

Politics at a Crossroads

The current era of economic and commercial globalisation presents three important new features that set it apart from the past.

The first is the sheer scale and pace of the phenomenon. Never before has a process of integration of trade and of the global economy occurred on such a vast scale, in terms of the number of individuals involved, or so rapidly (within the space of just a few decades) that it has left the institutions unable, by adapting the traditional instruments of government, to equip themselves to respond efficiently to the changes taking place.

The second unprecedented feature is the degree of disintegration both of production processes and of services. Thanks to the new technologies, these can now be broken down into innumerable subprocesses which, distributed all over the world, keep production costs to a minimum. This situation, together with the liberalisation of trade and of the movement of capital, is undermining the states' power to manage their own economic and fiscal policies. All this is producing a worrying weakening of the legitimacy of the states in the eyes of their citizens and an increase in the political influence, within them, of oligarchies and particular interest groups.

The third new feature concerns the environment. It is a fact that the growth of the world economy threatens, within a few decades, to ruin the climatic equilibria and the natural balances that, for centuries, have guaranteed regular cycles of life and allowed mankind to inhabit this planet. Mankind, for the first time, is having to confront the problem of what limits must be placed on growth, and of how to apply and enforce these limits globally.

The scale of these problems is so great, and the institutions and politicians so clearly inadequate, that many people now doubt that there is scope for further economic integration, and find it difficult to envisage a progressive and peaceful future for mankind. All this is a far cry from the benefits that civilisation was expected to reap when, in the second half of

the last century, the new mode of production generated by the scientific and technological revolution began to bear its first fruits. In the attempt to respond to these concerns and give politics a role once again, the first question we should be asking ourselves is *why* globalisation is looking more and more like a failure than a success, and *how* exactly we got to this point.

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In the 1950s, the founder of this journal, Mario Albertini, realised that the European nation-states no longer represented the framework of reference and the driving force of the course of history in Europe and in the world. This realisation allowed him to appreciate better than others the scope of the revolution that was taking place in one of the fundamental sectors of the new mode of production, that of automation. He predicted, first of all, that this new organisation of production could revolutionise the structure of society and its customs, and lead to a deep crisis of civilisation, unless politics developed theoretical and practical instruments to cope with the changes that were coming. He understood the structural reasons why both the European states and the Soviet Union were proving unable to adapt to the needs of the new mode of production (the former too small and impotent and the latter too centralised and autocratic), and could also see the huge advantage over the rest of the world that the USA was gaining in practically every field.

Today, with the benefit of hindsight and our knowledge of events that half a century ago were still only just beginning to take shape, it is easy to object that Albertini was only able to intuit and to predict what has since become fact. To appreciate the sheer scale of the developments that were gathering force in North America, and were subsequently to spread to the rest of the world, one need only consider the two innovations (then just beginning to evolve) that have come to epitomise the whole globalisation phenomenon: the Internet and container transportation. Both the manner and the ambit in which these innovations came into being are emblematic of the effects and transformations that the interaction between science, technology and *raison d'état*, in given situations, is capable of producing. For the forerunners of the Internet and of the containers, the United States of America, with its continental market and democracy (then still politically vital and a cultural driving force), together with the strategic needs created by the competition between the USA and the USSR, was the ideal environment for the development of the

remarkable technological applications made possible by the scientific discoveries of the twentieth century.

As regards the Internet, its original conception was nothing other than an attempt to realise the idea, which the Encyclopaedists of the Enlightenment period had merely outlined, that it should be possible for every individual to have access, at any time and in any place, to mankind's entire store of knowledge. Without this profound intellectual motivation, it is most unlikely that the group originally entrusted by the Pentagon with the task of laying the foundations of a reliable network for the exchanging of information — initially between research laboratories, and only later between points of military command — would have created the instrument whose enormous potential for development the world has since witnessed. The early evolution of the Internet was accompanied by a theoretical elaboration that was conducted with the aim of creating not a simple, closed, national network, but rather a galactic network that would allow real-time sharing of knowledge on a global scale.

The use of containers for commercial transportation, on the other hand, stemmed from the application, in the civil sector, of military logistics developed by the USA in the Atlantic and the Pacific. The period after the Second World War and the wars in Korea and Vietnam were the test bed for this method of transporting, over long distances, the huge quantities of material needed to supply US military bases and troops — a method that was later to become the backbone of global trade when, after centuries of decline, the great trade routes between West and East were rediscovered. These routes, in turn, could not have been guaranteed and sustained had they not been governed by a federal agency directed by Washington: the Defense Logistic Agency. This agency can, to all intents and purposes, be regarded as the prototype of today's large consumer goods sales and distribution chains.

The high expectations and the ferment of ideas produced by the first, still limited, applications of the innovations produced by the growing interaction between science and technology were thus a far cry from the diffidence that such applications generate today.

By the end of the 1960s, it seemed that everyone could have access to more: more goods and more free time. In short, the era, described in Aristotle's *Politics*, in which "the shuttle would weave and the plectrum touch the lyre without a hand to guide them," and in which there could be an end to man's enslavement to man and to machine, seemed to be on the point of abandoning the realm of myth to become reality, or at least, that is what many scholars in the industrialised world hoped.

This prospect generated expectations, both in democratic countries and in those with socialist regimes, that extended far beyond the possible advantages in the commercial and production sectors. What it seemed possible to envisage, first of all, was an unlimited increase in the material wellbeing of single individuals, but above all, greater democratisation of the institutions at all levels and an urban revolution that, by organising cities around educational and self-governing institutions, would make them better places to live in. The West and East were not — as they are today — talking of increasing the working week, but rather of cutting it drastically — to well below thirty hours —, and even of abolishing, in the scientific-technological production system, the relationship between the manager and the managed. Today, all these ideas sound like the products of abstract theories and naivety, but one need only take a look at the 1968 writings of philosopher *Radovan Richta* on the scientific and technological revolution to see that many of these expectations had already assumed the character and substance of out-and-out designs and proposals, which were being brought to the attention of political class of the time.

But in the 1960s and '70s, neither the democratic West nor the socialist East was able to see that the bipolar world order, which the world credited with the great historical and political achievement of having defeated Nazi fascism and favoured the birth of countless innovations, was starting to show that it was incapable of guiding development in a rational way. There were signs — in the deepening imbalances present in the economic and environmental field and in the arms race — that the existing institutions and the dimensions of the states were not adequate for governing progress, but these signs were not picked up. Politics, both in the West and in the East, failed to find the instruments that would have made it possible to rise to these challenges. What was called for was the laying of the foundations of a new system of world government and of a new model of state, an initiative that it was up to the Europeans to take, since they, by completing on a political level the process of unification begun in 1950, were the ones who could have broken the rigid bipolar system — thereby restoring fluidity to international relations — and, above all, who could have provided the world with a template for the building of supranational state institutions. However, the Europeans, instead of overcoming the intergovernmental model on which the working of the European Community was based, chose to advance gradually along the road of economic and monetary integration, preferring to hold onto their respective sovereignties for as long as possible and to remain tied to the US-guaranteed framework of production, growth and security. In other

words, they chose to remain divided and impotent in the face of the new and rapid evolutions, while the USA and USSR, forced by the logic of their head-to-head confrontation, continued to pour vast material and financial resources into a geopolitical contest that would ultimately see the former winning the Cold War, but also losing much of its federal identity and many of the attributes of a democracy, and the latter caving in entirely, both as a state and as a leader of the process of the political and social emancipation of the working class.

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Much euphoria greeted the end of the Cold War and the advent, ushered in by globalisation, of a sort of universal commercial society with few rules and no binding legal authority. But now that this euphoria has died down, what is the position as regards the process of freeing individuals from their dependence on repetitive manual labour? What are the prospects for economic growth, and for improving democracy?

Paradoxically, from the point of view of the automation of industry, the thing that has perhaps contributed most to slowing down development has been the progressive integration into the global economy of the huge resource of low-cost labour available in developing countries like China and India, and in industrially backward countries like those of central and eastern Europe. Indeed, according to estimates by the *International Federation of Robotics*, although the cost of industrial robots has fallen by half in the past twenty years, the expansion of the automation phenomenon that was hoped for in the '70s and '80s has failed to materialise. Japan is the only exception to this. Even in Germany, which in the 1980s, through companies like Volkswagen, led the bid to reduce working hours in Europe, the density of industrial robots is still only around half the level recorded in Japan. In the USA, the country that has led the way in technological innovation in the past half century, the density of industrial robots (ratio of robots to people employed: ninety robots for every ten thousand workers) is currently 90 per cent lower than that recorded in Germany. Meanwhile, in the main Asian countries (China included), in Latin America, and in Africa, the density of robots is very low, a situation that does not look likely to change significantly in the coming years.

As regards the continuation of global economic growth, which is the other crucial aspect of development, we find ourselves faced with two possible scenarios, and both are alarming. Should economic growth

continue for several more decades at its present level, and resources continue to be consumed at the current rate, the world's environmental balance runs the risk of being irretrievably upset. Should growth come to a halt, on the other hand, the world would likely feel the effects of a fierce contest between states all pursuing a condition of wellbeing and security increasingly fragile and difficult to achieve.

As regards the first scenario, it must be borne in mind that the economic development of around two-thirds of mankind will inevitably unleash an unstoppable consumer revolution characterised by levels of consumption far greater than anything already seen in the western world. There are already clear signs that this is true: it took nearly a century for the number of cars in the world to increase from the few hundreds of thousands present at the start of the twentieth century to the half billion registered by its end, and, in the field of air travel, less than half a century to go from tens of billions to thousands of billions of miles travelled per year by the world's air passengers. If the growth of consumption in China and India continues at its present rate, it will only be a few years before even these figures to pale into insignificance.

It is, after all, inconceivable that the citizens of countries that have only just reached the brink of the consumer revolution should be willing, in an international framework characterised by strong competition and conflicts between the old and the new major powers, to limit their participation in the race for the wellbeing that the opulent West, which accounts for less than 15 per cent of the world's population but owns two-thirds of the world's cars, proved unable (or unwilling) to restrict in conditions that, in terms of international cooperation and peaceful coexistence, were far more favourable.

With regard to an arrest of growth, it is precisely the likelihood of a severe global environmental crisis that is making this a possibility. The scientific community now widely accepts that should mankind as a whole record the same per-capita carbon dioxide emissions as the United States, emissions of greenhouse gases would be fivefold the level they are today, an increase that would have inevitable repercussions on the climate and thus on the world's economies; and the same applies to energy consumption. As we have already indicated, the development of China and India alone is such that this scenario is both plausible and imminent (within the natural lifespan of the generations already born). And since, at the present time, policies for reducing greenhouse gas emissions cannot simply be divorced, at a single stroke, from policies for economic growth, it follows that only by stopping global growth, and keeping it at a standstill until

such time as it is possible, on a large scale, to abandon the use of fossil fuels, can we really hope to interrupt the process of global warming. Obviously this cannot and will not happen, because no government of any state, nor any international organisation, in spite of the “green” rhetoric that permeates all the political alliances, can or is willing to decree such a freeze. Having said that, economic growth could be brought to a prolonged standstill anyway, precisely because of the web of global emergencies that mankind is becoming entangled in, and which need to be contained.

From an environmental point of view, then, it has to be realised that the problem today is not so much one of ignorance of planet Earth’s alarming conditions — indeed, these have now been extensively studied, well documented and even authoritatively divulged; the problem, rather, is the fact that mankind has already entered the phase in which he should be preparing to manage the consequences of climate change, having failed in his efforts to prevent it in the first place. The real challenge, then, is to create, right now, the form of global government best equipped to tackle the imminent crises, in the full awareness that any hesitation and delay will only increase the threat of disorder and anarchy among the states, exacerbate the environmental emergencies, and, at the same time, damage dramatically the prospects of economic growth.

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Problems of the magnitude of those briefly described here, in a situation, like today’s, characterised by the total interdependence of the whole of mankind, cannot be tackled effectively by single political leaders or governments, however enlightened they are. They can be dealt with only by a strong and well organised system of global government that is capable of developing long-term plans and implementing them on a vast scale — a government founded on the broadest possible consensus and on the fullest possible participation of all the citizens; in other words, on democracy.

Today, there is no prospect of a government of this kind, or even of the convergence of the respective *raisons d’état* that might favour a move in this direction, given that the imbalances in the world are still so great and the new powers are still in the process of establishing their positions. Neither can the international organisations be expected to move in this direction: in the current phase, they are the mirror reflecting the evils and divisions in the world, certainly not the expression of a still embryonic,

developing international democracy. But this certainly does not excuse us — if our intention really is to guarantee mankind a civilised future — from making absolutely every effort to guide politics in this direction, not least because it is already clearly apparent just how urgently such efforts are needed. The protracted and continued absence of an opening for the development of democracy at a truly supranational level is, in fact, already having negative effects on the working of democracy even in countries where the ideals of political equality and freedom originated and developed, and not just in those (such as Russia and China) where these ideals are not yet established. The situation in North America and in Europe illustrates this.

The degeneration of federalism and democracy in the USA has reached such a point that it has provoked a strong current of protest even in some sectors of American public opinion. The disproportionate weight of legislative and judicial power wielded by the central executive has dramatically undermined the functioning of the US system based on federal and democratic principles, and there is no real prospect, in the immediate future, of a reversal of this trend, even under a new administration in Washington. It is only by reducing the huge pressure generated by the USA's foreign policy, and by its domestic corollary (the subjugation of the whole system of government to military security needs), that American society can hope to muster, internally, the energies needed to restore strength to the federal democratic institutions and return to the front line of the battle to affirm a system of global democratic government.

In Europe, the European nation-states' prolonged dependence on the American superpower has severely weakened the legitimacy of their democratic institutions and governments, as their security and wellbeing have depended for too long on a foreign power over which the Europeans have no control. European integration served to temper this phenomenon up to a point, that is, while it still represented a credible channel for the realisation of the world's first supranational democracy. But today this possibility is clearly excluded, first, by the fact that European institutions were created but were not attributed the powers, or the executive, legislative and judicial competences typical of a government, a parliament and a court, and, second, by the fact that the design for a political Europe has been gradually emptied of all its significance by the EU's progressive enlargement and watering down into a free-trade area.

In this scenario, hopes must lie in the fact that there is still scope for proposing a political alternative that might steer, in a positive direction,

the expectations and attitudes of public opinion, of the governments, and of the states. For the Europeans, like the Americans, a return to democracy and to a role in efforts to promote a responsible and just system of global government demands a radical change in the framework of international power. But, unlike the Americans — and, in truth, unlike the citizens of all the other continents right now — the Europeans could, if they so wished, take the initiative in changing the very way in which men think and act in the world, creating a new power capable of radically altering the existing framework. It is up to the Europeans alone, but primarily up to those Europeans who, with the declared intention of building a European federation, created the first Communities, to take the decision to overcome the national sovereignties in favour of the building of the core of a European federal state, this is to say, of that crucial element without which the transition to a more balanced multipolar order, more likely to favour the creation of a democratic world government, remains inconceivable.

If the state lacks the dimensions and the instruments needed to tackle the problems that the course of history and the transformation of society present it with, and if, therefore, it is increasingly perceived by the citizens as inadequate, and less and less able to be a mechanism for their participation in the democratic process, then this is because in Europe, the continent in which the state in its modern and conscious form came into being, the process of democratic evolution and of the states' expansion has ground to a halt.

The world is in its current, perilous position largely because the Europeans have not yet made any real contribution to promoting the creation of a more governable world order.

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In conclusion, politics has reached a crossroads. Either it sets out towards the construction of responsible system of government on a global scale, or it will be forced to succumb to the destruction that will derive from man's uncontrolled use of the enormous power that he has now gained over nature and over the evolution of our planet's natural balances. On the level of individual responsibilities, this means that whoever decides to engage in politics, and is thus committed to making some contribution to improving the world in which he or she lives, must be aware that the priorities to be tackled today are linked, primarily, to the backwardness of the system of global government, to the inadequacy of

the nation-state in most of the continents (Europe primarily), and to the need to create, in Europe, a lever that will make it possible to shift the burden of the world's pressing problems from their present, ungovernable position into a potentially governable one.

The first task facing politics, in Europe, is to found the core of a European federal state and, outside Europe, to favour its development.

The Federalist

Mario Albertini's Reflections on a Critical Reworking of Historical Materialism

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Introduction.

The most dramatic contradiction facing the world today concerns the gap between scientific-technological progress, which is rapidly and relentlessly advancing, and the instruments of political, institutional, and also cultural control that mankind has, to date, managed to develop in order to govern the effects of this evolution and the new processes it is generating. The inadequacy of these instruments can be attributed to the fact that, in spite of the global dimensions of the new processes that are under way, politics continues to be organised, and to act, at the level of the single states. As a result, it is totally incapable of rising to either the global or the domestic social challenges that this situation presents. In short, the vast store of knowledge that man has accumulated, together with the intellectual tools he has at his disposal, opens up virtually boundless horizons before him, but this is not reflected in any real capacity to resolve the contradictions that continue to threaten mankind and are even endangering his very survival.

Faced with this impasse, modern culture tends to adopt an attitude of surrender; refuge is sought in easy answers that negate the possibility of progress for mankind and only highlight the irrationality of the historical processes. It is no coincidence that this tendency, which is without doubt strongly rooted in twentieth-century culture, being an effect of the scientific discoveries that began at the start of the last century — it is, however, a tendency that in many spheres corresponded to clear-sighted and penetrating criticism of the rationalistic optimism of the second half of the eighteenth century and highlighted the limitations of human nature —, has, with the deepening crisis of the great political ideologies, come to dominate entirely both history and politics. As long as these ideologies

were still able to provide a key for understanding the processes that were taking place in the world, and to point out ways in which politics might intervene, the possibility of exercising rational control over the historical-political processes was, at least, a widely debated and widespread question that stimulated and oriented much intellectual activity and research in the sphere of the social sciences. But then it started to become apparent that these ideologies were increasingly incapable of grasping and interpreting the new phenomena that were emerging, given that, on the one hand, the struggles for the political and social emancipation of the citizens of the Western world were perceived as basically won, and, on the other, new problems and challenges were coming to light that exceeded the dimensions of the existing states and for which the latter had no answers. As this happened, and as there continued to emerge no new categories capable of overcoming the limitations of the previous ones, the idea that historical processes are casual, and thus indecipherable, took root and became the leitmotiv of Western culture.

This deepening crisis of culture, reflected in its inability, now, to see itself as the sphere in which the answers to mankind's problems should be sought, is thus linked to the current impasse of politics, and it is difficult to see how the two problems can be dealt with separately.

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In view of this situation, it is essential that we try, without delay, to understand, first, whether a process that might allow politics once more to be the ambit within which the present can be interpreted and the future planned for is even thinkable, and, second, whether such a scenario has any correspondence to the processes actually taking place, and thus whether it can supply the instruments of understanding that can make it possible to intervene in reality. It was precisely this concern that lay at the heart of the research of Mario Albertini, who saw this as the fundamental question that the philosophical-political culture of our times should be seeking to answer, and who saw it as crucial, from this perspective, to continue the endeavour, begun by Marx and by Max Weber in particular, to lay the foundations for the building of a solid political science. Albertini's reflections were, to a large extent, devoted to this purpose as he sought, above all, to understand and define politics as a specific sphere of human action, and to analyse the evolution of the historical process in order to try and identify its fundamental laws and thus to provide political science with an objective basis. His critical reworking of the historical

materialism of Marx, along the lines that will be illustrated in this article, was part of this endeavour.

Paradoxically, much of this analysis and reflection was never set out in writing, but instead continually revisited and developed during, mainly, the political philosophy lectures he gave at the University of Pavia during the 1970s and up to the mid-1980s. His failure to formulate his ideas in writing can be attributed both to the many political and organisational commitments and roles into which Albertini poured much of his energies, and also to the fact that he was not yet satisfied with his results. The transcript of a complete recording of a series of lectures given in the academic year 1979-80 is the reference source for this paper.¹

The “Crisis of Reason” and the Epistemological Statute of the Social Sciences.

Traces of Albertini’s reflections on the possibility of identifying a historical course, with reference in particular to the historical materialism of Marx, can be found in his lectures from as far back as the early 1960s, and they remain a feature of all his work right through to the mid-1990s.

Obviously, these were three decades that brought profound changes in the cultural setting in which Albertini worked: Marxism, having been a main theoretical point of reference for historical-social culture at the start of this period, began to enter a crisis in the mid-1970s, before finally being abandoned at the end of the ’80s, a period with major upheavals on the international political stage, in particular the collapse of the Soviet Union. At the same time, currents of thought were advancing that drew attention to the so-called crisis of reason, casting doubt on the idea that the search for truth were central to the growth of man’s knowledge.

Albertini, on the other hand, was deeply convinced of the value of scientific knowledge and rejected the claim that men are incapable of investigating reality. In fact, he felt that it should be possible in the political and social sphere, too, to arrive at a precise definition of the ambits within which a methodology, with features similar to those used in the physical and natural sciences, might be applied.

The whole idea that there is no such thing as “truth”, that there is no correspondence between knowledge and reality (making truth an empty concept), and that science itself is a process far less rational than it was once believed to be, derives, according to Albertini, from difficulties overcoming the effects that the new scientific discoveries and the consequent crisis of Newtonian physics — and, with it, of Kantian

philosophy — have had on Western culture. The attempt, undertaken, in particular, by the current of logical empiricism, to re-found philosophy on the basis of new knowledge and of the evolving methodology of the natural sciences, so as to give rise to an epistemology that might constitute a general criterion, valid in all fields of knowledge, failed completely. As basically shown by Quine,² who criticised the reductionism of logical empiricism, there exists no absolute criterion that makes it possible to distinguish a scientific theory from a metaphysical one. Not because there is no difference between the two, but because we are incapable of establishing what this difference is based on. Albertini, in his teaching, explained that any entirely coherent proposition, devoid of ambiguity, is such inasmuch as it refers to a precise and abstract idea, and as long as it remains, effectively, devoid of content. Indeed, this is the characteristic of the language of logic and of mathematics, which are true as long as they remain on the level of formal verbal control and do not have any definite content. Once a proposition of this type is inserted into reality, and required to confront the facts of reality, it loses its absolute character and has to reckon with the impossibility of establishing perfect correspondence between formal logic and factual verification. There are two reasons for this. First, in the sphere of reality, individuality is the point of reference, which implies practically infinite variety; for this reason, a verification would demand investigation of *all* the cases — past, present, future — that enter into the formal formulation; second, there is a need for instruments of control — verbal, physical, technical — for which no provision is made, and no description given, in the theory being verified.

The unavoidable existence, in our capacity for knowledge, of a certain margin of ambiguity and the disappearance of the concept of absolute certainty have inevitably generated a profound sense of bewilderment in our culture. But according to Albertini, it is a mistake to conclude, from this, that science has lost its validity. Science loses its absolute validity at the level of the single act, where verification is always ambiguous and provisional, but it retains the capacity, as a process, to recognise its internal error and to eliminate it. This is an attribute of science that no one has ever been able to deny. What we cannot do is ascribe all the processes that establish truth to act of the single scientist. This is quite normal: no single individual controls all knowledge; only the scientific community — and, more generally, the community of mankind — can assume responsibility for controlling knowledge. While science does not grant us access, at any single point in time, to the whole of reality, it does allow

us to piece knowledge together, and the “building” that is produced in this way is the construction of truth, precisely because it confronts reality and has the capacity to identify and overcome its own internal error. Truth and certainty disappear, then, if we consider them in relation to the single case, but they are recovered if we think in terms of a process involving the scientific community.

After all, the reality of human life provides us with crucial evidence of this, which we cannot ignore. While, in philosophy, we can certainly question the basis of reality and claim that reality does not coincide with the global representation that scientific knowledge gives us, and while we are aware of the complexity of the methods used to acquire scientific knowledge and of our poor understanding of them, this does not change the fact that science has shown that it can come up with concrete answers and formulate predictions that do find confirmation in reality. Scientific models allow expectations to be formulated and observations to be made that do correspond to what really happens: we cannot be absolutely certain of the existence of the atom, yet by taking the model of the atom as our starting point we can predict certain physical events in a given context, and observe their actual manifestation.

This correspondence between scientific representations and real occurrences is one of the two fundamental characteristics of science; the other is its character as a coherent body of criteria of knowledge relating to a single object or field of phenomena. It was by mastering, starting with Galileo, this approach to learning and knowledge, which demands not only rigour and coherence, but also the capacity for self-monitoring and verification, that mankind acquired the capacity for the universal sharing and accumulation of knowledge. Indeed, scientific knowledge is defined, among other things, by the fact that, over time, it affirms its universal validity and can thus be shared by all; it is this that allows its amassing.

To abandon this terrain is, in Albertini’s view, extremely hazardous, given that it constitutes, to date, mankind’s only possibility of governing knowledge. Of course, there was knowledge of reality even before the advent of the scientific method, and this kind of knowledge continues to be present in our daily lives. One need only consider how every individual bases his own everyday existence on the certainty of the relationship between cause and effect in the countless instances and situations that make up his practical life and that rest on the truth of common sense. It is this kind of truth that allows people, all the time, to make predictions that do not even require verification, given that they are basic truths or scientific truths that have become facts of life. Accordingly, if you want

more light in a room, you look for the light switch; if you want to speak to someone on the telephone, you dial their number, and so on. But the drawback of common sense knowledge, which is immediately confirmed in practice and is thus a first effective form of knowledge, is that it cannot be rigorously controlled, and therefore cannot be, basically, cumulative. Only science, which develops systems to eliminate all ambiguities and, through factual verifications, to ascertain rigorously the correspondence to what really happens, can be considered a verifiable, shared and cumulative process.³

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Whereas science in the ambit of natural phenomena (leaving aside the philosophical questions it raises) has now acquired extraordinary capacities, in the field of the social sciences, no method has been developed that is capable of producing results that might form the basis of a verified and shared body of knowledge. Albertini, convinced that this shortcoming is the cause of profound imbalances, deems it crucial to make advances in this field.

For some decades now, man's capacity to influence natural processes has been such that he is even capable of destroying life on earth. It is a fact that the immense power he has acquired, through science, is not counter-balanced by a similar capacity to control the effects of this power. In many ways, man is teetering on the edge of a precipice and the most alarming thing is that his technological progress is not reflected in progress in other areas: in morals, happiness or life itself. One need only think of the failure to control the growth of the cities, or of the failure to use the resources that are available in order to solve the problems of hunger and underdevelopment in the world, to say nothing of the environmental issues; we could go on citing examples endlessly. Mankind's enormous capacity "to achieve things" is translated, diabolically, into the capacity to destroy, a contradiction that is rooted in his failure to develop institutions capable of regulating human behaviours. Collective behaviours depend, ultimately, on the public powers that exist at different levels. And, today, the public powers are no longer able to represent, truly, the level mankind has reached. These powers are still based on the institutions of the nineteenth century, institutions that proved capable of producing creative solutions and of responding effectively to the problems thrown up by the society of their time. Indeed, the affirmation of individual freedoms, the creation of the democratic state and of the first forms of social security and

redistribution of income were all *political technologies*, to use Albertini's definition, which allowed mankind to progress. But today's problems are different from those of the past, and there is a need for adequate instruments to govern them.

What we are witnessing today, therefore, is the failure of the social sciences, primarily of that which calls itself political science. The continued failure to produce a political technology capable of intervening in the course of events and of producing the desired effects, that is, a technology that allows men to exercise political control over the immense store of knowledge acquired and to use it to advance the progress of everyone, means that political science *simply does not exist*. Today, on the one hand, we lack institutions capable of directing and controlling political behaviours and of curbing egotistical attitudes, in order to prevent the springs of altruism from drying up completely. On the other, we are witnessing the crisis of the great philosophical ideas (starting with idealism and Marxism — and something similar applies to the religious systems), a crisis that, according to Albertini, can be traced back to this incapacity of thought to relate to the present. And the more these great visions (once capable of giving meaning to the world and to life and of providing a moral foundation) are rejected as a possible compass for individual behaviours, the weaker the roots of ethical sentiment become, and the faster the descent, into crisis, of society and the state.

The persistence of these contradictions has plunged the great political ideologies into crisis, too, particularly those that, in the recent past, had indicated the path of progress for mankind (i.e. liberalism, democracy, socialism). As a result there no longer exists a system of thought capable of political and social planning for the future, and consequently the future, as a concept, is in crisis. Albertini, it is important to note, views the function of ideological thought in politics as irremovable (even though it needs to evolve and become more controlled and coherent). What he means by ideological thought is a system capable of identifying institutional objectives appropriate for the objective conditions created by the historical-social process, and of affirming historically the political value that emerges as a priority for remedying the contradictions that exist.⁴ A rigorous system, then, that must have a scientific basis, but that must also look beyond this basis, since it cannot limit itself to trying to interpret that which exists; a system that, instead, starting with an analysis of the processes that are under way, must set itself the objective of working out the future — that which *does not as yet exist*, except as a potential development. It is this system of thought, able to present a broad

view of the future, that provides the framework for orienting political action and identifying the spheres in which it is most urgent to intervene. Only in this way can politics fully assume the character of collective thought, which must ultimately be shared by all, and make it possible to achieve that control by all over all that is hypothesised by Rousseau in his concept of general will. If, instead, politics were purely a science, it would be the exclusive province of specialists, who, on the basis of their current knowledge, would reach decisions on behalf of everyone. Obviously, this observation does not detract from the need for a genuine political science, or from the value that this would have; on the contrary, it makes it possible to establish with rigour its ambit and competences.

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This divide between scientific and ideological (i.e. philosophical) thought in politics reflects the complexity of man's condition as a being equipped with reason and called upon to build his own world; it also reflects the consequent relationship that exists on a general level between science and philosophy, wherein the latter continues to be an irrepressible requirement of reason that scientific progress leaves intact, given the infinite questions of meaning that rational knowledge of reality (which is a long way from covering knowledge *tout court*) leaves open in the ontological, gnosiological, epistemological, and practical fields. This, then, is the delicate and complex divide that must be taken into account in relation to the problem of the epistemological statute of the social sciences.

Scientific thought, as we have already said, is the only category of thought that is self-verifying and capable of identifying and eliminating its own internal error. This is a property that philosophical thought, metaphysical thought and religious thought all lack. Obviously men, mainly in the wake of the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, pondered the question of how to apply to human events the capacity that they had developed in relation to their understanding of nature. Albertini cites Kant, Hegel and Marx as the main protagonists, albeit adopting different approaches, of this first attempt to take the social sciences out of the realm of utopia and into that of science proper, i.e., into the realm of verifiable thought. And even though today we find ourselves in an ambiguous situation in which we sometimes deem this objective to have been reached — in fact this is not true — but mainly abandon all efforts to pursue it on the grounds that it is impossible, Albertini feels that this is just a transitory phase and that the need for an objective understand-

ing of social events will once again be perceived as a priority, precisely because it corresponds to an irrepressible need on which, as we have said, mankind's destiny depends. In fact, progress, in the sphere of values, depends on the capacity of men to create the conditions for the realisation of those values, and therefore becomes a question of knowledge, primarily, and only subsequently one of action. In the absence of clear knowledge, based on scientific criteria and thus universally accepted, different interpretations, instead of giving rise to rational debate (to rid each of them of their arbitrary elements and keep only those that correspond to an effective interpretation of reality), generate only reciprocal rejection and lead to paralysis. In this way, they prevent action.

The scale of the epistemological problems raised by the social sciences is vast, however. In addition to the complex framework, shared with the physical and natural sciences, there are also other, specific difficulties. First of all, there is the difficulty of verification: in the social sciences even just limiting and defining the framework to be investigated can be a highly complex undertaking; basically, it is not feasible to reproduce the verification mechanisms applied in the field of the experimental sciences. After all, no human event can be isolated and reproduced in a laboratory, in specific conditions, in order to test whether the hypotheses formulated in relation to it will prove correct. Furthermore, even though, for the natural sciences, too, the problem of the multiplicity of individual reality is a limitation that creates a divergence between theory and experience, the fact remains that what is being investigated is a setting for which it is possible to hypothesise constant laws. In the field of the social sciences, on the other hand, one has to reckon with the human element, which is not only individual, but also — partially at least — free, and therefore unpredictable and unrepeatable; this excludes the working out, a priori, of a general theory, and it means that real knowledge can be pursued only in the study of individual, real cases. Furthermore, there opens up that ineluctable space for philosophical reflection and for ideological thought referred to earlier.

What all this means is that the historical-social sciences can never hope to arrive at a level of knowledge that would allow us to *predict* events; they can only *lead us towards an understanding* of the mechanisms underlying processes, thereby allowing us to intervene in them in a conscious and controlled manner. The resulting “political technology” — wherever there is science a technological element will also ensue, that is, a capacity for intervention in reality — would stop men, collectively, from having to submit passively to events and would open up the way for

their conscious and, by definition, free intervention.

What type of knowledge can these sciences really give us? In their ambit, all that can be worked out in a controlled and rigorous manner are the methodological criteria for analysing the facts of reality; in other words, they can specify and increase awareness of explanatory models that allow crucial facts and events to be circumscribed and then studied on the basis of cause and effect. Albertini refers to Weber's theory of the *Idealtypus*. Weber,⁵ in his view, supplied the first, crucial elements making it possible to distinguish between philosophical and scientific knowledge in the historical-social setting. And the fundamental point is the awareness — we have Weber to thank for this — that, in this field, the object being studied is different, in nature, from natural phenomena: rather than a purely observable fact, it is always an *instrument*, a means to an end. As such, we can come to know it only if we are able to *interpret* it correctly, in other words, if we are able to see its original significance. Historical-social knowledge is always related, fundamentally, to certain values and it is this relationship that allows us to grasp the significance of what is being studied.

Any historical-social analysis must therefore start from a value choice: in fact, the first task is to identify and isolate, in the infinite continuum of historical facts, those that seem to have some kind of relevance to the objectives of the proposed investigation. This first step is thus based on what is of particular interest to the scholar (that is, on the value he attributes to certain facts and events), and it is this that makes it possible to construct a meaningful whole — meaningful in relation to the investigation to be conducted.

This is how historians, sociologists, and so on always operate. But the point is that the more conscious this mode of operation is, the more scope there will be for controlling it. The choice that has been made (i.e. the value relationship) must, first of all, be made as clear as possible, after which the meaningful whole that has been constructed must be treated as a hypothesis to be verified on the basis of concrete facts. If this operation is carried out with clarity of vision and without self-mystifications, it becomes possible to establish a coherent ideal type (scheme) on the basis of which we can understand the cause-effect connections between events and acquire a verified knowledge of a given process. In fact, when this stage is reached, it is possible to apply the "if" technique and to identify the facts that, if removed (together with other facts connected to them), would break the chain that leads to the point of arrival, and that therefore constitute an indispensable link. Put another way, it becomes possible to

identify what Weber terms the “adequate causation” of the historical event.

This methodology, which proceeds by causes, makes it possible to overcome the purely ideological stage in the study of history and to arrive at a conclusion that can be shared; this is true even starting from different hypotheses, given that, by following these steps, these can be evaluated objectively and discarded if found to be inadequate.

Albertini is perfectly aware that Weber’s theory attracts criticisms and gives rise to doubts. But he is convinced that Weber correctly identified the problem, i.e. that in the historical-social field the only possible form of controlled knowledge is that based on the study of causes; he also sees this approach as central to a correct framing of Marx’s historical materialism, which acquires real value only if it is conceived of as a very broad model for interpreting history. However, according to Albertini, the doubts and criticisms provoked by Weber’s theories failed to prompt an in-depth debate on the questions he raised; even though he is recognised as a great sociologist and as a key figure in the history of this discipline, no serious consideration is given to the issue he raised. Instead, progression of the social sciences depends absolutely on genuine consideration of his theory.

The Question of the Course of History and the Intuition of Marx in his Historical Materialism.

Albertini was convinced that in order to tackle the problem of the current crisis, a crisis that ultimately strikes the very foundations of the human condition, it was necessary to start from the question of the meaning of history. History is the basic mechanism of human action. All great events, political, moral, scientific, and so on, take place within this collective process, which somehow dominates the lives of all men and escapes their control, despite being a product of human activity. According to Albertini, this “obscurity” of history is a source of irrationalism that takes away, often totally, any possibility of planning the future.

Croce, highlighting the difference between *volition* and *occurrence*, explained this mechanism well. Man is characterised by the fact that he makes plans and has clear aims, and pursues these in a rational way. At the level of the individual, where action depends substantially on the individual’s will and capacities, we can observe a behavioural situation in which an aim arises from a desire or from a need and adequate means are employed, as far as possible, in order to achieve it. But at the level of

social phenomena, particularly more marked ones, any result will clearly be the fruit of the action of many individuals, that is, of the sum of many wills. As a result, in these cases, nobody can plan what happens and what in fact occurs, despite being produced by the action of men, is controlled by no one.

History's great events thus manifest themselves with apparently irresistible force and can never be attributed to particular people. They always arise from a spontaneous ferment generated by society, which only subsequently man can attempt to direct (as the history of the modern revolutions shows), and even then, only providing its profound nature is respected; anyone who tries to oppose it is in fact swept away, because there is no stopping the march of history, or any chance of channelling it in other directions. This applies not only to society as an organised and institutionalised reality (and thus as regards its political, legal institutions, etc.), but also to customs and ideas.

History can best be likened to the flow of a river, which cannot be opposed, but must, rather, be adapted to, always being careful not to swim "against the current."

The first risk to be avoided, in the face of this observation, is that of falling into the trap of irrationalism, and thus of allowing oneself to be crushed by the apparently irreconcilable conflict between individual freedom and the determinism of historical processes, which can seem casual at first. To regard historical processes as casually determined would empty any hypothesised political action of all meaning: indeed, if conceived of and pursued in a setting in which chance is the only evolutionary mechanism, such action could not imply any goal, or make provision for any means. Ultimately, such a perspective would condemn men to impotence, with all the moral implications of this.

The only way to avoid this risk is to attempt to develop theories on the nature of this unstoppable force, and thus to try and understand the "logic of the occurrence." For mankind, becoming committed to understanding the mechanisms underlying the historical process is an essential step towards being able to exert a controlled political action, capable of identifying the scope for intervening on these mechanisms in order to govern their effects, develop a political technology, and ultimately affirm freedom in history and to take control of his own destiny.

* * *

The thought of Marx contains an intuition that seems to make it

possible to move in this direction. This intuition is found in his theory of historical materialism, and it concerns the evolution of the mode of production. According to Albertini, this is the starting point from which to trace an initial outline of the course of history theory and to take the first steps towards a scientific approach to the study of social reality.

The difficulty pinpointing, in historical materialism, the beginnings of a scientific approach can be attributed, mainly, to two factors: the first is that Marx's formulation — this is often true at the start of great discoveries — is not sufficiently unambiguous; the second is that it is usually regarded as an element set within the general theory of Marxism (and this, not a coherent theory, actually conceals some of Marx's theoretical discoveries and prevents them from being properly evaluated). That which Marx elaborated should be studied in the same way in which we study theories in the scientific field: analysing them and verifying them objectively, trying to develop them when they seem fruitful, and using them as the basis from which to move on to further discoveries. No one would ever dream of talking of "Einsteinism," claiming that an evaluation of Einstein's discoveries can take, as its starting point, a general system derived from the entire body of his thought and of that of his "followers" (the latter, itself, is a term that would be out of place in a scientific context). This approach is just as ridiculous when it is applied to Marx, and especially to his theoretical contributions in the historical-sociological field.

It is thus necessary to specify, first of all, what Marxism is: either it is the thought and the life of Marx, and thus a historical-biographical topic, which should be studied as such; or it is the thought that has grown from subsequent contributions and from the different interpretations of Marx's works ("the Marxism of all," as Albertini puts it⁶), in which case it should be approached as a historical, political or social problem.

When wanting to analyse historical materialism, one should therefore focus exclusively on Marx's thought, identify when, how and why he was interested in the question, and, from there, go on to examine the texts in which he dealt with it.

Marx's active life as a scholar and thinker can be divided into three stages: the first, very short, ending in the latter part of 1844, is the philosophical period, to which his critical essays on the philosophy of Hegel belong; the second, also very short — lasting from the end of 1844 to 1846 — is the one in which he concerned himself with historical materialism; in the third, beginning in 1846, he devoted himself entirely to studying the society of his time, and he did not return to, or seek to re-

elaborate, the question of historical materialism. The intermediate phase, then, that in which he investigated the possible existence of a law of historical development, and in fact believed he had discovered it, is the one that allowed him to progress from his philosophical-idealistic stage to his so-called scientific one.

Marx started out as a liberal, passionate about his studies of philosophy and history. But, morally outraged by the profound injustices of the society in which he lived, he became convinced that contemporary philosophy did not furnish him with adequate instruments, given that he sought knowledge as a basis for action. His research, driven by a strong revolutionary spirit, undoubtedly led him to embrace utopian communism.⁷ It is highly likely that this hypothesis remained somehow suspended in his mind. At the same time, the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, which, despite Marx's attempts to lay philosophical foundations for a theory of communism, are still imbued with a liberal view of political-social problems, according to which economic and social injustices are attributable to a lack of democracy, to the inadequacies of the political system. Marx's espousing of utopian socialism, in any case, preceded the writing of *The German Ideology* (1845), which is, indeed, the work in which he deals extensively with the question of historical materialism.⁸

Thus, when Marx began to investigate the laws of history, he did so with a number of aims (later to be recalled in his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*). These aims range from the desire to work out the reasons for his and Engels' conflict with German philosophy of the time — this meant, first of all, having to reckon with their own philosophical conscience — to the attempt “to understand themselves,” that is, to work out a scientific concept of history and the tools for understanding its mechanisms. Once Marx had completed this operation, which seems to have led to an understanding of the laws governing the evolution of history, he was able to concentrate entirely on the scientific study of society, adopting a sure perspective, supported by the certainty of *prediction*: communism has a scientific basis and, as such, will not simply be the result of a political or moral aspiration, but rather the fruit of the objective evolution of history.

All these elements have to be borne very much in mind when studying historical materialism, particularly in *The German Ideology* (which is the fundamental text in this regard, the one that really does contain Marx's attempt to develop a theory). If, indeed, one wants to appreciate just what new and influential elements are contained in this Marxian theory — and

something useful there must be, given that it is impossible to ignore it completely and that many of its aspects have appealed, and continue to appeal to many scholars, even non-Marxists, and frequently crop up, albeit in a confused and, above all, uncontrolled manner, in the work both of historians and sociologists — one must start with a critical examination of it.

* * *

As regards the critical examination that is necessary in order to understand fully the value of historical materialism's theoretical core — an endeavour that should see us trying, somehow, to “get inside Marx's head” in order to understand his mindset —, the first observation to be made is that *The German Ideology* is an extremely difficult text, for two reasons mainly: first, it was never completely developed. The vicissitudes of this manuscript, which Marx “abandoned to the gnawing criticism of the mice,” are known to all and sundry, but, as a rule, tend not to be taken into account when its content is examined. Instead, it is important to be aware that Marx had flashes of intuition, but that he did not have the time or opportunity, or did not feel the need, to return to them, that is, to review them in order to verify their consistency. The notes that litter this work show clearly that its theoretical part still needed to be rewritten and set in order. The second reason is that, in this work, attempts to develop concepts to be applied to the study of history are mixed with attempts to recount pieces of history from this new perspective (and not always managing to remain consistent with it). This continuous switching from reasoning based on concepts — which, however, are never fully elaborated — to reasoning based on facts, without clearly distinguishing between the two, means that one is faced with the difficult task of taking the text apart and reassembling it in such a way as to separate the theoretical part from the narrative part, so that both might be analysed in depth.

The second observation concerns, precisely, the reconstruction of history on the basis of the new materialistic models contained in *The Ideology*. In Albertini's opinion, there is no doubt that these ideas, sketched out, owed much to the utopian communism that Marx had somehow absorbed and internalised. In other words, when Marx begins to abandon the liberal perspective (in which the vision of history is bound up with stages in the progressive affirmation of freedom, and great importance is attached to the events linked to this, such as, for example,

religious factors, Christianity primarily, and the Reformation, or political ones, etc.) in order to try and develop new frameworks of interpretation that overturn completely all the points of view valid up to that point, he cannot reconstruct immediately the whole of history from the materialism perspective. In actual fact, Marx already had these ideas in mind, even though they were not yet clearly formulated and were still mixed up with the scheme for interpreting them.⁹ As a result, this first draft, being a partial elaboration of theoretical categories, creates confusion between facts and concepts, does not help us to get to the real theoretical core of historical materialism, and shows only, as we said earlier, that the latter had not been fully thought out and was still imbued with pre-established ideas, acquired via other channels, channels almost certainly belonging to the utopian socialist tradition. A few clear references clarify this link (Marx himself will later consider utopian his idea of work in this text, and, equally, it is impossible not to see as utopian his affirmation that socialist society, which corresponds to the realm of freedom, will regulate general production in such a way that no one need be tied, permanently, to the same activity, and everyone, instead, will have the opportunity to gain experience of all types of activity, as well as the freedom to do one thing one day and another thing another day, in accordance with their wishes); but there are also other references, although they are more difficult to pick up on, which show Marx's attachment to the utopian idea of communism, such as the one concerning the centrality, in the interpreting of history, of private property, which we will come back to in our analysis of Marx's text.

It has to be remembered then, that Marx's thought contains elements that were never fully worked out, elements of a utopian, non "scientific" nature, and that these are confused with the new concepts; to analyse the latter fully, and also to complete the elaboration of them, they therefore need to be separated from the former.

After all, it is not feasible that Marx should, at a single stroke, have discovered a whole new concept — in itself an enormous intellectual endeavour — and, on the basis of this, have rethought the whole of history, reconstructing it afresh on the basis of the new categories. First, because such an enormous undertaking can be carried out successfully only if one starts with categories that have been rendered perfectly coherent and entirely devoid of ambiguity.¹⁰ Second, because in Marx's time, understanding of scientific methods was only just dawning. Science was advancing rapidly, but at that time reflection on the manner of its advance, and on the methods it used, was still not sufficient to prompt a

similar kind of reflection in relation to the new and pioneering field of the social sciences. The fact that there was still not even a clear awareness of the distinction between science and philosophy in this sector, makes it quite unrealistic to imagine that there might have been an awareness of the need to perfect a theory in order to render it fully operational.

Nowadays, we know that the initial insight that is the starting point for developing a new concept must be treated as a hypothesis to be examined. And in order to be examined, this hypothesis must first be formulated in absolutely clear and consistent terms that exclude all ambiguity, because this is the only way in which it can be verified. Once this has been done, it must, indeed, be verified in relation to the facts to which it refers: we check what facts it allows us to see clearly and what facts it instead conceals. The result of this initial verification allows us go back to our original theory to see what parts of it remain valid and what parts instead need to be eliminated in order to refine the formulation; the next stage is to verify the refined formulation in relation to the facts. This process is repeated until such time as we have obtained satisfactory empirical evidence and arrived at a coherent theory. It is only at this point that the hypothesis effectively becomes a theory that can be used to weigh up existing knowledge. And the gradual progression towards universal acceptance of a theory, over time, provides confirmation that the theory itself is satisfactory, even though this means of confirmation may, at first sight, appear rather crude.

In accordance with this last principle, the partial acceptance of Marx's theory, by the scientific community first of all, is, on the one hand, a demonstration that it harbours something powerful, in conceptual terms; if it did not, it would not have been able to exert, for over a hundred years, the influence in the world that it has. But on the other hand, it shows that Marx's ideas are still not unambiguous and scientific, given that they have given rise to totally different and opposing interpretations, even being deemed to constitute, at once, both method and knowledge (the two are in fact antithetic); indeed, only recourse to dialectic, by definition incompatible with a scientific concept, precisely because it never pins down the object definitively, has made it possible to hide — in the face of overly superficial examinations — all their incompatibilities.

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For many years, Albertini strove to accomplish this kind of verification and control operation, which Marx had been unable to do. In so

doing, he was well aware of the fact that he, too, was trying a path that would, in its turn, have to be critically reviewed by the community of social scientists. He was all too aware that when one tries to tread a new path, one rarely reaches the best result straight away; but he was firmly convinced that the greatness of scientific thought lies, precisely, in its ability to grow through such attempts, and through the corrections that can be made by those who follow, who are spared the effort of starting from scratch and are able to exploit the insight of those who started the process. In the end, he felt he had produced a *clear* formulation, and was convinced that this would make a valuable contribution, because clear formulations always lend themselves to useful examination and criticism, and, for this very reason, further the pursuit of knowledge.

Finally, it is worth recalling, even though this may seem obvious from what has already been said, that this work of Albertini's cannot be set within the tradition of Marxism, understood as a "historical-social fact" as he defined it; in other words, it does not belong to the stream of thought inspired by the works of Marx and of those who later interpreted him. Obviously, Albertini gave thought to his position vis-à-vis these authors and embraced any elements that he found illuminating. But none of them ever approached the question of historical materialism in the same terms as he did, considering the need for a critical reworking of it, and setting it in relation to the facts. Indeed, what has always prevailed has, instead, been a certain dogmatism, which has led to efforts to bend the facts to the theory, without examining the contradictions inherent in the latter; as a result of this, the valid parts of the theory have been emptied of much of their meaning, leaving it an increasingly sterile conceptual instrument. If, as Albertini believed, Marx's insight can provide, crucially, the basis for an understanding of historical-social processes, then the time has come to abandon the tradition of Marxism and to examine objectively Marx's thought.

A Critical Reworking of Historical Materialism.

The German Ideology was, as we have already said, the starting point of Albertini's analysis. This text is the most advanced elaboration of Marx's thought on historical materialism, even though it must always be remembered that it is not a complete work. The writings prior to 1844, *Manuscripts* in particular, prefigure many of its ideas, but the formulae presented are still immature, and as such, not useful for the purposes of a re-elaboration. Finally, it is possible to find instances of Marx returning

to the topic of historical materialism (returning in the sense that they are reflections on a question that Marx by this time considered closed) and these can be found in his preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* and in some letters.¹¹

In order to guarantee a rigorous approach to an analysis of Marx's hypotheses, the main thing, as mentioned, is to appreciate that, from the perspective of scientific methodology, his elaboration was necessarily limited (as we have said, this was inevitable given the instruments, in this regard, that were at his disposal in 1845). What we need to do, therefore, on his behalf, is carry out the task of correlating, continuously, theory with facts, a task that is necessary in order to be able to clarify the latter and lend coherence to the former. Facts, of course, always "appear" within a conceptual framework, without which we would not even be able to see them, and it is therefore obvious that reciprocal referencing is an ongoing process. We therefore need to proceed with extreme caution and not claim to be able to anticipate any stage.

It seems clear that Marx, when he had the insight to overturn the idealistic perspective and to take material production as the starting point of his attempt to explain man's fundamental character, had isolated, among all those at his disposal, a series of facts (socialism, the class struggle, private property, alienation, etc.) that, in this new conceptual framework, had immediately taken on a new significance, had seemed to be linked together, and had given him the impression that he had found the common thread that would make it possible to see the direction in which history was moving. This is the point in his investigation at which, feeling satisfied, Marx came to a halt, failing to investigate whether these facts were all compatible with one another, whether they could all, in reality, be explained on the basis of his initial theoretical assumptions, and without fully verifying the coherence of his initial hypotheses. Yet this is exactly the kind of investigation that was called for.

The starting point is thus, necessarily, this insight that Marx had regarding the centrality of production in a re-reading of the lives and history of the whole of mankind. Having decided to adopt this criterion, the next thing is to establish what facts become visible in the light of it. Here, Albertini felt, however, that Marx should not be followed to the letter, precisely because he seems to have accomplished this stage too quickly, which suggests that his field of vision continued to be impeded by pre-established elements, predating his theoretical discovery. The field of investigation thus needs to be limited to the facts that immediately emerge from this new perspective, which was present, somehow, in

Marx's writings of the period '44-'45, before he wrote *The Ideology*. And the thing that this production perspective immediately shows us (when, through Marx, it takes on its new value and becomes both the basis and the content of human life), is that the whole of society can be described in terms of the complex structure that he defines the *mode of production*.

First of all, the mode of production determines the division of labour. Even at the very elementary level of hunting, fishing and the gathering of food, we see the imposition of specialisations and rules that must be obeyed by all, as they are indispensable for production: all these functions, on which production depends, are the *productive forces*.¹²

In the same way, there emerge the *relations of production*, which are also the product of the division of labour: different specialisations correspond to different roles in society, and these have to be coordinated and codified in order to guarantee that everyone's functions are carried out in an orderly manner.

Then there are the *means of production*, which include both physical and intellectual tools: for example the sharp-edged stone or the most sophisticated electronic equipment in the first case, or all the knowledge needed to guarantee the different phases of production in the second. Thus, the sciences, without which certain kinds of production are impossible, are means of production, but so, too, is man's own conception of himself, which must be compatible with the relations of production; in this way, philosophical, political, and religious ideas are also to be regarded as means of production. It is at this point that the concept of ideology starts to enter the picture, but, for the moment, it is better that we finish looking at the system of production. We will come back to the question of ideology later on.

The last category, which is the one Marx formulated with the least precision, is that of the *needs of production*. Man's needs are, primarily, biological and his survival depends on their being met; but what sets men apart from animals is the fact that man's primary, biological needs are accompanied by the historical-social needs that he himself has created by this introduction of the dimension of production: therefore, man's survival is not only a physical or biological question; he *also* has to survive on a historical-social level established by the existence and evolution of the means of production. The needs of production spring, in fact, from the modifications of human behaviours introduced by the means of production; and the relationship between the introduction of a means and the emergence of a new need can be said to be a constant feature of mankind's civilisation.

Albertini sees these early formulations as discoveries — primarily empirical — that make it possible to grasp the historical-social aspect of human nature, which had previously remained hidden. And they also make it possible to see the necessary link that exists between a certain type of production and the size and composition of the population: the number of inhabitants of an area may range from tens of thousands, in the case of the hunting and fishing mode of production, to hundreds of millions, in the presence of the advanced industrial mode of production. The composition of society itself continues to be rigidly determined by a limited range of possibilities that have to be compatible with the functioning of production. Domination within the community does not emerge, then, simply as a result of a desire for power on the part of single individuals, but as a necessary guarantee of the relations of production; for example, it was not until the advent of agricultural production that there emerged — as a *necessity* — the great divide between intellectual work and manual labour. The more the mode of production evolves, the more complex the relations of production, as a whole, become; these relations have to be guaranteed to ensure that the system can function, and this increases the need for rules, which in turn imply appropriate levels of knowledge, a certain development of politics (in a broad sense), and a compatible conception of the world (elements all necessary conditions for the development of a certain mode of production). All this gives rise to a crucial reflection: the scope for the emancipation of society (meaning the realisation of a free and fair community, founded on equality) depends, first and foremost, on the evolution of the mode of production, and as long as production (industrial production, for instance) continues to be based on a necessary division of labour in which there are workers who are subordinate and destined to fulfil tasks that require little skill, the seed of inequality, which, objectively speaking, the relations of production continue to harbour, cannot be eliminated.¹³

As mentioned earlier, the analysis of the means of production also brings in the concept of ideology,¹⁴ which Marx was the first to formulate, introducing a new criterion of analysis that highlighted a formerly unknown dimension of thought. As we have seen, the means of production include political, religious and philosophical ideas, which reflect the relations of production and thus make it possible, basically, to preserve consensus for them. This means that they are ideas formed not on the basis of a direct relationship with the object of our investigation, but rather on the power relations on which society's survival depends. The ambit of knowledge can thus be seen to have three dimensions: in addition to the

dimension of the subject, who knows, and that of the object, which is there to be known, there is that of the relations and forces of production that precondition our capacity to hear, to see and to understand. Man's mind is not, therefore, a mirror capable of reflecting reality objectively (albeit perhaps making some mistakes, which are nevertheless part of this direct relationship between the subject who knows and the object that is known); instead, in most cases, social conditioning actually *turns reality on its head* and shows it to us upside down. One of the clearest and most well known examples of this is Aristotle's view that slaves were slaves because slavery was their natural state, and that it was their good fortune to have a master to take care of them. Obviously, Aristotle was well aware of the circumstances that led men to become slaves, and it is perfectly clear, too, that he had the ability to reason in non-ideological terms in very many fields. Yet, thinking of slavery as a natural state while at the same time knowing that slaves were, above all, prisoners of war does not seem to have been a problem for him at all.

Marx does not dwell for long on the foundations of the concept of ideology, but he does explain clearly how, in every age, the prevalence of the thought of the dominant class is accompanied by an acceptance of that thought by the dominated classes. On this basis, reflecting with hindsight on this Marxian discovery, we can see it as a requirement imposed by the need to guarantee the survival of the community: this survival depends on the functioning of production, which in turn is guaranteed only by a certain type of organisation whose implicit inequalities and privileges everyone must regard as *natural*. If this mechanism of thought did not exist and were not internalised, both by the dominators and the dominated, reality would soon find itself having to deal with the emergence of an awareness — which exists, in fact, in philosophical or religious free thought — that all men are equal, and rebellion would be inevitable. Instead, what occurs is a phenomenon of consciousness splitting and of self-mystification, unconscious obviously, which allows our minds to accommodate contradictory ideas. For example, it allows the Christian idea of the equality of all men to coexist with an acceptance that the differences created by society are inevitable. It is important to note that this ideological veil which conceals the reality of the relations of oppression can fall away only when these relations no longer coincide with the needs of production, that is to say when they no longer constitute true *relations of production*. The rejection of an ideology, its unmasking, never has a purely theoretical basis somehow, but is always a result of a change in the power situation that previously it justified.

This discovery, by Marx, allows us to see that man has the capacity not only for knowledge, but also for self-mystification, and that our brain sometimes works to probe reality, sometimes to justify or hide social reality. The problem now is to understand the extent of this mental mechanism. Marx, in fact, does not seem to have resolved this question. Although, through his insight, he opened up a new field of investigation, effectively unknown up until that point, at the same time, he made the mistake of taking it for granted that all thought is ideological, perhaps deceived by his own observation — correct, moreover — that thought as an autonomous activity can emerge only in conjunction with the birth of the separation of intellectual work from manual labour in the agricultural society; and he never returned to this theoretical point. But the question, here, is that it is not true that all thought is ideological and the passive reflection of the relations of production; it is not true empirically, even before any attempts to theorise it. If all thought were passive, there would be no explaining man's discovery of the sharp-edged stone, or the emergence of the physical tools of production generally. Every technical innovation, whatever its level, is, by definition, an act of innovation and, as such, free. In the same way, mathematics is free (two and two makes four regardless of the context in which we are operating), as are logic, the sciences and probably, to a large extent at least, all the higher manifestations of thought, from philosophy to religion and art, even though, particularly in the case of these three, there is always the possibility that ideological use may be made of them. In general, wherever true knowledge exists, and the history of mankind is full of examples of true knowledge, there is no ideological thought, but rather active, free thought, albeit usually on the part of isolated individuals. Much of the thought of men is, undoubtedly, repetitive; even in the case of complex activities, once we have learned to carry them out, the tendency is to resort to mechanical application. But this must not be allowed to cancel out the real experience, however rare, of thought as innovation: when this happened to Marx and above all, to the subsequent Marxist culture, it gave rise to serious contradictions that undermine Marxian theory, which, as a result, could no longer explain innovation and account for reality. Many of Marxism's (here understood as the thought that came after Marx) difficulties and slips into dogmatism can be attributed in part to this mistake, which was not identified or corrected, and, together with the other contradictions inevitably present in the Marxian formulation — which, for the reasons several times recalled, lacks clarity —, has prevented the truths of Marx's thought from emerging in all their greatness.

Nevertheless, the fact remains that, in any case, none of what we have said thus far about production and the way it is structured can explain active thought. If experience in general prevents us from denying the existence of this type of thought, it is equally true that, within this model, active thought remains a fact to be clarified. What this model really sheds light on are the determinisms that underlie man's historical-social reality, not his free acts. The point, to be precise, is thus to recognise that this theory *cannot* explain freedom and innovation, but neither can it deny them; it accounts for *one* dimension of human existence, the historical-social dimension, but cannot claim to account for the *whole* of human existence. We will see below what relationship can be established between these different elements.

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This point of view, founded by Marx, also allows us — albeit remaining at the level of the empirical description thus far furnished — to identify the basic workings of historical dynamism. Previously, the reasons why history advanced, why it “moved” seemed obscure. Indeed, ideological or idealistic explanations were advanced that failed to clarify the fundamental mechanisms. Through Marx, on the other hand, it becomes possible to understand them, starting from the observation that changes in the mode of production create new needs: the introduction of a new means of production brings about a transformation at the level of behaviours and of the way of thinking, and this has the effect of creating new needs within the social-historical sphere; these new needs, in turn, act on the system, modifying it, and it is certainly plausible that the accumulation of the new needs that are progressively created, and of the responses that they produce, can reach the point at which they change the mode of production. One might think, for example, of how the agricultural mode of production has gradually created new needs, to respond to which the system has become more complex, has extended and grown stronger, in all sectors: in that of knowledge (to reach, ultimately, the birth of modern science), in that of technology, in that of craftsmanship, in that of the economy, and so on. Society goes through a process of overall growth and a progressive transition that can — as has in fact occurred — at a certain point result in a sudden leap forward, a profound change that leads to a new mode of production. A dynamism, then, that is characterised by profound breaks with the past, and radical changes, even though these are infrequent transitions.

It is important to note, before going on, that the deterministic nature of the dynamic movement of history can be identified only after the event. The historical materialism model, in fact, makes it possible to identify the causal links at the root of historical-social transformations, and thus to understand them and explain them; but it does not claim to be able to predict them. In fact, it is not possible to anticipate innovation (the introduction of the new, physical means of production that triggers the creation of new needs and that can, in turn, itself be the response to profound needs, or, on the other hand, a brilliant solution to secondary problems), precisely on account of its free character, already referred to; it is not possible to predict automatically the type of needs that will ensue, because these depend on the concrete conditions of society, and neither can the response to these needs, should they arise, be anticipated; neither, finally, are the changes produced in the wake of the activation of this mechanism automatic. It is only with hindsight that this model, which starts from the perspective of production, makes it possible to see why certain fundamental changes in the life of society have come about, or indeed *not* come about. After all, history is not only continuous change, it is also comprised of periods of stagnation, ends of civilisations, collapses of empires.

History advances by great stages, because, as long as a mode of production endures, retaining its essential characteristics, then all the other aspects of historical-social life conserve their basic characteristics, too. As our analytical breakdown of the concept of production seems clearly to show, the size of the population, within its possible range, is determined by the mode of production; this is also true of the social composition of the population and of the culture, experience and prevalent mindsets that characterise it. This is not in a rigid and absolutely unequivocal manner, obviously, but within a range of predetermined options. A transition to a new mode of production is accompanied by a rapidly accelerating process: behaviours change profoundly, the size of the population starts to increase and continues to grow until it is compatible with the new type of production, the social composition of the population changes completely, the level of schooling and the number of people sharing in oral and written knowledge both increase and, depending on the increase in controlled thought, i.e. scientific thought and philosophical thought, there is also an increase in society's capacity for freedom and in the processes of democratisation and socialisation.

This point of view thus makes it possible to understand both the dynamic aspects of history, and the reasons why, within a stable produc-

tion system, the changes that manifest themselves in society (naturally within that fixed framework, outlined earlier, that relates to the fundamental characteristics of the population) are to be attributed to politics, law, the economy, science, religion, etc., whereas when the mode of production changes, the transformations that take place must be related, in the first instance, to that change. When seeking an explanation for changes that came about in society in a given era, this very general criterion emerges as the decisive key to a correct understanding of the processes that unfolded.

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If this reconstruction is plausible — as an empirical reconnaissance suggests it to be, even though it is relatively remote from Marx's formulations —, then the next stage is to move on from this initial identification of the type of facts that historical materialism (hypothetically) clarifies, to a new verification of the theory, to see whether it really is capable of isolating, describing and explaining these same facts without ambiguity or confusion.

First, however, we must make a premise. In performing this series of operations in his bid to advance along the road first set out on by Marx (the development of a scientific theory of the evolution of history from the perspective of man's historical-social dimension), Albertini was moving in what was still practically uncharted territory. For this reason, he very often took time to dwell on the methodological question, trying to clarify fully the terms of his investigation. He was quite clear about what he was aiming to do: he needed to arrive at a scientific theory, which as such would be based on language that could be interpreted unambiguously (thus, by definition, a theory that could no longer lend itself to a philosophical interpretation, given that science and philosophy are mutually exclusive), and which would ultimately find, in practice, its definitive (and necessarily public) confirmation, in other words, a theory whose validity would be demonstrated, over time, by everyone's acceptance of it as valid. All this in the awareness that science is a process that is never contained in a book or in a single discovery, but is, rather, in a state of constant re-elaboration.

The route to this goal — the scientific elaboration of the theory — is, in part, still to be discovered in the historical-social field. Albertini, for example, having got this far in his analysis, realised that he needed to have recourse, in this initial phase, to the instrument of description in order to

be able to represent historical-social reality in the light of the set of concepts derived from the idea of production. And the use of description, in this case, needs to be carefully explained, because it is a form of description that presents structural limitations: it is, first of all, conjectural, hypothetical, given that it does not refer to a specific historical situation that has concretely manifested itself; and what is being described are the constantly recurring features of human experience, features that will continue to recur until such time as men change their nature. It is not, therefore, a description of things already seen, a sort of photograph of a historical situation, but rather a hypothesis, a conjecture, the identification, somehow, of a law able to show that production is a factor whose social significance is such that it is crucial for the survival of the human race and determines all social activities.

The same caution needs to be applied when re-examining Marxian theory in the light of what is thrown up by the earlier empirical reconnaissance. This is because it is very easy to be deceived and to fail to spot its incongruities. First of all, when Marx, at the start of his investigation, declares that he rejects *en bloc* the idealism of Hegel (because this is his true opponent) on account of the fact that it establishes the object of study even before starting to study it, he raises the problem of his need to start from scratch. Marx's theoretical elaboration cannot be based on pre-established knowledge; all that he can and must do is formulate a premise and hypothesis. Any other idea he might in some way hold on to, in order to get his analysis started, leads him to fall into a process of self-mystification. This, then, is the first point to consider in a re-examination of his theory.

This starting from scratch is an extremely complex and arduous task, of which Marx is not even fully aware, precisely because he is treading new ground and opening up a completely new avenue. Yet, it is a task he nevertheless manages to accomplish, effectively entering an ambit that coincides with the ambit of science. His starting point is, in fact, a premise, "living human individuals,"¹⁵ which he does not postulate as an entity, rather as something that still needs to be defined empirically. And from the empirical point of view, what emerges is that the difference between men and animals can be traced back precisely to the point at which men started to produce their own means of subsistence.

This first observation has a series of consequences. The first, and here we quote Marx, is that if this is true, then men in this way "are indirectly producing their actual material lives."¹⁶ This first indication, which seems entirely logical, makes it possible to mark out with precision the

dimension determined by the mode of production. If, in fact, I am talking about indirect production, I am excluding, without attempting to explain it, the biological factor, which regards both reproduction in a physical sense (that which might be defined the direct reproduction of life) and thought (here meaning free and active thought, which, too, can be linked to the biological sphere). Both of these aspects, in fact, lie outside the ambit considered here.

The difficulty arises when Marx is unable to maintain this framework. Indeed, from the very next lines, and after a series of passages, he in fact states that what individuals are “therefore coincides with their production, both with *what* they produce and with *how* they produce. The nature of individuals thus depends on the material conditions determining their production.”¹⁷ This second affirmation is a complete reversal of the first: whereas what was highlighted before was the fact that men *indirectly produce* their lives (through the means of production) — and thus that these means are explained by the fact that men produce them —, this latter passage says that men are what they are because of production, and thus that it is men who are explained on the basis of the means of production. This is a vicious cycle in which the precise boundaries of the field of investigation also get caught up. In the first case, as has already been pointed out, thought is not included, in the sense that no attempt is made to explain it as an effect of production: and yet the fact that men produce, that they create means of production, *presupposes* the act of creation, which is the fruit of free thought. Conversely, the second hypothesis not only implicitly includes biology (when we talk of life, without specifying it further, it is difficult to imagine that the biological sphere is not included), but also claims to explain thought, thereby reducing it to pure ideology.¹⁸

This is the unacceptable point, which introduces, right from the start, a dangerous ambiguity that, in addition to creating the conditions that will allow the most arbitrary interpretations to find justification, prevents the theory from being clarified to the point at which it becomes a true instrument of knowledge. On careful analysis of these passages, it can, unfortunately, be seen that Marx repeatedly falls into this ambiguity and it is the flaw at the root of many misleading formulations. In Albertini’s view, the real cause of this error is, in addition to the objective difficulty of opening up a completely new avenue, the fact that two different spheres of analysis, the philosophical and the scientific, continued to be mixed up in Marx’s thought processes, as he strove to provide communism with a theoretical basis. If one is reflecting on a philosophical level, one must try

to get to the roots of being, ultimately, and thus try to explain man in his totality. It is inconceivable, on the philosophical plane, to stop at a dimension that does not exhaust the reality of the object we are studying. On the scientific plane, on the other hand, success is made possible precisely by the definition of the context of the research (and thus by the renunciation a priori of any attempt to investigate the whole).

A seemingly banal example helps to clarify this point. When talking of the division of labour, Marx maintains that its first manifestation is seen in the man-woman relationship in procreation,¹⁹ in which, he says, relations of oppression and domination are established. But given that his purpose was to establish what distinguishes man from beast, the basis of his argument is clearly incorrect. Here, in reality, we are talking at the level of biology, where men have a great deal in common with mammals. If we want to consider the division of labour in relation to the relationship between the sexes, we should, instead, be looking at how their social roles differ, and thus transfer our attention away from the question of procreation, which concerns only the biological sphere, to the historical-social sphere. It is easy to understand why Marx commits errors of this kind if we consider the co-existence, within him, of these contradictory trends, and the fact that, when his mental control weakens, the philosophical inclination to seek to explain everything gets the upper hand.

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Continuing our analysis of the text we find at intervals, as already indicated on several occasions, further conceptualisations and the first sketchy accounts of history, in which there appears the question of property;²⁰ some pages afterwards we find references to the structure of production, from its relations through to its needs,²¹ and to the elements that make it possible to advance hypotheses regarding the mechanisms of historical dynamism. Once again the confused framing of the exposition tends to mislead and can seem to give substance to the hypothesis of an outline of history that takes the different forms of private property as its starting point. The problem is that whereas the terminology relating to production makes it possible to establish in a precise and unequivocal way the constant characteristics of *all the stages* in the historical process —and in a satisfactory way compared with the level of theorisation thus far reached (in other words, it does not introduce elements as yet unexplained) —, property, instead, enters the discussion as an element that has still not been theorised and whose only link with the theory is the

fact that it is a product of the division of labour, yet it immediately becomes the crux of a general idea that includes the transition from capitalism to communism. In Albertini's view, none of this holds together. When one sets out with the aim of working out a general vision of history and thus endeavours to establish the first general aspects of man's social-historical situation and to draw out its constant features, it is clear that a phenomenon that intervenes only in already advanced stages of history should not emerge as central. Therefore, the idea of property as the main thread running through the historical process, in this context and in these conditions, does not work and to place it on a par with the concept of production, at this level of the investigation, is profoundly contradictory: whereas production emerges from an empirical verification which takes as its premise the lives of men, the same cannot be said of property. Once again, Marx's confusion can be deemed plausible, and justifiable, only on the basis of the suggestion that the communist ideology which had somehow become impressed in his mind was tending to superimpose itself on his investigation, leading him towards pre-established elements that, in this context, lacked all theoretical legitimacy (indeed, it is no coincidence that property is one of the key elements in *Manuscripts*).

Many of the formulations of historical materialism, which moreover are the ones that in some ways have been most successful (here I also refer to those contained in the preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*), share these same origins and theoretical flaw. A theory that sheds light on the constant features of history, as observations of fact, is mixed with an idea of history developed according to the canons of utopian communism. Even the idea of the class struggle is born of this ambiguity; in fact, it claims to be a general theory when clearly it refers to historical-social situations that are not *constants in or of* the process, but rather facts that appear from a certain stage on, and that actually manifest themselves strongly only in an industrial society. They are thus, at most, frameworks for interpreting contemporary reality — the question of whether or not they are right for this purpose is not even raised — but they are misleading because they are attributed with a general character.

However, the most serious error, from the theoretical point of view, in Marx's formulation of historical materialism is that he reduces the mode of production to an economic concept.²² When we analysed Marx's first formulations of the mode of production, these could be seen to range from the most simplistic one, which spoke only of indirect production of

actual material life — this seemed the most satisfactory — to the one that attributed the whole of the life of men to production, even going so far as to deny the existence of any reality outside of production. So, if this ambiguity of exposition tends to give rise to a situation of theoretical uncertainty that helps to explain the difficulty in maintaining the stability both of the words used and of the concepts, it is also true that both the formulations are moving in a very clear direction, i.e. defining production as complex whole. There is thus no basis for identifying, at a certain point in the investigation, the concept of production with that of economics, i.e. with just one of the many parts of the complex whole that is the production of the historical-social dimension of the lives of men. It is clear that once again there has been a superimposing of levels that has resulted in a shift of the theory, a shift made apparently acceptable by the previous affirmations and by the mixing in of utopian elements. According to this reduction, the economy takes on the status of a foundation “structure” that determines the other levels of human activity (politics, law, religion, philosophy, art, and so on), which are thus nothing more than its “superstructure.” It is thanks to this formulation that the very widespread cliché that economics is superior to other human activities — almost a dogma, even today when Marxism is harshly criticised —, has found acceptance; but above all, it invalidated all the hypotheses from which the Marxian analysis started out, hypotheses that have instead shown themselves to be capable of harbouring very valuable innovative potential. The erroneous division of human activity into different spheres, economic, religious, etc., and the subsequent establishing of a hierarchy between them, is not reflected in reality, in which, to cite a basic example, it is actually politics that much more often predominates over economics; similarly, one need only think of all those situations in which the production process depends on technology, the existence of which, in turn, depends on the evolution of science. But it is, above all, on the theoretical level that the contradictions introduced by this narrow interpretation become really serious. In fact, either production coincides with the whole historical-social dimension of the lives of men, as Marx indicated several times in his initial hypotheses, and is thus a perspective that explains all the determinisms in this ambit (as well as their interdependence), and effectively clarifies the basic mechanisms of these processes, or it is a merely confused concept according to which one part of human activity — this part is actually limited and dependent on other types of activity — determines everything including, obviously, free thought and the biological sphere.

Yet this dogma has enjoyed huge success and allowed a simplification (and vulgarisation) of Marxism and its enunciations on the class struggle and on property, this simplification being useful for propaganda purposes (because of its capacity to identify effectively some of the characteristics of the industrial phase and to bring about mass mobilisations), but devastating from the point of view of the quest for a real understanding of the general processes and thus of the enduring validity of the theory. One need only recall that, from this perspective, the institutions have become a superstructure devoid of autonomy vis-à-vis the economic processes, and the state has even been interpreted as an expression of the existing relations of power, thus as an organisation to be abolished together with them.

A final remark can be made with regard to the theory of the causes of historical dynamism that emerges from the preface to the *Critique*, in which the concept of historical materialism is set out (albeit using the terminology of production) starting from the priority consideration that “the totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness.”²³ We thus find ourselves on terrain where the framework of reference is history conceived of as a class struggle based on property. From this perspective, the mechanism moving history is no longer found in the creation of new needs deriving from the introduction of means of production, but rather in the contradiction that arises between the relations of production and the productive forces as the latter progressively expand. As long as there remains scope for the development of the productive forces within a given mode of production, “no social order is ever destroyed” and new superior relations of production cannot take its place.²⁴ Only when the old system reaches a state of complete paralysis can the revolutionary change occur. Marx concludes by pointing out that the bourgeois relations of production are the last antagonistic form of the social process of production, because the productive forces that develop in the bosom of bourgeois society create, at the same time, the material conditions for the solution of this antagonism; this social formation therefore brings the prehistory of human society to a close.²⁵

This formulation, too, was extraordinarily successful, both because of its strong emotional impact and because it contains a determinism that makes it possible to point out both the inevitability and the objectivity of progress, showing it to be the ineluctable fruit of the historical process, the advent of the final stage in history: communism.²⁶ The problem is that

this determinism is untenable. To claim that a paralysis of the system is followed automatically by a transition to the next stage is not only untrue in fact, it is also contradictory in theory. On the factual level, this determinism cannot explain the stagnations and irreversible crises that are history's most frequent scenarios; the only example of an ongoing process, a progressive development that has never been definitively interrupted, is, in fact, the European experience. This model is thus useful if it is applied to this specific case, if it is treated as the description of a fact; but if it is applied to history generally, then it simply does not work. On the theoretical level, by introducing an absolute determinism it denies, once again, all scope for innovation and for the free act which are, instead, the implicit precondition of the whole theoretical construction. Instead, the theory of needs manages to take this aspect into account satisfactorily, and does not create determinisms, as we have seen. It shows that *if* a new element is introduced into the system, the element modifies the system — this is what is often seen when new needs emerge —, but it does not say that a new need will automatically be met by an evolutionary response, and thus it does not claim to predict that which cannot be predicted.

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In short, the ambiguities that we have highlighted here are the elements that need to be eliminated from the theory of historical materialism, in order for this to become an effective instrument of knowledge, hypothetically the first step towards the founding of the historical-social sciences. They concern, first of all, the claim that *every* aspect of human life is determined, which implies that the repetitiveness, and thus ultimately the passiveness, of human behaviours can be seen not only in large numbers, statistically, but also at the level of the individual. In this way, freedom as a factor is totally excluded. Against this, we have tried to demonstrate, instead, that this theory works only if it is conceived of as a sort of open system that works on the basis, precisely, of variants introduced from the outside: in this case, from the biological sphere and above all from the sphere of free thought. The fact that the theory cannot explain free behaviours, but limits itself to explaining the determinisms of historical and social mechanisms, and therefore does not deal with the freedom that, in this framework, can in fact be set aside (collective behaviours, never individual ones, are the object of its investigation), does not in fact mean that it can, or indeed should, exclude their existence.

This is the reason why the development of the historical process can never be anticipated in a deterministic sense. In fact, this conceptual model cannot predict what will happen; rather, it makes it possible to interpret certain general aspects of past processes and current trends, identifying a few general rules that restrict social development; it is knowing these rules that allows mankind to act in a conscious manner. Conversely, the idea of the historical process as a certain and spontaneous evolution ferrying mankind, inevitably, towards the realm of freedom, is a myth that cannot be trusted in.

There is one final point that is crucial for a correct framing of historical materialism, and it is that historical materialism must never be mistaken for a description of concrete historical processes, even though it often has been. This only gives rise to confusion that, once again, conceals reality rather than helping to clarify it. After all, even Marx himself, even though he sometimes wavered, seems to have realised that he had developed models for understanding history that did not, in themselves, correspond to effective knowledge of the facts, but rather theoretical instruments for probing the facts and understanding them. The text contains many remarks to this effect and Albertini cites, in particular, notes, later deleted and then included only in the critical editions, in which Marx was particularly clear on the fact that knowledge is derived directly from history.

Historical materialism is a conceptual scheme, or model, which, as such, provides the means for analysing fundamental processes, but does not describe reality. It is possible, from this perspective, to see historical materialism as an *Idealtypus*. Albertini, as mentioned earlier, regarded Weber's idea as illuminating from the point of view of the methodology of the social sciences. He felt that it might be possible to establish a sort of hierarchy of ideal types, starting, precisely, with historical materialism, which could be seen as the most general because it explains the fundamental mechanism of the historical process and contains the most universal and least specific criteria. Starting from this, it would then be possible to insert the other ideal types that would frame with increasing precision the evolution of historical events and human behaviours (one of the first of these ideal types would be that of the *raison d'état* or rather the reason of power, which, Albertini hypothesises, is the basis of political science because it makes it possible to explain political behaviour) until one arrives at the most specific ones, and finally at the level of the individual; in short, until one arrives at what really occurred, which is the object of knowledge and must be recounted in all its specific detail.²⁷

The historical materialism idea, once it has been reworked — we might also say, once it has been brought back into line with Marx’s original design, which he was unable to carry through to completion (given that, in the conditions in which he was operating, no one would have been able to avoid confusing two overlapping perspectives, that of the nature of communism and that of the nature of history) —, emerges as a very powerful instrument that allows us to verify any detail of our historical knowledge. The causal links that it has allowed us to bring out (in particular in relation to the size and social make up of the population) are constants of the process that no specific investigation can fail to take into consideration.

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In this complex analysis, Albertini (who basically reconstructed historical materialism, almost from its foundations), used Marx’s outline with the rigour of a philologist, with the rigorous and minute patience of a scientist feeling his way forward on uncharted terrain, and with the passion of a man of action who senses the urgent need to know in order to understand the times in which he lives and to evaluate the scope for introducing a political project that might give men the chance to plan their own future. Without this extremely strong moral tension, something he has in common with Marx and which allowed him to attempt (successfully, I believe) to “get inside his head” — as he himself put it —, he would not have been able to achieve the extensive and innovative results he did. Indeed, his findings deserve to be taken up again in historical and social debate, to be discussed and even criticised, but without ever skirting the great issues they raise.

If there is a basis for Albertini’s re-interpretation, historical materialism, as he understands it, is a powerful instrument for studying history’s transitional phases, those in which a new mode of production is emerging. It thus becomes critically important, given that the world today is going through a transition from the industrial to the post-industrial (or scientific, as it tended to be called in debate in the 1960s and ’70s) mode of production. This change is presenting mankind with enormous opportunities, but also terrible risks and momentous challenges. Let us not forget that if all that we have hypothesised thus far is true, if what we face is not just a simple extension of the industrial mode of production, but rather a transition towards its possible overcoming, then this will demand and bring enormous changes in culture and in politics, changes that will be

neither simple nor painless, given that they will clash with the inertia of the established powers and will need to be thought out with appropriate intellectual instruments.

Albertini began to think about these processes when they were only just dawning, but the speed of the transformations that are taking place show that his remarkable insight allowed him to envisage scenarios that are now, to a great extent, manifesting themselves.

NOTES

¹ The first ten lectures are currently accessible in audio (mp3) format at the website of the Mario and Valeria Albertini Foundation, www.fondazionealbertini.org, and, before long, the entire set should be available.

² Willard V. O. Quine, “Two Dogmas of Empiricism”, in *From a Logical Point of View*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1953.

³ Albertini often pointed out that scientific knowledge demands absolute objectivity on the part of those operating in this field, which implies absolute freedom from any will of power and any personalistic ambition. From this point of view, science is also a great ethical lesson and can be defined as a *collective moral enterprise*. This mindset of science, which implies openness to rational criticism and acceptance of the need constantly to verify the results achieved, should serve as an example in every sphere of human action, above all where the aim is to improve the knowledge and lives of men, because it corresponds to the way in which reason itself operates.

⁴ A precise definition, by Albertini, of the concept of political ideology can be found in Mario Albertini, *Il federalismo*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1993, p. 91 (note 3).

⁵ Max Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen, Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 1922.

⁶ This definition also took into account the fact that there existed, in the Marxist current, positions that often contradicted one another. Towards the end of the 1970s, the existence of these different approaches even led to the term Marxism being used in the plural, and thus to talk of “Marxisms.” In Albertini’s view, this clearly showed the impossibility of identifying a precise theory underlying this definition; after all, if, in the attempt to bring together different interpretations and theories under a single label (to square the circle in some way), one ends up talking of Marxisms (in the plural), one is effectively negating the very existence of Marxism as thought. If we attribute a given meaning to version A of Marxism, and another, different meaning to version B, and so on, ultimately all we are left with is a name that has no clear meaning, because it refers to different things.

⁷ This step can be justified precisely by the moral reaction that, in Marx, derived from his appreciation (dating back to his reports for the *Rheinische Zeitung*) of the dramatic difficulties in which most of the poor classes lived.

⁸ According to Albertini, Marx’s attempt, in *Manuscripts*, to found, on a philosophical level, a precise theory of communism, can in fact still be seen in the context of his utopian thought, at least in the very general sense that utopian thought does not have a clear link with the historical process. The coexistence, in Marx’s mind, between this tendency to look for a way of theorising communism on a philosophical level — in the utopian sense as we have

said — and the desire to lay the foundations of scientific thought lasted for some considerable time, and it is this, above all, that explains the many variations in his formulations that prevent him from developing a coherent theory. This aspect, mentioned briefly here, is covered in more depth in the next paragraph which analyses the text of *The Ideology*.

⁹ Marx himself, on other occasions, and especially in several letters (see, in particular, *Letters to Dr Kugelmann*, New York, International Publishers, 1934), stresses that he has not discovered anything new, that all he has really done is identify the elements making up his new idea within already affirmed thought — from the class struggle, to the problem of social diseases linked to private property, to the idea of the abolition of private property, to the very idea of socialism. His achievement, an achievement that he himself claimed, was that of piecing together these fragmentary elements into a unitary vision that linked them to the historical process, transforming them from moral denouncements, of a utopian nature, and from partial truths, incapable of affecting reality, into parts of a scientific theory, which revealed the fact that the historical process was moving, precisely, in the direction of the advent of socialism.

¹⁰ It must be appreciated that an undertaking of this kind really does demand a titanic effort, because it becomes necessary to redefine, from scratch, everything that has happened and everything that is crystallised in our consciousness; it is not, therefore, a mechanical operation, but one that involves consideration of each single case; it is, at the same time, a crucial undertaking because if it is not carried out, elements of the old ideas will survive and make it impossible to attain the clarity needed to reach true knowledge.

¹¹ In particular, *Letters to Dr Kugelmann, op. cit.*

¹² In some points, Marx uses the term *productive force* in the singular, too; in this case, however, it has a different meaning, referring to the overall production capacity of a society. For the moment, however, we will leave this formulation out of consideration, since it is of little use in the context of the present analysis.

¹³ This observation was at the root of Albertini's criticism of the many Marxist illusions regarding the possibility of realising the communist design in a society still characterised by the industrial mode of production. The Soviet experiment itself, which had clearly produced a society in which there persisted power differences, and also relations of subordination of the workers to a managerial class that, while not formally owners of the means of production, nevertheless controlled production — here we touch on another controversial issue, which we will return to later in this essay, concerning the possibility of abolishing private property in accordance with the terms of Marxism, — was undermined not only by the country's specific historical conditions, but also, and mainly, by the fact that in an industrial society there necessarily remain, as already noted, differences in roles and in power. Albertini's idea was that only one mode of production (like the scientific mode that began to be taken into consideration in the 1960s and 1970s) which replaced repetitive human labour with machines and transformed all workers into skilled technicians might effectively make it possible to institutionalise the control of all over all, in other words, freedom and equality.

¹⁴ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, "The German Ideology", Vol. I, Part I, Ch. I, in *Marx and Engels Collected Works*, London, Lawrence and Wishard Ltd.

¹⁵ *Ibidem.*

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹⁷ *Ibidem.*

¹⁸ Another example of the contradictions, also internal, introduced by this formulation which claims to reduce the *whole* of men to the production dimension emerges in relation to the problem of freedom. It is known that Marx spoke of the advent of communism as the

transition from the realm of necessity to that of freedom. The concept of freedom is compatible with the affirmation that man produces his own life indirectly, in the sense that the only aspect of life which is determined by relations of productions is historical-social life. Since it does not coincide with the whole of human life and does not include biology, and thus thought, it therefore becomes possible, on the basis of thought, to explain the scope — however frequently this is grasped — for freedom; and also to explain its realisation in concomitance with the advent of a mode of production that allows the creation of a society founded on equality. But if man is limited to the sphere of production, and is thus totally determined, how is it that he can suddenly become *free*? From where does this possibility arise?

¹⁹ *Ibidem.*

²⁰ *Ibidem.*

²¹ *Ibidem.*

²² A very clear formulation of this identification of the mode of production with the economy can be found in Karl Marx's preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1977.

²³ *Ibidem.* This passage, if analysed extremely closely, clearly shows the contradiction contained in this formulation. The relations of production are the economic "structure" of society, but also its spiritual and technological structure, and so on. So what is the basis for this separation and pre-eminence of the economic "structure" vis-à-vis the rest, which has exactly the same function in relation to the process of production, identified by Marx himself, in this context too, as the point of reference?

²⁴ *Ibidem.*

²⁵ *Ibidem.*

²⁶ Were this determinism true, it would be impossible to see the sense in, among other things, a revolutionary force fighting for the realisation of an objective that history has already preordained. Even if this force were acknowledged to be capable of speeding up the process, the fact remains that its role, viewed from this kind of perspective, is entirely marginal. It would also mean that history can be known before events have even taken place, and this is absurd.

²⁷ History, Albertini explained, as regards its basic events, is a story of choices, of free acts; this is why history can only be recounted. But the story can become knowledge and correspond to reality only if the investigation of reality takes as its starting point a typological framework that allows the actions of single individuals to be set within the general framework of history.

Altiero Spinelli and the European Social-Economic Model

ALBERTO MAJOCCHI

1. *Introduction.*

This paper looks at some of the main points of Altiero Spinelli's economic thought, seeking to highlight their relevance to the present-day situation and to establish the extent to which these objectives might be realised in the current phase of globalisation, given the limits characterising the stage now reached in the evolution of the European Union.

The following analysis of Spinelli's economic thought is partial, in that it does not cover his activity as a member of the European Commission, or his work within the European Parliament. However, it is worth recalling that Spinelli's action as a member of the European Parliament was particularly significant, as his bid to strengthen the Parliament's budgetary powers was the starting point of the political initiative that led to the founding of the Crocodile Club and, subsequently, to the start of a process that would culminate in the Parliament's adoption, on February 14th, 1984, of the Draft Treaty establishing the European Union.

2. *The Social-Economic Model.*

The third chapter of the *Ventotene Manifesto*, as Pistone remarks in his introduction to the anastatic version of it, presents social reform as one of the fundamental tasks of the post-war period, and returns to "the fundamental ideas of Carlo Rosselli's liberal socialism, oriented towards the quest for a synthesis of the liberal democratic system, whose maximum expression can be found in the United States, with the demands for freedom and social justice expressed by the different streams of socialism." Basically, the authors of the *Manifesto* draw attention to the need to create a mixed economy that, by combining some public intervention with a free market system, might succeed in guaranteeing equal opportunities through a series of measures and reforms, which can be summarised

as follows:

a) transition towards public ownership of monopolies, particularly so-called natural monopolies — basically, public utilities providing network services and firms operating in strategic sectors — in order to prevent private monopolies from exploiting consumers and large enterprises from influencing, in the total absence of control, the management of public policies;

b) redistribution of wealth through agricultural reform that would assign land to those who work it, and industrial reform that would increase workers' ownership of fields not controlled by the public sector, through cooperative management and employee stock ownership plans;

c) reduction of inequalities of starting points, through the provision of public education for all, guaranteeing a balance between the demand and supply of work and a relative convergence of levels of pay in all professional categories;

d) a generalised system of social protection able to guarantee a decent standard of living even to those who find themselves in the most difficult circumstances, yet “without reducing their incentive to work and save.”

It can thus be seen that this social-economic programme, outlined schematically in the *Manifesto* and certainly displaying Ernesto Rossi's influence, constituted a rather modern approach, and it is one that was progressively implemented in Europe, albeit with many limitations, in the period following the end of the Second World War. But today, this same programme is subject to very profound criticisms, which seems to suggest that the survival of social-economic model that characterised the European economy in the wake of the Second World War can no longer be guaranteed.

3. *A Marshall Plan for the Third World.*

A second important aspect of Spinelli's economic thought is illustrated in a small book he published in 1978, entitled: *PCI, che fare?* In one chapter, Spinelli, considering an alternative policy for promoting growth, picks up on a Keynesian idea, highlighting the fact that Europe's scope for future growth — once “the great well of domestic demand has run dry” — will depend on the availability “of another, comparable well of potential demand that can, progressively, be turned into real and enduring demand.” And Spinelli concludes that it is “the developing countries — the world's vast South, but also the small South that exists within the most advanced countries — that represent, for the economies of the developed

world, this vast reserve of potential demand that can, progressively, be turned into real demand.”

A historical example of this enlightened policy was the Marshall Plan, by which the United States, in supplying Europe with the means to reactivate its “economic machine,” also served its own interests: indeed, American industry’s successful transition from wartime to peacetime production was supported largely by the massive demand, from Europe, for US goods.

Spinelli returns to this idea, suggesting that “the North should make the very noble gesture of offering to transfer to the South, on an annual basis and free of charge or under very favourable conditions, financial resources to be used not for the relief of hungry populations — such gestures remain within the realm of charity — but rather for the realisation of development plans, drawn up by these countries themselves, if necessary with the technical assistance of the advanced countries.” And such plans should be supported primarily by Europe, which has already established — starting with the Lomé Treaty — good relations with the associated countries.

This policy would help not only the countries receiving the aid, but also Europe, whose production system would benefit from a large and constant flow of demand from developing countries. Spinelli also draws attention to a corollary of this policy, which is basically a Keynesian policy but implemented at supranational level: the growth produced, while certainly not sufficient to absorb the whole of the available workforce, would have the effect of reducing unemployment. And, picking up on a topic dealt with extensively in the works of Ernesto Rossi, Spinelli concludes that “in our countries we need to organise a form of compulsory work service in which young people of both sexes would have to be enrolled for a certain period of time, selecting the types of work that best lend themselves to such a scheme. By so doing we would be introducing, into society, new ethics and new forms of social solidarity.”

This idea of compulsory civil service thus completes the picture of a society that has recovered the dynamism of growth — accompanied by a fairer distribution of wealth on an international scale —, and that is able to guarantee equality of opportunities (through a generalised system of permanent training and social protection) and work for all, also by exploiting the opportunities offered by a non-profit sector capable of supplying the services necessary to meet the social needs that the market is not equipped to cater for.

4. *The European Social Model and the Challenges of Globalisation.*

If this, summarised very briefly, is the social-economic model that emerges from the works of Spinelli, the question we must ask now is, first of all, whether it still meets the needs of European society and, therefore, whether it is compatible with the development of a globalised world. Indeed, there are many, in political circles and among economists, who maintain that Europe does not have what it takes to rise to the great challenge of globalisation. And they support their view by listing the factors contributing to Europe's crisis, namely, the structural rigidity of the labour and product markets, the high costs to business of funding the welfare state and, above all, the excessively high level of taxation. These observations are usually translated into two general political considerations:

- to increase employment, Europe, following America's example, needs to deregulate its labour and product markets, thereby favouring flexibility and greater competition;
- to make production more competitive, and thus able to take on the international competition, Europe needs to abandon its costly welfare systems and scale down public intervention. This will allow it to reduce the level of taxation, thereby boosting consumption, thanks to the increase in the disposable income of families, and consequently production, thanks to the cutting of costs as well.

Reform of the welfare state, lower pensions, and a smaller public sector tend, therefore, to be presented as inevitable consequences of the process of globalisation that has laid siege to the world economy. But what this attitude actually reflects is not so much a point of fact as an ideological prejudice, which uses globalisation as an excuse to reduce the level of social protection and to play down the role of public intervention, even when this is justified by a failure of the market. This is, therefore, a point that needs to be properly clarified, because policies aiming to reduce to the role of the welfare state are running the risk of turning public opinion against the process of European unification, thereby making it very difficult to launch an action geared at overcoming the limits of intergovernmental cooperation and at promoting a reform, in a federal sense, of the institutional provisions contained in the Maastricht Treaty.

5. *The Process of Globalisation.*

Globalisation, or the progressive unification of economic and social

relations at world level, is the natural product of the development of the forces of production, the same factor that, in the nineteenth century, in Italy and in Germany, wiped out the anachronistic regional markets, making way for the creation of national markets, and, in the twentieth century, decreed the definitive demise of the national markets in favour of the advance of European integration. It must be remarked that the progressive unification of economic and social relations, that is, the birth of a global market, is destined to lead, sooner or later, to political unification of the world, if it is true that — as Robbins taught — no market can exist without a government to guarantee the upholding of the fundamental rules on which it must be based. And it must also be remarked that the present governance of the world market — that which is today manifested through the hegemony of the United States, a hegemony founded on military might and technological superiority sustained by public demand — cannot guarantee a growth of the global market that is in the general interest rather than in the interests of just a few privileged groups.

These are phenomena of enormous significance. It is a fact that the process of globalisation has been promoted above all by technological developments in the information technology and transport sectors, and sustained by a widespread diffusion of mature technologies, a diffusion that has allowed economic systems characterised by an abundant labour supply to become competitive in the sphere of industrial production, too.

Globalisation, in this way, has allowed many countries, at last, to launch a process of rapid economic growth. But the diffusion of technology would not have been enough, on its own, to sustain this process; there had to be adequate capital resources as well. From this point of view, the most decisive innovation was the liberalisation of the capital market, which prompted vast flows of financial resources to be channelled away from areas where there is more propensity to save than to invest, directing them instead towards areas ready to use this surplus to fund the growing level of investments needed in order to get their industrial production off the ground.

This increased industrial production in developing countries has managed to find adequate outlets thanks to the opening up of the markets made possible by progressive reductions of the barriers to international trade agreed in the ambit of successive GATT rounds of trade negotiations. This has led to a gradual redistribution of the location of production, with developing countries becoming specialised in more traditional types of production, that is, in the intermediate sectors based on mature

technologies, leaving the advanced countries to go on controlling the markets in the more innovative sectors. In an international political scenario characterised by the end of the bipolar order and, following the collapse of the Soviet Union, by the United States' emergence as the sole hegemonic power, this gradual integration of developing countries into the global market has also been sustained by the well-established role of the dollar as the reference currency in an international monetary system in which the choices of the American Federal Reserve are still decisive.

6. The Environmental Risks Associated with Globalisation.

Having acknowledged the positive effects that the progressive liberalisation of international trade has had on all countries, including developing ones, we must now turn our attention to the problems that an increasingly integrated world economy can produce on an environmental and social level, and also with regard to the stability of the economic systems involved in the globalisation process.

On the first of these levels, the basic problem concerns the relations between the growth of trade and the safeguarding of the environment. Many observers maintain that increasing flows of international trade are, by definition, beneficial to the environment as they increase the resources that can be used to protect it. It is certainly true that environmental protection is a "good" more typically present in rich countries. The increased income now enjoyed by developing countries should, then, inevitably produce positive effects in this regard. This argument, while valid, tells only part of the story, however, given that the growth of the economy is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for achieving more effective environmental protection. In truth, the growth of international trade produces positive effects on the environment in the areas that are gradually incorporated into the global economy, providing these areas have a good environmental policy in which the cost for the use of environmental resources is internalised into the prices of final goods. If this is not the case, the growth of production will inevitably be accompanied by a deterioration of the environment, due to the excessive use of natural resources, to air and water pollution, to increases in the quantity of waste, to environmental degradation, and so on.

The acceleration of trade liberalisation promoted by the WTO should, therefore, be accompanied by a strengthening of environmental policies. But this is not the responsibility of the WTO, which, even if it were, does not have the powers needed to enforce compliance with adequate envi-

ronmental regulations. In fact, there exists no supranational organisation capable of guaranteeing observance of obligations in the field of environmental protection, as the difficulties applying the Kyoto Protocol have all too clearly shown.

Furthermore, many countries, to support their greater integration into the world economy and achieve the balance of payments equilibrium and the monetary stability necessary to obtain IMF funding, are forced to respect constraints imposed by the IMF. To this end, the countries in question, often still in an initial stage of growth, are compelled to sustain an increase in their exports, which are made up largely of natural (agricultural or forestry) products; the result is more intensive exploitation of the land, more extensive deforestation, causing a severe loss both of biodiversity and of carbon dioxide sinks (and thus a worsening of the greenhouse effect), and a degradation of the environmental conditions generally.

7. The Social Risks Associated with Globalisation.

This opening up of international trade and the increase in factor mobility have left the economies of the industrialised world more fragile than before. The first sign of this was the relocation of production activities to newly industrialised countries, which are able to offer not only the same technologies that are used in rich countries, but also a plentiful supply of low-cost labour. This phenomenon, in itself, must be deemed a positive development in that it brings about a redistribution of production to areas once excluded from the process of industrialisation. But it leaves the countries from which this production has emigrated with falling employment levels in the industrial sector, and these need to be offset either by an increase in demand for services (for both business and families), or by the introduction, onto the market, of new products — the fruit of processes of innovation (therefore, by definition, technologically advanced). Where this fails to happen — or where it happens to an inadequate extent — the result is growing social tension, linked to the increase in unemployment, which generally leads to a demand for greater protection of the domestic market. This, in fact, is not the solution, but it is an option that, in the end, it is difficult to resist.

Another problem stems from the fact that the employment crisis demands greater recourse to measures of social protection, whereas in the globalised world there is a strong drive to cut public spending, and thus to reduce taxation (because of the difficulty deriving income from an

increasingly internationally mobile tax base, but also to increase the competitiveness of national industry through cost reductions). The risk, therefore, is that, for the sake of competitiveness, we will see the start of a *race to the bottom*, both as regards environmental policy and social protection measures, which will have the effect of reducing the quality of life in industrialised countries. Again, this is not the right solution, and it is a matter of seeing whether, in Europe, alternative solutions can be proposed that will allow the European social model to be preserved.

8. *The Difficulty of Funding an Expansionary Policy.*

The possibility of guaranteeing the survival of the European social-economic model, but also of sustaining the development of the backward areas of the Third World, clearly depends on an acceleration of the growth rate, coming in the wake of a long period during which the development of the European economy has failed to reach the levels recorded by the American one, or even of those of the developing countries. In particular, since 1995, the growth of productivity in Europe, which was higher than that of the United States throughout the post-war period, has been lower in Europe than in America. This gap in productivity has affected both product growth and the external competitiveness of the European economy.

For Europe, it has thus become essential to promote an economic recovery policy. But expansionary policies should not be launched through support for domestic demand (the traditional, Keynesian approach) but, instead, through solid domestic supply policies and transfers of resources sufficient to favour the growth of the world's most backward areas. However, the funding of these policies is rendered particularly difficult, on the one hand, by the requirements on public finance imposed first by the Maastricht Treaty and then by the Stability Pact; and on the other, by the inability to increase tax revenue by the necessary amount, an incapacity that is linked to two sets of factors:

a) globalisation has made the tax bases, in every country, more unpredictable. In particular, the volatility of capital flows makes it impossible to guarantee adequate taxation of capital income; this means that, in order to keep the level of taxation stable, the levy on relatively fixed factors of production, and in particular on labour, has to be increased, having negative effects on people's disposable income, and thus on consumption and employment;

b) in an increasingly integrated global economy, the primary objective of economic politics is increased competitiveness, and with this end

in mind, the prevailing view among politicians — prompted by the prevailing current of thought in academic circles — is that a reduction of the level of taxation is absolutely unavoidable. More generally, it is felt that public intervention (deemed to reduce competitiveness by increasing, through the tax levies needed to fund it, the production costs of European firms) must inevitably be reduced.

These various financial constraints make it very difficult to implement the Lisbon Agenda and, at the same time, an effective policy for sustaining the growth of demand in the developing world. In Europe, then, it is proving impossible both to boost the competitiveness of European production, and to stimulate the potential demand in economically backward countries that could provide new outlets for European production. A solution to this impasse must be found if the gap separating Europe's productivity growth from that recorded in the US is to be closed, and a new cycle of sustainable development of the European economy started.

9. Productivity Growth as the Means to European Economic Recovery.

Indeed, the recovery of the European economy calls for a growth of productivity, and this, in turn, presupposes a series of measures that, to be effective, have to be decided and implemented at European level, in the framework of a global economic situation that is quite different from anything seen in the past. A new technological revolution has taken place and the United States has succeeded in exploiting it to the full, recording extremely high productivity and product growth rates; meanwhile, the newly industrialised developing countries are now competing with the established industrialised nations in a host of sectors, and not just in those based on mature technologies. Europe is thus caught in a double vice and is struggling to find the road that leads to stable and sustainable growth.

In truth, it has to be realised that a phase in the development of the European economy, that which characterised the second half of the last century, is now definitively over. The key factor in the growth of that period was a technological development that can be defined imitative: in short, simply by importing the best technologies from the most advanced countries, Europe was able to boost productivity and keep on improving the standard of living of its population. Today, however, Europe has reached the technological frontier, and this makes it impossible to envisage the start of a new phase of passive development, i.e., of development determined by the importing of technologies from outside

Europe. To grow, Europe must now rely exclusively on its own resources, looking, in particular, to a new capacity to produce innovation.

The growth of productivity in the United States has been sustained by that country's very rapid technological development, which can be attributed to a combination of factors: a) a standard of higher education that certainly surpasses that found in most European countries; b) a large public demand, linked to the defence sector mainly, which allowed highly innovative investments; c) a domestic market of continental proportions, long integrated and supported by a reserve currency that is, in fact, used as the global currency. All this explains the technological superiority of the United States that has left the European economy trailing increasingly far behind it.

This set of factors is not present in Europe, where a fuller liberalisation of the internal market is the solution most frequently advanced as the way to challenge America: it is felt that freeing the labour and product markets of the last remaining obstacles will boost competitiveness and make it possible to take production to increasingly high levels of efficiency. A first objective to be reached in order to stimulate growth, then, is completion of the liberalisation of the internal market, which the enlargement of the EU and the challenge mounted by industrially developing countries, with their much lower labour costs, is currently throwing into question.

10. Completing the Internal Market.

It is certainly true that since the early 1990s, the process of completing the internal market, accompanied by the progressive increase in the size of this market, mainly as a result of EU enlargement to the countries of central and eastern Europe following their exit from the orbit of the Soviet Union, has been the one factor that has continued to sustain European growth. This process was further strengthened by the creation of the single currency, which has favoured deeper integration within the eurozone. But these development factors have not been enough to guarantee the EU an adequate growth rate: the gap, in terms of per capita income and labour productivity, that separates Europe from the United States has become wider and wider, and many have talked of Europe's irreversible decline. The time has thus come to proceed, with determination, in this direction, but at the same time realising that other measures, too, are now needed.

The process of completing the internal market must start with the opening up of the services market: this is its most urgent priority. It is

unthinkable that the single market should exclude a sector generating 70 per cent the European GDP and in which the productivity gap versus the United States is most marked. Integration is particularly important from the point of view of business-related services, whose investments in R&D, and thus in innovation, are influenced by the size of the market. In other cases, such as the personal services sector, where services are naturally more locally based, and that of services that can be supplied at a distance, integration is not such an important issue. But, without a doubt, Europe cannot disregard this factor, which is crucial to the increase of its productivity and growth.

The second key objective is completion of the process of financial integration. For various reasons (industrial, regulatory and fiscal), this objective is still far from being reached, even within the eurozone. The most striking paradox in this regard is that the greatest obstacle, the existence of different currencies, has already been overcome, at great cost and considerable sacrifice, and yet the benefits of this huge effort are being largely cancelled out by financial nationalism, and by competition between national regulatory authorities.

As the experience of the past decade has shown, completion of the internal market and further liberalisation of the labour market are certainly positive factors from the point of view of the growth of the European economy, but on their own they are not enough. What is needed, in order to restart European development, is support through a large public demand, which would favour a qualitative increase in European production and make it able to compete, on an equal footing, with the other players in today's globalised world. And this is where the European budget comes in.

11. *A Plan to Revive the Lisbon Agenda.*

In the present economic phase in which, following two years of good recovery, the European economy looks as though it might be about to start slowing down again, the priority seems to be to introduce, at European level, a coordinated plan of investments — public and private — in order to fill the gap, in terms of material and immaterial infrastructures, that has been created in many EU countries by the need to comply with the restrictive policies necessary to bring these countries' public finances into line with the Maastricht criteria and the terms of the Stability Pact, and, at the same time, to guarantee an investment plan geared at strengthening competitiveness and favouring the launch of a model of sustainable

development.

This roughly outlined plan, in accordance with the objectives established in Lisbon, could make provision for:

- investments aimed at completing the European networks in the transport, energy and telecommunications sectors, also taking into account the connection requirements emerging in the wake of EU enlargement;
- a plan of investment in R&D and the promotion of higher education, to strengthen the competitiveness of European production;
- public and private investments in avant-garde technologies aimed at promoting European champions in the most progressive industrial sectors;
- the funding of a series of projects aimed at improving the quality of life of EU citizens and at guaranteeing sustainable development objectives (sustainable mobility, waste water treatment, renewable energy sources, new sources of clean energy, etc.);
- investments to guarantee the conservation and increased exploitation of cultural assets.

In the context of this plan to revive the European economy, increasing expenditure on R&D and on higher education emerges as particularly important, to improve productivity and make European production more competitive. In the past decade, the EU member states have invested 1.9 per cent of their GDP in R&D, as opposed to the 2.6 per cent invested by the United States, while spending on higher education in Europe has absorbed 1.3 per cent of the GDP as opposed to the United States' 3.3 per cent. According to Aghion estimates, the EU needs to increase its expenditure on higher education by at least one GDP percentage point over the next decade (at the same time implementing a profound reform of the system of university *governance*).

12. Union Bonds as a Means of Funding an Economic Policy to Boost Growth in Europe.

Faced with the threat of a recession of the American economy and a slowing down of the growth of the global economy, the Bush administration has responded by proposing an expansionary fiscal measure, worth 1 per cent of the USA's GDP; added to this, the Federal Reserve has, on several occasions, lowered the federal funds interest rate. In Europe, on the other hand, it seems entirely unrealistic to envisage the introduction of an economic policy to support growth, given that maintenance of price

stability is the primary objective of the ECB, under the terms of the Maastricht Treaty; moreover, no impetus in this direction can come from the national budgets, which are bound by the need to comply with the rules of the Stability Pact. And the European budget, under the present rules, is in no position to contribute to efforts to boost growth.

In the context of a strategy to relaunch European growth, on a continental level, the European budget would have to be given an active role. But such a strategy would also have to be substantially different from the one implemented in America. Whereas, in America, reduction of interest rates and a policy of tax relief for families is seen as the way to boost consumption, Europe's priority should be a strong recovery of investments, in order to make the whole business system more competitive, through higher productivity, and in order to increase the wellbeing of families, through a sizeable increase in collective consumption. At the same time, and here, too, there emerge considerable differences with respect to the American approach, an expansionary policy in Europe should be introduced in a framework of financial stability, guaranteed on the one hand by the ECB, which would have to be careful not to force recovery through excessive reduction of the level of interest rates — given the long-term risks of this, clearly highlighted by America's experience — and, on the other, by the constraints (designed to prevent the public finances of EMU member states from running out of control) deriving from the Maastricht Treaty and the Stability Pact. In short, it is a question of following the road indicated by the Delors Plan of 1993, whose fundamental lines were, subsequently, partially taken up in the Lisbon Agenda.

What is needed, then, is a European economic development plan of around the same dimensions as the American one, i.e. worth around one GDP percentage point (again, this is in line the Delors plan). Once this choice has been made, there are two possible avenues that can be followed to find the resources needed to sustain the recovery of the economy. The first is, with the support of the European Investment Bank, to finance the European plan through the issuing of "Union bonds" — that is, bonds issued by the EU and guaranteed by the Community budget. Given the EU's reputation on the world market and the current strength of the euro, these bonds could be issued at low interest rates; in addition to strengthening the European financial market, they would help to attract a large slice of global saving that currently, in the absence of valid alternatives, ends up on the American market, even though the value of the dollar continues to fall. Moreover, financing the growth support policy through

debt would also seem to be justified by the decision to favour investments, whose profitability is deferred, over increases in private consumption.

Should this kind of budgetary reform appear difficult to realise, an alternative road will inevitably be taken, namely that of applying a *golden rule* at national — not European — level. In this way, the expenditure provided for under the European development plan would be exempted from the constraints of the Stability Pact, and could thus be financed by the issuing of national Treasury bonds. The results obtained would be similar, but in this case they would be accompanied by the risks implicit in loosening the stringent rules that have allowed Europe to move towards conditions of financial stability. It is certainly true that peer pressure and monitoring at European level could reduce the risks of “imaginative finance” potentially inherent in the application of the golden rule at national level; but, in any case, the application of a European golden rule seems to be more in line with an evolution towards the founding of a federal financial system in Europe, in which budget balances can be managed, at the level of the central government, in accordance with macroeconomic stabilisation policies, while the national governments remain bound, by the terms of the Maastricht Treaty and the rules of the Stability Pact, to a policy of budgetary equilibrium.

13. *A Policy of Sustainable Development on a Global Scale.*

Whereas, in Europe, relaunching growth presupposes a supply policy, geared at increasing productivity through a series of measures ranging from more spending, by business, on R&D to a large increase in the share of income invested in higher education; or from the creation of material and immaterial infrastructures to link the different areas of the EU, to the completion of the internal market (through a profound integration, in particular, of the sector of business-related services), on a global level, there can now be no avoiding the need to introduce, at last, a Keynesian-type policy in support of the development of the most economically backward countries, those of Africa first and foremost.

Indeed, not all the areas of the world have been affected, to same degree, by the process of development triggered by globalisation phenomenon. Many countries, the African states in particular, started out from conditions so severely backward that they have not been able to participate successfully and profitably in the expansion of international trade. Even though the rate of economic growth in Africa has certainly

accelerated over the past ten years, as a result of the increased demand for primary goods from industrially developing countries, this has not been enough to allow these economies to get off the ground and start absorbing the masses of the unemployed, or, therefore, to develop a domestic demand on the back of a significant increase in disposable income. Furthermore, the weakness of the political systems that emerged after the end of colonisation, added to the lack of technicians and skilled labour, has so far made it difficult for these countries to attract the international capital — in particular investments by multinational corporations — needed to solve the problem of the shortage of domestic capital and trigger a process of industrialisation outside the sphere of raw materials.

As way out of these conditions of chronic backwardness, Spinelli suggested launching a Marshall Plan for the Third World, based on the interests of the contributing countries and not purely on a spirit of transnational solidarity. In fact, by transferring financial resources to African countries in particular, Europe could transform a vast potential demand into real demand, thereby favouring — thanks to increased exports — the transition towards a new model of development which globalisation has made necessary. But this “Marshall Plan,” suggested by Spinelli, must not be allowed to take the form of unconditional income transfers — these would serve only to perpetuate the corruption of the dominant classes —, but rather that of the funding of regional development plans, promoted by regional groupings of states, which, at last, are beginning to emerge in Africa too.

But this is not all. Africa’s environmental conditions are extremely fragile, and they risk further deterioration on account of two factors: first, spiralling oil prices are making it increasingly difficult for the continent to obtain an adequate energy supply, and this is leading to increased use of its forests to meet this need (already, 49 per cent of Africa’s primary energy supply does not come from fossil fuels), and thus to a loss of biodiversity and a depletion of carbon dioxide sinks; second, climate change is intensifying the desertification process, exacerbating the food supply problems of countries that, to a large extent, are already living at barely subsistence levels. The launch of a policy to favour sustainable growth of the African economy can be put off no longer.

14. *Europe’s Responsibilities.*

Such a policy is not needed only in order to favour the start of development in Africa; it is also essential to Europe’s transition towards

a model of sustainable development. A process of redistribution of wealth, on a vast scale, is currently taking place at global level. The so-called BRICs (Brazil, Russia, India and China) have become the symbols of this process. But this economic growth is bringing with it a progressive degradation of the environment. The growing global demand for goods and services is leading to an excessively rapid increase in the demand for natural resources and creating an environmental emergency. To respond to this, it is necessary to adopt models of consumption more compatible with the need to protect the quality of the environment.

On this front, too, Europe bears a heavy weight of responsibility, given that there is greater awareness in Europe, among public opinion and politicians, that current growth rates of production and consumption are incompatible with maintenance of the world's natural balances. It is thus necessary to start rendering production processes more environmentally sustainable and, at the same time, to start containing the growth of consumption of market-produced goods in order to make room for an expansion of the types of consumption needed to meet the primary needs of the population, and in particular those of its most vulnerable groups (we might cite, first of all, the care of the elderly, the sick and the disabled, but also the conservation of collective goods and of the territory, the protection of cultural assets, and so on), above all through extensive recourse to the non-profit sector. And in this area, too, Spinelli's ideas regarding compulsory civil service emerge as more relevant and urgent than ever.

Europe thus has a twofold responsibility. First of all, it must start up, internally and quickly, a process of conversion of production and consumption, in order to ensure that product growth is accompanied by an increase in wellbeing, not by a reduction in the quality of life, which is what is happening now. At the same time, while implementing an austerity policy internally, it must strive to favour the sustainable development of Africa, being careful to finance only projects apt to reduce energy dependence on fossil fuels and favour the conservation of environmental and natural resources. However, there is currently no indication that such major transformations are on the horizon and, moreover, in spite of the repeated statements of principle in favour of sustainable development advanced both at national level and by the European Commission and Parliament, it is hard to envisage a substantial change, in favour of more environmentally friendly development, in the absence of a European government equipped with real power and thus the capacity to turn European politics in a different direction.

15. *Financing the Budget from Own Resources.*

Naturally, with a view to bringing about an in-depth reform of the EU budget, it is necessary to act not only on the knowledge that the investments envisaged by a European development plan can be financed by the issuing of Union bonds, but also by making provision for a return to a system of genuine own resources. The so-called fourth resource is actually nothing other than a national contribution, proportional to the single country's GDP. To be turned into a true own resource, it would have to be replaced by a European surtax on national income taxes, paid to the EU budget by the citizens directly, so as to increase both the transparency of taxation and, at the same time, the accountability of the European level of government that is levying the resources.

A new source of funding for the EU budget could be found by going back to the Commission's draft directive for a carbon/energy tax. In a situation in which the risks associated with climate change are becoming increasingly clear, and the need to replace fossil fuels with alternative sources of energy increasingly urgent — also in view of the huge increases in oil prices —, a tax based on the carbon content of energy sources would seem to be an ideal instrument for triggering self-perpetuating energy-saving and fuel-switching processes, reducing the negative environmental impact of energy consumption, and encouraging the introduction of less energy-intensive production processes.

The process of reforming the EU budget should also include a review of the rules that shape budgetary choices. First of all, the multiannual financial perspectives should be approved at the start of the Parliament's activity and their duration should correspond to that of the legislature. They should be approved by highly qualified majorities and serve, for five years, as the framework of reference for annual budgetary choices. Lower levels of government should also be allowed to participate in decisions on the splitting of resources between the national and European levels of government. Once the multiannual perspectives have been approved, decisions on the activation of own resources to cover expenditure should be taken by a majority vote, and no longer by unanimity, through a codecision of the Parliament and Council, and without the need for ratification by the national parliaments.

16. *Conclusions.*

Increasingly urgently, the recovery of the European economy is

calling for implementation (at last) of the Lisbon Agenda and reform of the EU budget, which, structurally, must reflect the new priorities set out in the Agenda. There is also a need for in-depth reform of the financing of common policies, with the introduction of a European surtax on national income taxes in place of the fourth resource, a carbon/energy tax to favour sustainable development, and the issuing of Union bonds to finance the creation of the necessary material and immaterial infrastructures, and to make European production more competitive.

But the fact is that, as the Kok Report clearly showed, the Lisbon Agenda is not moving forward, and the reforms proposed by the Commission are, in truth, doing very little to favour this. The real reasons for the failure of the Lisbon strategy lie elsewhere and they are highlighted with extreme clarity by Collignon,¹ who draws attention to the fact that the objectives defined in the Lisbon Agenda have the nature of public goods. It is thus in the interests of member states to act as “free riders,” enjoying the benefits of reforms and initiatives introduced by other countries, but without sustaining the relative costs. Even though a cooperative solution could increase the benefits enjoyed by all the countries party to the agreement, the prevailing strategy is one of non-cooperation, which makes it impossible to progress towards the realisation of the objectives set.

For this reason, if an effective recovery of the European economy is what is seriously wanted, we need to see a transition from a system of *governance without government*, to use Rhodes’s expression,² to one of *governance of a government*, that is, the creation of a European government of the economy capable of overcoming the inefficiencies of the open method of coordination envisaged in Lisbon, whose weakness was reinforced by the decision of the European Council taken on March 22-23, 2005. But there does not seem to be any awareness of this need among Europe’s politicians, who have not even managed to carry through the institutional reforms provided for under the Constitutional Treaty which, in this regard, had in any case taken some wholly inadequate steps to guarantee adequate government capacity to favour an effective recovery of the European economy. The first step has to be that of acknowledging that Europe cannot have a government without first building a federal state equipped with limited, but real, powers, and that the European economy cannot possibly be governed — particularly in the face of the enormous problems presented by today’s globalised world — though the coordination of national policies managed by states that retain ultimate decision-making power in this field. This lesson, left to us by Spinelli, is as wholly valid today as it ever was.

NOTES

¹ S. Collignon, *The European Republic. Reflection on the Political Economy of a Future Constitution*, London, Federal Trust, 2003.

² R. A. W. Rhodes, "The New Governance: Governing without Government", in *Political Studies*, n. 3, 1996, pp. 652-667.

What Freedom for Europe?

BERNARD BARTHALAY

Europe is not occupied by any foreign power and is not dominated by anyone. Yet Europe does not have the same freedom of action that the United States, the pseudo-federation of Russia, and China have.

Europe is dependent. Europe has no will of its own. Europe is not free.

This is because it lacks unity. Europe has, of course, been engaged in a process of unification for more than half a century now, but its unity is not complete. Nothing has been sanctioned definitively. The same states that, in a moment of great wisdom, conceived of the unification project, are today ready to abandon it; they have become promoters of division more than factors of unity. This is the nature of things. Europe, in its vulnerability, offers itself up to the other powers in the world, which shamelessly exercise, at our expense (but through our own fault), the divide-and-rule tactic. This, too, is the nature of things.

European Realism.

The world continues to be a system of sovereign states, unbalanced in favour of just one power. And this global system of sovereign states is, for this one power, both its sphere of influence but also the source of its limitations. In short, it is a Westphalian system (global now, not European) in the hegemonic grip of just one state. The Europeans are familiar with the iron rule of this system; after all, they have lived under its effects for more than three centuries, and have disseminated them throughout the world. It is the iron rule of power politics, of the state-power. Within this “modern” system, there are states that have the strength, real or potential, needed to challenge the pre-eminent power; and states that do not have this strength, even though they may be under the illusion that they do. This national illusion, harboured by some European states, is now countered by another illusion, this time European. Founded on a project of unity for peace and capable of creating new material conditions conducive to peaceful relations between states, Europe has developed legal instru-

ments, placed at the service of its economic power, that allow it to impose its rules, or at least have its say, in global negotiations with the other regions of the world. Therefore, Europe should not need to have recourse to “modern” instruments of power. The theory is that the “post-modern” principle underpinning the Community system relieves the EU legal order of the need to have recourse to “modern” power politics, as though this system, merely because it exists in our own particular corner of the globe, were enough to incline the rest of the world towards a “post-modernity” in which relations based on law prevail over relations of force.¹

This is the “soft power” cosmopolitan idealism² that our illusion merchants are peddling. It is, for Europe, an illusion to believe that all it needs to do in its dealings with the world, as the Schuman declaration urges its states to do among themselves, is dispense with “hard power,” in order for not only peace to follow, but also equal rights of the powers and containment of the risks faced by our planet. It is suggested that it is, fundamentally, a question of leaving everything to the passing of time, which Javier Solana recently identified as the European Union’s greatest ally, as though — and this is an illusion upon an illusion — time were not already running out. It is wrong to lose sight of the fact that the world is a modern system, because to do so prevents one from seeing Europe’s political impotence, and the total absence of Europe in the global power balance. There is an enormous risk that the vacuum created by Europe’s absence will induce war and crisis, economic and environmental. Again, this is the nature of things.

After all, do all Europeans even have the same sense of the passing of time? I am not suggesting that different perceptions of the passing of time should be interpreted as peculiar national cultural traits, but simply as a more or less keenly felt thirst for Europe, a greater or lesser urgency to complete the process of unification, a different propensity, in the event of a crisis, to come down on the side of unity rather than favouring an “each for himself” attitude. It is a fact that Great Britain, despite Churchill’s 1946 declaration in favour of a “United States of Europe”, chose, at that time, to stay on the fringe of Europe; it is also a fact that, since then, Great Britain has always preferred the Atlantic to the Continent, the slow *laissez-faire* approach to the more rapid reaching of decisions characteristic of common policy making. Cosmopolitan idealism and the *laissez-faire* approach (basically, the cynicism of the all-powerful market), in fact, form a kind of alliance which is slowing down the process of unification, an alliance exacerbated by simple nationalistic opposition to

European unity (“Rule Britannia”, “right or wrong, my country” attitudes). It is a fact that France, an originator of the European project — we may recall Jean Monnet’s United States of Europe, Schuman’s federation, the “indissoluble union” advocated in the Fouchet Plan —, but also responsible for burying Europe’s constitutional acts (the statute of the proposed European Political Community, Hallstein’s federal budget, the Constitutional Treaty), continues to be trapped by the contradiction “no independence without power, no power for Europe,” which amounts to an affirmation of the perpetuity of the nation-state and the inevitable death of the European project. There also exists an alliance between cosmopolitan idealism and *souverainisme* (basically, the cynicism of the all-powerful state), which, combined with nationalisms (France’s *grandeur*, France for the French), constitutes a further obstacle.

Nevertheless, in certain periods, it is thanks to France, in part, that things move forward at all. So would it be true to say that with the election of Nicolas Sarkozy as President of the French Republic we have now entered one such period? To answer this question, we need first to examine Germany’s situation and Italy’s too, given that France alone, even in its best periods, cannot achieve anything in a European sense. At this point in the analysis it is necessary to adopt a methodological criterion: the usual distinction that is drawn between the *intergovernmental*, the *Community* and the *federal* has to be reviewed in the light of the paradigms of methodological nationalism and of methodological cosmopolitanism, the latter in its idealist and realist variants.

While it is clear that the intergovernmental method is based on internationalism and thus, in method terms, on nationalism, and that it therefore reflects a particularist ideology which accepts the impossibility of acting together when there is no unanimity of wills, it is less clear that the Community method, which is cosmopolitan, is only an idealism (“power through law”), denounced as renunciatory by the nationalists and other *souverainistes*, and even by federalists critical of the Community method, who thus, in a stupefying cacophony, end up coming together with the most romantic internationalism. In truth, the Community method has endured because it is ambivalent. Essentially, it solves the difficult problem of reaching decisions among sovereign states. By conferring on an independent body responsibility and a power of initiative (and, over time, the powers of many subsequent initiatives), the conditions are created (without damaging the interests of states that, from one occasion to the next, might be in the minority) in which states can vote and thus in which decisions can be taken that bind the states (common

rules). In this way, integration takes on the form of layers of Community laws (the *acquis*), some of which are oriented towards federal objectives. And herein lies the fundamental difference between the (above-described) Community method seen as abstract cosmopolitan idealism based on blind possibilism, in which new decisions are guided by previous decisions, and the Community method seen as cosmopolitan realism, targeted, clear-sighted voluntarism, in which new decisions are guided by a political objective (the federation), which is decided at the outset and then pursued in a coherent and continuous, unremitting fashion. In the cosmopolitan realism paradigm, the federation also emerges as the only possible way out when the realist version of the Community method has run its course, in other words, when it is no longer possible to advance small step by small step; when what is needed is a great leap forward; when it is a question of pooling that which can no longer be divided. In these conditions it emerges as the form that needs to be given to the community of democracies in order to save them from empire, both internally and externally. This is the logic that prevailed among some member states in relation to the creation of the single currency and the European Central Bank. It is this model of cosmopolitan realism geared at a federal objective that the Federal Republic of Germany espouses in its Constitution. It is the same model that prevailed in Italy when Spinelli and De Gasperi succeeded in getting the statute of the proposed European Political Community annexed to the European Defence Community project, and that also prevailed when Monnet and Schuman, in their pursuit of a noble political objective (Franco-German reconciliation), created, to this end, an apparently technical, economic and sectorial instrument. Strangely, it would again prove to be the prevailing model when de Gaulle submitted the Fouchet Plan to the other five European member states, presenting it as the founding act of an "indissoluble union," a plan that they rejected.

When the new President of France advocates advancing towards a "Europe of defence," definitively sealing the Union, or electing a president of a political Europe, the Europe he has in mind looks less and less intergovernmental and more and more like a community, at the very least. But is it a community with or without a precise end? When he has the Schuman declaration read out on the 14th of July, and when he quotes (now without omissions) the founding fathers, is he steering the building of Europe (according to him, the supreme priority of French politics) towards a federation or towards a system of sovereign states? This is a not hair-splitting question. It is the whole essence of the debate.

To Say it or Not to Say it?

But can we use the word “federal”? Mrs Thatcher refused to utter it. And since then, the whole of Europe, from the most fervent supporters of the *laissez-faire* approach to the opportunist wing of organised federalism,³ has, at every stage, followed her example, complicating the debate. If one wants to be absolutely unambiguous, the word “federal” cannot be avoided. If support for this ultimate objective is clearer in Germany and Italy than it is in France, this is without doubt because, in Germany, federalism and the building of Europe are ideas incorporated into the Constitution, because Rome is not Paris, and because neither Italy nor Germany have had a de Gaulle to make the idea of the *grandeur* of the Italian or German nation fashionable once again (something that, moreover, would actually have been fiercely resisted).⁴ It is not that de Gaulle complicated the issue. He clarified it, vetoing Britain’s entry into the EEC and proposing an indissoluble union, but opposing, paradoxically, a federal budget. The reason for the degeneration of the whole European debate in France was the settling of accounts (played out against the backdrop of the colonial wars and the Cold War) between the successors of de Gaulle and those of Monnet, Schuman, Pinay, Blum and Mollet. Of course, it was tempting for these successors to build their patrimony on the basis of what were still very recent memories, but now, after an interval of time, it would be wise to stop setting memories against one another so as to be able to strive, together, to reconcile ideas and demands long considered irreconcilable within the Union. Those of de Gaulle: authority of the state, organised concert of responsible governments,⁵ direct popular ratification,⁶ subordination of the executive to legitimate powers,⁷ indissolubility of the Union; and those of Monnet: equality of states, abolition of the right of veto, expression of the common interest, strength of common rules, the political objective.

This is what Nicolas Sarkozy has, so far, seemed intent on doing, and it is highly likely that he will not stop here if, like others before him, he wants to set his mark on the process of European integration.

Certainly, to do this could not help but calm the stormy waters of political debate in France, something that our neighbours and partners, often put off by all the hostility, more or less contained, between France’s two traditional political factions and between the new “yes” and “no” camps (two divisions that, moreover, cannot be superimposed), care little about. However, it has to be acknowledged that the Community method is quite widely opposed even outside the ranks of the nationalists and the

souverainistes, who are against any form of integration — some of its opponents are even to be found in the close *entourage* of Nicolas Sarkozy —, and that it has now become fashionable, both on the left and on the right, to write off the Monnet method as “superseded” (without really making it clear what is meant by the Monnet method: his institutional design, gradualism, or even the idea of economics being given precedence over politics).⁸ In any case, one thing, simplifying nothing, is clear: among those opposed to the Community method, there are many, even in the “yes” camp, who are critical of it because it goes beyond the intergovernmental level; in addition, there are those who would like to silence the Commission, those who see the right of veto as the states’ inalienable right, and those who protest against what they see as a government of judges and question the legitimacy of a parliament that does not belong to a nation. Yet, on the other hand, there are also those, even in the “no” ranks, who criticise the method for stopping half way along the road that leads to European federation, or even for precluding this outcome altogether. Meanwhile, support for the Community method, just as widespread, is accompanied in some cases by the realisation that the intergovernmental approach is no way to achieve either efficiency or democracy, and even by the admission that, ideally, it is only through a federation that they can be made to co-exist; others, instead, support the method itself, its universality, in the spirit of Monnet, who would never have used the expression “United States of Europe” or taken America as his example and inspiration: these are the ones who, on principle, reject all that seems to smack of “presidentialisation” or complete parliamentarisation of Europe, of a European government, or of a European federal state. Given this scenario, it is hardly surprising that France’s partners struggle to understand what is at stake, and that even the French citizens themselves do not understand it very well. The important thing is no longer to submit to forms of intellectual terrorism, be it that of Mrs Thatcher or that of the “anti-liberals” or “anti-cosmopolitans” who have become the new thought police.⁹ This is an appeal to all the Monnets and Spinellis out there — Europe does still have some, and the upcoming generations contain more of them than might be imagined — to “pull the cart,” in the hope of obtaining, through the “Monnets”, a new initiative from France and from some of its partners, based on a new strategy of roles, and through the “Spinellis”, should it be necessary, fresh impetus based on new forms of participation of the citizens.¹⁰

As the experience of the euro clearly shows, the Community method is not an inevitable step towards the affirmation of the federal method. In

the case of indivisible competences, where the need for decision-making unity and responsibility is paramount, it is clearly necessary to skip the Community stage. Interest rates cannot be decided around a table by a council of governors, required to agree unanimously on a would-be “common” policy to be conducted by central banks that remain independent of each other. Indeed, the central banks needed to be organised as a federal system with a single, common executive, the ECB, distinct from the national central banks, and this is precisely what was understood, and indeed realised, but only among the countries that were ready to take this step, and the Maastricht criteria were there to help identify which countries these were. Today, like it or not, these countries form a core of EU member states that share a common system of monetary government, open to all the other members as and when they should prove ready to be part of it. This seems to beg the question: why not do the same in the spheres of foreign policy and defence? The first point, in answer to this question, is that a bank is nothing other than an agency. Even though currency is a matter for the state, and even though the power to coin money is a kingly prerogative, by which we clearly mean a “sovereign” one, the fact remains that the governor of a central bank, even though he is independent, does not wield political power, but has only technical, “trivial” power, that his fate does not depend on the polling booth, and that, regardless of whether the bank is independent or not, he plays no part in the struggle for power. The second point is that this problem has arisen only once before, between 1951 and 1954, and that ever since the collapse, through France’s fault, of the European Defence Community project, which France itself had created, it has constantly been avoided, and the question of pooling diplomacies and armed forces shelved (a shelving that seems to be moving from provisional to definitive). There has been no shortage of small steps forward, taken providing the independence of the commanders in chief of the armed forces (i.e. of the heads of state or of government) and of the foreign ministers was not infringed. For instance, the creation of a European External Action Service or of the Eurocorps (both agencies), and even — this is a new development — the existence of a European Chief of Staff (again an agency), have not altered in the slightest the formal sovereignty of the states and the power of the elected leaders. Even the Lisbon Treaty, which creates a stable President of the European Council and raises the profile of the High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy (who will become High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy), stopping short of giving him the rank of minister, emerges as no threat to

sovereignty, on a formal level at least.¹¹

The only genuinely new development with regard to the institutions — this is something that Continental Europe, unlike Great Britain, has still not grasped completely — concerns the fact that the enlargement of the EU from 15 to 27 countries has produced an effect, sanctioned by the Lisbon Treaty, that most of the governments were not expecting: namely the transformation of the Council Secretariat, headed by the High Representative, into an out-and-out supranational institution, entirely on a par with the Commission and the Parliament. To work efficiently with 27 members, the Secretariat can no longer settle for a role as a go-between; instead, it must affirm its own authority, its European authority. And paradoxically, this supranationality is indeed in the interest of the governments before the Commission. And it is here that the problems start. The more important the Secretary, alias the High Representative, becomes, the more he or she will overshadow the Commission, of which, moreover, he/she is vice-president; this is a development that is bound to strengthen the supranational character of the Secretariat, but that will, at the same time, progressively eclipse the national ministers and heads of government, the very ones who had hoped to use the High Representative to prevent the Commission from resembling a European government. And this is to say nothing of the President of the European Council, who will be forced to raise his profile at the expense of the President of the Commission. All this explains why the European CFSP and ESDP machine is stuck in its tracks and cannot move forward! Because, in EU-27, there exists neither the effective convergence (awareness of common interests) and cohesion (working solidarity) that a full European foreign policy should generate, nor a European political body. The task of the High Representative is to conduct a policy that will struggle to survive, and that will never be anything other than extremely partial, always liable to conflict with the actions undertaken by the single states. But, on a smaller scale, as the euro has shown, coherence is possible, and a sufficient level of cohesion can be achieved. In this regard, it is worth considering extremely carefully a declaration made by Jean-Claude Juncker, on November 8, in Berlin. Recalling the fact that the UK is not in the Schengen area or the eurozone, and had recently secured derogations from the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and also in the fields of police and judicial cooperation, Juncker underlined the need to respond to this state of affairs by strengthening the central core of states that adhere to all the rules of the European Union, authorising the establishment, around the outside of this core, of a corona of countries whose admission is only

partial. This is clearly a recurrent theme for Juncker who, on a previous November 8 (on this occasion addressing the French Senate in Paris), spoke of different “apartments in the European building: one apartment for those who want to do everything together, plus two or three additional rooms for those who do not want to, or cannot, participate in all the EU policies.” He went on to say that, in his view, to want, at all costs, a single construction and the same obligations for as many as forty or so countries is to want a project doomed to failure.

Nucleation,¹² as well as being part of the dynamics of Europe ever since the time of the ECSC, is an idea that has cropped up in the European debate from time to time ever since the Schäuble-Lamers paper of September 1, 1994;¹³ the organisation of a rearguard was even hypothesised, unofficially, by the main author of the Penelope project (the Commission’s draft for a constitution), the late François Lamoureux.¹⁴ Will this idea achieve strategic importance, as a model of “completion” (as opposed to deepening or enlargement) in the situation that will be created in the wake of the ratification (if ever) of the Treaty of Lisbon, or will it instead form, alongside the spill-over or domino theory, a simple analysis instrument to be added to the tool-box of the economist or political scientist of integration?

Envisaging the Core.

Envisaging the core is a difficult undertaking, because one also has to ask oneself which countries have both the legitimacy and the credibility needed to embark on this initiative, and what complete adhesion to the EU actually means, in other words, what the definition of a full member is. And is a “core”, as a full union, or accomplished union, the same thing as a union of full members? How should it be formed? How should it be organised? What should its status within the Union be? And what should it do that the present Union does not do or is not able to do (be this a postulated incapacity or one that might quickly emerge within the first few years of application of the modified Treaty)?

It is clearly the last of these questions that needs to be answered first. The core is only a means, as indeed the Union itself is, of saving the Europeans from division and the world from chaos. One need only consider the following expression, found in the British press: *Europe is shrinking, the West as well*. The size problem, even just in economic and demographic terms, is plain for all to see: Europe and North America would have to team up in order to hope to be able to measure up to China

or India tomorrow.¹⁵ This is the same as saying that a balanced transatlantic relationship is essential in order to ensure, in the world, the victory of reason, of the liberal rule of law and of representative democracy. If a common energy and environment policy is a prerequisite for Europe's sustainable development, then that of the whole world hangs on our capacity to draw the United States of America, primarily, in this same direction and then, in their wake, two subcontinents with populations numbering billions, even if the price to be paid for this has to be a "great-power" foreign policy, served by an appropriate defence policy.¹⁶ The peace and freedom of the Balkan states and of the area surrounding the European Union and our collective freedom of action in the face both of a Russia whose future direction looks uncertain and of the chaos in the Middle East also depend on our intelligence capacity and our capacity to project power, to control seas (primarily the Mediterranean and the Baltic) and space: our capacity to dissuade any potential aggressor. At the same time, the credibility and promise offered by the Community method as the prototype of "tomorrow's forms of world government" (Monnet) depend on the completion of the process of European unification and the presence of an indissoluble union of countries ready and determined to take part in that process: a union that will still be open to all the EU member states, a federation within the Union. This prospect of federal completion explains why it is possible to view the Community method in two different ways. It can be seen as a useless return to the free-trade approach and to the illusion of global cooperation among nation-states under the protection and supervision of the most powerful nations, namely the United States and China (plus India, if it can gather the necessary will and prove able to find a way of coexisting with its great neighbour to the north), in other words, as a return to a world in which the European message, with all its values and principles, would no longer be believed, a world in which Europe simply would not feature. Alternatively, it can be seen as the most direct route to a multipolar global system of regional federations, to a new world order, to a global democratic government. Monnet's method has not been superseded: it is at a crossroads and the direction it takes depends on whether the Europeans choose to place it at the service of the *laissez-faire* approach, which is what the British insist on, or instead decide consciously to adopt and pursue the federal objective set out by Europe's founding fathers.

Europe can go on being an increasingly large *space* — in fact, the whole world can be considered a *space* —, rapidly becoming organised to be merely that, in which case businesses, trade unions, and the citizens

themselves will soon stop seeing the usefulness of the Union, which will not be capable of defending and promoting their interests; alternatively, Europe, a federal Europe within the Union, can become a *power* capable of doing for all the Europeans everything that, or even more than, America does for the Americans, in which case, the Europeans will regain faith in their future and become a people, capable of sharing with the other continents the experience they have gathered over more than half a century of victories over the “savage freedom of states” (Kant).

It was a mistake to use the word “constitution.” There cannot be a constitution without a state. Since there was never any intention of uniting the states in a single federal state, there was no call to talk of a constitution. Confused, the French and Dutch (as well as others not given the opportunity to have their say in a referendum) had the impression that, through the manipulation of “words and things,” they were being taken for a ride, not being offered genuine change; because, after all, the Treaty was merely about creating the conditions for more efficient decision-making within the enlarged EU, certainly not about “constituting” a state. They felt misled. This should serve as a lesson, because the time has now come to speak clearly. The time has come for Habermas to write a new article: “Why Europe Needs a State” (and why a state must be constitutional, democratic, federal and social).¹⁷ The time has come to declare that the problems of survival the world now faces cannot be solved effectively without first putting an end to this “new global disorder,”¹⁸ starting by turning Europe into a power; the time has come to make it clear that time is running out, that this “power Europe,” if it is to be credible both externally and in the eyes of the Europeans themselves, and if it is effectively to serve the objectives (like food and energy independence and sustainable development) already pursued by today’s impotent EU, can only be a federal state, a federal order that, “albeit allowing each state to develop its own national life in the manner most suited” to its culture and identity, “removes from the sovereignty of all the associated states the means of imposing their own selfish particularisms.” These words, borrowed from Spinelli,¹⁹ make it quite clear that the kind of state that is needed is only a minimal, sufficient, subsidiary state, certainly not a superstate. Moreover, we might at this point ask our adversaries to tell us exactly what they mean when they talk of a “superstate,” given that we take such pains to explain what a federation means. Don’t the eurosceptics in Britain (and elsewhere) consider the United States a free country? Do they really believe, against all the evidence to the contrary, that having suffered at the hands of two totalitarian regimes in the space of one

century the Continental Europeans might be tempted to invent a third? Or is what they are imagining some kind of centralised bureaucratic state, along the lines of the French or Prussian model? This is quite absurd. All those who give in to the temptation to think this way, be it out of laziness, demagoguery, habit or ignorance, need to beware of becoming ridiculous!

When talking of the power of Europe, i.e. the power to steer things in the direction of European principles and interests, it has to be understood that the *status quo* of an intergovernmental cooperation, groping its way along, has absolutely nothing in common with the policies that could be democratically defined and effectively conducted by a European federal state. The advances that have been made, a little by little, have been achieved in the shadows. The Europe that might be suspected of conspiring against the nations is this stealthy Europe, this Europe “en douce,” as Elisabeth Guigou called it the day after the referendum on the Maastricht Treaty.²⁰ And it is this same, slowly advancing Europe that allows adversaries, rivals, competitors and partners to score points over us, that passively looks on as other continents grow more powerful, and that will continue to look on as, before too long, our North American partner grows increasingly vulnerable and impotent and even begins its descent into decline. The time has come to act (beyond the sphere of simple cooperation among all the EU member states), pooling means of diplomacy and defence, instruments of intelligence and policing, that is, the indivisible competences, those areas in which decision-making unity and responsibility, representation and action are essential. It is also time to recognise that the Community method (particularly in a 27-member Union) is unworkable, and that even if all these areas were “communitarised,” as has been promised, this would still not solve the problem of the need for legitimacy, a need reflected in the states’ refusal to act and linked to the question of the use of the armed forces. If it is a question of taking just one step, as in the case of the single currency, as opposed to setting out on a long road, like that of the single market, then it is necessary to get rid of the idea that Europe cannot be created at a stroke, suddenly, and in the full light of day. It is time to admit that the process of drawing closer to the final objective has lasted long enough and that we need to take concrete action. Today, this is still a choice that we can make freely and cool-headedly, and we must therefore move now, before it becomes one that, in the midst of crisis and upheaval, we are forced to take hurriedly, in the heat of the moment, and at a time and in a form we will not have had a chance to ponder and decide calmly, among Europeans. Monnet’s

gradualism now needs to be replaced with — here we return to the roots of Spinelli’s federalism — the creation of a new internal and external sovereignty, built on the territory of different EU member states through the partial fusion (the fusion of the federal part) of their old sovereignties, which have remained intact up until now.²¹ The federation created in this way would inherit its member states’ rights and obligations, deriving from European and international law. It would represent them in the spheres of its competence.

It is worth remembering that it is precisely because the European Union’s existence has not eroded the national sovereignties that the member states retain this freedom to do what they want with them, partly fusing them (the federal method) — this is already the case of the single currency — but also continuing to share them (the Community method), as we see in the areas that are not fields of exclusive competence of the Union.²² The creation of this federation would be instantaneous, albeit comprising a series of separate legal and political acts, and it would present all the other member states (which should nevertheless be kept informed and invited to participate) with *afait accompli* (from which they would, previously, already have distanced themselves). Those launching the initiative of this founding act will necessarily have to display a strong common will, as spontaneously common as that shown by Schuman, Adenauer and De Gasperi. The timeframe for this “stroke,” delivered in full accordance with Community law, is neither the centuries-long one of the unfolding of the crisis of sovereignties, and of the taming of them, nor the historical one of the spontaneous evolution and growing interdependence of mankind: this stroke, regardless of whether it comes within or outside a moment of crisis, constitutes a breakaway moment and, as such, is not a new concept in the process of European integration.

It is feigned that this building of Europe is nothing other than a process that, if not continuous, may at least be seen as a chain of events in the context of a mechanism destined to last a very long time. But to feign this is to forget that the ECSC caught other countries off their guard without undermining the only European organisations in existence at the time (the Council of Europe and the OEEC). Those in central and eastern Europe tempted (now or in the future) to interpret a possible “nucleation” of the Union as a divisive act intended to reduce them to satellite states would do well to remember that today they would not even be members of a free union of free nations had the supporters of the ECSC had scruples about pressing on alone. A founding act means a break with the past. It could sweep away everything: there is no question about it! It is just about

letting the future in: that is the issue at stake.

The Federator.

To understand this idea of nucleation better, it might be useful to consider its separate phases or moments, which we may call those of opportunity, initiative, vision, communion of wills and, finally, deliberation (or constitution, meant in the strictest sense of the word). The phase of opportunity is the one in which the situation as a whole is analysed, and to devote oneself to this analysis publicly may be one way of helping to build the necessary consensus. One need only consider that the level (greater or lesser) of global disorder still depends (but for how much longer?) on Washington more than on any kind of global consciousness (a global consciousness is starting to appear, but it is not yet solidly reflected in the institutions of a legal community), and that we can be saved from environmental disaster only by an immediate, universal action, which demands new “forms of government” at world level, capable of bringing about a convergence of divergent interests. This is the phase in which it is necessary to involve the *raisons d'état* at work in the states of the necessary size, i.e., in the continental or sub-continental states. This is the “Machiavellian” phase of nucleation.

The initiative phase is the one in which the immediate needs and interests are assessed. It is the phase in which it is realised, thanks in part to the contribution of some enlightened soul, that the Europeans need to wake up if they are to avert the dangers now looming: stagflation, energy dependence, strategic weakness, demographic decline, instability around Europe's borders, and stagnation of research. By declaring, in resolute terms, just before the start of the French presidency of the EU, his intention to build a Europe of defence, Nicolas Sarkozy has opened a “window of opportunity,” because this intention derives from an analysis — consistent with the federalist view — of the risks and stakes involved; but it is also a window of initiative, in which not only France's ambitions for Europe need to be expressed, but also those of its partners. This French initiative, as long as it remains open and genuinely European, is reminiscent of other, earlier initiatives. It is a “Monnetian-Spinellian” moment. It is the kind of initiative that will trace the first outline of the federal core. A Europe of defence can be one of two things: either the Europe of the military-industrial complex, or the Europe of European armed forces under a unified command. The first option would be “great business” for the arms traders, whether the arms were intended for national or European

use. It clearly coincides with the interests of France; and also with those of Britain (with the usual risk of divergence). If, instead, it is a question of building the second pillar of NATO (and thus of going much further than a simple alliance within an alliance, which our partners, Germany in particular would not want), then a military command is not enough, as the Italians, in view of the events of 1951, can authoritatively assert. No army without a state, then. But no state, the Germans will retort, unless it is not only a democratic — this much should be clear to everyone — but also a federal and social state. Should this initiative remain open to all the other EU member states, then it will soon be possible to see an outline emerging: France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain. The British, providing there are no surprises, will want nothing to do with the state and, adopting a “wait and see” approach, will fall back on arms production programmes. The Netherlands, Portugal (both always sensitive to Britain’s positions) and Austria (unless it ends its “permanent” neutrality) could all decline the offer. Ireland and Finland, which are not members of NATO but use the single currency, could instead see it as an opportunity to become part of a collective defence system linked to NATO and thus to be present in NATO, as members of the federation, without having to adopt national stances. Denmark, a member of NATO and more and more willing to relinquish its opt-outs, could easily review its position on defence. Poland will not want to hear mention of federalism, at least initially, but Slovenia (which is in the eurozone) and Hungary (which has often spoken out in support of a European defence) may well come out in favour of joining (especially if Austria, which also uses the euro, does the same); in the same way, the Baltic states might follow the example of Finland, overcoming their fears about the prospect of seeing the Europeans divided again. “Everything is possible” Monnet writes “if only one can focus on a precise point that pulls all the rest in its wake.” In the light of all this, other entirely unexpected developments would, in the longer term, become probable, even in Sweden (where they are now starting to talk of a “hard core”²³ and are considering becoming members of NATO), in the UK, and ultimately in all the member states.

But the state, whose civil head is also head of the military, has to exist before the army (and its General Staff) can, since it is its precondition: this is where we reach the vision phase *à la Victor Hugo*. Ultimately, the conceptual framework for the Europe of defence will inevitably be that of the United States of Europe, for reasons of balance (equal partnership) and also of legitimacy: Europe will have credibility only if it has not only a single telephone number on which to take calls from the White House

or the Kremlin — it already has this through the High Representative — but also an interlocutor with the President of the United States who is not just a single individual — this already applies to both the President of the Commission and the future, “stable” president, but which of the two should it be? —, but above all an individual who, like the US president, has been chosen by election, is equipped to answer all questions on behalf of the federation, and is invested with the legitimacy needed to engage its armed forces in military operations, with or without the United States, in the framework of NATO, or acting unilaterally.

We then come to the phase of will, particularly the will of those who are not believed in France to possess any: the Italians, the Belgians and the Luxembourgiens. This is also the most delicate phase, because its positive outcome depends on the strength of conviction, the diplomatic skills, the imagination and, fundamentally, the personal commitment of men and women. These men and women are out there. They are our contemporaries. We rub shoulders with them. But who are they? Have they said what they think? Are they prepared to act? To induce this stirring of will is the main task of the federalists today, just as it was in the past; this is the moment in which whisperers, like Monnet and Spinelli in their time, providing their words reach the ears of some of these men and women, have the power to change the course of things. The federalists, through a strategy of influence and through consensus-building or people-building actions, can be manufacturers of will: the will of these men and women to dissuade France from taking any hasty unilateral step, particularly one that excludes Germany; to talk Germany into responding positively to a French proposal that, if we follow its logic through, goes far beyond the revised Treaty with which Berlin, for the time being, is feigning satisfaction; to obtain, through Germany, the support of Nicolas Sarkozy (who is seen as unprejudiced) for the principle of the federal state, so as to favour acceptance of any French proposal to seal something definitive, something that Nicolas Sarkozy claims to want to see, in other words support *for the federating nature of the pact that binds indissolubly* the parties to the agreement; the will to give rise, in this way, to the federator (here already European) whose absence General de Gaulle lamented — the federator that he himself proved unable to be. Finally, the will to go on besieging the European governments, in order to bring together, under the same conditions and without scope for derogations, the greatest possible number of Union member states. The French need to be made to see that many of their partners recognise the urgency of the need for European foreign and defence policies, and share their convic-

tion that EU-27 is not the working framework in which this need can be met, that enhanced cooperations will change nothing,²⁴ and that what is called for is an ambition that, initially, not all can aspire to. But France also needs to appreciate clearly just what it would lose in the event of failure. It would sacrifice any chance of offering the Europeans, and thus the French, the means to achieve their legitimate goal: a European public power, a European power to provide balance in the world and to pave the way for world government.

And so we come, last but not least, to the final phase: nucleation. This is the most consensus-based, because it is now simply a question of exercising representative (and participatory) democracy: it is Spinelli's constituent moment, the moment of deliberation and of the crystallisation of the founding consensus.

The moment in which a constituent assembly is called for should, in fact, be a moment of national and European reconciliation. In France, it was, in fact, a leading Gaullist, Fouchet himself, creator of the plan that took his name, who lamented, shortly before his death: "we should have convened a constituent assembly." There is no need to explain to readers of *The Federalist* the axiological significance, political impact and the strategic importance of this moment.

This will be followed by the period of completion, by the slow process of enlarging the core until it reaches the Union's boundaries, which will no longer be the same as they are today.

To learn from past defeats and failures, in a spirit of absolute humility, is, in the end, our only obligation. In particular, the defeat of the so-called Constitutional Treaty, due to too much idealism. "*Embrassons-nous, folle ville*" is not a realist maxim: the haste to become wider, before first becoming deeper, has sealed the destiny of the European Union, which will go on being a mere space, useful in the pursuit of prosperity, but unsuited to the wielding of power; the Americans themselves recognise Europe's potential, but, knowing it to be squandered, they laugh at it. Then there is the failure to create an "economic government" of the eurozone, as well as the failure of the Lisbon strategy and of the CFSP. Indeed, by failing to include the broad lines of economic policy (and the relative budgetary instruments), a general framework for national educational and research policies, and the CFSP itself in the scope of the Union's exclusive (federal) competences,²⁵ the governments have condemned Europe to decline. We must also consider the trend for anarchic differentiation as a defeat: through the granting of opt-outs, derogations and exemptions, as well as British rebates, the principle of the equality of

the states' duties and obligations has been lost: what has emerged is not a vanguard, but a rearguard, which has its place in the EU area, but which can be likened to a ball and chain holding back the full members of a future full union, which aspire to carry weight on the world stage.

It is possible to see that the two ideas, on defence and political union, central to Nicolas Sarkozy's vision of the future are destined to fail (like the EDC and the Fouchet Plan), unless it is appreciated that a Europe of defence is inconceivable without a *political* Europe; and that a political Europe is inconceivable without a *federator*.

The federator, in the absence of a great historical figure with the calibre to fulfil this role, can only be a fistful of parliamentarians and men of government acting in concert to bring about a return to the objective of Europe's founding fathers. After all, nothing of what has been achieved thus far could have been achieved without keeping this objective in mind; equally, if we allow this objective to be forgotten, even the greatest ambitions are destined to end in failure.

This missing federator could emerge from the core of full members entering into an indissoluble pact,²⁶ taking the form of a free Europe, a sovereign union, a federal state made up of the member states that are realistic enough to recognise that the original design is more relevant today than ever. And from their citizens there could emerge a first genuine European (not national) democracy, called upon to federate, step by step, the whole of the continent.

NOTES

¹ The post-modernity paradigm has been explored in depth, in the field of the historical-social sciences, by Ulrich Beck, whose works analyse its potential: first *Risikogesellschaft – Auf des Weg in eine andere Moderne* (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1986), then *Macht und Gegenmacht im globalen Zeitalter: neue weltpolitische Ökonomie* (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2002) and *Der kosmolitische Blick oder: Krieg ist Frieden* (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004), and finally, together with Edgar Grande, *Das kosmopolitische Europa* (Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004). In the field of politics, and in particular in that of international relations, his analysis is too synchronic, based on the interior cosmopolitanisation of each individual. As for the states, they can be assumed to be behaving like modern states, still engaging, over essential matters, in relations of force tempered little by the interior cosmopolitanisation of the men of government and by the trend towards the international organisation. In the European Union, the most advanced form of international organisation — as we shall see, the EU's experience is that (thus far unique) of integration geared towards complete union —, where war has become materially impossible, as Monnet and Schuman imagined, and where sovereignty has been 'tamed' (to use Paul Magnette's lovely expression), legal relations

already prevail *de facto* over relations of force. For this also to be the case *de jure*, irreversibly, the Union would need to be indissoluble, and thus a state (federal). One might say that Europe has already become post-modern internally, while the world outside it remains modern, and to forget this would be every bit as suicidal as the unilateral disarmament theories that were once in vogue.

² This is an idea proposed by Joseph Nye in *Bound to Lead – The Changing Nature of American Power*, New York, Basic Books, 1990, as a reaction to theories that predicted a decline in America's power. The idea was picked up on and applied to Europe, in French by Zaki Laïdi (*La norme sans la force – L'énigme de la puissance européenne*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2005), and in English by Robert F. Cooper (*The Post-Modern State and the World Order*, Demos, 2000). Cooper is hardly an insignificant figure, being an aide to EU High Representative, Javier Solana. It is true that he tones down his affirmation on the fact that a post-modern state is emerging, whose sovereignty would amount to nothing other than the right to a seat at the table, by explaining why the world still needs empires ("Why we still need Empires", *The Observer*, Sunday 7 April, 2002: <http://www.observer.co.uk/worldview/story/o,11581,680117,00.html>). This is perhaps where we might find the explanation for the dangerous title that Ulrich Beck gave, or allowed to be given, to the French translation of *Das kosmopolitische Europa: Pour un empire européen* (Paris, Flammarion, 2007). In any case, his idea comes down to the recognition that power politics (great or small) is not dead in the global system of states and that it is not by introducing rules against them that empires can be contained.

Readers of *The Federalist* know that the federalism professed here cannot be suspected of abstract idealism, cosmopolitan or otherwise, or of naivety. However, I am not certain the same can always be said of organised federalism and some of its contradictory currents.

³ The abstract cosmopolitan idealism of the naive and of all those who claim that the Community method can go on being sufficient indefinitely, or that Europe does not need to be (or never will be) a state, are in truth playing the laissez-fairism game of the financial markets and of their channels of mass communication, whose rallying cry is not "less state" (an argument that has pervaded French statism ever since liberalism became fashionable again) or "state only if necessary" (the subsidiary state according to the German model), but "as little state as possible" or "no state at all," and, since the world is, after all, in need of a "policeman," what is required is an imperial republic at least: Raymond Aron was not wrong. If Europe proves unable to react to this prospect by federating immediately (a scenario perfectly depicted by Englishman Anthony Giddens: "federalism is dead"), it will be deliberately hastening the advent of a world in which another power, or other powers, step in to contest the American *imperium*: American democracy, without European help, will not survive. This is the meaning of the title (*Comment l'Europe va sauver l'Amérique*, Paris, Saint-Simon, 2004) given to the French edition of a fine book written by a former advisor to Bill Clinton, Charles A. Kupchan: *The End of the American Era, U.S. Foreign Policy and the Geopolitics of the Twenty-first Century*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.

⁴ To say that the European Union is not a state is to affirm an obvious fact. But to say that it constitutes a federal system of government is to lie, even today: It is clear — here I borrow Kenneth Clinton Wheare's penetrating definition, from his essay *What Federal Government is* — that the states are independent, but are they coordinated? Alternatively, we might ask: whose job is it to "organise or integrate (the states) in a harmonious operation, avoiding overlapping of roles, without leaving gaps and without creating contradictions" (here I draw on the definition of "coordinate" taken from *Logos – Grand dictionnaire de la langue française*, Bordas, Paris). In truth, the Oxford constitutionalist was perfectly clear, saying that the federal government is characterised by the division of competences among authorities that are in no way subordinate to each other; this applies as much to the extension

as to the exercising of their constitutional competences.

But what this conveys is division in the *sharing* sense, almost fusion (to say nothing of confusion), rather than division in the sense of separation. I have even heard Delors remark: “After all, we don’t want a return to Montesquieu!” The Union, by virtue of its founding act — a treaty, even though it is called a “Constitutional Treaty” — remains subordinate to the states. It is necessary to recognise this, however tempting it is to draw up a list of the federal characteristics that the Treaties have progressively conferred upon it (primacy of Community law, pre-eminence of the Court of Justice, elected Parliament, exclusive competences, common citizenship, principle of subsidiarity, double legitimacy).

⁵ It seems that what De Gaulle ever really had in mind was representation of states through their governments. This is, moreover, what happens in German federalism. It is generally recognised that this is the most suitable solution in the case of a union of old nations: it gives the Upper House a power that an elected senate would not have. Historically, it was the Netherlands that first raised the question “but where are the states?” during the negotiations for Treaty of Paris, after Monnet had proposed a High Authority. He had immediately seen the advantage that could be derived from accepting the creation of a council at the same as time putting forward the idea of an assembly, prefiguring, through these two institutions, a federal-type bicameralism and obtaining without striking a blow the support of the Germans.

⁶ De Gaulle never put European acts to referendum, although it was certainly his view that an act of indissoluble union should be ratified by the French people. The failure of the Fouchet Plan decided otherwise.

⁷ De Gaulle’s criticism of European technocracy, whose development he had actually contributed to, having had the Commission placed under the permanent supervision of the Brussels-based committee of diplomats, COREPER (Committee of Permanent Representatives to the European Communities), was always accompanied by a great distrust of the obscure power of officialdom in France itself. In his view, an administration was there to serve. Yet he never realised that an administration keeps all elected authorities, particularly territorial ones, on a leash (with the exception of the President and his ministers).

⁸ Many throw out the good with the bad: in this case, the institutional design with the economic gradualism. This was not Monnet’s choice, but that of the French National Assembly with its 1954 rejection of the EDC. Having closed the door on political union, it became necessary to apply the ECSC-type model to the economy generally, and first of all to the market. The irony is that this same country, rejecting in 2004 (fifty years on), a constitutional avenue deemed capable of paving the way for a movement back in the direction of the political objective, actually believed itself to be breaking with the “market first” or “currency first” logic to which it had previously condemned itself.

The Monnet method, as its name suggests, is just a method; it does not set out to divide competences between the states and their “community”, so as to protect the states’ rights, and also those of the citizens, but to facilitate common decision making by the member states: the deliberating and voting (within the Council) on rules proposed by an organ independent of the states (the Commission) which results in the generation of an autonomous system of rules to be adhered to by the states that together created it (this accumulation of rules, the *acquis*, is the concrete reflection of the method’s gradualism). But it must be noted that, downstream, the implementation of the rules continues to be, at territorial level, the responsibility of the single states (the Union does not have its own territorial administration) and that, upstream, the states lost no time undermining (through the COREPER — this body was devised under de Gaulle as a means of controlling the Commission — and through countless “committees” bringing together civil servants belonging to a general directorate of the Commission and national ministers responsible for the same issues in each

of the states) the independence of the Commission from as early as the stage in which “its” proposals are worked out. This trend was noted by the political scientists who took it as the starting point for the development of their theory of administrative “fusion” (W. Wessels, “Comitology: fusion in action. Politico-administrative trends in the EU system”, *Journal of European Public Policy* 5/2, 1998, pp. 209-234; Dietrich Rometsch and Wolfgang Wessels (eds), *The European Union and Member States: Towards Institutional Fusion?*, Manchester, M.U.P., 1996). It coincides with the prospect of a government of bureaucrats denounced by Romano Prodi. And were this trend, which is perfectly in line with the French and “Prussian” traditions, to be confirmed, the result would be a monolithic administrative state, without counter-powers. A state of this kind, which was created under the monarchy and survived the French Revolution, continues, essentially, to exist in France. If this is what the British are afraid of, then I can understand them, and if this is the case, then they should draw on all the resources of their political liberalism in order to propose a federation with limited, but real, powers, rather than transferring their sovereignty, presumed to be intact, to the United States.

⁹ One aspect of the referendum debate in France struck me in particular: the breadth of the opposition to the market and to openness. Many defined themselves as “anti-liberal” and “anti-cosmopolitan.” I realised, on reading Emmanuel Faye’s book, *Heidegger, l’introduction du nazisme dans la philosophie*, Paris, Albin Michel, 2005, which is full of texts by authors belonging to the NSDAP, that they have the same targets as the Nazis, who directed all their hatred at democracy and at cosmopolitanism (the Jews, cosmopolitan on account of the Diaspora). Something similar applies to Bolshevism which, in spite of all its universalistic claims, taken from Jacobinism, never abandoned its innate hostility towards “bourgeois” freedoms and declared itself a victim of a cosmopolitan conspiracy. How better to describe the “totalitarian” cultural soup into which, during the referendum campaign, all those who believed the false arguments of a minority of activists allowed themselves to be drawn?

¹⁰ “Monnet and I are pulling the cart like two stubborn mules — he in the hope of obtaining a new initiative from the governments, I in the hope of gaining fresh impetus from the movement.” These are Spinelli’s words, quoted by Italian President Giorgio Napolitano in his elegant essay entitled, *Altiero Spinelli e l’Europa*, published to mark the centenary of Spinelli’s birth. (Bologna, Il Mulino, 2007). My ideas on the participation of the citizens are already in the public domain. The reader is invited to refer to my website (currently being prepared): <http://www.peupleeuropeen.eu>, which will include a “Draft Manifesto for a New Congress of the European People.”

¹¹ The President is answerable only to the states, the only holders of sovereignty, and the High Representative is not one of his ministers. It is actually paradoxical that the High Representative is likely, in practice, to look like the natural interlocutor with third party heads of state, more likely in fact than the President of the European Council, whose function is to preside, or to chair, not to represent. Tony Blair, supported by others, Nicolas Sarkozy among them, nevertheless seems to have formed a different idea, wholly exterior, of this function. Should this idea prevail, it will necessarily create the need for a review of the institutional order, making provision for the direct election of this president, who will effectively act as a President of the Union. This, in turn, will inevitably prompt objections of the kind raised in the sixties and seventies over the European Parliament: what is the point of electing a president who will have no powers? Why choose this president in the same way you would choose a head of state when the Union is not a state? If the precedent of the direct election of the European Parliament means anything, this will be the time for the organised federalism and the non-organised euro-federalists to “pile on the pressure.”

A report by Antonio Missiroli analysing, for the European Parliament’s Security and Defence Subcommittee, the probable effects of the new Treaty on the ESDP was recently

published in Brussels: *European Policy Centre, The Impact of the Lisbon Treaty on ESDP: Opportunities and Unknowns*. He fears, in this case as in that of the French project for a Mediterranean Union, that the Union risks being replaced by a network of regional unions, which may or may not be associated with one another, and he traces the outline of a Europe of defence that might be defined superimposed-dissociated, given that it includes the UK and Poland.

¹² This is the formula I used in my book *Nous citoyens des Etats d'Europe...* (Paris, L'Harmattan, 1999). There I described four scenarios that now, a few years on, it is obviously possible to review: 1. Atomisation-fission (the Treaty is not ratified, it does not come into force, France feels that Europe is slipping through its fingers and so, head down, launches into the Mediterranean enterprise, with the support of Italy, which is by now on the brink of disintegration; at the same time France takes delight in engaging in a play of alliances to the rear, favouring Moscow over Berlin. Germany has only one solution up its sleeve with which to respond to all this: Mitteleuropa; America, to ward off dangers to the East, offers Berlin a closer relationship, while London kicks itself for having refused to accept that the objective of the process of European integration should be political. Several years on, the ECB crumbles, the dollar or a new German mark is the currency in use in central Europe and the Continent's stability is at the mercy of possible unrest in the Balkans).

2. Superimposition-dissociation (a Europe of defence, primarily Franco-British, is formed at the heart of NATO, while Germany opts resolutely to go no further than acquiring an entry ticket to the exclusive arms industry club; "enhanced cooperation" is no longer practised, since the French and British do not want to debate matters of defence in the presence of others; there is a loss of faith: this instrument, whose creators are tempted to use it in defence of their own interests, renders vain any attempt to equip the Union with a foreign policy of its own; and France and Britain, whose differences Germany tries to settle, are far from having the dimension required for a great power policy; defence involving some states and diplomacy involving all the 27 member states neutralise each other).

3. Replacement-association (this scenario opens in the same way as the first, except that France and Germany respond to the failure to ratify the Treaty by forming a "weak core," an Élysée Treaty-type confederal core established outside the Community institutions and thus outside the enhanced cooperations framework; some members of the eurozone keep their distance, the initiative is perceived as a divisive action, in which the desire for domination is playing a part; this excessively small "core," all of whose members continue to be members of the Union, tends to take the place of the Union in these countries' list of priorities and this brings to an end the stability of the 27-member area. Reflecting this situation, regional areas start to be created in the Baltic, the Balkans, the Black Sea, and eastern Europe, joining together those who, with difficulty, manage to weave themselves a web of association agreements; this is this Union's final volte-face).

4. Nucleation-fusion (this is the strategy of the "strong core" validated by broad consensus and patiently built following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty among the member states that have ratified it; it is the strategy of peace and democracy, and of power at the service of stability and security, that is, of the higher interests of the states that are part of the federation, interests superior to the national interests; the federation inherits the rights and obligations of the European Union member states; its perimeter is great enough to justify the development of a "great-power" foreign policy and a defence policy at the service of it: within a decade, most of the countries that initially chose to remain outside it go on to ratify the constitution, even the British, having been urged, by Washington, to see reason and recognise the correct interpretation of their own interests).

¹³ Karl Lamers and Wolfgang Schäuble, “Überlegungen zur europäische Politik”, CDU/CSU Fraktion des Deutschen Bundestag, Bonn, September 1, 1994. More recently, in the same vein, Karl Lamers “Die Fundamente tragen noch – Wie Europa seine Bürger wiedergewinnen kann”, *Internationale Politik* 60 (2005), 7.

¹⁴ European Commission, *Feasibility Study – Contribution to a Preliminary Draft Constitution of the European Union – Working document 04/12/2002*. This valuable text, in many ways superior to the draft Constitution presented by European Convention, would merit more serious consideration in the event of an arrest of the current process. In particular it could be used, as a working paper, by citizens’ assemblies (in the framework of a new EPC) or by a conference of Parliaments (with a constituent mandate).

¹⁵ Just to recall orders of magnitude: EU: 500,000,000; NAFTA: 400,000,000; China: 1,300,000,000; India: 1,000,000,000.

¹⁶ Here I deliberately borrow the term “great-power European policy” used by the *European Council on Foreign Relations* (ECFR) think tank-cum-lobby, and by one of its founders, Joschka Fischer, by many tipped as a possible candidate for the role of High Representative. The ECFR is backed by George Soros’s *Open Society Foundation*. The general impression one gets, in my view, from the *fora* organised this year in these settings is that Europe cannot avoid a crisis, that it needs as crisis in order to gain an awareness of its de facto unity, and thus to sanction its unity in law. How can so many influential people reason in this way yet without inventing, at the same time, the strategy of influence and the political formulae that would save them having to rely on this crisis, instead allowing them, cool-headedly, to steer public opinion in the direction of unity? But let’s not be discouraged: I have read an analysis, written by Ulrike Guérot, ECFR representative in Berlin, of the threat to the balance of the institutions that the independence of Kosovo poses, and the example it sets for other stateless nations and other powerful regions. It in any case emerges as an indication in favour of the direct participation of the territories in a future constituent process.

¹⁷ Jürgen Habermas, “Why Europe needs a Constitution”, *New Left Review* 11, September-October 2001, <http://www.newleftreview.org/A2343>.

¹⁸ One eurofederalist who expresses this view is Tzvetan Todorov, *Le Nouveau Désordre mondial: Réflexions d’un Européen*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 2003.

¹⁹ “... a federal order, which, albeit allowing each state to develop its own national life in the manner most suited to the degree and the peculiarities of its civilisation, removes from the sovereignty of all the associated states the means of imposing their own selfish particularisms, creates and administers a body of international laws to which all must adhere equally” (Altiero Spinelli and Ernesto Rossi, *Problemi della Federazione europea*, Edizioni del Movimento Italiano per la Federazione europea, 1944).

²⁰ The idea of the conspiracy is still very much alive in France’s collective memory, in the Jacobinic left, where the conspiracy is necessarily Girondist, and thus federalist; and in the forces of reaction, where it is Judeo-Masonic, and thus cosmopolitan.

²¹ When I say that sovereignties are intact, I am of course referring to formal sovereignties, which remain absolute. Other types of sovereignty, material (which reflects competences, when these are exercised in a community or federal manner) or real (which, for a state, ends where another more powerful state’s will for power has led it to extend its own) are another question altogether: there are always de facto limitations on sovereignty. Just like the free trade of Classical economists, absolute sovereignty is a myth. In the federal state, it is the constitution that places restrictions, very real ones, on sovereignty.

²² My own preference is for dual federalism, even though German and Austrian style cooperative federalism is very important in Europe. It seems to me best to avoid a drift either towards an administrative fusion of the federated states and the federal state, or towards

excessive centralisation. Dual federalism is criticised for allowing a less consensus-based mode of operation. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that it reduces to its simplest expression the field in which the consensus between the federated states should become established. In this regard, it may be helpful to read: Tanja A. Börzel and Thomas Risse, “Who is Afraid of a European Federation? How to Constitutionalise a Multi-Level Governance System”, *A contribution to the Jean Monnet Working Paper No.7/00*, Symposium: Responses to Joschka Fischer, available at: <http://www.jeanmonnetprogram.org/papers/00/00f0101.html>.

²³ Swedish prime minister Fredrik Reinfeldt’s address to the European Parliament in Strasbourg, Tuesday, February 19, *Europe* n. 9605.

²⁴ As Missiroli says, the framework of the new Treaty offers “opportunities,” if one can show some imagination. But the fact remains that “enhanced cooperations” will be unworkable, as explained by Philippe de Schoutheete, leader of the joint study by the *Centre for European Policy Studies* (CEPS), the *Institut Royal des Relations Internationales* (Egmont) and the *European Policy Centre* (EPC), entitled “*The Treaty of Lisbon: Implementing the Institutional Innovations.*” The new Treaty contains new rules, but the modalities of their application risk discouraging these “cooperations.” All the member states, even those that will have rejected them, will be involved in the work they do and the European Parliament will have a say on their creation and their decisions. An enhanced cooperation made up of a majority of the member states would be able to overcome these difficulties, but what about when only a minority take part? The MEPs of the non-participating states would be in a majority and could oppose it. As a result, the countries involved would tend to set up simple intergovernmental cooperations, outside the framework of Community rules, which means outside any form of democratic control, with the clear risks of paralysis and failure that this implies.

²⁵ The idea of the federator, like that of open membership, was implicit in the Fouchet I Plan, the text of which can be accessed at *European Navigator*: <http://www.ena.lu/>.

The idea of a continental pact that declared the indissolubility of the union among those member states of the EU determined to adopt a common foreign and defence policy and to pool their public means in the fields of science, higher education and research, in the past incomprehensibly rejected, would today serve to discriminate (in a manner more definitive than declaration 52 on the “symbols” of the Union annexed to the Lisbon Treaty) between those that accept the Union’s political vocation and those that (for now) reject it. It is within the boundaries of this pact that the constitutional question, and thus the question of the state, could once more be raised, through the convening of an assembly with an appropriate mandate.

²⁶ Declaration 52 on the “symbols” of the Union outlines boundaries. What are these symbols if not the symbols of a state in the making?