



Society,

Jos J.A.M. van Gennip

Values,

An introduction to the debate

Politics

**With a preface by Jan Peter Balkenende,
Prime Minister of The Netherlands**

Socires | CDA-Eduardo Frei Foundation

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The demand for study and reflection on the basic dilemmas of European society and their need for moral inspiration

- An introduction to the debate -

Jos J.A.M. van Gennip

President of the Socires Foundation, Former Senator

With a preface by Jan Peter Balkenende, Prime Minister of The Netherlands

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Preface

With the elections for the European Parliament in 2009, the Christian Democrats again got a central responsibility for preserving, deepening, and renewing the European Project. The coming years, Christian Democrats and their allies in the European People's Party should translate their electoral mandate to an answer to the enormous internal and external challenges that our respective societies and the European Union are facing.

That answer asks for expertise, realism, and ingenuity, just as it has asked for this in the past sixty years during which we worked on the European Dream. But more is needed. Europe was not built on pragmatism and expertise alone. Europe first came to be by the inspiration, values, and choices that were inspired by moral convictions. At crucial moments in the history of Europe after WWII, these moral convictions were decisive.

Moral convictions of reconciliation and justice, responsibility and community spirit, of solidarity and compassion, and other values took over from feelings of revenge, from holding on to prejudice, short term self-interest, and quick results at the cost of other countries.

In the heat of everyday's political debate, this foundation of our actions and choices is easily overlooked. That goes for internal politics, but also for European politics. Some deny this dimension of values of Europe and they also consider the idea of a European identity as irrelevant or even unwanted. Those voices were loud in the long road to the Treaty of Lisbon.

Others do not touch on the relationship between values and Europe because they, too easily, thought the European unification as an irreversible fact, a historic achievement, which did not need to be argued for time and again. And then there are those who will never get accustomed to the idea that political actions are inspired and guided by an explicit orientation on values.

Since I became Prime Minister, I have devoted myself exactly to this relationship between values and political actions and choices. During the Dutch Chairmanship of

the EU this was even a key theme. Many in The Netherlands and elsewhere, also colleagues, see the necessity of reconnecting the big questions about our future with the very fundamental beliefs about man, society, and creation. This is seen as necessary for both the direction of the answers to these questions, as well as the recovery of the relevance of political action in our society. That applies especially to the European Project. We have had half a century to achieve the main goals of this process of unification: reconciliation, reconstruction, freedom, protection against absolutist ideologies, enlarging of our prosperity, and over the last twenty years the healing of our continent. Those achievements were accompanied by a gradual enlargement and strengthening of the European institutions.

But in our century it does not suffice anymore to limit the European debate to this process of strengthening by only referring to this past. Then the institutions become goals instead of means. That at least partially explains the distance many citizens have towards a more intensive unification in Europe, even sometimes towards unification as such.

Europe, more than any other large political project, needs a clear connection to the contemporary challenges and choices with which citizens and societies are faced. Even the rediscovery of Europe's indispensability as a protection against the instability of international financial and economic developments does not render superfluous a discussion on what kind of Europe we want to achieve and on which values this Europe will be founded. To the contrary, as I have explained at several occasions, the financial crisis has everything to do with morality, values, and our view of man and society. Therefore, reflection on Europe deserves a clear deepening to this twofold question: what are the foundational values of the Europe of the 21st century, and what type of European society do we aspire? The answer to this twofold question determines the identity of our continent, and our unity.

It is the process of globalization that confronts us with choices, because this process forces itself upon us with an almost irreversible power, and also with opportunities and threats. It asks at least that we choose what we want to keep in the inevitable modernisation and change, what we want to strengthen, and what we do not want to adopt. Our economic system and how we treat the environment; the structure of business, and the role of society; culture and architecture, and the place of the family and the dignity of the human person; the organisation of global security and the banishing poverty; these, and many other issues, fill the agenda of the future.

For decades, the author of this essay, Jos van Gennip, has occupied himself with

these issues, with these questions *behind* the political questions. This essay is a plea for openness towards new developments and opportunities, and at the same time, for a conscious selection of those things that should be preserved and of guides that should lead to new balances and new positions, based on fixed values. That is why I greatly appreciate this effort to deepen the European debate, though we need not always share his conclusions. It is a broad effort for a new orientation in this debate. It is in the first place a plea for a new debate in Europe with the starting question: what is our European identity and what does that mean for the big social, cultural, political, and economic choices?

“An introduction to the debate,” the author writes on the title page. An introduction that is addressed to a new generation which grew up less accustomed to the relationship between Europe and values. A new generation that still feels attracted to the inspiration and tradition out of which Christian Democrats have built Europe. But also a generation that needs a guide to these sources of inspiration, to the history of the European unification, and especially for the relevance of this inspiration for the topical political and social dilemmas. Efforts such as this deserve therefore our support, both in the older member states of Europe, as well as in the countries that joined more recently and in the neighbouring countries that recognise that they are also part of the one European history.

Therefore, I hope that this introduction will be a reason for many to study further the themes that surface in this essay. Literature study, seminars, and courses are necessary to feed the political beliefs on which Europe was built, and on which also the new choices and balances can be based that give content to the tasks and responsibilities of current European politics.

Jan Peter Balkenende
Prime Minister of The Netherlands

Acknowledgements

As I am not practicing an academic profession, but instead involved in international politics and with managerial responsibilities for a number of societal institutions I never could have written this introduction in the philosophical, sociological, and historical aspects of current European and societal problems without the assistance of many.

First of all I have to thank Dr. Hans Groen. With advice and contributions for content, with the design of our publications and as a translator and proofreader he has been of invaluable help for the work of our think tank *Socires* for more than ten years. As a social philosopher he assisted for this publication extensively in specifying and systematizing the sources and the important recommendations for further reading for those who want to broaden their knowledge about the relevance of the historical and contemporary relation between society, values and politics.

The compilation of these sources and recommendations also benefited enormously from advice and help of Dr. Marcel Becker of the Centre for Ethics at the Radboud University Nijmegen. I appreciate very much his voluntary and cooperative devotion towards these writings in particular, and towards the ongoing effort to deepen the knowledge and reflection about the ethical dimensions of our societal problems in general. He and his institute under the leadership of Professor Paul van Tongeren deserve our recognition for their exceptional and courageous stand that there is more to societal problems than clever pragmatic solutions, but rather that attention to and deepening of the ethical dimensions is indispensable for a relevant and imaginative approach. Such an approach can, even in a secular age, gain inspiration and sometimes surprising perspectives from the Christian social reflections and teachings. I am grateful to Prof. Van Tongeren for his critical readings and comments on my texts. I have to confess that I could not do full justice to their richness and depth. Still, we definitely share the concern that a new generation of political and societal leaders all over Europe should get acquainted with this dimension at the moment when the reorientation of our society and the challenges it faces demand comprehensive choices. Over the last fifty years, this need has never been more urgent than now.

In fact, this publication was the by-product of our common observation that there is a strong need for curricular and extra-curricular courses, seminars, and conferences on the relevance and innovation of the Christian social inspiration *vis-à-vis* the huge problems of contemporary European society as it has to provide an answer to the overarching phenomenon of globalization. I hope that this publication will be a contribution to these needs.

Dr. Theo Brinkel, historian and associate professor International Relations at the Netherlands Defence Academy, Breda, assisted in finding material on the history of the ideas and motivations behind the idea of the European reconciliation and its unification process – a history that is surprisingly unknown.

A special mention deserves Ms. Indira Bedi-Thomas. On a voluntary basis she was willing to do the editing of the essay with her unique knowledge of the European Union and her language skills.

Like the other common publications of *Socires* and the *Eduardo Frei Foundation (EFF)*, Ms. Wilma Bakker took as always great and indispensable care for the cumbersome process of producing this publication.

Publications like these are not commercially viable. The Eduardo Frei Foundation, however, recognized the relevance of an introduction to the ethical and philosophical dimensions of the European Unification Process at its current stage. This is part of its mission to kindred spirits in Central and Eastern Europe, and also in those parts of our common continent which are not part of the EU. We are grateful that the EFF, under the chairmanship of Dr. Jan van Laarhoven, facilitated this publication financially and at a number of occasions stimulated a discussion about its content among its trainers and their counterparts from Central and Eastern Europe. This approach fitted in its ongoing efforts (so much in line with the thinking of its chairman) over the years to deepen the knowledge of the fundamental underlying convictions of Christian social and Christian democratic engagements. This booklet is the seventh contribution of *Socires* to this endeavour.

Finally, the willingness of Jan Peter Balkenende, the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, to introduce these writings with a preface is much appreciated. Previous publications were introduced by either outstanding Christian social thinkers, like Bishop Ad van Luyn of Rotterdam, or prominent politicians like former Commissioner Chris Patten, and Foreign Affairs Minister Bernard Bot. In the person of the Dutch

Prime Minister we find both qualities combined in an exceptional and outstanding way. For a number of years Jan Peter Balkenende held the chair on Christian social thinking at the VU University Amsterdam. Before entering politics he combined this chair with his scholarly work at the Research Institute for the Christian Democratic Party in the Netherlands, mostly on subjects which are also dealt with in this publication. In his political office he stimulated as much as possible the reflection on the relation between values and society at the national, and, especially during his Presidency of the EU, on the European level. I am very grateful for his exceptional contribution.

A new consideration of our deepest convictions and historical inspirations can remedy the actual malaise in democracy and societal and political participation that is spreading over our continent. In view of the overwhelming challenges from within and from abroad, in my opinion the only answer will be the creation of a Responsible European Society on the basis of transcendental values and convictions, personal commitments and a high level of professional expertise and knowledge. Formation and education, if possible in some institutional provisions such as summer schools and systematic courses, would be instrumental as an answer to this requirement. I hope this booklet is a contribution to this.

The author

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Introduction

THE CRUCIAL turning point in the debate on the direction of the European unification process took place in the second half of the eighties. Thirty years after the foundation of the European Communities as functional projects – the interweaving of economies; the coordination of policies on a limited number of issues; food security for the citizens of all member states — came the beginning of an understanding that the direction and policy choices of the European societies and communities should be the real subjects of the unification process. That awareness grew stronger and stronger in the years that followed. Prevention of war and reconciliation — the dream of Schuman — had been achieved as the primary goal, notably, by the paradoxical precondition of the supra-nationalisation of the coal and steel complex. After the anti-communist crusade with its strong doctrinal impetus of the Catholic Church, the defence against the new totalitarianism became unsurpassable by the newly acquired wealth - thanks to our successful economic recovery and developments. Starvation and hunger, and their reminiscences, were washed away in the surpluses of milk, wheat, meat and wine. The functional goals of the unification process had been achieved and, towards the end of the eighties, even more than that....

So, the end of the process, the restoration of stability and for the rest — business as usual?

For some pioneers and philosophers, such as Romano Guardini, the European Project had always been much broader and deeper than the official functionalities, much more than prevention, than defence, or even reconciliation. In their view, Europe should be the embodiment of certain values and their translation into a specific social order. That order should, at the same time, be powerful enough to ensure an appropriate income for its participants and their security on one hand, and create the social, political and even cultural preconditions for freedom, cohesion and responsibility on the other. Central to this approach was the perception of a European identity, in which compassion, responsibility, human dignity, freedom and respect for tradition and for the fabric of society were essential. Respect for the family, religious institutions, common and shared values and a strong civil society kept that fabric

together — a process achieved without the rejection of modernity in terms of urbanisation, industrialisation, technological progress and social mobility, but also without a radical rupture of the institutions and the social structures of the past. That was, in the view of such thinkers as Romano Guardini,¹ Jacques Maritain,² Emmanuel Mounier,³ Oswald von Nell Breuning,⁴ the ideal of a new post-war Europe, sadder and wiser after being raped by totalitarianism, nearly devastated by war and alienated from its own roots by nihilism and materialism. Individualism and humanism, inspired by deep Christian, — mostly Catholic — convictions, were the beacons for a better and recognisable world.

But, however appealing this approach might have been for some, it did not succeed in carrying the decade forward after the fall of the Berlin Wall, when the need for a radical new foundation of the European Project became essential. Certainly, some elements of this value- and identity-based vision of Europe have been translated into concrete political and socio-economic concepts. The rejection of the class struggle, for example, as well as of the fully free market is an approach accepted in most of the European countries. Social dialogue, a social market economy with protected labour rights and a recognition of the stakeholders rights rather than the shareholders prerogative are the characteristics of a — still? — recognisable Rhineland model. The overwhelming engagement towards the *healing* of Europe — in its double sense — can be explained as an expression of a concept of Europe that is more than just an economic or a security project; and the same can be said about the new drive, embodied in the European Consensus, that the Union should play a much more distinct role in combating world poverty. And last but not least, the focus on human rights and human dignity underscores the fact that much more is at stake than economic growth and the preservation of prosperity.

However, the confusing debate on the acceptance of a *Leitkultur*, and especially the unwillingness of a majority of European nations to describe the European identity in terms of its religious roots or to accept a European identity at all, demonstrates our bewilderment.

Whilst this confusion will have dire consequences for the continuation and inten-

1 Guardini, R. — *Spiritual writings*. Selected and translated with an introduction by Robert A. Krieg. Maryknoll (NY): Orbis Books, 2004.

2 Maritain, J. — *Man and the state*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951.

3 Mounier, E. — *Oeuvres*. Paris : Editions de Sueil, 1961-1963.

4 Nell Breuning, O. von — *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft heute*. 3 Bände. Freiburg i. Br.: Herder, 1956-60.

sification of the European project, there is an even more important question mark. The material and spiritual trends in our societies are of such a ruptural nature that they pose a pressing and inescapable challenge as to the kind of society we want to shape, choose, or avoid. How do we deal with the new political, societal, economic, ecological, cultural and ethical dilemmas? What are the guiding principles for making such choices?

Some say that the age of ideologies is over. And indeed, the times of closed and largely oppressive ideological systems is over, but does that mean that humanity can do without the beacons, the instruments and the route planners on the way to a preferred society, and preferred to what?

The magnitude of the developments and trends in our societies at the beginning of the 21st century seem to be so overwhelming that a mere repetition of the guiding principles of the Christian social tradition is insufficient to provide the appropriate answer at the appropriate time to the overarching question: what kind of society do we want to live in? And to that other question: why would we want to continue our work on an own, identifiable European project?

Those questions do close the circle: First, what kind of society do we want to foster as an answer to the automatism of trends and prevailing developments; and if we have answered that question, then that gives rise to the intrinsically linked other question: what space, what room do we need to protect our concepts and the transcription of our values into societal realities? And the answer to that question especially constitutes the new foundation for the continuation of the European project as *the* own space of citizens in the process of globalisation, or, in other words, as the formulation of conditions and criteria by which we wish to participate in that process.

A route planner does not work by only inserting the destination, or even by indicating limitations and restrictions; a route planner is efficient primarily because of its ability to gauge the realities on the ground. And it is exactly the combination of this understanding of the signs of our time together with a new and fresh knowledge of the beacons — the guiding principles and values — on the way to our choices that can direct and redirect, inspire and differentiate our political and social preferences. Enabling interested members of a new generation across Europe to install their preferred route comprises the basis of this effort to develop a kind of compendium on the current dilemmas of European society, its history and perspective.

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- Weiler, J. — *The Constitution of Europe; do the New Clothes have an Emperor?* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998.

Internet resources on the history of the European Union:

Treaty of Rome: <http://www.hri.org/docs/Rome57>

The *European Convention on Human Rights* and additional protocols can be found on the website of the European Court of Human Rights:

<http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR/EN/Header/Basic+Texts/Basic+Texts/The+European+Convention+on+Human+Rights+and+its+Protocols>

From the *European Community*: http://europa.eu/abc/history/index_en.htm

European Navigator: <http://www.ena.lu/>

<http://www.historiasiglo20.org/europe/>

Revolutionary developments in our social circumstances and values

IT IS probably not the era of doctrines, ideologies and values based choices that is over, but the time of the prefabricated norms which model the societal processes and to which these developments would have to comply. In fact, the reverse is true. Apply the inductive methodology: starting not with sermons and blue prints, but opening your eyes to what is really going on, and then asking yourself: is this what we want with all its ramifications?

Open your eyes but be aware that rarely in history have such far-reaching changes or ruptures taken place in such a short period of time. Instead of assuming that 1989 would have brought us some rest, some space to manoeuvre, or some time to just work on the enlargement and the deepening of the European Project, we have to face the reality of being confronted with such an accelerated process of breathtaking changes and challenges that we can barely grasp their momentum and scope.

Compare it to the impact of the invention of the steam engine in England after the Napoleonic wars. Just this one material invention dramatically changed the economic and social landscape first of Great Britain, then of the continent and then the rest of the world. However, in terms of religious convictions and ethical patterns — at least in the first few decades — the fabric of society did not change essentially.

Lately, there have been a number of technological breakthroughs with the same impact as the steam engine — namely, developments in the area of ICT, communications, medicine, genetics, procreation, food production, etc.- but, and that is the real revolutionary dimension, there has also been a historically unprecedented rupture in the perceptions, the convictions, the values and the cultural backgrounds of our citizens. It is exactly that unique combination of material and value shifts that creates this revolutionary change.

The material changes include not only technological developments and innovations, but also demographic changes, the influx of immigrants with completely different cultural backgrounds, and economic globalisation. Concomitantly, there has also been, at least in Western Europe, an irreversible process of secularisation, of emancipation, of social mobility, of the ‘monetarisation’ of the society and culture, of indi-

vidualisation; and, maybe also, of self-realisation as the ultimate ideal of the human being.

It goes without saying that there is a strong interdependency between the material changes and the spiritual, cultural, and societal developments — the sexual revolution, for instance — and signalling these developments does not necessarily imply a imposing negative connotation on them as such. What is being asserted here is the extreme degree of discontinuity in and rupture of nearly all dimensions of society, life and perceptions. And, obviously, we are only at the beginning of this process.

Under these circumstances, efforts to establish the blueprints of a society and of social and political action to format developments according to a preconceived scheme and fixed moral principles are clearly futile. What is needed, first and foremost, is an awareness of what is really going on: what is the impact of the material changes from mankind's potential to destroy with one stroke the entirety of Creation to bringing an end to world poverty and hunger for the first time in history, from the abuse of the information techniques to control every human being to detecting and denouncing the violation of the human rights of any of our six billion global co-citizens.

As far as the spiritual changes are concerned, we have to be acutely aware of the consequences of the phenomenon of a broad and sweeping secularisation and the resulting loss of ethical consensus on the meaning of life and the human condition. And yet, despite the moral vacuum, we see individuals make a conscious decision to adhere to a particular religious conviction or institution regardless of tradition, environment, or automatism. And another example: don't we need to reflect on the whole of the emancipation process, which rightly enables women to fully develop their own capabilities, but also frequently overburdens them with the combination of their "traditional" tasks and their new professional obligations. Doesn't that have an impact on how we should perceive the career aspirations of partners and the classical rhythm of someone's life pattern?

And the most striking is the interface between material and value changes: what is common in a multicultural society, where traditions and convictions differ, but where one has to make new choices in nearly all areas of one's personal life and in the orientation and priorities of society and politics. Take, for instance, the medical breakthroughs and their ethical implications in a society where there is no longer any consensus on ethical norms. The development of a contraceptive pill belongs to the material changes while the differing views on pre-marital and extra-marital sex can be attributed to the shift in values, and it is the interface of both which causes a revolution, in this case, the sexual one.

Therefore, communications and lessons on the orientation of society, of politics and of Europe should start with a profound knowledge about what is really going on, both at home and in the world at large. The catchwords of contemporary developments are still difficult to find, but could be indicated by such terms as globalisation and ‘technologisation’ on the one hand, and emancipation and ‘individualisation’, on the other. First, we need to get acquainted with this knowledge before posing the next question: are these trends, these threats, these opportunities what we really want, how can we correct them, and in which direction can we channel them? The civilisation mission today has to cope with precisely these new realities.

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www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?SHORTCUT=677

Responsibility and Confrontation

PURE OPTIMISM is not the central characteristic of our thinking. Trends and new developments have to be analysed and scrutinised on the criterion: will they harm or benefit that which we consider advantageous for individuals persons and society? Do technological breakthroughs bring destruction and overexploitation, underscoring the position of the already powerful or do they contribute to the quality of life, to saving natural resources and to fostering the participation of the marginalised? Does individualism break up societies, end voluntary work and care, or...? Does multiculturalism cause alienation, antagonism and ghettoisation, or...?

Pessimism is not an option either: along with Saint Augustine, we do not believe that the times are bad “because we are the times” and we can change trends and developments for the better. The central characteristic of our thinking is much more: it is responsibility — responsibility towards ourselves, our fellow human beings, our society, towards our earth and Creation.

But if responsibility demands action, intervention and selection — in other words, confrontation with our ideas about the good life and the good society — the central question then is what are the ideas, convictions and values that are the subject of this confrontation?

A thorough study, in this sense, of the dilemmas of the European society should not limit itself to a perspective of contemporary changes, trends and developments. It should enable the participants to confront these trends with the central question: is this what we would like to see happen? Answering that question demands more than intuition, more than sentiments and feelings. It demands the explication of our central values as the embodiment of what we perceive as the characteristics of a good society.

Our opinion as to what constitutes a good society will be subjective to a certain degree. But that is not the same as being arbitrary. All major world religions encompass values and orientations which make a distinction between bad and good: from parental responsibilities to not wasting food, from protecting life to being just; from respect for the elderly and parents to honouring promises and covenants, etc. In different cultures and traditions, these values are worked out and specified.

In the European Judeo-Christian-classical and humanistic tradition, we have inherited a number of values and orientations that can be, and should be, beacons and guidelines for the good society and for individual behaviour. These values are often incorporated into the basic principles and programmes of political parties and social movements. The specific appeal of the Christian social movements and traditions lies in the following values:

- » human dignity
- » justice
- » solidarity
- » responsibility
- » reconciliation
- » subsidiarity
- » freedom
- » stewardship
- » security

The priority, the interpretation and even the summing up will differ from person to person according to the experiences, the history and challenges of a particular society and individual conviction. It is because they are a translation of a central conviction that there are a number of values that are, in essence, indispensable for a society which is respectful and fosters the concept of human dignity, the value of human communities and the need to protect Creation. Therefore, in a given era, certain values will take precedence: for example, after the second World War, reconciliation was highly valued in Western Europe while in post communist Central Europe freedom and justice came to the forefront.

Other values or guiding principles were also placed in the limelight. The relevance of the principle of subsidiarity, the autonomy of civil society and the recognition that higher levels of governance should not take over functions which could be performed at lower levels — albeit less valued in the reconstruction and peace-keeping phase in Europe — became evident to Christians and non-Christians alike in the debate on the competencies of the European Union versus the Member States.

The problem with current social and political discourse is that there seems to be a certain fatigue in referring to these values and principles. Pragmatism, common sense and no-nonsense seem to be adequate for making the relevant political and societal choices. More so, when these debates are carried out in a media dominated landscape where there is little room for philosophical debates on values and principles. And

indeed, in the past, sermons and slogans had too often substituted the necessary debate on actual challenges, trends and opportunities.

Therefore, not only will Central and Eastern Europe have to catch up with half a century of forced neglect and silencing of these values, but Western Europe as well needs a necessary correction of the voluntary neglect of and indifference to these values and doctrines in the last four decades.

In this context, there is a pressing need to raise awareness of the meaning of the values summed up above and confronting these values with the trends and developments as outlined in the previous chapter. Every individual should have access to the instruments whereby the values inscribed in the concept of “the good society” and “the common good” can be questioned, challenged or embraced.

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Just theory? The practical meaning of values and inspiration for societal and political choices in the 20th and 21st century

ABANDONING THE social relevance of our values, the reflection on them and the confrontation with the inexorability of our contemporary trends deprives us of a vision of our society which overcomes the challenges and gives a longer-term objective to our social and political engagements and choices. Unfortunately, our society and our educational institutions, including academia and the media, pay scant attention to this dimension so prominent in other times of crises.

The confusion in the debate on the competencies of the European Union was obviously needed to rediscover the relevance of the principle of subsidiarity; Robert Bellah's research on the "Good Society"⁵ in Berkeley and Amitai Etzioni's⁶ studies on society and community in Washington were necessary for reviving the significance of "social capital" and "community" and the translation of such values as subsidiarity, solidarity and justice at the level of society. Indeed, it was mostly in the course of the confrontation of the Anglo Saxon world with the effects of fully free market developments, the no-nonsense approach, the pragmatic fixing of societal problems, that this rediscovery of the need for, and the guiding capabilities of, these kinds of values and principles happened. Liberal, but "hidden Christian" sociologists, pastoral letters on "poverty" (US Bishops) and "the common good" (UK bishops) demonstrated the need for "a moralisation" of the socio-economic debate and, at the same time, the relevance in our times of these wisdoms and reflections.

At the end of the 19th and during the first half of the 20th century, the relevance and meaningfulness of the confrontation between trends and automatisms in socio-economic developments with values and principles became clear. The growth of proletarianism, the rat race to provide minimal labour costs, rural exodus and a growing gap in income between the richest and the poorest were the price of progress and prosperity, at least in the eyes of a considerable number of entrepreneurs and econo-

5 Bellah, R. — *The Good Society*. New York: Knopf, 1991.

6 Etzioni, A. — *The New Golden Rule: Community and Morality in a Democratic Society*. New York: Basic Books, 1996.

mists, and, following in their suit, politicians. (It has to be noted that some conservatives of those days had strong reservations against it because the new poverty and the new wealth created differences in the new century far greater than the feudal and aristocratic eras had demonstrated.) And on the other side, there was the “unavoidability” of the class struggle: the economic developments with the same subsequent growth of proletarianism and rural impoverishment created the conditions for such a struggle and the ultimate victory of labour over capital.

But then the Christian social doctrines and teachings brought in a completely different concept: yes, there was oppression of the labour class; yes, there were grave injustices; yes, there was “the architectonic deficit in the building of the society” (cf. Abraham Kuyper) but the requisite repair did not demand an annihilation of capital, property and the fabric of society, rather a reconciliation between these two defining elements, a reconciliation and a dialogue, a surpassing of the antithesis between labour and capital. The strong appeal of this message — modernity, change, progress, industrialisation, free market compatible with justice, stability, respect for society and tradition — became the blueprint for extensive historical reforms in the domain of economics and social security in a number of (West) European countries and formed the basis of the so-called Rhineland model.

The catchwords were: the cohesion of society instead of growing gaps and differences; common good instead of group interests; the importance of identity, tradition and culture; the combination of social security with personal/individual responsibility. Names could be attached to these concepts, namely, Pope Leo XIII, Abraham Kuyper, Don Sturzo, Von Nell Breuning, Van Zeeland, Cobbenhagen, Aalberse.

Again, in the second half of the last century, the confrontation between the mostly harsh realities and trends in the society with the defining values of our civilisation and our conviction proved to be extremely fruitful. We have already referred extensively to the notion of peace and reconciliation. This notion ended or channelled better the concept of nationalism which had brought disaster to Europe for so many centuries. Here, it was not so much the absolute choice between exalting the national identity (with its subsequent revenge agenda) and embracing US style federalism. It was more the principle of subsidiarity together with the principle of forgiveness and reconciliation which laid the foundations for one of the historically most striking socio-political projects, that of the European unification.

The previous academic, ecclesiastical, economic and political generation built the bridges for a number of otherwise inseparable gaps:

- » The balance between human rights and national sovereignty. The Declaration of Human Rights was the product of a concept of the human person and human dignity, which according to Prof. René Rémond (Académie Française) had its traceable links and roots in the Christian vision of the uniqueness of every person, and it is no wonder that Jacques Maritain was one of its central authors. (And yet, in current references and literature, the Declaration of Human Rights is seen as being opposed to Christian values.)
- » A balance between urban and rural economic perspectives and, simultaneously, a balance between food security and free international trade. (This balance was distorted after the protection and subvention system of agricultural production became outdated in its actual form.) It was, in a certain sense, the translation of such values as the right to food as a basic human provision and the principle of solidarity. (Access to food should not be determined totally by market forces.)
- » A balance between social security and individual responsibility. Post-war Europe with its vast poverty and mass destruction was tempted by the notion of the strong collectivisation of the economy and the levelling of incomes. Although strongly open to the notion of solidarity and justice, Christian social thinkers also put forward the notion of individual responsibility, whilst making provisions for entrepreneurship and acquiring property. This was a delicate balance in situations where a month off due to illness or joblessness meant poverty for oneself and one's family. So, social security in combination with protection for families became a cornerstone of this thinking together with incentives for saving, paying insurance premiums and facilitating the acquisition of one's own home.
- » And above all the concept of the human person — not as a hyper-individual but with strong ties and responsibilities to its community and society, but neither as part of a collective unity. And hence, the rejection of collectivisation.
- » Last but not least, the acceptance of modernity, technology and economic progress on one hand and respect for tradition, identity and, again, the fabric of society on the other.

So, in post-war Europe, the signature of Christian social thinking became discernible in the development of our societies, in the defence against new totalitarianisms and in the forging of the new supra-national formula. What were mere theoretical notions, in the eyes of some pragmatists, became, with the right understanding and in confrontation with the real trends and developments, creative instruments for the humanisation of the society.

Once more, society in the 21st century, two generations after the Second World War, is confronted with grave dilemmas and the temptation to just accept the unavoidability of certain trends and developments.

Will globalisation lead to a rat race to the bottom between nations: who will produce the cheapest goods and services; who will own *and* sell their natural resources, vital for the survival of the rest of the world, to the highest bidder? Who will dominate, with their monopolistic knowledge and communications systems, the global information, financial and even spiritual and cultural systems? Will the global security system continually be held hostage by terrorists or specific interest groups or by one superpower, or are there alternatives of justice, peace and power sharing?

All these questions have to be tackled in these decades and the central issue is, whether or not there will be, once again, a tool kit of concepts and values which is usable in the fight against these socio-economic, political, cultural and security trends, in order to lead them in another direction in favour of a global civilisation which deserves the predicate “human”.

This new confrontation derives its revolutionary dimension not only from that overarching phenomenon of globalisation in all its dimensions, but also from an historically unseen rift in human development: the unprecedented process of secularisation in Western Europe, which goes as far as the denial of the mark of Christian inspiration on history, socio-political reforms and civilisation of our continent, in other words of our identity. Overcoming the pragmatists or the defeatists in their acceptance of the unavoidability of the trends at the beginning of the last century or with the recovery of post-war Europe was already complicated enough, dealing with the broad-based cynicism and aversion to transcendent values of today will be much more difficult.

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Could the triangle work again? — the agenda for the 21st century

IN CHAPTER 2, we tried to give an indication of the far-reaching consequences of the new revolution of the 21st century. But we are more than observers. The crucial question for responsible human beings in this century is whether or not we are willing to confront the new trends with our inspiration and principles and then to change the automatisms and the probabilities. The triangle: what is really going on; what are our values and criteria; and how can we conceive and stimulate changes in order to make what is going on compatible with our ideals?

a) The new socio-cultural challenge

In the 20th century, the Christian social thinking was primarily relevant for the socio-economic choices. One of the notable differences in our days is another relevance: the cultural dimension of our life and society in a broad sense. Helmut Kohl and Helmut Schmidt, both former chancellors of Germany, in a double interview in *Die Zeit*, expressed the belief that the dominance of the socio-economic dilemma of the 20th century would be substituted in this century by the *socio-cultural challenge*.⁷ A leading Dutch Christian democratic thinker, Herman Wijffels, is of the same opinion.

» *Globalisation and identity*. Indeed, the first issue is the question whether there is still room for one's own identity in a world which is characterised largely by a growing global dominance of one uniform culture. Features of that mass culture are hedonistic, even over-sexualised, secular, commercial, urban, individualistic and focussed on self-realisation. The reaction in certain traditional cultures and religious communities is a strong rejection not only of this culture, but also of its vehicles: modernisation and globalisation. Once more: in our political and societal choices, we are pressurized into either embracing this aggressive, some say imperialistic, modernisation or closing the windows to the outside world. Sometimes some religious leaders summon us

7 "Erstmals seit dem Machtwechsel 1982 sprechen Helmut Kohl und Helmut Schmidt miteinander. Kanzler trifft Altkanzler." Christoph Bertram (moderator). *Die Zeit*, 5 March 1998.

to defend ourselves actively against that culture, even to attack. The central question, however, is whether or not we can create *a balance* between the link with a global culture on the one hand, and create space for our own identity, on the other. This constitutes the core of the new debate about the identity of Europe, its features, and its civilisation. It is also the new justification of the unification project. We are just at the start of this process: is the new global culture compatible with our ideas about the relationship between national identity and supra nationality; about the relation of the cultural versus the commercial domain; about rural and urban areas and urban sprawl and landscape protection; about the remuneration of the market sector vis-à-vis the public sector; about state broadcasting and commercial media; the future of national languages and the promotion of cultural productions which are not commercially profitable, etc. How can we translate the principle of subsidiarity into an identifiable European society? How do we contribute to and be part of both a global humane society and a Union that remains capable of making its own social and cultural choices?

- » *Modernity and tradition.* What is relevant for our continent is, in a different way, relevant also for the individual and the community. Are the actual socio-cultural developments compatible with our vision of human dignity, the sense of community, the respect for the weak, the elderly and the specific features of our societies as we cherish them? How do we really *combine* technological progress with respect for natural developments and non-interventions? How do we empower adolescents not to consume, or not to separate sex from love? Do we want to keep Sunday special and do we want to preserve a rhythm of the year which is inspired by the crucial moments in the life of Christ? Do we believe that consuming, borrowing and spending is a precondition for a healthy, happy modern society or is there an alternative of saving and soberness? How do we achieve all this while simultaneously accepting the benefits of emancipation, social mobility and access to material resources, which modernity can bring about? The answers to these questions should be given not only at the individual level but should also be translated into cultural patterns and even legislative provisions.
- » *Multiculturalism and social coherence.* In most Western European and in a number of Central European countries, the composition of the post-war population has changed dramatically and will continue to do so. Considerable

minorities and, in certain urban areas, majorities comprise immigrants or children of immigrants with completely different cultural and religious backgrounds. Moreover, in a parallel development, the “traditional” majority has largely relinquished its own old religious convictions and is even doubtful of the characteristics of its own cultural identity. In other words: Old Europe is faced with a double dilemma: are we still a Christian continent and part of a Christian civilisation, the Christian Evening Land, or are we a — culturally — empty immigration area? ‘*Christliches Abendland oder leeres Einwanderungsgebiet?*’ to quote the title of a seminar of the Quandt Foundation. And there is another dilemma in this context: are there enough bridges and binding values between the different segments of a population to maintain at least some form of social cohesion? Or, in the words of a seminar of *Socires*, do we have public squares or isolated ghettos (“*Getto’s en Pleinen*”). Maintaining, restoring, strengthening social cohesion will probably become the most far-reaching challenge for the decades to come, accompanied by questions as to the characteristics of such a cohesion, such a society? Will there be assimilation of the immigrant population? Will this assimilation be based on an acceptance of their different cultural and religious backgrounds with their behavioural and public expressions and respecting their own identity whilst trying to forge common bonds, or will it advocate the need not for assimilation but for adaptation and foster the recognition of a *Leitkultur*, a dominant culture which is characterised by the European history and its religious roots? Cardinal Danneels sees the key solution in the development of a “European” Islam, which would enable the adherents to remain inspired by their own religious conviction, but would also steer them towards accepting the main characteristics of our culture such as gender equality, separation of the Church and State, democracy and regular engagement as responsible citizens: in other words, multiculturalism *and* social cohesion.⁸

» *Individualisation and community*. Another socio-cultural dilemma with far-reaching consequences is the trend towards hyper individualisation, or in other words, the denial or marginalisation of community ties and bonds. Lifelong marital relation is under pressure as is integration in a local

8 In a lecture on 24 September 2004, at a conference of *Ucsia*, the Universitair Centrum Sint-Ignatius Antwerpen. http://www.ucsia.org/main.aspx?c=*UCSIA2&n=63811&ct=61846&e=161851 (retrieved 18 May, 2009).

community or neighbourhood. Or volunteer work and service deriving from respect for social institutions. However, individualisation is not just a trend which can be reversed or even should be, because it is also an expression of self realisation and can also be an optimisation of one's own capabilities and talents. On the other hand, human society needs binding and stable institutions, voluntary and public service; children need stable families; the public sector needs responsible, sometimes even selfless service. Recognition of the indispensability of community participation, of the conviction that self realisation is only possible in relation to others and their communities and institutions, and that institutions and fellow human beings are in need of ideals, service, fidelity in order to keep the society humane. The specific tension between the ideal of self realisation and marital bonds are symbolic of this contemporary dilemma, and the breakdown of such a high percentage of marriages today underscores this general challenge of our days.

» *Personal autonomy and ethical consensus.* The combination of secularisation and increasing personal autonomy and individualism has created strong tensions in the public debate on ethical regulations. From abortion to euthanasia, marriages between same sex partners and human genetic engineering, from biotechnology in general to animal protection, from divorce to parental responsibilities, from pornography to prostitution, from privacy protection to the use of DNA in the cure for hereditary diseases and the breakthrough of new (bio) technologies come exactly at a time when consensus amongst citizens about ethical issues is practically non-existent. But lawmakers and politicians have to decide whether they wish to pursue to the principle of laissez-faire, or whether there should be, at least some societal agreement on the use and limitations of new techniques, and on the future and place of institutions born out of our traditions and convictions, such as marriage. For a number of Christian social thinkers and politicians, this leads to choices which are not compatible with the classical right-left schemes of the 20th century. One can be progressive in socio-economic policies and simultaneously, conservative in ethical questions. But in a majority of our countries the central issue at stake is: do we accept certain common values or should we restrict ourselves to just procedural approaches, which guarantee the voluntary choice in freedom of the individual, even in the most important choices of life and death?

» *Monetisation and the meaning of life.* Another trend with far-reaching

consequences is the reduction of the meaning and sense of life to income generation and success in business. It is right that the former prisons of class poverty have been broken down and that wealth and prosperity are no longer the privilege of the upper class or families of nobility. It is right that society offers prospects for talented, hard working and entrepreneurial people. But social esteem, respect and sense of life have been strongly reduced to level of incomes, profits and professional success. Even societies characterised by “the embarrassment of the riches”, such as the Dutch Calvinistic one, are nowadays replete with ostentatious wealth and exhibition of luxury. Even more serious is the underestimation of professions and services, which are vital for a humane society, but are non-market related, such as nursing, teaching, voluntary work, civil service, etc. The preference for jobs and careers that provide quick, easy and abundant rewards drastically erodes public and social services. Moreover, the explosion of wealth and income among a select few, and sometimes undeserved, causes social unrest and dissatisfaction. Although in the Christian social tradition, the preference for levelling off all incomes and redistributing wealth is not enunciated, there is a strong impetus towards the restriction of income differences, for fostering property ownership among broad circles of the population (not nationalisation) and against overspending and over-consuming, at least in the Rhineland Model. And there is, above all, a high esteem for social service, for considering some public functions, such as politics, a vocation (Jean Paul II) and the engagement on behalf of the neediest and weakest. The strongest elements of the European civilisation will come under pressure if we do not create a space for non-economic activities and services. They give meaning to one’s life and to the wellbeing of the society.

» *Functionality and wholeness of a human being.* Another characteristic of our societies is the focus on efficiency and functionality. This can be a real achievement. Efficient production and delivery of services can make life much easier, can increase incomes, and can even save human and environmental resources. But in many cases, reverting to efficiency and functionality also implies a standardization of processes, preference for mechanical and technological production, even in areas that deserve more human attention and, above all, it implies a reduction of human relationships to their material utility. The efficiency criterion quite often causes alienation, bureaucracy and anonymity, especially in the domain of health care, education or professions

where personal attention is needed. An efficient organisation of the production processes of goods and services is an acquisition of the West and we should not give that up, but we should also work to find a balance between the importance of non-functional human bonds and contacts and an efficient working habits and conditions. Otherwise we will arrive at a new civilisation where the material aspects will override considerations of the quality of society and interpersonal relations in terms of warmth, recognition and participation.

» *Freedom and transcendental values.* Finally, we arrive at an issue that is probably the central challenge of society and human beings in the 21st century. Individual autonomy and freedom is perceived as the central value and ideal of contemporary citizens. The history of Europe, for the last two to three centuries, has been marked by the struggle for freedom: freedom from want, fear and, above all, oppression, authoritarianism and discrimination. At the same time, this struggle was combined with a struggle against “oppressing” institutions, against imposed convictions and religious beliefs, against social immobility, against dictatorial regimes. In the 21st century we seem to be free at last. However, a number of post modern analyses suggest otherwise: the removal of authoritarian structures and oppressing doctrines seems to have given way to new forms of constraint and lack of personal autonomy. Fashion, behaviour pattern, peer pressure and, above all, an extremely compelling set of materialistic, consumerist and even hedonistic values are imposed on us and especially on those amongst us who are the most vulnerable and susceptible: youngsters, adolescents, less educated.⁹ A striking example is the deliberate focus of the advertising industry to “sexualise” children below the age of twelve — a trend British analysts have been warning against — or the hidden techniques for promoting addictions in adolescents — nicotine, for instance. The recent debate on the resurgence of religion, even in Europe, points at this phenomenon. Is real freedom possible without the communication and acceptance — of course, freely — of certain so-called transcendental values: convictions about what is good or bad for a human being or a society, which are not completely dependent on one’s own subjective preferences, findings and opinions? Values that profess that life should be protected from the

9 See for example: Friedman, L.M.,— *The Horizontal Society*. New Haven, Yale University Press, 1999. Also: Klein, N., — *No Logo*. London: Flamingo, 2000.

beginning to the end; that pain and suffering are an integral part of human life; that life is more than just earning money; that society is more than a sandbox of individuals; that children need a father and a mother; that sex and love are inseparable; that marriage is more than a matter of just convenience; that a human being bears the responsibility for her or his own well-being and is not just a victim of circumstances and the human environment; and that solidarity is a personal, social and a state commitment to this personal responsibility. But how can these values, and their indispensability, be communicated to a new generation, which is secular and for whom an automatic reference to God does not exist or work?

So the socio-cultural dimension is *the* overwhelming challenge of our times and needs, not negation or an unconditional acceptance, but a deliberate balance and reconciliation between the new trends and the objective preconditions for a humane and stable society. A complication for the debate on politics is, however, that the role of the state in this domain is limited. The state cannot interfere in matters of fostering other convictions or imposing values or proclaiming social coherence. The state can only develop a set of preconditions which will enable citizens and their institutions to communicate values other than the culturally dominant ones (as for instance, protection of the family, subvention of non-commercial television, freedom of education for parents, etc.).

b) The new socio-economic challenge

The dominant character of the socio-cultural challenges notwithstanding, one still cannot overlook enormous relevance of the “traditional” socio-economic challenge, even when the struggle against poverty has been won. And in such new forms as:

» *Globalisation and European socio-economic survival.* Apart from safeguarding the socio-cultural identity, the quest for (maintaining) prosperity is again high on the agenda. Can an ageing, holiday-enjoying, heavily protected Europe compete with the emerging highly skilled, hard working, and less earning, workforce from the newly emerging economic forces from the South? And how can it when Europe’s youngsters are permitted to choose jobs related, primarily, to the overarching ideal of “self realisation” and not so much to the demand of the market in the longer term? But is a rat race to the bottom i.e., the lowering of labour conditions, a solution? The new economic globalisation

challenge is certainly a new motivation for continuing and intensifying the European Project in the 21st century. So, is there a balance possible between accepting and utilising the phenomenon of globalisation and preserving an own European identity, translated into own economic and social models?

» *The welfare state and personal responsibility.* The promotion of the idea of the welfare state as a combination of income distribution, strong state planning and enlarged social security has grown out of the Christian social and the social democratic tradition. More specifically, it was the fruit of the discussions between the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Beveridge during World War II and it provided Labour in the UK with a much-needed substitute for the outdated Marxist philosophy. In the meantime, on the continent or at least in the nations not under communist rule, a marriage between free market economy and strong social protection of the employees was concluded, die *Soziale Marktwirtschaft*, which bore the signature of, notably, Ludwig Erhard. But the circumstances of sixty years ago are so different from those today: a week without work meant hunger for the family; a few days' illness a considerable and unaffordable loss of income, not to mention the fate of unemployment. Moreover, the contract with the company, the enterprise or the institution which provided the job, was considered to be a lifetime relationship. Fostering one's own property, especially for the property-less masses, seemed to be the ultimate answer to Marxist proletarianism. But since the forties and fifties, the income situation and vulnerability of normal labourers have changed dramatically for the better. Personal economic chances have improved with frequent changes of employers and jobs, and the overall economic picture of a nation seems to flourish more with spending and consuming than with saving. But the claims for social protection have barely changed and some legal social provisions seem to have evolved exactly in opposition to their original purpose: the benefit of the labourer. Labour mobility is sometimes hampered by outdated protection systems and in some countries fiscal subventions — as for example, acquiring a home — have narrowed down the possibilities of first time buyers on the housing market (sometimes with young families) because of their consequences for inflated prices. And above all: the remuneration of top managers without reference to their real engagement and effort has a devastating effect on the concept of enterprise as a community of capital *and* labour. But the most dramatic

consequence is described in the book of Chr. Smith (former minister in one of the Blair Cabinets) and R. Koch, *The suicide of the West*.¹⁰ The authors analyse the trends since the introduction of the concept of the welfare state and come to the conclusion that the real engine of progress and prosperity of the West and the precondition for its survival, the notion of personal responsibility, has been gradually substituted by a ‘victim’ culture: the responsibility for my well-being or despair/downfall lies with everybody and everything else except myself. Since Thomas de Aquinas, and especially since Calvin, the notion of self-responsibility has been the crucial element in the development of the West and its advantage over other cultures. In these decades, that conviction and sentiment seems to have given way to the feeling that one is the object, and not the subject, of circumstances, one’s environment and the behaviour of others. On the borderline between culture and economy this is, in their opinion, the central issue of society, civilisation, values and politics. In any case, this demands a thorough review of our social security system and the concept of our welfare state. It is ironic that this thesis is being put forward not by the followers of Hayek or neo-liberals but by prominent adherents of Labour! Is it — in other words — possible to strike a balance between entitlements to social protection and maintaining the citizen’s primary duty of being responsible for his/her own welfare and income? Is such a balance possible in a culture which has largely cut itself off from the ethical and religious roots which introduced this notion in our tradition?

» *Economic growth, protection of the environment and climate change*. This dilemma is well known for the last twenty-five years. In the eighties, the dominant thesis was the recognition of the incompatibility of economic growth with the protection of the environment. But the demise of communism and the subsequent *improvement* of the environment demonstrated that, at least in certain phases, economic growth can be an instrument of environmental improvement and the reduced use of scarce resources and, as a result, of less pollution and waste. Unfortunately, the Christian social tradition, a strong defender of labour, did not have significant influence in the domain of environment or “the preservation of Creation” as it were. Indeed, the Conciliar Process of the Churches in Europe has since 1989(!) contributed strongly to the

10 Koch, R., Smith, Chr. — *The suicide of the West*. London: Continuum, 2006.

perception that the overexploitation of the riches of the world, wasting, over-consumption, concentrating on today rather than on the survival capacities of future generations is contrary to our deepest responsibilities but, apart from St. Francis, this tradition has never been that strong. Tilting the Earth and submitting it to the plough was seen as more urgent than preserving and maintaining it, despite the prevalent attitude of soberness and fasting. Today, it is all the more necessary to combine such virtues as personal responsibility and prudence, such values as stewardship, justice and solidarity with a new economic order, where there will be room for sustainable development, room for a redistribution of the environmental load in favour of underdeveloped societies, respect for Creation in all its diversity, and an economy characterized by saving and taking into consideration the interest of future generations. The accelerated process of climate change makes this dilemma a pressing challenge of our days.

» *Interest groups and the common good.* The traditional antithesis between labour and capital may have been dwindling, but at the beginning of this century there is a new class struggle on the horizon.

Class solidarity has eroded substantially and specific new groups of mostly better off employees or entrepreneurs are increasingly demanding better conditions, mostly chargeable on the account of their former “comrades”. The traditional position, e.g. that of the trade unions and other professional groups, are in danger of being overwhelmed by small segments of specific interest groups, such as traffic controllers, lock drivers, etc. In practice, dealing with these interest groups could mean that the outlook for overarching broader socio-economic interests is distorted. This is evident in the already mentioned self-enrichment process of the top management of mostly stock registered companies. But the real threat to a balanced socio-economic policy and a coherent society is the insidious attack on the European economic order, the so-called Rhineland Model. The Rhineland Model was not only an effort to reconcile labour and capital, but also an attempt to make enough space available for companies, not registered on the stock market, namely family firms that provided continuity and generated employment; “die stille Gewinner”, the Silent Winners. And finally, profits should accrue not just to the shareholders and employees of a company but also to consumers and society. Corporate social responsibility should be the order of the day. And that is the relevance of the Rhineland Model in the 21st century against the pressures to substitute this model by Anglo-Saxon capitalism.

c) The new security challenge

Apart from the cultural and economic challenges and the need to find balances between the deciding trends and our values, we are, in our time, confronted with yet another challenge: the security threat. In addition to the ever-present threat in the already “traditional” form of a nuclear holocaust, mankind is now confronted with the disruptive and destructive capacity of bio-chemical and cyber warfare. Furthermore, there is the added danger of local conflicts escalating into regional and even global ones.

The concept of insecurity and security has to be reformulated in two ways: the boundaries between state aggression and private criminality have become blurred and there are new life-threatening coalitions between failing states and private criminal groups. Threats aggravated, on the one hand, by technological developments, which can equip private gangs with a destructive capability comparable to extreme state violence (nuclear, chemical, biological) and, on the other hand, by emotion driven motives of revenge and of cultural religious convictions leading to self-destructing terrorism. The same is valid for their solution: measures and preventions on a global level can have their effects in far away countries, even villages, not to mention, specific prisons. None of the major domestic problems can be resolved without taking into account their global dimension. And security is indivisible. State security and private security, ‘hard power’ and ‘soft power’, come together in the concept of ‘human security’. This is the new reality of the 21st century. Politics and society therefore have a new priority: to balance the reality of globalisation with the virtues and values of justice, compassion and solidarity.

» *Globalisation and justice.* The reality of globalisation in terms of the economy is undeniable, as stated above, but even more so in politics and in the global power structure. Some say, and with reason, that in terms of power the globalisation process has elements of imperialism. But instead of falling back on nationalism, we should strive to humanise this process, first of all, by fostering and extending the rule of law in a growing number of domains. This can take different forms, and does not have to be restricted to official treaties and global structural reforms. “Soft law”, international jurisprudence, sectoral voluntary agreements in addition to international treaties and institutions, are all equally valid and useful. Care has to be taken to pave the way for an incremental regime of global democracy and balances of power, and to impose better restrictions of superpowers. Security is best served by the rule of law and, above all, by justice.

- » *National interest and global solidarity.* One of the most significant paradoxes of our days is the renewed emphasis on national interests. If there is any solidarity at all, it ends at the national borders. But the reality of globalisation makes the biblical question of “who is my brother?” borderless. More so, if development is the new word for peace (*Populorum Progressio*) — in that case, investment in development, in combating mass poverty, in alleviating the biggest inequalities and, above all, in creating employment and jobs is an indispensable contribution to human security and to global security. This is not only a challenge for the richest countries but also for the middle- income countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Special attention should be paid to Europe’s responsibility as a whole. The Founding Fathers of Europe had already in 1957 expressed the motives behind their project by undertaking the responsibility to take care of the South, notably Africa!
- » *National defence and international peacekeeping.* A direct consequence of the dark side of globalisation is the reconsideration of the concept of national territory and area in terms of defence. While defending one’s own territory remains important, the present condition of ‘borderlessness’ — the lack of frontiers in a globalised world — makes interventions far “out of area” not only justified, but sometimes imperative. Peacekeeping, peace protection and prevention of civil war and external aggression are the order of the day. There are two moral dimensions to this process: firstly, legitimisation and mandate and, secondly, the willingness, and even duty, to respond to appeals for engagement, even in the military force spectrum. The ethical dilemma of seventy years ago “why dying for Danzig?” poses itself today several times a year: why for Cambodia, for Rwanda, for Darfur, for Afghanistan, for Congo? This is one of the gravest moral questions of our times confronting politics, society and individual human beings. Again, a new balance has to be formulated here between one’s responsibility for protecting the homeland and to engage in far away, but necessary, military interventions.
- » *National sovereignty and human rights.* In a globalised world, the sophistication of modern communications makes it difficult to hide the violations of human rights in far off places and victims of such violations have a name and a face, even amongst hundreds of millions of other civilians under an authoritarian rule. National sovereignty is often used as a pretext to ward off foreign interventions, but it can also be an excuse for not meddling in the internal

affairs of a distant country for fear of incurring — perhaps — certain economic damages. Or maybe, it is just indifference to the fate of fellow human beings in a remote country. But human dignity and respect for human rights are indivisible and non-selective. Of course, the competence of a national government in domestic matters should be respected, and one should be very careful not to interfere unnecessarily in the internal policies of a given nation. Intervention should only take place on the basis of a mandate commissioned by the relevant international authorities and on grounds of incontestable, systematic and grave violations by the state authorities. Here, again, there should be a new balance between respect for national sovereignty on the one hand and, on the other, the willingness to engage based on an informed decision-making process.

» *Privacy and state control.* In this day and age, the constant threat of terrorist attacks and the need for security officials to be able to defend citizens pre-emptively poses yet another dilemma. Preventive measures require in-depth information about other citizens: their whereabouts, their background, religious convictions, affiliations, etc. But in the era of ICT, this could easily lead to the abuse of intelligence, competences and capabilities and, in the name of security, privacy could easily become the first victim. On the other hand, the grave risks our societies are exposed to demand a new balance between state control and the right to privacy.

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Rethinking the role and set-up of institutions in the 21st century

THE MOST striking effect of the revolution in the summer of 1968 in Paris and Europe was probably the infiltration, the colour change, the erosion and the destruction of many of the determinant institutions of the western society.

Hence, the demand for *the rediscovery of societal institutions* of the role of institutions in our society. But merely reconstruction and restoration would be a negation of the new realities in our societies and cultures. And it was not only the Paris revolution that was at the origin of the decline of the vested institutions. It was the monetarisation of existence as well, together with the decrease in voluntary work, or, at least, the willingness of citizens to take up honorary, non-paid responsibilities for the functioning of non-profit organisations and social provisions. Not only the Paris revolution, but in another dimension, social mobility, secularisation, individualisation, emancipation and the rise of the welfare state have also strongly affected the traditional role and set-up of institutions. And above all: in the raw version of market capitalism “there is no such thing as a society” — there is only the individual, the state and the market.

This led to the decline of institutions and, in some cases, the ‘detournement’ of functions and identity. Sometimes, when institutions survived, the reference to their original founders and their motives have been substituted by completely different references or they have become ends in themselves accountable only to themselves and their strict institutional interests. A striking example was a Catholic university in The Netherlands which, catering to secular culture and trends, decided to grant the instigator of the Paris Revolution, Daniel Cohn Bendit, an honorary degree. The same can be said about a great number of cooperatives in the area of social housing, agriculture, and even health care institutions, which refused any reference to their founding inspiration and became ends in themselves.

In the Christian social tradition, there is a strong conviction that in order to form a society in the true sense of the word, such a society needs binding institutions that are an indispensable prerequisite for solving a number of material and, especially nowadays, spiritual problems. Therefore, instead of writing off the societal institutions, we

need to institute a far-reaching reevaluation of the role and set up of institutions, or in other words, the replenishment of social capital. If the Christian social movement, and possibly Christian Democracy, restrict themselves to just applauding the role of societal institutions — the famous “middle field” — and set out policies on the basis of a — sometimes loose, or even false — supposition of their vital existence, then there arises an obvious parallel with Marxism in the seventies and eighties: doctrines and political systems built on a non-existent social fundament. Again, the central issue will be: is it possible to strike a new balance between the realities of the 21st century such as individualism and the need for institutional engagement. Take for example the issue of reconciling the obvious willingness of a new generation to take care of people in need in their neighbourhood with their strong dislike of institutional, long term commitments or responsibilities.

Amitai Etzioni has underscored, in several publications, the need for this rethinking, re-establishing and redesigning of the contemporary institutions and communities in his defence of a new communitarian movement.¹¹ The Research Institute for the Christian Democratic Party in the Netherlands has published a number of studies in this area and the Party’s famous programme “*Samenleven doe je niet alleen*” (One does not live together on one’s own) is a testament to these ideas. In other words: how do we combat the obvious social desertification of our societies and lives?

Apart from the need for this fundamental reflection on the ways in which to mobilise engagement and to re-connect institutions with their original constituencies, there are four specific domains which deserve special attention in these times:

a) Marriage and family

The real problem of western societies in our era is not so much the denial of the importance of the family as such, but the way in which this institute can survive in the circumstances that are so radically different from those in the nineteenth century in rural and bourgeois contexts. The double revolution in objective societal conditions *and* in patterns of values and behaviour, as described earlier, put enormous pressure on the “traditional” family — the nucleus family, “*het gezin*” —, while the extended family — “*de familie*” — has lost most of its meaning in western societies. From individualisation to emancipation, from secularism to the decoupling of sex and procreation, from monetisation and eroticisation of the public life to the need for double

11 Etzioni, A. *op. cit.* See also: *Essays in socio-economics*. Berlin: Springer, 1999.

incomes, etc., all the trends and conditions of our era — positive and negative — are becoming visible in the pressure they place on the traditional family and marriage. But, at the same time, there is a strong longing of young people to partner themselves for lifetime, to have children, to remain faithful and to have a real home — an oasis of quiet and trust (*“De verzwegen keuze van de Nederland”* — The silent preference of the Dutch). But the reality is that the number of break-ups of marriages is increasing dramatically; that the previous mechanisms of finding a partner have not been substituted adequately by new ones and that so many live alone against their will; that social and emotional costs for children not growing up in stable parental circumstances are enormous; and, above all, that the family is no longer a bastion against outside influences and that from childhood to adolescence there is a strong competition between external influences, especially commercialisation, and the values one would or should transfer to the next generation. In many cases, this leads to parental impotence in the domain of education and the loss of roots for juveniles.

And then there is, in western societies, the dramatic fall in the demographic figures, resulting in often unbearable costs of the aging population and the impending decimation of the original populations of many western European nations.

Maybe the central challenge is therefore: could we combine the fully justified aspirations of both parents for societal and career options with the time for and engagement in family life and raising children? If so, then how can we arrive at a drastic change in the rhythm of life? For instance, from the age of thirty to forty-five, we are supposed to optimise our career options in order to establish the basis for our later financial situation, take care for our own aging parents, and devote attention to bearing and raising children, whilst ten/fifteen years later — mostly in good health and at the peak of our capacities — we are supposed to fade out of the labour process. Is a new balance possible, wherein one of the parents can interrupt his/her full time labour participation — for a period five years, for instance — and “add” that later to their working years? If we do not wish to adhere to the models of the nineteenth century, and instead take fully into account the socio-economic, technological and moral changes and achievements of today, then we should substantially rethink the political and societal preconditions for marriage, family, education: from parental leave to educational support, from children’s allowances to marital counselling, from provisions for infant care to multi-generational housing, from media policies to an economic and cultural rehabilitation of the role of education and educators.

b) The public dimension of religion and the separation of Church and State

One of the most interesting developments in the public debate is the recent rediscovery of the indispensability of the role of religion in the public domain. From Sarkozy¹² to Blair¹³, and from Angela Merkel¹⁴ to Romano Prodi¹⁵ and the Dutch WRR, everyone is underscoring the need for recognition of this role, for dialogue between the world religions, and for a redefinition of the relationship between church and state.

Three new developments seem to be at the origin of this phenomenon:

- » the increasing and visible presence of Islam in Western Europe;
- » the lack of social cohesion and the quest for an European identity;
- » the need for a sense of direction for a new generation, other than earning money or spending it on luxury;

As a fourth element, one could add the recognition by some observers that the globalisation process needs to have references to moral and ethical dimensions in order to become humane and sustainable.

But this trend is certainly not unanimous; there is also a strong and emerging, often aggressive, secular movement, which would eliminate all public expressions of faith, religion and churches. Using the fear of aggressive Islam as an excuse, there is a tendency towards banning all forms of religion from public life. Integration and assimilation are best fostered in public schools and by abolishing religious education. Moreover, religions are often at odds with a number of fundamental human rights such as abortion, the full and integral recognition of same sex marriages, adoption by same sex couples, the right to end one's life, the autonomy of science and even the freedom of speech.

In the current debate on the future orientation of Europe, these two streams clashed with each other with nearly fatal consequences. From a reference to God to

12 For example: Sarkozy, N. *La République, les Religions et l'Espérance*. Paris: Editions du Cerf, 2005; see also the article on <http://www.firstthings.com/onthesquare/?p=942> (retrieved 3 June 2009)

13 For example: <http://tonyblairfaithfoundation.org/2008/04/tony-blair-faith-and-globalisa.html> (retrieved 3 June 2009); other texts on <http://tonyblairoffice.org/>; also "Blair defends faith," *Times*, 5 March 2009, <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/faith/article5853385.ece> (retrieved 18 May 2009).

14 For example: Rede von Bundeskanzlerin Merkel zum Statesman of the Year Award in New York, 25 September 2007, http://www.bundeskanzlerin.de/nn_5296/Content/DE/Rede/2007/09/2007-09-25-rede-bkin-statesman-of-the-year.html (retrieved 19 May 2009).

15 For example Prodi, R: "Why Dialogue is Important," opening speech at the Conference on Intercultural Dialogue (2002: Brussels, Belgium), Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2003.

any mentioning of the Judeo-Christian roots of our civilisation, from the desirability of a dialogue with churches and religious movements to the juxtaposition of the freedom of religion to other fundamental human rights — everything was contested. A struggle of nearly three centuries about the separation between the church and the state seemed to have been revived. There is the more Northern European approach to this theme which is central to our democracy and freedom: the state should have no authority over the church and citizens should be free and equal, whatever religion they wish to adhere to, if at all. However, the state should also recognize that religion has its expressions in the public domain, as for example, in the educational system, the media, in philanthropy and health care. And sometimes, the state should be amenable to certain social services of churches or even to some of their institutional preconditions such as the spiritual development of its servants or the maintenance of its buildings. This is the Northern European tradition as opposed to the Gallo–French tradition of *laïcité*, in which religion is a completely private affair and should disappear behind the closed doors of one’s own house or church.

The new actuality of this debate has two obvious dimensions:

- » Many observers conclude that immigrant adherents of the “new” religions are not open to accepting this confinement to the private domain and that any attempt to do so will be met by fierce opposition and further societal separation and even recourse to parallel semi-state institutions and judiciary systems; and
- » What is neutrality in a culture dominated by the values of commercialism, consumerism and hedonism? What is freedom in a society in which adolescents are virtually forced into a uniform pattern of behaviour, taste and preferences?

The Christian tradition has long wrestled with the concept of the separation of the church from the state. In a certain sense, the Christian Democratic doctrine has been the result of the acceptance of this separation, on the one hand, and the deep-seated conviction that religion and faith can not be restricted to one’s private life, but should have a public meaning and utterance, on the other. One of the most exciting questions is, whether this line of the Christian tradition, which was partly a reaction to the religious wars in the 17th century and the fruit of the work of French catholic philosophers in the 19th and 20th century, could also be relevant for developments in the Muslim world, where some are longing for a similar combination of not having to give up

one's religious convictions and, at the same time, accepting the separation of the church and state and the overarching concept of human rights.

c) Voluntary work and engagements

The quality of contemporary society depends to a high degree on the readiness of its citizens to engage in voluntary work at all levels: from caring for disabled members of one's family to the willingness to take up, often weighty, responsibilities in the governance of societal organisations and institutions. Studies have shown that although this readiness is still present insofar as it has to do with the direct care of individual fellowmen in need, it is not the case with regard to institutional engagements and responsibilities. Individualism, monetisation, anonymity and social mobility are not conducive to this type of social engagement, to *dem Ehrenamt*, and this leads to severe anaemia and the desertification of social life. Moreover, when these suppositions and conditions for an autonomous civil society, independent from state and market, are no longer fulfilled, one of the cornerstones of the Christian social doctrine falls apart, notably the indispensability of an authentic citizen's associations and institutions. A rethinking and revaluation of the concept of voluntary work and voluntary availability is urgently needed together with new techniques for the mobilisation and recruitment of volunteers. When Christian social movements and institutions become the nurseries for voluntary and non-paid availabilities, the role and social credibility of these organisations will grow even in secular societies.

d) Political parties

The state of the political parties in European democracies deserves special attention. In most European countries, the level of political participation has decreased substantially, at least via the traditional instrument of the political party. Frequently, their role is substituted by civic action, opinion polling, media generated hype and publicity. But despite these external influences, the mandate and the legitimacy of politicians still depend on the selection and direction of their party. The erosion of the party system, therefore, strongly affects this mandate, the trustworthiness of the political system as such and the legitimacy of the governance. In a country such as the Netherlands, the degree of participation in criminal activities sometimes seems higher than active participation in politics. Occasionally, especially in the case of local elections, there are simply not enough members of a given party to fill the lists of electoral candidates.

There is discussion on the causes of this process: does it have to do with the

general trends of abstinence from voluntary and societal engagements? Is it the preference for market related professions? Is it the constant over-criticism by the media and lack of privacy for the politicians? Is it the absence of real visions, choices and values things that really matter?

Pope John Paul II — an exceptional protagonist in the tradition of the papacy in favour of the relationship between faith, democracy and political participation — never ceased to call the political profession a real vocation and repeatedly advocated the need to see public office as a service to mankind. As Christians and as citizens, one has the strong responsibility for stopping the erosion of the political system that happens when other means are used to influence the governance of a country, e.g. by reverting to commercial interest for financing one's electoral campaign. Winston Churchill warned that each generation would have to conquer anew the democratic achievements and, in our times, the revitalisation of the political participation is essential. This entails a strong revaluation of the importance of content-oriented political programmes, a rethinking as well of the real societal needs and dilemmas and a reconnection between one's principles and visions of human life and responsibilities and political choices. The efforts for renewal made by Tony Blair, for instance, in the midst of the nineties brought about an influx of 30.000 new members to his party per month! A new generation seems to long for real programmatic perspectives for society and Creation, based on deeply rooted convictions. In this sense, also the document "New Ways, Stable Values" of the Netherlands CDA (1995) still has an impact in our times.

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The Earth Charter Initiative (M. Strong, M. Gorbatsjov, R. Lubbers):
<http://www.earthcharter.org>

Konrad Adenauer Stiftung — Studies about Islam and democracy, and the possibilities of a 'European' Islam: <http://www.kas.de/wf/de/21.47/ac.doc/-/>

Scientific Council for Government Policy (WRR) — *Religion and the Public Domain*, The Hague, 2006

The limitations of pragmatism

IN THE last quarter of the 20th century, it was fashionable to write off ideological and doctrinal convictions as the basis for political choices and institutions — understandable after the demise of Marxism, after the marginalisation of the Christian inspiration, and after the doubt over the “make-ability” of society. Pragmatic, courageous, research- and common-sense based decision-making should substitute political ideologies.

But about one and a half decades later, it is increasingly obvious that pragmatism has its own severe limitations. The same research based analyses of the current social, cultural, economic and ecological developments lead to just one conclusion: our societies are in need of far-reaching reforms, changes and answers, if they are to cope effectively with the challenges of our times. Otherwise, it is improbable that such basic conditions as prosperity, quality of human life, care for the weaker, security and even the survival of the Earth can still be guaranteed. Moreover, technological breakthroughs engender essential questions about life and death, and the degree to which we might manipulate and intervene in human life. But maybe the most important trend is the longing of a new generation for a sense and purpose in life other than material wealth. Society and politics that do not nurture this demand are losing their value as citizens cannot identify with them. And even the welfare state does not contribute, in the words of Pope John Paul II in *Centesimus Annus*, to renewed political and societal engagement, but to its erosion, unless the system is associated with visions, perspectives and responsibilities.

Therefore, it is highly appropriate that we rediscover the beacons for the crossing the next few decades. This does not mean a return to the old ways, but a going forward. And here the golden triangle is indispensable: knowledge and internalisation of the sources of our life and society, notably of the values and virtues which are indispensable for a society which guarantees personal dignity; together with a profound observation of the signs of our times; and, on that basis, the proper utilisation of our intelligence, considerations and knowledge for reprogramming and redirecting our life, our community and our society. This rediscovery, leading to a refreshment of our

social and political engagements, beyond pragmatism, is perhaps even more urgent now than in the last two hundred years.

That is the real justification of the reflections that are laid down in these previous pages. They are intended to foster an educational project and a systematic communication and ongoing information on the linkages between values, society and politics.

Internet sources for further research

Centre for Ethics Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands www.ru.nl/cve

Von Hügel Institute, St Edmunds College Cambridge

www.st-edmunds.cam.ac.uk/vhi/index.shtml

The Acton Institute for the study of Religion and Liberty, Grand Rapids, US

<http://www.acton.org>

Aktionsgemeinschaft Soziale Marktwirtschaft, Tübingen, Germany

www.asm-ev.de/veranstaltungen.htm

Oswald von Nell-Breuning-Institut, Frankfurt, Germany

www.sankt-georgen.de/nbi/index.html

The Centre for Social Justice, London, United Kingdom

www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk

The Tony Blair Faith Foundation, London, United Kingdom

www.tonyblairfaithfoundation.org

Centre for Catholic Social Thought of the Catholic University of Leuven (International Association for Catholic Social Thought), Leuven, Belgium

www.kuleuven.ac.be/ccst/iacst.php

John A.Ryan Institute for Catholic Social Thought, University of St Thomas, St Paul (Minn.), United States www.stthomas.edu/cathstudies/cst/default.html

Colophon

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The Eduardo Frei Foundation

The Eduardo Frei Foundation, linked to the Netherlands Christian Democratic Party (CDA), was founded in July 1990. Eduardo Frei was one of the founders of the Christian Democratic Party of Chile (Partido Demócrata Cristiano) and president of Chile from 1964 to 1970.

The goals of the EFF are:

- » To promote Christian Democratic thinking and knowledge in the field of international cooperation in general and in the field of development and human rights in particular.
- » To stimulate the conscious involvement of members and affiliated organizations of the CDA in the mentioned field.
- » To initiate and support projects, which are aimed at promoting Christian Democratic principles, especially in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Third World.

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