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A Changing Humanity

Fast-paced living as a new model of being

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INTRODUCTION

After the analysis collected in *Religion and politics* (SANGALLI 2016), the “Sinderesi School” dedicates its annual research (2015-2016) to “fast-paced living as a new model of being”. We do so, in the attempt to understand the contemporary interpretation of the human being as a “changing humanity”. In fact, it has come to pass that a slow and static world has given way to one that is fast and interconnected. This change has carried with it various consequences in relating to space and time, in shaping a culture, in regulating daily work and, most of all, in searching for the meaning of human existence.

These are the main fields of investigation, and were addressed by following our methodology of lectures, individual study, research groups and monthly brainstorming assemblies. Here are presented the results of this shared intellectual journey.

The first section is comprised of three lectures given by scholars between October and December 2015, regarding the different approaches to human change in the Eastern and Western cultural traditions. The second part gathers the results of a shared and intensive debate between our students concerning the various aspects of human life mentioned above. These students, who were supported by qualified experts, first prepared and then discussed in various workshops the general findings of their research and some case studies.

In the introductory lecture, I assert that, after the so-called “third industrial revolution”, the human way of living has experienced an unexpected acceleration, whose hallmark has been “continuous change” as the ordinary style of life. Such a movement has brought about a great mixing of traditions, religions and cultures, leading to a complete redefinition of the identity of everyone. This new reality demands a new moral foundation, based upon shared values, especially before the more recent crises of human migration and the environment. Humanity is now charged with an unprecedented “stewardship of the earth” that could be taken up only through the recognition of the ontological value of the principle of non-contradiction. It implies recognizing individual being as a gift in the first place to be respected and not something infinitely manipulable. This recognition is reflected in the moral order as the “Golden Rule”, which can serve as the foundation stone of a new universal ethics for the positive transformation of passions, which we call “humanization”. In other words, it entails the respect of human

dignity. To this end it is essential to promote interreligious dialogue as a good example of how to act toward peaceful coexistence. In fact, at the core of each great religious tradition lies the commandment of mutual understanding and love.

Professor John Loughlin, former Director of the “Von Hugel Institute” at Cambridge University (UK), focuses on the concept of human dignity, the foundation for human rights, as the fruit of a long intellectual journey primarily into the Western tradition, characterized by the ontological quest. Assuming the Catholic philosophical perspective known as “personalism”, his paper explores different concepts of human dignity: from the civic dignity and the intrinsic human dignity purported by the Stoics in Greco-Roman Antiquity, to the Biblical notion of man as made in the “image and likeness” of God (Gen 1:26-27) and its continuity in the theological anthropology of the Church, to Renaissance Humanism with the recovery of the classics, then rejected as syncretism by the Reformers, to the Enlightenment and the rise of secular humanism - eventually with no need of God - as it is in the Kantian description of human dignity based on its capacity for moral reasoning. This historical analysis concludes by addressing the anti-humanism of the 19th and 20th centuries as a skeptical reaction against Kant which ultimately leads to nihilism. Loughlin asserts that, after the tragedies of the Two World Wars, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the German Constitution (1949) were the first two documents which made human dignity the foundation of human rights. But these efforts were done in such a vague and controversial way that some doubt about the usefulness of the concept in jurisprudence, even though international courts have often pronounced sentence referring to it. Undoubtedly, the Catholic Church today is one of the main contributors in asserting human dignity in a communitarian not simply in an individualist sense. Loughlin describes it in terms of the four features summarized in the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*. Moreover, in *Dignitatis Humanae*, the Council made a direct link between human dignity and religious freedom, which fulfils human dignity in relation to the personal and public search for the truth. This clearly demonstrates how Catholicism, along with other Religious traditions, in its “integral humanism” offers a broader and deeper justification of the concept of human dignity.

The last lecture treats a different approach to reality by looking into the *Weltanschauung* of the Far East, which reflects more the becoming than the stability of individual being. Doctor Alberto Rocca, from the prestigious *Collegium Doctorum* of the “Biblioteca Ambrosiana” in Milan, answers the question whether the Japanese Shintō tradition is built on change as cultural system.

He asserts that in Japanese history the role of “the path of the kami” has been “a mixture of tradition and change and change within tradition”. In the attempt to explain the Shintō system, Rocca retraces the five phases of its history. First, the origins of this tradition can be discovered in the two most ancient writings, the *Kojiki* and the *Nihongi*, which gather and codify pre-existing oral traditions. Shintō, as a collection of official ritual with the emperor in a central role, was institutionalized during the third/fourth century BC, under a deep Chinese influence. The encounter with Chinese culture, and Buddhism as strong component, qualified the Shintō to be like a “transforming entity”, a sort of *amalgamation* of cults, rooted in the respect for ancestors and rites linked to the agricultural calendar. Then, there it was a period of reaction against foreign influences (1603-1867), followed by the so-called “State Shintō” (1868-1945), when it was strengthened by the idea of an “imperial line unbroken for ages eternal” and, in a spirit of nationalism, were established fundamental documents for the formation of ethics and morality based on loyalty and patriotism towards the emperor. The consequences of the end of the Second World War represented an authentic trauma for the relationship between the Japanese people, tradition and culture. As a result of this dramatic blow, Shintō struggles to maintain a role in contemporary Japanese society. The shrine of *Ise Jingu*, with its buildings demolished and rebuilt every 20 years, is still “a symbol of death and rebirth, manifesting the Shintō belief in the impermanence of life and the renewal after death ... in a continuous flow of identity and change”. In the optimistic cosmological view of the Shintō, the dignity of each individual consists in taking part of this endless growth and evolution in harmony with nature, within the family, the village, the country. According to this tradition, these religious values are to be kept in the ever-changing dynamics of a world in progressive evolution.

After these insights on different dynamics involved in the contemporary changing society, our aim focused on the investigation of some of the manifestations of these insights.

Under the supervision of Caroline Kanter and Silke Schmitt, Representatives of the “Konrad Adenauer Foundation” in Rome, a group of students, led by Francesco Nicotri and Rosaria Gimmelli, studies a new way of promoting culture that is more suitable to this changing society. They analyze the cultural opera of the foundations – particularly the “Konrad Adenauer Stiftung” (KAS) as a case study – to promote education in the “essential political values” for the modern society. Assuming that culture is truly a soft power able to generate growth, innovation and a sense of belonging, the six German political foundations were established in Germany and in its

partner countries as models of civic education for the promotion and support of democracy as a value and as a political system. The international cooperation of the KAS has brought this Organization to pursue programs that combine the expertise of its network in various working teams. Influenced by Christian heritage and through various activities, the KAS has acquired competence in strengthening democracy, furthering European unification, improving transatlantic relations and deepening development cooperation, especially by supporting culturally democratic parties. In recent years and in many areas, the KAS – even through its personnel is spread around the world – has focused on the importance of dialogue for the promotion of a “culture of encounter” recommended by Pope Francis. In a globalized world, the model of KAS could represent a “conceptual framework” of cultural diplomacy and cooperation to strengthen democracy in Europe and in other parts of the world. Certainly the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity figure prominently in this method of work for a mutual enrichment between the KAS and its partners.

In its attempt to analyze the present phenomenon of mass-migration, the second group of research, led by Antonino Cordopatri under the supervision of Rev. Flavio Pace, Official of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, focuses on the situation of the Christians in the Middle-East with the aim to clarify whether their compelled migration could be recognized as a form of “ethnic genocide”. Following a general description of the main prejudices causing religious persecution, the paper focuses on the two reasons for examining the persecutions of Christians in the Middle East. In fact, this region is the “cradle of Christianity” and disappearance of Christians from this region would represent an irreparable loss for the identity of these societies they have helped to build. Secondly, due to the violence and insecurity that have caused this exodus, it could also represent a real threat to the stability of western democracies. The essay offers an interesting analysis of the situation of the Catholic Church in Syria, the Christians in Iraq and the Maronite Church in Lebanon, which once stood as a model of coexistence among different religious groups. Essentially, due to historical reasons summarized in the paper, Christians in the Middle East are present in a dynamic and composite way, and their contribution to the development of the Arab culture is undeniable, especially in education and administration, despite the decrease of their presence under Islamic domination. Even today they are generally highly appreciated by their neighbors and seen as a threat only by those fundamentalists interested in maintaining ignorance and resentment against the West. Although it is impossible to

have precise data relative to the Christians' diaspora in the Middle East, the number of their population has radically diminished since the recent Arab spring. Paying attention to the paradigmatic case of Syria, it is asserted that, despite the reluctance of several politicians, scholars and religious leaders to use this language, the European Parliament, the British one and other institutions or authorities have recognized the genocide of Christians and other religious minorities that is perpetuating there by the IS/Daesh before the whole world. The essay aims to settle the difference between a diaspora and a migration, and to describe the experience developed by these Christians in order to settle the conditions under which a migration could represent a source of richness and not a nightmare for both the immigrants and the hosts. A new equilibrium in the Middle East can be reached only if the international community places its efforts to stop the conflicts and to promote solutions respectful of religious freedom and minority groups. Peace in this region could be vital not only for the future of the Christians there, but even for the Muslims, which could then serve as model of coexistence of different cultures, traditions and religions in our globalized world.

Treating technology's impact on lifestyle that has changed our sense of time, the group led by Lucia Cosmano, Marilena Pisani and Edoardo De Luca, under the supervision of Dr. Paolo Messa, journalist and member of the RAI Council of Administration, examines the relationship between media and intelligence, as a case of the interface between security and mass communication. By tracing the access to information in human history to the arrival of the Internet, one can recognize that the web has changed the spatial and temporal perception of ordinary people today. We talk of cyberspace, a new style of social life inhabited by the "digital person" and made possible by the development of Web 2.0 and Web 3.0, with an ever-increasing use of automated software to mediate any kind of social relationship. Unfortunately, this huge information system can be used anonymously and without accountability mechanisms, even by criminal organizations. The paper highlights how the unlimited amount of information collected in open sources (OSINT), mostly from the Deep Web, could be crucial for intelligence activities and not only for security reasons. The access and use of this information raises ethical problems regarding their unavoidable regulation. It is required a system of "ethical governance of the internet" with essential shared rules, not tied to cultural and ideological models, but suitable to permit a balanced functioning of the sector, while respecting the freedom and rights of all people involved. Is our society able to achieve a similar goal? Undoubtedly, such an attempt implies the

promotion of education on cyber security, from grammar schools to the universities and professional levels. In this regard, everyone should be aware that, due to the present importance of the Information and Communication Technology (ITC) in many sectors, the level of risk in the event of crisis is considerably high for many countries. For example, the essays quotes from the “2015 Italian Cyber Security Report – Framework for National Cybersecurity” regarding the cyber security involved in daily activities and programs for the development of the nation, and then enlarges the considerations on this issue to the important question of the cyberspace-terrorism relationship. Certainly new efforts of intelligent ethical innovation should be developed to cope with this fast growing and fragile new horizon of knowledge.

A fourth group, led by Mariangela Lancillotta, Irene Buzzi, Nino Marzullo under the supervision of Dr. Natale Forlani, General Director at the Italian Ministry of Welfare, studies the huge change in the western world regarding labor: from a fixed steady job to the labor market determined by the so-called “know-how”, with a special attention given to the young generation in Italy as case study. In fact, after the conclusion of the past static society and the expansion of the present “liquid” one, as well as how the economic and financial crises have forced a new look at the world of work, it is not easy to change the conceptual framework and habits linked to that model of existence. Will these changes lead to the loss of the historic gain of considering the work as “displaying human dignity”? How is it possible to cope with them fruitfully, innovatively and creatively in order to take advantage of the skills and expertise of the younger generations without losing the achievements of the past? The essay begins by describing of the evolution of the labor market in the new century, characterized by the great technology and informatics revolution, and the consequences of the unemployment, especially among the youth because of the recent crisis. The job market is characterized by a strong tension between the increasing demand for highly skilled workers and the relatively low presence of the new generation in proportion to the total workforce. This inability to integrate the contribution of the young – especially in Italy and Europe – has increased problems such as over-education, brain-drain and the NEET phenomenon. While globalization is increasing flexibility and movement, labor has to be seen as a driving force for a different and more open way to organize communities at the political, economic and social level. This could be achieved by starting from new labor contracts, more suitable to sustainable development, and the establishment of placement offices at the university level. The paper suggests that the gap between the world of

education and that of business must be bridged through plans of alternating school-work, and the creation of a didactic-educational modality able to work across this board, in order to train people who are able to take advantage of their “know how” whatever the context. In the Member States with high rates of unemployment, the European Union has already started this policy, through the project “Youth Guarantee”. A similar logic is followed in the Italian program “Enti Bilateralì”. Overall, these efforts could be enriched by policies to eliminate barriers between education and employment, and to promote a life-long learning approach in order to overcome the challenge of globalization by creating new kinds of professionals, who are aware of their dignity and proud of their expertise. The essay concludes by formulating a practical example of how the phenomenon of the so-called “brain drain” instead could become an occasion of brain exchange, favoring a hybridization of talents with new ideas through organic programs which implement young people’s skills and knowledge abroad (such as *Torno Subito*, edited by Lazio Region). In conclusion, in order to give value to the contribution of the younger generation in a positive renewal of the labor market, the time has come for a structured alliance between the education system and the world of businesses and politics, coming together to serve the common good.

Grappling with the theme of change in the context of religion and religious experiences is the aim of the last group, led by Antonella Piccinin and Giacomo Alfiero under the supervision of Prof. Roberto Cipriani, one of the most distinguished Italian sociologist of religion in the world. Their research focuses on American society to verify whether or not a pluralistic environment could represent a threat of relativism. In fact, in the case where the State is impartial towards religious beliefs, pluralism offers a positive context for the flourishing of religions in the public square, for their mutual dialogue, and their being sources of development for the society. The article begins describing what pluralism means today in a modern society and its consequences for a religion. Then it selects the United States of America as a case study because of its pluralistic tradition and its particular Constitutional model. Religion has always played a significant role in US, and religious freedom was pursued by the Founding Fathers as the basic principle for American jurisprudence, which is reflected in the Constitution as the denial of competence for the State on religious matters. Throughout the centuries, American Pluralism has passed from a fact within Christianity to something involving other religions and philosophies as well. The First Amendment of the US Constitution, in its two clauses, guarantees their free

exercise and regulates the church-state relationship according to a principle of separation. Although there are different interpretations on this regard (separationists vs. accomodationists), it is generally recognized that such a separation has been done not in a spirit of conflictual antagonism with religions but with deep appreciation for the moral contribution that they bring to build a national ethos. In the US, the freedom of religion is protected as an unalienable right of the individual conscience, and forms the center of ethical decision-making and an essential part of the social contract. Its liberalist approach evidently is aimed to evaluate and preserve the right of the individual more than to assess the meaning of the public presence of religion; as it could be in a European approach such as the one enshrined in the German or Italian legal systems. This focus on the individual – with its advantages and limitations - is also evident in the American regulation of conscientious objection, according to the settled principle of impartiality. The examined case in the medical field reveals how it is illicit to separate personal from professional integrity, and how eventually, into this world of growing diversities, religious pluralism could be guaranteed in its fuller sense within an environment of reasonability.

All these contributions are now here published with the clear intention to share publicly a debate on issues extremely relevant for the present and the future of our society. The ideas here collected belong mainly to young people, as the fruit of their study and as a demonstration of how it is possible to create creative minorities of new thinkers able to offer interesting and inspiring points of view resulting from their willing to be present to the contemporary world in a competent manner.

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