

**Workshop number 18****Gloria Germani (Ecophilosophical Association)****The Deconstruction of the Imaginary of Growth: the Myth of Science in Tiziano Terzani and Raimond Panikkar”**

*“All truth passes through three phases before being recognized.  
The first is ridiculed,  
the second is opposed,  
in the third it becomes obvious in itself.”*  
A. Schopenhauer

Seeing things through the glasses of just one culture, without being aware that we are wearing them: this is the power of myth.

The myth of our western-modern culture is based not only on Growth but – at a deeper level - on the Myth of Science (Newtonian-Cartesian classical science).

This wider philosophical perspective (which requires a rethinking of Modernity, Enlightenment, and scientistic optimism) is the only one that allows us to deconstruct the empire of Economics which is actually wiping out the whole of true humanity today.

**PART I****The myth of Newtonian-Cartesian science**

The huge economic crisis of the industrialized world forces us to question the basic idea on which we are acting.

We all agree with Latouche when he says “We must decolonize the imaginary” and, first of all, that myth of growth which leads all modern politics – both right and left – and its GDP. According to Pallante: “Over the last 30 years, thanks to advertising and to the frantic development of mass media, we have been subjected to an authentic brainwashing. It's been a real anthropological mutation .... we were mesmerized into assuming that growth would continue for ever, and that more we bought, possessed and consumed, the happier we would be. But that actually never happened”.<sup>1</sup> “Both Capitalism and Marxism maintained that industry and technology would produce such a cornucopia of goods to make happy the whole of humanity, but – as Massimo Fini has bluntly stated – this two-faced utopia has failed ”.<sup>2</sup>

The industrial revolution has caused, over the past 50 years, an environmental crisis of staggering proportions; even if all mass media (inextricably linked to technological productivity and marketing) tend to conceal it. Mother Earth, Nature, was seen as something external to man to be dominated, plundered and exploited. As Mercalli reminds us “only five generations in the twentieth century - out of ten thousands that separate us from the appearance of 'homo sapiens' - have plundered the resources of non renewable fossil fuels with the illusion of becoming Lords of the environment” .<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> M-Pallante and L.Salvi, *Dalla crescita insostenibile alla Decrescita felice*, [www.venezia2012.org](http://www.venezia2012.org)

<sup>2</sup> [www.massimofini.it/Manifesto](http://www.massimofini.it/Manifesto).

<sup>3</sup> L.Mecalli, *Prepariamoci*, Milano, 2012, p. 22.

To really understand the complexity of our problems, to make a correct diagnosis, to prescribe a medicine and not just a palliative, the Myth of Growth is important but not sufficient. The unquestioned faith in Growth is in fact inseparable from faith in Progress, Development and Evolution. The undisputed axiom of growth is inseparable from the idea of linear time that leads to the highest form of animals (man), and the most developed form of civilization (modern-western civilization). We must therefore dig into modern Imaginary without fear of shocking - to say it with Latouche – the worshipers of Progress and Technoscience.<sup>4</sup> To be able to really understand our myth there is an absolute need to look at our time from far away or from the outside and to realize that we are wearing glasses. As Achille Rossi says with great sensitivity: “Our myth is always concealed. Only those who live in a different horizon can unveil it to us”.<sup>5</sup> Rather than consulting the experts or the specialists, we need to widen our horizon.

### Science is not neutral

To do this we shall follow the footsteps of two great men of our time whose similar destinies brought them both to live a good part of their lives between Europe and Asia. The greatest of our contemporary interpreters of the intercultural dialogue, Raimon Panikkar (1918-2010), son of a hindu father and a catholic mother; and the journalist-explorer Tiziano Terzani (1938-2004), whom I believe I can well acknowledge as a true 'philosopher' in the authentic, ancient term of 'lover of wisdom'.<sup>6</sup> Panikkar used to say: “*It is enough to live in any other different culture, to realize that there are radically different approaches, not only to life and death, but also in regard to matter, time, space and other fundamental notions, not excluding social and political life*”.<sup>7</sup> Terzani wrote: “*The big problem is that, unfortunately today, on the stage of the world, we westerners are the only protagonists and the only spectators. And so, through our televisions and newspapers, we listen only to our issues, we feel only our own personal pain. The world of the 'other' is never taken into consideration, never put on the stage*”.<sup>8</sup> Through all our excessive technological and mass-mediatic power, we put into circulation on the whole globe just one culture, only one anthropology – what Vandana Shiva defines as 'Monoculture of the Mind', the western modern '*forma mentis*'. It is therefore necessary to lift the veil off what Raimon Panikkar calls Myth. **And the Myth inside which we are immersed – so much so that we don't even see it – is that of Science.**<sup>9</sup> But we are so strongly persuaded by mass-media that we are the civilization of Science, of development, of technology; we are so assaulted by school manuals and books with the fixed notion that we are the superior civilization, that we can fly through the sky, land on the moon and so on, that it becomes very difficult to formulate any doubt, and instead we think that, sooner or later, Science will solve all problems.

<sup>4</sup> S.Latouche, *Per un'abbondanza frugale*, Milano 2011, p. 37.

<sup>5</sup> Achille Rossi, *Il Mito del Mercato*, Città di Castello, 2002.

<sup>6</sup> G.Germani, *Tiziano Terzani la rivoluzione dentro di noi*, Milano 2008.

<sup>7</sup> R.Panikkar, *La porta stretta della conoscenza*, Milano, p. 197 see also P.Calabrò, *Le cose si toccano. Raimon Panikkar e le scienze moderne*, Diabasis, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> T.Terzani, *Letters against the war*, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> When we speak about Science in this text, we refer always to Cartesian-newton Science. It should be noticed that although contemporary sciences are confuting too many of her fundamental concepts, official science and the mainstream still maintain the old paradigm and arrogate of Six and Seven Century Science. See also Guido della Casa, *Ecologia Profonda*, op 183.

Nevertheless, the man who is considered one of the Fathers of Degrowth, Ivan Illich - unusual priest, who lived between Europe and South America - also maintained that we are victims of the illusion of science and that we must get rid of the myth of science.<sup>10</sup>

Panikkar has declared in very strong terms that the fact of introducing western culture, through technology, into a culture different from the western one, means to restrict the space of that particular culture. *“Globalization of technology implies the occidentalization of the world and the destruction of the other cultures which are based on visions of reality incompatible with the modern implications of technology. The latter is not a neutral issue, since it can only germinate in modern soil and grow in a westernized climate. Up to which point other cultures can survive, preserve their own identity and avoid becoming reduced to a marginal type of folklore, remains a huge problem to be solved”*.<sup>11</sup>

Tiziano Terzani had spent much of his life in the Orient and he often confirmed that thirty years in Asia had taught him a lot of things. First of all, the idea he had conceived - after seeing with his own eyes *“Asia's merry 'suicide' in favour of a western type model of development”* . In his last book which sounds like a 'spiritual testament', he strongly confirmed this idea, leaving no doubt about it.

*“It's always the same old story. It's always the westerners going and knocking on the other continents' doors with the excuse that they have some nice principles to offer to them: today it is democracy and freedom, in the nineteenth century it was the free market, earlier on it was christianity .... the story of western expansion is always the same.”*

The reason why globalization was introduced, the reason why these peoples could end up considering the western way as the only one towards progressing, for Terzani it's simple, although dramatic. *“We have sold them christianity, colonialism, and all this nonsense. As a last item, we sold them the idea that modernity can only be of the type we support. Therefore this model, exported through communication and via mass-media, such as TV, has taken hold of the whole of Asia”*.<sup>12</sup>

Tiziano Terzani never met Panikkar, but the conclusions he reached - as someone who had come to know Asia in depth – by exploring how man can live a better life, how man can be happy and fair, which relation he can create with Nature and his own self - are surprisingly similar to Panikkar's.

Terzani, for example, writes about the actual influence of Cartesian-Newtonian science: *“To look at reality only through the lens of science is behaving like Mullah Nasruddin's drunkard:*

*A man after spending the evening drinking with friends realizes to have lost the key to his house and starts looking for it in the light-cone of the only street lamp there is. A passer-by asks him: 'Why just there?' 'Because it's the only place where I can see something' answers the drunkard.' - That's the way scientists behave. The world they describe with their instruments is not the world, but just a very partial representation of it, a truly non existent abstraction”*.<sup>13</sup>

### Technology as the Trojan horse

Panikkar underlies two very important thesis: **“Scientific thought is a peculiar and restricted form of thought”** (only 300 years old). **“Science is neither neutral nor**

<sup>10</sup> I. Illich, *La convivialità*, Milano 2005, p. 114.

<sup>11</sup> R. Panikkar, *La torre di Babele*, p. 28. See also *La porta stretta*, p. 194.

<sup>12</sup> T. Terzani, *La fine è il mio inizio*, p. 258 -260

<sup>13</sup> T. Terzani, *Un altro giro di giostra*, p. 84.

**universal.**” And in order to avoid any misunderstanding, those are the titles he gave to two chapters of his very famous book 'The Narrow Door.'<sup>14</sup>

Living his life with people of Asia, he had actually discovered that **“western culture is in direct contradiction with the archetypes of other traditions”**. In spite of science's apparent positivity, Panikkar underlined the fact that *“modern science embodies the power and creativity of a certain culture.... It is not neutral: in fact it is the carrier of a particular cosmology. Neither is it universal.”*<sup>15</sup>

In his later years, the Indu-Catalan philosopher in fact confirmed that his basic thesis, what he had repeated in various ways in many books and speeches, was the following:

**“Modern science is wicked ... and technology is the Trojan horse to succeed and force the whole world into complying to western patterns.”**<sup>16</sup>

Terzani too had realized that science is a 'tale' – in fact he often writes it with a capital 'S' – and defines it – with a well chosen term – *the Highway of scientific knowledge*. It's a fast knowledgeable as it takes you immediately to your destination. It's a comfortable road, which allows us to see many things, but conceal many others which are – possibly - the most important ones.

*“Such total faith in Science has excluded us westerners from an interesting amount of knowledge. We have taken the road of scientific knowledge and we have forgotten all the other paths which, once upon a time, certainly we too were aware of.”*<sup>17</sup> *“Putting Science on a pedestal has meant that everything not pertaining to Science appears to us as ridiculous and contemptible”*<sup>18</sup>

Terzani had realized also that western medicine is “a big landing bridge for modernity.”<sup>19</sup> Quite differently from what one generally thinks – starting from the inner Western scientific myth and with a remarkable dose of arrogance as well as of ignorance – **the expansion of technoscience in the world – globalization – is not the result of the natural evolutionary process culminating in the superior modern Civilization.**

On the contrary, as Panikkar has confirmed: *“Globalization turned out to be possible thanks to the Myth of scientific rationality prevailing today.”*<sup>20</sup>

This is the reason why Tiziano Terzani, the successful journalist who had believed in modernity, in politics, in knowledge, - at age 54 – meets a turning point in his life and abandons 'the Highway of Scientific Knowledge'

Terzani, starting from 1993, the year he never travelled on a plane - as narrated in his book *“A fortune-teller told me”* - explores a different way of thinking still prevalent in Asia. Thus begins his taking a distance from Modernity which he defines as: *“The Middle Ages of Materialism”* or *“The dogs' race after the plastic rabbit of the false wellbeing of consumerism”*.<sup>21</sup>

### Science and materialism

This is the point we find hard to focus on, since we are confused by our pride and by our triumphant march. Consumerism and the modern productivistic system cannot be

<sup>14</sup> P.Panikkar, *La porta stretta della conoscenza*, p. 30.

<sup>15</sup> Ibidem, p. 197.

<sup>16</sup> R. Panikkar, “A Self-Critical Dialogue”, in J. Prabhu (ed.), *The Intercultural Challenge of Raimon Panikkar*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, New York 1996, pp. 287-8. The strong expression *Trojan Horse* is repeated also in *La porta stretta*, op.cit. p. 198.”

<sup>17</sup> T.Terzani, *Un indovino mi disse*, p.426

<sup>18</sup> T.Terzani, *Un indovino mi disse*, p. 197.

<sup>19</sup> T.Terzani; *La fine è il mio inizio*, p. 304 and 310. See also G.Germani, *Tiziano Terzani: le revolution inside us*, chap4,2-

<sup>20</sup> R.Panikkar, *La Porta stretta*, p. 191.

<sup>21</sup> See also T.Terzani, *La fine è il mio inizio*, p. 414.

separated from the exclusive interest for matter (materialism) which is at the centre of Newtonian- Cartesian Science.

There is a very close connection between knowledge (the scientific knowledge), the object of knowledge (matter) and lifestyles. And this is what ultimately justifies the extraordinary importance that Economics has gained today, that is, the material aspect of existence. Apart from any political orientation, either right or left, if there were not a practically exclusive interest in matter (the specific feature of scientific knowledge), we would not witness technology's huge development which distinguishes the modern epoch from any other civilization, leading at the same time directly to the ecological crisis. When one believes that the most important reality is wholeness, inter-relation, unity of body and mind, unity of spirit and matter (as it is the case with most traditional cultures) then there is no space, nor interest, no involvement, nor concern given for the development of technology.

This is why Panikkar would say that western scientific culture *“is in direct contradiction with the archetypes of other traditions”*.

This is why Terzani, in one of his very last speeches, stated that *“the great evil of our time is the fact that we put matter at the centre of everything and we don't see anything except matter. This justifies capitalism, this justifies the exclusive search for profit, as well as our aspiration to have rather than to be.”*<sup>22</sup>

If there were no scientific vision of the world, based on what is measurable, quantifiable, ordered according to linear time, there would not be the economic value which dominates our lives. Then our political systems – both right and left - would not be obsessed by their GDP.

### Materialism and Happiness

There is another very important and exemplary figure between East and West, and that is J.S.Wangchuck, the last king of Bhutan. After completing all his studies at Oxford in England, as dictated by tradition, the young king asked himself what his people might expect from him, as their *leader*. He definitely refused to follow the concept of GDP, because this leaves out many aspects of life, above all what people truly wish for themselves: that is, happiness.

During the whole of his life he never used the expression 'economic growth'. Instead in 1972 he created the expression 'Gross National Happiness (GNH), starting from the clear and irrefutable truth that you cannot be happy, if others around you are not. This became the basis on which he built the core of Buhtan's whole policy.

From that time, many western economists followed him, by creating alternative Welfare Indexes, such as GPI (Genuine Progress), HDI (Human Development), and PHI (Planetary Happiness Index). In 2009 the first on the list of the world nations according to PHI turned out to be Costa Rica, whereas the USA was relegated to a meager 114th position.

But the story of the small and enlightened state of Buhtan is unfortunately an isolated case.

Travelling around the world, Panikkar, had grasped the concept that **“science has been extrapolated from the scientific field and has spread like cancer in the mentality of modern man, from east and west alike”**.<sup>23</sup>

Panikkar explains this as follows: **“Science has introduced itself (also due to the failure of other aspects of human life – in particular of institutional religion) as the way that will take us to happiness, abundance and progress. In other words it has showed itself as a substitute for Heaven.**

<sup>22</sup> T.Terzani, Microfono aperto a Controradio, registred speech , april 2004.

<sup>23</sup> R.Panikkar, *Ambiguity of Science*, in *Interculture*, june 20111, n° 19.

**Authentic science does not pretend to be the Messiah. But the judeo-christian tradition - which is still waiting for the Messiah - since he was not turning up anywhere, has looked for him in Science. Science does not offer a vision of the world, nor it claims to do so. However, as we cannot live without a cosmology, we grabbed the only reality available to us - that is, science with all its impressive scientific construction – and we turned it into a total and all embracing vision”.**<sup>24</sup>

### **Science and Western arrogance**

Sustained by this belief, and therefore in perfect good faith, we proposed our myth to the rest of the world. Thus, in Panikkar's words: **“With utmost good will, and in accordance with the official definition by the United Nation, we have considered 80% of humanity either as 'underdeveloped' or 'developing'. This expression is even worse since it means that we believe that there is only one target and that the arrival stage of mankind is represented only by western man”.**<sup>25</sup>

For Terzani too, Science has become an all embracing vision of the world.

*“In the West, Science has been enslaved to the great economic interests and has been placed on the altar instead of religion. So Science itself has become 'the opium of the people' on the false pretence to be able, sooner or later, to solve all problems. Science has got to the point of cloning life, but not to telling us what life is. The Medical Science has become capable to postpone death, but not to tell us what happens after death. Or do we actually know what allows our eyes to see or our mind to think? However, thanks to the great faith we have placed in science, everything is now being taken for granted. We believe we know but it is not so. We satisfy ourselves with not knowing, convinced as we are that it will soon happen. Somebody is certainly taking care of that! Does population increase, exhausting the earth's resources, first of all the availability of water? Science will certainly solve this problem. Millions of human beings are starving to death in many parts of the world. Let us then turn to the genetic modification of many types of seeds which will soon produce miraculous harvests ....and maybe also ....new types of cancer! It seems that we live as though this were the only one of all possible worlds, a world for ever promising some kind of happiness. Some happiness to be approached by a permanent progress of more education (sic!), more welfare, and obviously more science. Everything seems to come down to a problem of just organization and efficiency! What an illusion!”*<sup>26</sup>

Terzani was fully aware that this particular and restricted form of thinking (as Panikkar says: “ just 300 years old, out of a long history of human civilizations”) is cancer-producing, because it destroys not only natural equilibrium and different lifestyles, but above all other ways of thinking.

Indeed Tiziano never missed an opportunity to stress that we must strive towards safeguarding not only biological diversity, but first and foremost, all cultural diversity.

*“Everything today is being globalized. From our behaviours to our brains. Humanity in the West is going through a period of great crisis: we are becoming all alike, we react and think all in the same way. The most important thing would be to hear a dissenting voice going counter-current, saying something different. In the same way as in biology there has to be biodiversity so that life can continue, inside culture there has to be cultural diversity for culture to exist.”*<sup>27</sup>

Today *“the big problem lies in the fact that we are being forbidden to differ in our way of thinking, we are being forbidden to find out what other people wish, who they are .....*

<sup>24</sup> R.Panikkar, *Emanciparsi dalla scienza* in R.Panikkar and other, *Pensare la Scienza*, L'altra pagina, Citta di Castello, 2004, p. 18 -19.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> T.Terzani, *Un altro giro di giostra*, pp.347 sgg.

<sup>27</sup> T.Terzani, in A.A.V-V. *Regaliamoci la pace*, Rome, 2003- .

*Human beings in the West are going through a very serious crisis: i.e. globalization: we are becoming all alike and we are thinking all the same way*".<sup>28</sup>

Terzani struggle for cultural diversity in the same way as S.Latouche promotes the decolonialization of the Imaginary. In his last interview 'Anam, the nameless', Tiziano declares in no uncertain terms: *"America has started a process of terrible de-civilization, pursuing its own (inadequate and limited) interests, claiming to be THE SUPERIOR and ULTIMATE CIVILIZATION."*

Terzani had realized all this with deep sorrow, and in his last book - which strikes like a sort of spiritual testament - he confesses *"the torment which had assailed me. It was the torment to have to look at modern society turning man into a non-human being"*.<sup>29</sup>

We have to become aware, as Panikkar points out, that **"the scientific Civilization has failed .... and we must free ourselves from science's domination"**.<sup>30</sup> The sooner we'll gain awareness of this, the better it will be for all concerned.

Terzani was 20 years younger than Panikkar and he had been a direct witness of the cultural disasters, caused in Asia by the West (not only Communism in China, Vietnam and Cambodia, but also the capitalistic disasters brought in Japanese way of life), and his position is even more drastic than Panikkar's.

***"Does this civilization deserve to be saved? – Terzani ask himself - Do we need to ponder over: what is the real sense of this modern civilization? It's the reason which has gone crazy: crazy because of Economics. Economics has become the criterion of everything – there is no other value.***

*Why to increase production which causes more and more waste? .... This man has become a real nothing, this western man ..."*<sup>31</sup>

### **Science and Modernity both capitalist and communist**

But Terzani's experience is fundamental for yet another reason.

He understands that the Myth of Science has invaded all aspects of life and that the two great ideologies of modern times – both communism and capitalism – are indissolubly tied up with the Myth of Science.

*"Both are based on the fundamental 'scientific' notion that there exists a material world separate from mind, from conscience, and that this world can be conquered and exploited in order to improve man's life conditions. The system based on marxism has been a failure, the other even though successful is showing signs of a crisis."* Terzani continues: *"In spite of their seeming contradiction and the mortal strife in which they were engaged, both of them were founded on the same faith in science and reason, both were engaged in fighting for the domination of the external world, with no concern about people's interior world."*<sup>32</sup>

Terzani had seen with his own eyes that "wherever the communists arrived, be it China or Cambodia, they had first of all abolished the popular traditions, eliminated the fortune-tellers, fought against superstition."<sup>33</sup> For him, who lived in Asia, it was simple to understand that all modern visions of the world -since they are based on the "scientific" notion that there exists a material world separate from the mind - had to necessarily sweep away the ancient cultures, that is to say the traditional **holistic** visions in which everything is interconnected.. In the West, instead, the traditional holistic beliefs lost strength during a

<sup>28</sup> T.Terzani, Microfono aperto a Controradio, april 2004.

<sup>29</sup> T.Terzani, *La fine è il mio inizio*, p. 267.

<sup>30</sup> R.Panikkar, *Pensare la scienza*, p. 23.

<sup>31</sup> T.Terzani, *La fine è il mio inizio*, pp. 409 -411

<sup>32</sup> T.Terzani, *Un altro giro di Giostra*, p.255.

<sup>33</sup> T.Terzani, *Un indovino mi disse*, pp. 37 and 234.

very long process which runs through European history between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, and has become exasperated in the last thirty years through the activities and the brainwashing of mass-media. The materialistic vision and the consequent obsession with economics has spread into the minds so slowly and with such uniformity that our young people can no more conceive that there exist lifestyles different from consumerism and globalization..

On the fundamental identity between marxism and capitalism, also Massimo Fini has expressed himself with great clarity:

*“Marxism has revealed itself inadequate to control and defeat capitalism, since it is nothing but an inefficient variation of Industrialism. Capitalism and Marxism are just two sides of the same coin. Having both grown in western soil, children of the industrial Revolution, both contain aspects of illuminism, modernism, progressivism, positivism, optimism, materialism, economic; both uphold the myth of work, and both operate in the conviction that industry and technology will produce such a cornucopia of goods to make happy the whole of humanity. They part company only in their idea on how to produce and distribute such wealth. This 'double-faced' utopia has failed. Industrialism, in whichever form – capitalist or marxist – has produced more unhappiness than it has eliminated. For two centuries Capitalism and Marxism, enemies in appearance; in reality, being mutually functional, they have backed one another as two arches of one bridge. But the collapse of marxism announces that of capitalism, if for no other reason than an excess of enthusiasm.*

*These basic issues are either not mentioned or camouflaged. Even the apparently most radical criticisms halt in front of the indestructible conviction that, in any case, the industrial modern world is 'the best of all possible worlds'. Both capitalism and marxism, in their varied aspect, are unable to put modernity under criticism, because in it they were born and had established themselves.”<sup>34</sup>*

However, Terzani overcome the pair 'marxism/capitalism' in a deeper way, because he grasps their common root, that is to say, the connection with science. “Both of them are based on the fundamental 'scientific' notion that there exists a material world separate from the mind, from conscience, and that this world can be conquered and exploited in order to improve humanity's life condition”. This philosophical non-dualistic approach – on which I'll expand later on – allows us to understand why Economics has taken hold of our lives.

Terzani understood long time ago that Economics had become the absolute value, so much to cancel any other value, and noted with concern: “Years of uncontrolled materialism had lowered and underestimated the role of morals in people's lives, turning values, such as money, success and personal interests, into the only yardstick for judgment. Nowadays the whole world functions in this way: the only thing that has value is market, the only morals are those of profit, and everyone struggles to survive as best one can in this kind of jungle.”<sup>35</sup>

Terzani is again very clear and prophetic, so much so that in 2004 (well before the outburst of the economic and financial crisis) he denounced openly:

**“With its claim of being scientific, economics is destroying our civilization, and creating around us a desert, of which nobody knows the way out. Least of all the economists ... But if economics continues raging the way it's doing now, it will be the end of the world.”<sup>36</sup>**

Terzani's legacy can be summed up in his last, and today all the more prophetic words:

<sup>34</sup> Massimo Fini, Manifesto dell'antimodernità in [www.massimofini.it](http://www.massimofini.it)

<sup>35</sup> T.Terzani, *Letters against the War*, p. 118 and *Un altro giro di giostra*, p. 42.n

<sup>36</sup> T.Terzani, *Un altro giro di Giostra*, p. 245.

“Freedom has disappeared. I keep repeating this: we are **never being so** little free as we are today. Actually there is no more freedom: freedom to become, or rather to be what we are. Since all is already foreseen, all is prescribed. **And to get out of this isn't easy. And it is a big fight. But this is, in my opinion, the great battle of the future: la battaglia against economics which dominates our lives**, the battle towards a form of spirituality, you can even call religion to which people can turn to – politics we leave out because there are no solutions there.”<sup>37</sup>

## PART II

### The Newtonian-Cartesian Science as the contrary of the Second Noble Truth

Let us repeat: the empire of economy is intrinsically linked to the myth of Science. If it were not for the scientific world view, based on what is material, measurable, quantifiable, ordered according to the timeline, there would **not** be the numerical value of economics that dominates our lives. Our wealth, our happiness would **not** be identified with possession of more and more things and r with the economic. Our power political systems would not be obsessed by the idea of Development (which was introduced in 1949) and GDP (introduced in 1934).<sup>38</sup>

But there is another side of the coin. Believing that the true reality of the world lies in what is measurable, quantifiable, objectively testable, means that we believe that the subject - the I which measures, quantifies, experiments - is completely neutral and separated from the objects of his studies and from the external world.

This is the dark side of the myth of science.

### The Eastern philosophy of non-dualism

All the scientific method was developed starting from the separation enunciated by Descartes of two distinct and separate realities: that of the mind (*res cogitans*) and matter (*res extensa*).

"The philosophical basis lies in the fundamental division between the self and the world introduced by Descartes - Fritjof Capra states - As a result of such division, it was thought that the world could be described objectively, i.e. without taking into account the human observer, and the objective description of the world with the economic power became the ideal of all science"<sup>39</sup>

It was assumed - therefore - that the Ego was separated and neutral. As a matter of fact, the Ego t was forgotten and, for this exact reason, it was expanding more and even more.

From the standpoint of Eastern philosophy, we were making in this way an huge mistake. From time immemorial, in the East was clear that the activity of the ego is intrinsically involved in knowledge and in our image of the world. This philosophy – which is called

<sup>37</sup> T. Terzni, *La fine è il mio inizio*, p.400 integrated with registration.

<sup>38</sup> As remembered by Eduardo Zarelli the first was introduced by President Truman just 4 years the end of WWII. From this time on, three billions of world's inhabitants were immediately “underdeveloped”. The second was invented by the Russian economist S. Kutznets in 1934 as a means to escape from the Big Depression of 1929.

<sup>39</sup> F. Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, op.cit. p. 67; cfr also p. 25.

advaita or non-dualist because it doesn't separate the world from myself - recommended in every way to pacify the ego with meditation or yoga techniques in order to reaching any significant knowledge of the world.

In contrast, in Europe in the 600, we began to believe that man was capable of knowing in an objective manner the external matter and so, that man was able to dominate the world through knowledge. At the same time, the forgotten ego was rising and swelling dramatically.

### The rise of individualism

It's easy to observe it at the sociological level. We shall remember that that there were countless civilisations where the human being had a sense and a meaning only in relation to the community, to nature, to ecosystems. For example in China, the man was a man only if he respected the 5 perfections in relations with his wife, his brother, his parents, the king, his friends. At the contrary the modern age knows only and more and more individuals. We moderns think to ourselves in term of individuals independent and autonomous, we believe in our capacity for choice, in the 'affirmation of our individual rights, and our society is "increasingly based on an unbridled individualism, disguised by a sense of freedom."<sup>40</sup>

As noted by Latouche, in the footsteps of other famous sociologists such L.Dumont, "Surely individualism is the most specific keynote of the West after the Renaissance ... the individualistic society and the individualist ideology are clearly modern creations."<sup>41</sup> It should be stressed that the type of society that has produced, for the first time in human history, the invention of the economy, i.e. the economy as we practice it today, is grounded in this idea of man as a being separate from others and from nature.<sup>42</sup> Even Terzani grasped it clearly: modernity is "The race of man toward individualism and materialism." They are the conceptual basis of modernity and they can't exist one without the other!"<sup>43</sup>

In terms of individual conduct, it should be remembered that virtually every spiritual traditions of humanity - from Buddha, to Christ, to Muhammad, to San Francisco - have always educated man to hold off the ego. The Christian capital virtues, as well as the ethical precepts and conduct guides, (for example, the Hindu votes practiced by Gandhi - sincerity, nonviolence, continence, non-possession, non-attachment) are continuous warnings because the ego will not take over. More than any other tradition, Buddhism teaches that nothing is permanent, and less of all the Ego to which we attach so much. The Ego is something that constantly changes between youth and old age, from birth to death and it is wrong and dangerous to believe it an entity or a substance. It may grasp us with a never satisfied greed, in a continuous run.

Terzani had deeply understood this point and, exactly on this, built up his own death: "Nothing is permanent, nothing is permanent in this life! What do you want to be permanent, you? And who told you? ... Look at you - he said to his son - you're young, you're strong, full of muscles. Oh! I was like you!. Look at me now. Skinny, skinny, swollen legs, the stomach like a balloon. And what would you identify yourself? With your job? Your being a bank manager? Or the small trader, or the great football player? Or do you identify with your possessions? Your cottage by the sea, your bike, your car ?? " But the

<sup>40</sup> Cfr. Achille Rossi, *L'altra pagina*.

<sup>41</sup> S. Latouche, *The invention of Economics*, p. 68 and Luis Dumont, *Essays on Individualism*, p. 27: "The Economic life is the realized expression of individualism".

<sup>42</sup> Cfr. S. Latouche, *How to escape from consumist society*, p. 80 sgg.

<sup>43</sup> T. Terzani, *Another marrygo around*, p. 358 and G. Germani, *Tiziano Terzani, the revolution inside us*, p. 152 sgg.

best thing is the realization of the incredible impermanence of everything. Look around, the river, these woods, this beautiful nature that becomes every moment and never it's the same".<sup>44</sup>

Our modern individualism - that in the words of Terzani, sounds so ridiculous - it is the full expression of the Ego from which departs the scientific way of thinking. In front of this Ego - independent, autonomous, separated from the others and from Nature- there is a world that unfolds around at just one level, a world quantifiable, countable, which has as its essential characteristic the quantity and never quality.<sup>45</sup> It's a flat world, devoid of any intrinsic values. A world to which only man put a value according to its changing tastes and wishes.

### Marketing is based on the Ego

#### **We must realize that the empire of Economics on our modern life is based precisely on this Ego.**

Starting from 1950 on, our economic system -, the so-called TINA: "there is no alternative" or, with more sarcasm, "Produce, Consume, Crack" - is governed by Marketing that is precisely "to create a need that didn't exist before"

Marketing was invented in the late '40s to overcome the great overproduction's crisis of 1929 that was followed by the terrible Second World War. At the end of the war, together with a tremendous technological development, this method for manipulating the mind was started. The reason why is very simple: for selling products, you need even before to sell wishes.

However - this creation of needs and desires is by itself the antithesis of wisdom and ethics.

In particular, introducing a desire that was not there before, is the exact opposite of the Second Noble Truth of Buddhism. It clarifies that the cause of suffering is desire, is attachment, is the search for happiness outside ourselves.

"The cause of suffering is desire", says the Second Noble Truth. The Third states positively: "It's possible to eliminate suffering". While the Fourth teaches the eightfold path of life through which you can extinguish that state of mind which is desire. Obviously the eightfold path contemplates also the economic aspect of life but this last is conceived as "The right means of livelihood", i.e. in a completely different manner from the hegemonic role that economics has acquired in modern time.<sup>46</sup>

The Buddha taught that the mindsets created by desire and greed - intended to endure even beyond death - cannot lead to happiness. The essence of his message, therefore, was demonstrating that neither our self nor the things that we consider external have an isolated existence, are autonomous, are independent.

This is the heart of the Four Noble Truths. All is impermanent. There is not a permanent substance called Ego. Don't be attached to this false belief, but keep flowing just like water. This is, for Buddhist world view, the recipe for true happiness.

For those who do not like too much oriental references, we can recall our great western tradition: the Greek. The philosophical schools of antiquity: the stoics, skepticals and even Epicureans were school of life, they taught how to live. Their central teaching regarded achieving peace of the soul (the famous ataraxia) the inner freedom or autarchy. From

<sup>44</sup> T, Terzani, *The End is my beginning*, p. 420 and p. 455 sgg.

<sup>45</sup> Cfr. R. Guenon, *The Reign of quantity and the signs of time*.

<sup>46</sup> Just to grasp the differences from our western path, The Noble Eightfold Path is composed by: right view, right intention; right speech; right action; right means of livelihood; right effort; right mindfulness; right concentration.

Socrates to Aristotle, from Cynics to Epicureans, the wise man was someone who knew how to break free from everything that was external and who could expand his ego so much as embracing universal cosmos, and the infinity of nature.<sup>47</sup>

### The devastating empire of publicity

At this point, we must realize how much advertising and marketing - that have entered our lives just 50 years ago - enhance and increase the belief that there is a "substance Ego". Marketing and advertising stir up attachment and increase dramatically the tendency of looking outside us for our own satisfaction.

Advertising, marketing, "the science of communication" stir up that little thing we call the Ego continuously, bombarding him with new needs, new desires. They seduce us with the mechanism of feeling every day new desires, which, once satisfied, leave a huge void that we try to stem again with new desires. All this is in complete contradiction with the recipes of wisdom and happiness which used to be taught both in Eastern and Western tradition.

What can we expect from this state of things? Marketing is like a big megaphone that amplifies our most childish illusions: we wish to be young and youth passes, we wish to be beautiful, and beauty fades. And television which comes home to lure our attention? As a French television manager, quoted by Latouche, says: "Basically the job of TF1 is, for example, to help Coca-Cola to sell its product. If you want an advertisement that steps, the brain of the viewer must be available. So our programs have a duty to provide: that is to amuse, to prepare and lay the brain between two advertising message. What we sell to Coca-Cola is available human brain time."<sup>48</sup>

Today in the world over 550 billion dollars a year are spent in advertising costs, not to mention the enormous amount of unpaid images propagated by the media. It's a huge quantity of visuals, auditory - studied in every detail to enslave people to new models, new things to possess, to artificial wants. It's a new kind of language invented by so-called "creative", made up mostly of dazzling images and blatant lies that do not even have the energy to report.

Terzani wrote: "*The industry of advertising and public relations are today two very sophisticated system of manipulation of the mind. There is nothing - from God to an electronic tool or to a war - that does not come out cleverly packaged and presented in some illusionistic formula of words and in some colored sets to be launched in the market.*"<sup>49</sup>

As Chomsky, has masterfully elucidated, our modern informations system together with all the wars in which our democratic nations are committed, are completely handled by the system of public relations.

But what we have to realize lies on a deeper level.

### The reversal (not the evolution) of Man's image

We are really experiencing a reversal of perspective.

Instead of containing the Ego - according to what has been the goal of every cultural traditions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism, Confucianism, but also stoicism, skepticism,

<sup>47</sup> On philosophy as a way of living, cfr the important works of Pierre Hadot, *Spiritual exercises and Ancient Philosophy*, or *What is Ancient Philosophy?*

<sup>48</sup> Viveret, *Rethinking wealth. From GNP tyranny to social economy*, 2005

<sup>49</sup> T.Terzani, *Another marrygo around*, p.64.i

Neoplatonism, and medieval Christian mysticism, just to name a few) our modern culture feeds and encourages the expansion of unrestrained Ego through endless desires and needs. What has been reversed is just the vision of man.

No longer man is a complex system of relationships, just a part of a Natural Whole, but he is an independent and aloof individual who chooses things and decide what to do as he pleases. As Deep Ecology also stress, we come to an completely anthropocentric world view.

This is accomplished with the invention of modern thought, when the image of man is shaped on the physics of Galileo and Newton. Since for the new scientific thinking only material substances exist, all phenomena are movements of bodies linked by laws of causation.

Hobbes is the first to formalize this "physic" vision of man: *"Every man desires what is good for him and runs away everything that is bad. He runs aways, first of all, the greatest of evil that is in nature: death, and all this according to a natural law which is not different from that for which a stone falls to the ground"*.<sup>50</sup>

From Hobbes on , man escapes death and pursues pleasure, and from his time to the present, self-interest and Ego are became the root cause of both social and individual movement.

We must be aware – however - that this is a complete reversal, an upside-down of the image of man and not an evolution as (following Darwin) is believed and taught. Man is not any more a complex system of relations to a Natural Whole, but he – and his Ego - has become the independent brick, the fundamental substance.

In the early days and peaks of our civilization, Plato proclaimed that the purpose of wisdom was to prepare for death, and philosophy itself was merely a preparation for death. Hindu philosophy divides the life of every man in four stages, of which the latter two are completely dedicated to preparing for death. In India indeed, the highest ideal of man is the "*jivanmukta*" one who has reached such a level of consciousness that detachment from the body - which occurs on death - will not alter at all his status. How can we think that escaping from Death - that is the basis of modern anthropology - is something wise or stable on which we can build a social, economic and ethical way of living?

It is easy to see, at the contrary, that our modern economic action is based on those powerful impulses of selfishness that all spiritual traditions require us to suppress. i.e, greed and envy.

For instance, you might remember that the institution in 1830 at the University of Oxford of the first chair of Economics, caused many embarrassments, because at the time it was still clear that the economic principles were the complete antithesis of moral principles.

And again, Lord Keneyes, who was perhaps the most influential modern economist, urged in 1930: *"For at least for another hundred years we must pretend to ourselves and to every one that fair is foul and foul is fair; for foul is useful and fair is not. Avarice and usury and precaution must be our gods for a little longer still. For only they can lead us out of the tunnel of economic necessity into daylight"*.<sup>51</sup>

Approaching to 2030, we easily see that there is no daylight but avarice and usury are the real motor of our mistaken life system. What Serge Latouche call "the invention of economics" and Helena Norberg Hodge "Globalization" is grounded on a false, erroneous account of what is man.

<sup>50</sup> Hobbes, *The Leviathan*.

<sup>51</sup> L.Keneyes, *Economics possibilities for our grandchildren*, reported in F.E.Schumacher, *Small is beautiful, Economics as people mattered*, New York, 1974, p. 24

## So many crises, one cause

This level of reading of our present multiform crisis, allows us many exciting discoveries! There is a very close link between scientific thought, conception of the Ego and ethics. The Cartesian-Newtonian scientific way of thinking - with his dualism between mind and matter, between I and world - is the first responsible for the disastrous environmental crisis we are experiencing (because Nature was conceived as external, something to be conquered) as well as of the economic-financial crisis (because quantity and money have become the only values). But this way of thinking is responsible also of the existential and human crisis; because it's based on forgetting about the Ego and the Ego could only supersize more and more.

As a matter of fact, we can get the right medicine to get out of our multiple crises only if we find out, without hesitation and subterfuge, the right root. This root is the most simple and basic: a way of knowing based on Ego, i.e. the dualistic way of thinking that underlies the Cartesian-Newtonian science.

**The First exciting discoveries** are the ones of quantum physics. As announced to the general public by F.Capra, the findings of Subatomic Physics make unsustainable most of the ideas on which classical physics of Newton and Descartes was formed.

The concepts of time and space, the concept of matter, the linear relationship of cause and effect, the objective description of nature, all this have been proved unsustainable.

They are ideas and concepts no more suited to describe the ultimate reality. Physical science, continuing its investigation of the small and the infinitely small, discovered that there are no ultimate bricks, no smallest elements independent and separates that the student can study in a neutral and objective way. The subatomic world is an infinite interconnection; indeed, "particles" react to the mere fact of being observed!

Scientists discovered something that is so unusual for the West but not for the Oriental world's view where it has been always realized that the ultimate reality transcends language. The study of the world of atoms forced physicists to realize that ordinary language is not only inaccurate but totally inadequate to describe the subatomic reality. This caused many difficulties so that the same Einstein wrote in his autobiography: "It was as if there was not the ground beneath your feet and we didn't see just a fixed point on which to build".<sup>52</sup>

From the discoveries of subatomic physics on, the sharp division between mind and body, between matter and mind is increasingly entering into crisis. Today, every research in the microcosm and in the macrocosm - i.e., both in the field of subatomic reality of objects of our daily experience, both in the field of enormous galaxies which are studied in astrophysics and cosmology - converge in revealing the immaterial nature of reality. In its place, they discover two constants that pervade the entire universe: 1. the intrinsically dynamic nature of reality and 2. the interconnection of all things.

"These results - Capra concluded in his famous *The Tao of Physics* - force us to consider the world in a way very similar to that of the Hindus, Buddhists, and Taoists, very similar to that of the mystics of all times and all the traditions".<sup>53</sup>

The idea that classical physics functions only for ordinary world, but not for the world of the infinitely small and infinitely large it was very familiar to the Oriental people, Hindu or Buddhist, alike. They knew about a "gross level" - that we experience every day - and "subtle levels". Similarly, they thought it was a great mistake to consider the waking state

<sup>52</sup> P.A.Schilpp, *Albert Einstein scientist and philosopher*, p.25.

<sup>53</sup> F:Capra, *The Tao of the Physics*, p. 19.

(our ordinary consciousness, at the "gross level ") the only state of consciousness. For them there exist others different and far more advanced states of consciousness.<sup>54</sup>

**The second great discovery**, as it may seem puzzling at first, is that all the various sciences with which we interpret our modern life - from biology, to chemistry, medicine and agriculture, but also psychology, psychotherapy to the famous economics - are built on the model of classical physics of Galileo and Newton. They share the same frame and the same limits of Newtonian physics: and above all the same reductionist and mechanistic paradigm. In other words, as shown by F. Capra and S. Latouche in their major works *The Turning Point* and *The Invention of the economy*, these sciences belong to "a world's view which is over".<sup>55</sup>

Our current problems and our multiple crises are due to the fact that still too many scientists and the mainstream media adhere to the classic scientific paradigm and continue to maintain that anthropocentric attitude typical of the thinkers of the eighteenth century.

It should be remembered that Francis Bacon – the father of the famous empirical method and of the inductive process - claimed with certainty that nature had to be "chased after on his travels", "forced to serve" and "enslaved". It should "be put in the stocks" and the purpose of the true scientist should be to "tear up its secrets under torture".<sup>56</sup>

Today, fortunately, there are many different scientific approaches that recognize the interconnection of nature and the interconnection of life in all its facets. These are no longer anthropocentric approaches, but ecological and systemic. Starting from the discoveries of subatomic and quantum physics, these approaches are invading all areas of science, from biology to neuroscience, from cybernetics to psychology.

Scholars all over the world are now publishing Posters that identify the Cartesian-Newtonian's way of thinking and the resulting mechanistic and reductionist method- as the head responsible of the environmental crisis and the current food crisis. This is exactly the important result achieved by *The Manifesto on the future of knowledge's systems* (2010) signed by physicist Vandana Shiva and Fritjof Capra, by the founder of Slow Food Movement Sandro Pertini and historian Peter Bevilacqua together with other distinguished scientists and scholars.

The Federation of German Scientists guided by Nobel Prize winner H.P. Durr produced in 2005 *The Potsdam's Manifesto* that focuses on the structural violence of the Newtonian-Cartesian thinking. What is commonly seen as a process of "civilization", in reality is expanding without limits through globalisation, through plunder of nature and through exploitation of entire populations. Postdam'scientists point out - in full consonance with Terzani and Panikkar - that "*the worldview of deterministic materialism which is typical of traditional physics has become an ideology. By its claim of scientific legitimacy, it has imposed itself in wide areas of scientific thought and political strategy. If now we all think the same things, if we believe that welfare is only that of consumerism, it is because we feel legitimated by a thought that believe to objectify all reality on the ground of scientific principles*".<sup>57</sup>

The *Postdam Manifesto* calls for a cultural revolution. This revolution has "*to question the usual meaning of science. The necessary transformation of sciences and their knowledge paradigms is overdue essentially to the dialogue between all cultures and all religions*".<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Cfr. G.Germani in Caterina Conio, *Mistica comparata e dialogo interreligioso*, Milano 2011, p.199 sgg.

<sup>55</sup> F.Capra, *The Tao of Physics*, p. 15 and S.Latouche, *The invention of Economics*, pp.74 sgg.

<sup>56</sup> C.Merchant, *The Death of Nature*, New York, 1980, p.169.

<sup>57</sup> *Postdam Manifesto*, p.3

<sup>58</sup> *Manifesto – Denkschrift of Postdam*, 2005, p. 7.

**The third good news** regards the phenomenon of globalization that mankind, in its so ancient history, knows for the first time today and that brings disastrous consequences on the environment, and on economic level. The Phenomenon of Globalization is based on a false accounting and therefore it can be fought and stopped in non-violent way. .

As rightly stressed by Helena Norberg Hodge- in his valuable documentary *The Economics of Happiness* - Globalization is based on a false explanation: that of Growth and Progress.<sup>59</sup>

But these ideas, as I tried to show, are not universal and they are inseparable from the myth of Western Science. Ultimately, therefore, Globalization and its dramatic consequences are closely connected to the old concepts of Cartesian Science and Materialism which are surpassed.

The main weapon in our possession is thus unveiling the philosophical basis of the 'idea of materialism. This is a very powerful weapon because it is based on simple awareness and thereby it's inherently overwhelming.

Let us listen to the non-dualist philosophy of Oriental origin! It will help us to understand that subatomic physics force us to abandon not only the idea of matter, but also, immediately, its counterpart: the idea of the ego, the outsider self who was supposed to study objective matter.

The dualism between self and world, between mind and matter - inaugurated by Descartes - is surely indefensible today and scholars refer clearly to *Descartes's Error*.<sup>60</sup> The fact that there is an isolated Ego, independent and neutral - i.e. a subject separated from the outside, objective world - is actually a mere belief that is coming increasingly in crisis. Thomas Metzinger, sintering the long search for neuroscientists and cognitive scientists, sums up: "At the opposite of what most people believe, no one has ever been or ever had an Ego ... Today's philosophy of mind and cognitive neurosciences are destroying the myth of the subject"<sup>61</sup>

Although these are the results of decades of scientific contemporary research, they again agree remarkably with the spiritual traditions of most of humanity. Particularly with Buddhism which focus on the central notion of non-self (*anatta*) but also with Hinduism, Taoism, or Christianity, above all in the words of Meister Eckhart. His thesis, however, were condemned as heretical by the Church and in 1600 the mystical Christian thought was expelled from the West.

The question of Ego and matter is nothing less than the philosophical question par excellence. In other words, it's the question of identity and difference, i.e. how is it possible that in the continuous becoming of things there is something that stays the same? That there is a substance that remains? And how is possible that in the continuous becoming of life there is a person-i.e. my self -, that remains?

Buddhists, Hindus, Taoists have always thought that there is nothing that remains. Even in the Western tradition, Heraclitus said, "Everything flows", "You will not wet in the same river twice." Plato and the powerful tradition that refers to him, believed that what changes is not important. What is essential is what is eternal.

If today we believe in the Ego, in the Subject, in a Personality, this means that we take for granted a positive answer to the first of philosophical questions. We implicitly think that

<sup>59</sup> H.Norberg Hodge, *The Economics of Happiness*, DVD, 2011. By the same author, See also *Ancient Future. Learning from Ladak*.

<sup>60</sup> See Antonio Damasio, *Descartes's Error*.

<sup>61</sup> T.Metzinger, *The tunnel of Ego. Mind's sciences and the myth of subject*, 2009.

there is something that persists through change. Furthermore, change itself is simply the development of the same substance.

As a matter of fact, this is nothing but the answer given by Aristotle. A response that has become the cornerstone of Western thought. Aristotle stated that it is impossible that a thing is and is not at the same time, just to disprove that everything is impermanent, as claimed by Heraclitus and the naturalists of the time.

"Those who reason thus, suppress the substance," decreed the philosopher in his book *Metaphysics*.<sup>62</sup> "To refute all of them, we must take as starting point the definition. The definition comes from the very need to give meaning to the words".<sup>63</sup> In this way, Aristotle imposed the principle of non-contradiction that became the pivot of Western thought. We understand therefore that behind the belief in permanence, in a substance that remains, in a matter or in a Self that remains - - there is the need to give meaning to the words, the need to believe in the capacity of the Reason, of the Language of grasping the reality.

Instead of the result of a demonstration, that belief which has become dominant in the West since Aristotle, is based on a simple need. The medievals would have called it a *petitio principii*, i.e. a logical error which consists in taking for granted what instead should be demonstrated.

As it's even remembered by textbooks for middle and elementary schools, the Aristotle's attitude formed the heart of modern scientific thought. But the same attitude formed also the basis of many Christian conceptions, which were shaped on the Aristotelian frame during medieval scholastics. Faith on language and reason is also the backbone of the Christian religion, with all its theo-logies often fought bitterly.<sup>64</sup>

All this is very far from the humble and females acceptance of change and impermanence that is typical of the East. This feature goes hand in hand to the other one: to the oriental belief that language is not able to grasp the ultimate reality of things, that ultimate truth far transcends language and rational mind.

This is the reason why eastern civilizations over millennium have developed techniques, practices, arts, just to go beyond logic and the common concepts. They were used to achieve levels of consciousness that are not normally accessible or to prepare the disciples to a nonverbal experience of reality.

If we look at the statues of the Buddha with their ineffable smile, or an image of Lord Shiva's cosmic dance, or if we follow a yoga class, we're not too far from what subatomic researches discovered or from what W. Heisenberg said: "We can not speak of atoms using ordinary language."

Once we understand this basic difference between East and West regarding language, then it is easier to grasp that the alternative between material and spiritual (between the scientific view of nature and Christian view where God creates the world) is misleading. The contrast between the religious view and the scientific one has plagued the West at least since the days of Galileo in early 1600. It gave rise to bloody battles that lacerated Christian Europe for several centuries. Despite their opposition, and all their struggles, they both move from the same and unquestioned faith in language. And if the language is not able to tell us the ultimate reality?

There is a further double check on what we are proposing. Believing in evolution, in development and growth, as we modern normally do, means taking for granted that there is something that remains within the linear flow of time and history. It means that we believe in an Ego that remains, a subject that - neutral - notes, studies, dominates.

<sup>62</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV,3, 1005 b 20-24; 1006 a 1-8 e 1007 a 20 -22.

<sup>63</sup> Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IV,3, 1011 b 25 -1012 a25; .

<sup>64</sup> On this interesting subject, see Marco Vannini, *Prego Dio che mi liberi di Di, La teologia come verità e come menzogna*, Milano, 2010

Panikkar noted that the enormous development of evolutionary studies now in vogue, "presupposes a dynamic within a linear view of time", that takes for granted the usual position of Aristotle.

But the idea of linear time that develops towards a gradual improvement, i.e. the importance given to history, isn't found in other civilizations, not in oriental civilisations but even in Europe before 1500.

"The question of the origin presupposes the faith in evolution - Panikkar stress-and this faith leads us to classify people in developed and undeveloped, or "developing" as we say euphemistically".<sup>65</sup>

In other words, it means that we believe in a "substance – man", always identical to itself that evolves in history. Furthermore, we believe there is only one type of man and that its evolution coincides with the modern Western man, individualistic and scientific. Hence, we believe the right to export this man "evolved" through globalization, and even through all the wars we are exporting with imperialist style around the world.

Isn't it a very serious symptom of colonization of the imagination? It's really important to make explicit what usually remains implicit. We have to ask, as Panikkar does: "Do we really believe that all human history has a single line of development, i.e. that the scientific knowledges of today sum up and summarize the wisdom of all civilizations that have preceded us?".<sup>66</sup>

There's nothing that actually proves that there is a single path of development ..

Nevertheless, both Science and Christianity, believe in the evolutionary line of time and history. Despite the fierce battle in which they were engaged in the past, they go hand in hand in considering modern white western man as the most advanced manifestations of humanity. Both believe in the ability of reason and language to grasp reality and they consider themselves as the bearers of ultimate truths. What presumption!

Meanwhile, the environmental crisis and global warming are here every day to debunk our presumption to be the most advanced civilization of the world.

If we think at our present time according to non-dualism – i.e. according to the ego's prospective, we will discover that Mahatma Gandhi made some unsurpassed remarks. He wrote in the 1920s: "*Modern materialistic civilization was born, at root, from an attitude of maximum self-indulgence. Its foolish worship of matter gave rise to a mentality that looks to the material progress as the ultimate goal and that has lost track of any true purpose of life.*" "*The selfishness and recklessness which have been so far sanctioned, spread without limits in a world dominated by systematic violence and war*".<sup>67</sup>

The same feature was noted in 1970 by F. E. Schumacher, the brilliant author of *Small is Beautiful*: "*Modern economics is driven by the frenzy of greed and satisfies an orgy of envy. These characteristics are not accidental, but the real causes of its expansionist success*".<sup>68</sup>

If we succeed in dismantling the imagery of growth, in dismantling the image that the essence of things is just material and numerical, we will be able to live a simpler and more natural life.

Degrowth is desirable not only from the ecological, economic and existential point of view, but also - as I hope to have shown - from the point of view of **knowledge**. This is in fact the real way to escape to the huge dazzle - mistake of the Myth of Cartesian Newtonian science.

<sup>65</sup> R. Panikkar, *La porta stretta della conoscenza*, p. 30.

<sup>66</sup> R. Panikkar, *La porta stretta della conoscenza*, p. 199.

<sup>67</sup> M. Gandhi, *Satyagraha days in Madras*, 30 march 1919 and *Appeal to Lord Chelmsford*, 20 march 1919.

<sup>68</sup> F.E. Schumacher, *Small is beautiful*, p. 31.