

Rediscovery of culture: A challenge for the EU and the UN

A challenge for European journalists

By Enzo Farinella

Intercultural dialogue and education for all are synonymous with humanity's future viability. The intercultural dialogue and the fight for human rights in the world challenge us to find new ways to shape a better sustainable world.

At a meeting of Eastern and Western journalists, the first complaint that the Western world did not understand them in their heritage. Thinking of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, of the fighting theatres in Darfur (Sudan), Congo, North Uganda and other parts of Africa, above all Northern Africa, of the lack of peace in the Middle East, the revolutions in the Arab world, the race towards nuclear arms in Iran and North Chorea, the tragic situation in Cecenia, the dissatisfaction existing in various regions of the world with millions and millions of people driven out from their houses and from their lands and so many young people left orphans, and visiting the Remembrance Museum in Riga, Latvia, the gas chambers of Auschwitz in Poland, the many borders between East and West – more than 156 only between Austria and Hungary, which divided for decades entire families –, demolished finally at the end of November 2007, one may conclude that something does not work in our globalisation system and that we are far away from a sustainable world.

Could the rediscovery of Culture, as the centre of all values, help to build the dream of a *global village*, based precisely on the notion of culture?

If we don't succeed in the next 10 years to give a soul, a spirituality to Europe, we will have lost the match, said **Jacque Delors**, President of the European Commission. Ten and more years elapsed. Europe has grown up - a Region of 27 States and soon 28 -. However the Delors alarm is still there. The rediscovery of Culture, as centre of all values, could give new impetus to our world, above all in this moment of uncertainty which grips it and the EU.

Culture implies in fact: freedom in a world of justice, solidarity & peace; moral and civic autonomy; equality among all human beings; respect of diversity; deep-rooted sense of belonging to a common intellectual and spiritual tradition, which promotes forms of welcoming & openness to all people; unity in a common desire to defend and spread the ideals of freedom and democracy: all of them inviolable and fundamental rights, beyond any religious, social or philosophical interpretation or dependence, as common anthropological, cultural and ethical heritage.

To build the EU and the world of the UN upon solid basis, it is not enough to appeal only to a mere economical and commercial union or to economical interests, which, if sometimes unite, other times divide. It is necessary instead to aim at authentic values, based upon the universal moral law, written in the heart of every human being and, therefore, upon an authentic spiritual, ethical and cultural unity. Without the **Europe of culture**, the economic and political union could easily fail.

Many people support this view.

Azelio Ciampi stated, as President of the Italian Republic: *We must find the way to enliven the faith in the European ideal.* And, his successor, **Giorgio Napolitano**: *What we built together tenaciously was decisive to guarantee us always more peace and unity in our continent, progress in every field, growing social progress, safeguard and affirmation in the world of our common interests and European values.*

The President of Ireland, **Patrick Hillery**, said: *We will fight to give a more humane face to the new EU, a soul, according to our tradition and our heritage. I don't believe that a United Europe will be able to function only with a commercial union. The spiritual values, the culture, the wisdom are what unify the countries. To feel that we have a common goal, as we had a common origin, this must enlighten our Europe. The trade is a good thing. To compete in order to earn more is ok. However we need also values which must guide the totality of the EU.*

President Barroso: *As European and world citizens, we need to be aware of the fundamental goals of the same Union, which wants to promote peace, its values and the well being of its peoples.*

Closer to us, according to Professor **Tihomir J. Markovitch**, from Beograd, the striking thing is that very little is said about the matter of culture in the EU, which seems just as important, if not the most important, element of all.

This vision of culture, as foundation of all values, first of all the right to life of the human person with his/her inner dignity and his/her eschatological vocation, is the only one that can assure a new international order, being these rights based upon the natural law and present in the various cultures.

At the roots of our world history, and of Europe in particular, we find this notion of culture, the heart also of the Christian message. Christendom, in its wider meaning, has been the foundation rock of our civilization, for the past 2.000 years: it was and continues to be the cultural and spiritual bond of the global village. It was and is a great factor of civilization, inspiring the defence of the conscience inviolability, of the moral and civic autonomy, of the dignity of the mind, consecrated to the research of the truth in the light of the Gospel. Christendom promotes forms of welcoming, solidarity and openness to all people. In fact every person from this perspective has a supreme value, because made in God's image and likeness, a central and qualifying element in the history of Europe and of the world.

From these roots the values of the person and of the community with a proper eschatological vocation, flourished. The true meaning of equality of all human beings, fraternity, freedom, justice, equality, sharing, solidarity, peace find their foundation in them.

Pope John Paul the Second stated that *today Church feels, with renewed responsibility, the urgency to help Europe to build itself, being aware of the Christian roots which hewn it (Ecclesia in Europa).*

Equally, **Pope Benedict the 16th** said: the old continent must never forget the Christian roots which are at the beginning of its journey and it must continue to draw from the Gospel the fundamental values which assure justice and peace. Religion and *religions can and must offer precious resources to build a peaceful humanity, speaking of peace to the human heart*. To discover the richness of our cultural heritage in a more globalised world is then of crucial importance.

So to build the *common European house* and a more just world, where primacy is given to values and sharing – and not only to economy -, is the challenge that concerns us all, especially if engaged in the world media.

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