. The modern industrial world as we know is barely 300 years old. Now that shallow history doesn't suggest me we have all the answers for all the challenges that will confront us in the ensuing millennia".

For the benefit of future generations, as he suggests, we should preserve as many cultures as possible, trying to preserve (and rediscover) their ancient wisdom, and sharing it. If there's a clash, it is eventually not of civilizations but of ignorance and prejudices. Would we all fully embrace our responsibilities and become aware ambassadors of our cultures, we would shape a peaceful, rich, colourful, community. A community sharing a planet nobody can claim for its own. The imagine of Diasporic Peace Theory would evoke a future without borders in which each citizen would hold the same ID. It would contain useful information as spoken languages, blood group and actual residence for example. Each person would know and love his ancestors' arts, food, music and traditional rituals and practices, and share their beauty and wisdom with all the others. A basic common constitution would rule, while local peculiar traditions would be known and respected by visitors.

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