

# Letters to future generations

Original texts selected and compiled by **Federico Mayor**  
in collaboration with Roger-Pol Droit

KOFI ANNAN

WERNER ARBER

TAHAR BEN JELLOUN

REMO BODEI

TANELLA BONI

RITA COLWELL

NADINE GORDIMER

MUHAMMEDIN KULLASHI

RITA LEVI-MONTALCINI

CARDINAL JEAN-MARIE LUSTIGER

FEDERICO MAYOR

DANIELLE MITTERRAND

LUC MONTAGNIER

DAVID NEUHAUS

ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL

ILYA PRIGOGINE

HUBERT REEVES

RICHARD RORTY

MSTISLAV ROSTROPOVITCH

FERNANDO SAVATER

DARIUS SHAYEGAN

LEOPOLDO ZEA

# LETTERS TO FUTURE GENERATIONS

LETTERS  
TO  
FUTURE  
GENERATIONS

Original texts selected and compiled by  
**F E D E R I C O M A Y O R**

in collaboration with  
**R O G E R - P O L D R O I T**

## Acknowledgements

As the person in charge of the realization of this project, all the different stages of which were determined and monitored by Federico Mayor, I would like to thank all those who made it possible: the authors, who agreed to take the gamble of writing to people living in the year 2050; the translators, co-ordinated by Catherine Cullen and Simon Strachan, who did wonders with the languages and deadlines; Brieuc Segalen, for putting the texts on the Internet ([www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)); and Jutta von Reitzenstein, who took care of all the practical tasks involved in the project with rare efficiency, commitment and kindness.

Roger-Pol Droit

The authors are responsible for the choice and presentation of the facts contained in this book and for the opinions expressed therein, which are not necessarily those of UNESCO and do not commit the Organization.

The designations employed and the presentation of material throughout this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of UNESCO concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city of area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Published in 1999 by the United Nations Educational,  
Scientific and Cultural Organization,  
7, place de Fontenoy, 75352 Paris 07 SP (France)

Designed by Jean-François Chérier  
Printed by Imprimerie des Presses Universitaires de France, 41100 Vendôme

ISBN 92-3-103641-6

© UNESCO 1999  
*Printed in France*

# Contents

- 9     **FEDERICO MAYOR**  
          Director-General of UNESCO  
**Promises**
- 13    **KOFI ANNAN**  
          Secretary-General of the United Nations  
**Towards a culture of peace**
- 17    **WERNER ARBER**  
          Nobel Prize for Medicine/Physiology  
**Science and peace**
- 25    **TAHAR BEN JELLOUN**  
          Writer  
**Keep poetry alive!**
- 29    **REMO BODEI**  
          Philosopher  
**Do not lose a sense of the past!**
- 41    **TANELLA BONI**  
          Philosopher  
**Each human being is the source of time**

- 63 RITA R. COLWELL  
National Science Foundation  
Sciences, truth and freedom
- 69 NADINE GORDIMER  
Writer  
The human face of globalization
- 75 MUHAMMEDIN KULLASHI  
Philosopher  
Letter from a Chinese traveller returning from Yugoslavia
- 97 RITA LEVI-MONTALCINI  
Nobel Prize for Medicine/Physiology  
Everything around us
- 99 CARDINAL JEAN-MARIE LUSTIGER  
Archbishop of Paris  
A message in a bottle
- 107 DANIELLE MITTERRAND  
President of France-Libertés  
Building for the common good
- 115 LUC MONTAGNIER  
Biologist  
Dangers and awareness
- 121 DAVID M. NEUHAUS, SJ  
Biblical scholar  
Letter to a future generation
- 123 ADOLFO PÉREZ ESQUIVEL  
Nobel Prize for Peace  
Opening the doors of hope in the new millennium
- 133 ILYA PRIGOGINE  
Nobel Prize for Chemistry  
The die is not cast

- 141 HUBERT REEVES  
Astrophysicist  
That the next century may exist
- 143 RICHARD RORTY  
Philosopher  
Don't forget the nuclear weapons!
- 145 MSTISLAV ROSTROPOVITCH  
Musician  
Beauty will save the world
- 149 FERNANDO SAVATER  
Philosopher  
Some cautionary words for my descendants
- 153 DARIUS SHAYEGAN  
Philosopher  
The horizon of mixed influences
- 163 LEOPOLDO ZEA  
Philosopher  
A letter to people I shall never meet

Federico Mayor

Director-General of UNESCO

## Promises

*I understand how this pain wounds you,  
But sing and do not weep. Your best witness  
Is an airborne voice and not the clamour  
That confines speech and, in the end,  
Impedes reflection on what is happening.*

JOSE AGUSTIN GOYTISOLO, *The Voice and the Word*

Our force is that of the voice and the word. It is an indomitable force, which when it becomes the cry of a whole people, will set us on course towards havens of light and hope.

We must say 'No' to force, renounce violence. On the other hand, we must say 'Yes' to perseverance, to the tenacious non-conformism that in the end will enable us to leave behind the horrors of war, imposition and force and enter the realm of encounter and dialogue that has been our dream for so many dawns.

The future is no more fixed than is the past: thus Antonio Machado urged us to review with care the lessons of history to discover whether the description of the past is true to events. But, above all, he urged us to write the future together. The only way of assuaging the pain and the memory of past wounds is to

dare with imagination and constancy of purpose, to traverse together, to shape together, to inhabit together – all different, all equal, all unique – the time and space that we still have intact before us. It is the supreme legacy. It is the supreme inheritance.

Too often we have not kept our promises. In moments of prosperity we have not remembered the resolutions we adopted in times of trouble, when human tension is more creative and when passion and compassion encompass so many shores.

Daring is essential. One must keep in mind the terrible words of Camus: 'I despised them because, capable of so much, they dared so little.' Dare to know and know how to dare. Raise your eyes and gaze into the far distance. What matters is that what lies around the road's turning, the valleys beyond the nearby hills that prevent you from contemplating the horizon. Alone on the cornice, with the mist before you, on the dividing line between the light and the darkness. With more doubts than certainties. But with hope because the future is there, awaiting the ploughed furrow, the water and the seed.

Sow and sow without giving thought to the harvest. Many seeds will not bear fruit, but there is one fruit that you will never pick: the fruit of the seeds that you did not plant.

We cannot allow nature and the heart to wither at the same time. When they tell you that there is no solution, do not believe it. It is because they do not know how to find it. It is because they cannot see beyond the pressing tasks of each hour. Each hour you must move forward and invent and map out your route.

The answers lie within you, never outside. We need to listen to everyone, to everything, but thereafter we need to be free, stubbornly free – that is to say, to decide for ourselves. Be guided by your own thoughts and not the instructions or suggestions of others.

Hope is part of the creative capacity of every human being. To be used in confronting inertia and routine. In acting in a way other than that which is predictable. In responding – like Mandela – with smiles rather than bitterness and hatred.

Vast sums are invested in protecting borders, and very little on safeguarding what lies within them: children, women, woods, water, earth, air . . . We have come to accept the unacceptable: street children, lovelessness, neglect. What kind of civilization is it that finds excuses not to care for its children, and considers the treatment of AIDS for poor patients to be ‘costly’?

This is the crime of silence. We will work unceasingly to assemble voices and still more voices until we have succeeded in composing for you – you who are already with us and you who will arrive tomorrow – a life more consonant with the infinite dignity of each unique human being. And then we shall be able to look into your eyes.

You will need a great deal of courage to continue changing by the power of words alone what we were not able, or did not know how, to change.

One day in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, with our minds and eyes full of its horrors, we promised to spare you the unspeakable suffering of violence and war. Honour the promises we have not kept.

## Kofi Annan

Secretary-General of the United Nations

# Towards a culture of peace

Like the Roman god Janus, the world on the eve of the third millennium is looking in two directions at once. On the one hand, the year 2000 seems to offer people everywhere an opportunity to reflect upon and evaluate the past. Numerous attempts to catalogue the best and worst of human endeavour in the last century and even the last millennium bear witness to this. But with equal interest, though understandably less clarity, we also peer into the future, attempting to discern an outline of the days ahead. It is in this spirit of looking forward that UNESCO has initiated this volume of letters to future generations, and I welcome this opportunity to share visions of tomorrow.

However, views of the future and views of the past, like Janus's two faces, are inextricably linked – for it is from the past that we draw the lessons that inform our conception of the future. Thus, in setting down my thoughts for those who will inhabit our planet in 2050, I begin with our own experience of the twentieth century.

Perhaps the dominant theme of the modern era has been the constant shrinking of our world thanks to the march of technology. This is what we call 'globalization'. From the sextant to the satellite, each new technical breakthrough has allowed us to

conquer the barrier of distance. Indeed, today people in different parts of the world are directly affected by each other's actions more than ever before in human history. Billions of dollars are moved across the world in a few seconds by pressing a few keys on a computer terminal. A sporting event or rock concert can be watched in real time by people thousands of kilometres away. So, too, can scenes of war and terrible suffering.

Like almost everything in life, this phenomenon has both good and bad effects. It brings us many opportunities to learn from each other and to benefit from a wider range of choices. But it can also seem threatening. Workers may suddenly find their jobs rendered obsolete or uneconomic by imported technology or foreign competition. Parents may find their children attracted by products and role models from alien cultures. The feelings of dislocation that follow from this account for much of the fear and anger we see in today's world. The closer technology brings us together, the more some people emphasize the differences that keep us apart.

Differences in themselves are healthy, indeed they are essential to human progress. It is the refusal to accept difference that causes much of the violence and suffering that we see around us. We end this century witnessing a resurgence of genocidal conflict, something which five decades ago, after two terrible world wars, we promised would never occur again. We have yet to meet the challenge posed by the Charter of the United Nations 'to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war'. In considering how to achieve this supreme goal, we have come to realize that sending peacekeeping forces to separate warring parties is not enough. Nor is it even enough to conduct preventive diplomacy. We need to act at a deeper level for the prevention of violent conflicts before they arise. As expressed memorably in the UNESCO Constitution, '. . . since

wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed'. We need, in short, a culture of peace.

The first and fundamental principle of such a culture must be tolerance. This means welcoming and celebrating the differences that make our planet such a varied and richly textured place. However, even as we cherish our diversity, we must recognize the common ground upon which we stand. A culture of peace must not displace other cultures. But it can express what all cultures hold in common.

Dialogue between traditions, characterized by mutual respect and openness, is essential to this process. It has already begun with the promulgation of such international documents as the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. These agreements do not reflect the values of one civilization, but articulate principles upon which all nations can agree. An important task for the next century will be to build upon this foundation through continued dialogue and exchange. Our shared understandings will form the sturdy framework for peaceful interaction in the future.

We must also broaden our view of what is meant by peace and security. Peace means much more than the absence of war. Human security can no longer be understood in purely military terms. Rather, it must encompass economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization, disarmament, and respect for human rights and the rule of law. Many of these pillars of peace can be identified through the process of dialogue across cultures that is the essential component of a culture of peace. Moreover, these pillars are interrelated; progress in one area generates progress in another. Peace must also be sought as something that exists not just among nations, but within them as well.

If we come together and act on these principles, we shall be able to move from a millennium bedevilled by the scourge of war to one blessed with a culture of peace.

Werner Arber

Nobel Prize for Medicine/Physiology *Switzerland*

## Science and peace

Dear member of a future generation,

Allow me to start this letter with a short presentation of myself. I am a human being who has witnessed the last seventy years of the second millennium according to the Christian calendar. As a scientist, I have spent the major part of my professional life teaching and studying the genetics of micro-organisms, in particular, of bacteria and bacterial viruses. This has led me to pay increasing attention to the molecular mechanisms involved in the generation of genetic variations, which play an essential role in biological evolution. I have also been active in science politics, both in my own country, Switzerland, and at an international level. In my present function as President of the International Council for Science, also known as ICSU, I try to foster interdisciplinary co-operation between scientists working all over our planet. In my letter to you, I will be referring particularly to our knowledge of biological evolution, and to the role of science and its multiple applications towards the peaceful development of human civilization.

You, as a reader of my letter, will be another human being belonging to one of the generations to come. At the precise time of writing this letter, the total human population on our planet

has reached 6 billion people, or  $6 \times 10^9$ , and despite recommendations to limit further growth, the increase continues. At the time you read my letter in fifty years or so, this problem will hopefully have been solved. In the long term, an equilibrium must be achieved, and I hope that this will be characterized by offering all human beings the opportunity to enjoy happy, healthy and peaceful lives. I am convinced that considered, responsible applications of scientific knowledge can contribute to reaching this goal; but mutual help and unselfish co-operation will be also required.

Scientists are generally agreed that life on earth must have started almost 4 billion years ago and that the only life-forms in existence for long periods of time were single-cellular organisms, which we commonly call bacteria. The diversity of the different bacteria found on our planet is enormous. Certain bacterial species have adapted to very particular environments, while others are quite versatile in their requirements for growth. This is a consequence of the genetic composition of these microorganisms. In the last four decades, scientists have learned how to unravel the secrets of the genetic control of life processes. Interestingly, and as far as is known at the present time, the genetic information of all forms of cellular life is contained in the linear sequence of building blocks, called nucleotides – of long filamentous molecules of DNA, a nucleic acid. In addition, all living beings seem to ‘speak’ the same genetic language, i.e. they use essentially the same genetic code. These observations are in accordance with the Darwinian theory of biological evolution postulating a steady development of life processes from a common origin. The basis for this diversification is, on the one hand, the spontaneous generation of genetic variants and, on the other, the forces of natural selection acting on mixed populations of genetic variants and different species of organisms. Natural

selection results from the way in which individual organisms cope with the living conditions they encounter. The bacterium called *Escherichia coli*, which has been the subject of much study, is fairly versatile. It is encountered as a normal inhabitant of our intestinal tract and can also live in liquid suspensions prepared from mineral salts and a source of energy, such as sugar. Bacteria propagate by cell division. Under good growth conditions, cell division occurs about every thirty minutes; this leads to exponential growth of the progeny originating from a single cell. Only lack of nutrition stops this growth, which allows for multiplication of the number of cells in a population by a factor of 1,000 every five hours. Under these conditions, the number of 6 billion bacterial cells, corresponding to the number of humans populating the earth, can be reached in about sixteen hours! In a test tube containing six millilitres of nutrient broth these 6 billion bacteria form a relatively turbid suspension. However, bacteria are not only capable of growing very fast, they also manage to survive even if there is no nutrition available. In my laboratory, I kept the *E. coli* bacterium enclosed in a small vial for thirty years. After this long period of storage, many of the cells were still alive – which demonstrates that bacteria have ‘understood’ how to avoid dying when they have no opportunity to propagate.

There is still more to be learned from further studies with bacteria. Let us turn our attention to the generation of genetic variations. Recently developed methodology allows us to investigate the molecular mechanisms by which genetic variants are spontaneously generated. We can thereby identify three quite different strategies employed by nature. First, a number of largely understood reasons lead to small local changes in the sequences of nucleotides. Secondly, mainly enzymatically guided processes bring about the occasional reshuffling of

segments of the filamentous DNA molecules carrying the genetic information. Finally, once in a while, bacteria take up fragments of DNA originating from other organisms and such fragments may contain genetic information not previously present in the recipient cell.

In all of these processes, gene products, together with a number of environmental factors, are involved in the production of qualitatively different kinds of genetic variants. In general, however, the cells do not seem to possess a sensor that enables them to know what kind of genetic variation would be best suited to cope with the encountered environmental conditions. Rather, it is natural selection and the available genetic diversity that influence the direction taken by biological evolution.

I believe that the evolutionary genes (the products of which help to provide bacteria with genetic variations at acceptably low rates) have themselves a long evolutionary history, like the more conventional genes that satisfy the daily needs of each individual. As I see it, if we follow the same principles observed with bacteria, we can infer that higher organisms also possess evolutionary genes. I expect that by the time you read this letter this question will have been thoroughly explored. It is thus likely that the first few decades of the third millennium will bring us a more profound understanding of the molecular mechanisms underlying biological evolution.

Greater knowledge of the evolution of life undoubtedly leads us to draw philosophical conclusions that can strongly influence our world-view. Let me then make a few preliminary remarks.

First of all, I find it exciting to realize that Mother Nature takes care of the evolution of life. Until recently, we believed that spontaneous genetic variation was largely the result of errors, accidents and coincidences. The role played by the prod-

ucts of evolutionary genes completely changes this conceptual view. However, we should not take the novel notion of evolutionary genes as suggesting that nature follows a long-term plan that guides its evolutionary process towards a strictly predetermined goal. Rather, we can interpret our observations as indicating that evolutionary genes provide the means for life-forms to adapt to a great variety of conditions and to survive for long periods of time, during which their environments may develop in unpredictable ways.

A second philosophical implication arises from the way in which evolutionary gene products function as generators of genetic variations. They often interact half-randomly with a great number of sites on DNA molecules, so that these gene products give rise to many different specific genetic variants. The production of specific variants can at best be predicted statistically, but not at all in individual cases. Hence, this is an excellent example of the unpredictability of the specific effect of some of the genes carried in the genetic information. It may thus be wrong for us to believe in a very strict determinism of genetically influenced life functions. Nowadays, people often entertain a strict belief in genetic determination and this may well be at the root of anxieties expressed by society with regard to the possible impact of genetic engineering.

Allow me to make here a third philosophical projection to be applied to any kind of living organism, from bacteria to possibly higher organisms. If the ultimate goal of evolution is indeed to maintain life in any form possible, rather than to reach a superior or divine form of life, we can see in the steady action of natural selection the principal, constantly readjusted influence on the course taken by biological evolution, in which the availability of genetic variants represents an obvious limitation. Natural selection can act only on living organisms, depending

on the life functions of these organisms. From the point of view of biological evolution, we can thus see one meaning of life as being to provide a substrate for natural selection and thus for the evolutionary process. Taking a step further in this kind of reasoning, we can also assign meaning to death. After serving as a substrate for natural selection and after possibly giving forth progeny with possible novel genetic variations, there is no compelling reason to maintain life. After all, space for living cells on our planet is very limited and amounts, according to my estimates, to about  $10^{30}$  living cells at any one time. Growth and propagation over successive generations would not be possible without sacrificing organisms which have already served as substrates for evolution. I hope that these rough ideas on the meaning of life and death in the evolutionary process might possibly provide some stimulation to members of future generations to pursue these reflections further.

I believe that one of the greatest strengths of science is its ability to provide us human beings with knowledge about nature, its laws and its intrinsic strategies. In conjunction with ethical concepts, this knowledge can give us guidance for our daily activities. Too often, and frequently for lack of insight into the complex systems of interdependence, we carry out activities with short-term goals but that may turn out in the longer term to be counter to our intentions to help ourselves not only as individuals, but also to serve society as a whole. This has often been the case where scientific knowledge has been used for what can be summarized as 'technological applications'. Most scientists are aware of this problem, but they also know how difficult it is to make the long-term predictions technology assessment aims to provide. We must realize that, in our complex world, not all effects are predictable. The international co-operation among scientists has been very fruitful in collecting data, in

their interpretation and in formulating longer-range predictions. But we have reached a point where we must admit that predictability has its natural limits. We are having to learn again to live with uncertainty. However, compared to medieval times, we are now much more able to understand the bases of uncertainty and can delimit fields of uncertainty with increasing accuracy.

As a human being, I am glad to have understood that we cannot completely master nature in its very rich and diverse functions. We will rather have to activate our responsibility towards our own lives, towards the life of human society and towards the rich environment which forms the indispensable substrate for our existence. Science can contribute to a strengthening of our sense of responsibility by providing a deeper knowledge of natural mechanisms, natural strategies and natural evolution. With increasing dependence on technological applications serving to improve our lives, we will have to take much more into account the probable long-term impacts of our actions. Natural limits have been set on human expansion and it will be an important task for future generations to ensure reasonable living conditions for all members of human society and to maintain a solid, sustainable substrate for our evolving civilization. This demands a deep respect for the environment and more specifically, for rich biological and genetic diversity, as well as for the largely undisturbed physico-chemical background conditions.

Natural scientists have formed worldwide professional organizations and scientific academies. During the last seventy years, they have built together a non-governmental organization known as ICSU, which continues to be successful in fostering international and interdisciplinary collaboration on many of the problems and questions faced by humanity. Since many of

the objects under study by natural scientists are global in nature, displaying the same characteristics all over our planet, scientists are interested in exchanging results and ideas with qualified colleagues wherever they are. With the number of scientists growing worldwide, this compelling force for personal contacts across national boundaries has led to lasting personal friendships, to mutual respect and, in a general sense, to a more peaceful coexistence of humans on a global scale. I express my profound wish to future generations that these friendly contacts, which help the advance of science as well as the construction and maintenance of a peaceful world, should be continued.

## Tahar Ben Jelloun

Writer *Morocco*

# Keep poetry alive!

The twentieth century has been lavish in its massacres, acts of genocide, conventional wars and conflicts of all types. As we leave this century, we are a little despairing, a little defeated, with nothing much to be proud of. Certainly, man has walked on the moon. But so what? What good does that do if famine, humiliation and dispossession are becoming ever more widespread, affecting more and more human beings? We are skulking out of this century because the human person has been sacrificed. So let us look to the future, even if our vision is still clouded by the thick fog of desolation and helplessness. Our eyes retain the memory of their light and their tears. But let us forget the exhaustion of the soul and look forward. It is not the horror we should forget – just our weariness. We cannot enter the new millennium without remembering what has happened during the course of this century and what threatens the peace of the future. Nuclear weapons are lying in wait for the apocalypse.

Men no longer need consolation. War has blinded them. Hate feeds them. Brutality and discrimination reassure them. Not all men, but those who have usurped the power to decide, to start conflicts and to end them. Those who have no moral, political or democratic legitimacy. The new millennium will not change them. Human beings persist in their nature. It is

illusory to think that they can be changed. Let it be clear once and for all: man never changes. He may evolve and adapt to new situations, but he will always remain faithful to his convictions, his habits and ways. With this as our basic premise, we must be vigilant.

We must ensure that the new century does not reproduce the atrocities and the trail of injustices, deportations, forced exoduses and massacres that have gone unpunished during the century we are leaving behind. Obviously, one can have a more positive and more optimistic vision of the past – we can speak about the courage of those who have resisted tyranny, about the great discoveries of medicine, we can celebrate the progress in technology and the means of communication. All this will continue. Without making grand speeches, I would like to tell future generations, those of my own children, to be more inspired than we have been, to be more simple – ambitious but modest, closer to realities and more rigorous in respecting the values and principles of culture and coexistence that are the foundations of human society.

These values are as old as man himself: to live together, we are not obliged to love one another unconditionally, but we must have mutual respect for one another. The idea of respect is essential: it is about accepting other people's differences, keeping in mind that each human being is unique and remarkable. I should respect my neighbour, my partner, as I respect my parents – those who bore me and who gave me what they could. There is something gratuitous in all this. The beauty of an action is in its being gratuitous, rather than calculating. Being generous with oneself, with one's time and also with one's possessions . . . It could catch on.

Be tolerant, yes, but we should not tolerate the intolerable. We need an active and vigilant tolerance. We must be wary

of the easy illusions offered by the new technologies of communication. We should not delude ourselves because we are transfixed by special effects, by magical images and the amazing feats of technology.

We should also keep poetry alive. Without poetry, the world will be half blind and lame. Without poetry, men will lose a little more of their soul each day. Without poetry, the world will be flat, the sea will lose its blue and its surf, the sky will be indifferent and children will no longer demand stories to send them to sleep.

Remo Bodei

Philosopher *Italy*

# Do not lose a sense of the past!

Dear young people of the generations to come,

Your counterparts in today's younger generation are often accused of having lost a sense of history, of the value of the past. It is said that they are satisfied with living for the day or, better still, the moment. Thus, they belong to the 'no future', 'me' generation, whose horizons are limited to the immediate present.

It is true that it has become hard to picture the future based on the lessons of the past. History is no longer the *magistra vitae* (life's teacher), as it used to be when changes in society and individual consciousness were slow and drawn out, when the past more closely resembled the present. Today, the scope of experience (the meaning the past takes on in the present) is narrowing in the sense that, having become impoverished, it is used up more quickly. At the same time, the horizons of the future are shrinking in that we are finding it increasingly more difficult to imagine the future, now that it seems more like a threat than a promise. The words of John Maynard Keynes come to mind: 'The inevitable never happens, the unexpected always.'

However, memory does not only represent introversion or looking backwards, a simple, passive registering of events. It does

not oppose the advance towards the future: on the contrary it paves the way for and helps to determine it. It is an active force to be recovered. If I may be permitted to make a mundane comparison, it is like wine, whose enzymes give it the properties of a living organism, unlike mineral water which is a dead and immutable substance. The commonly held belief that memory is passive is born of the belief that our memories should not alter with time and that, if forgotten, one has only to find their first impression, the image imprinted in immaterial form by an external seal on a wax tablet, in Aristotle's famous image. It is also (wrongly) thought that memory has a passive nature because 'recent memories' are held to be truer than those which are evoked later, which in comparison would seem watered down or distorted. Usually, one does not realize that even a 'recent memory' is already an interpretation and that often successive reformulations (if meaningful) clarify and enrich it. It is also easy to ignore the fact that exclusively private memories do not really exist. As Maurice Halbwachs has shown, individual memory is sustained by *cadres sociaux* and by external structures (symbols, writing, monuments, rites) which give shared experiences a common language. Therefore, there is no such thing as memory exterior to the socially determined points of reference used by people to establish and return to their own memories.

Faced with the difficulties of retaining what is important in the past and of envisaging a credible future, every ideology of progress and every philosophy of history is nowadays looked upon with suspicion. According to some, we are going through a period which claims to have seen 'the end of history' and we are already living in the *post-histoire*. There are many different reasons for this view of the present, but two can be considered as crucial. In the first place is the obvious absence of any 'guiding spirits' determining events, as the *Volksgeister* were for

Herder, or the proletariat as the protagonist of the global revolution and creator of a 'new world' was for Marx. Secondly, faith in progress and a future guaranteed to advance towards a single and desirable end (the reign of liberty, a classless society) has evaporated and with it the belief that negativity and adversity in history can become the 'leaven' for good – that periods of extreme suffering endured by peoples are no more than parentheses to this development.

The instruments which guaranteed the fundamentally more reassuring forms of the philosophy of history have been undermined. This has allowed the ever-present doubts about the redemptive power of history (and about the politics and ethics which based themselves on this and which made use of the allegedly ineluctable currents of history to advocate courses of action which were coherent with these) to return in force.

We should not, however, be shocked by this, neither should it make us nostalgic for the past. Instead, we need to anticipate and develop the hidden potential of each situation, however difficult to confront. The media's responsibility in undermining the value of history is limited. The feeling that the historical vision of the younger generations has diminished comes from overrating the type of historical development we are used to. We do not yet know what many of the positive aspects of today's civilization might be, with the previously unavailable possibilities it offers – through audiovisual recordings and the creation of data banks – for building up a massive store of easily accessible historical memory.

Historical memory as such is not in crisis. At worst, it is the subjective selection criteria used to determine the significant and salient elements of the histories we are implicated in and which we ask questions about that are under attack. Their disappearance is heralded by some as the result of the collapse

of ideologies and utopias. They say that we are living in an era which is entirely devoid of ideology, as if it were only today, after centuries and millennia, that the age of disenchantment had begun – the blindfold having dropped from our eyes, we can at last see reality more clearly.

However, the end of ideologies has turned out to be its nth reincarnation. In fact, once fixed ideologies break down people – creatures that desire more than they reason – create others. And perhaps the worst ideology is exactly that which pretends not to exist. Today, the postmodern doctrines now widespread in many countries are replacing the old illusions about man's self-emancipation, sometimes with esoteric ideologies and expectations known as 'New Age'. Within this galaxy of positions, the message of salvation hinges, for example, on the belief that the entry of our planet into the constellation of Aquarius will lead men and women to spiritual rebirth capable of bringing ease to even the physical aspects of existence and of satisfying the desire for self-improvement.

Moreover, the recent declarations about the (alleged) death of ideologies represent, from a historical perspective, the repercussions of the disappearance of the last great 'totalitarianism' that was still dominating half of Europe: that of Communism. After the defeat of fascism in 1945, with the fall of the Berlin Wall, the break-up of the Soviet Union and the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, it also seemed to some that with the end of ideology we had also reached the 'end of history'. The debate about the crisis of ideologies was therefore closely bound up with that about the end of history.

Once again, however, this turns out to be a convenient mystification. In reality, neither ideology, nor history, nor utopia are in decline, given that no substitutes for such mixtures of desire and projection have been invented. What is being lost

are only fixed ideologies, ways of understanding history or utopias, which in the recent past have set the course for the dominant conceptions of history.

If we take a look back over utopias, to see how they have influenced our understanding of history, we discover that from the third century B.C. they were always conceived of in geographical terms, as places – in general islands – where the perfect society existed, but which were not, however, part of the known world. They were to be reached by chance. In classical terms, utopia is something that is ‘impossible’, ‘unrealizable’, but which is nevertheless useful as a yardstick by which to measure the known world. It is only in the seventeenth century, with Louis-Sébastien Mercier’s novel, *The Year 2440*, that the change from a geographical to a temporal utopia occurs, resituating the perfect society in the future. The impossible now becomes possible, utopia enters history and history becomes a process of progressive movement towards utopia, the distance in time between the imperfect today and the perfect tomorrow.

With this, Rousseau’s seemingly ingenuous theory, according to which man leaves the Creator’s hands good and is then corrupted by society, takes on an subversive aspect. It is odd, however, that the citizen of a theocratic, Calvinistic republic which held to the dogma that ‘absolute evil’ is inherent in man, should have defended such a position and considered every child born as being endowed with a ‘perfectibility’ to be rescued from the corrupting influence of external agents. Rousseau overturned with this an idea that was not only held by the strict Genevans: the theory that babies are born and grow up wicked was also solemnly supported by the Fathers of the Church and by philosophers, at least from Cicero to Hobbes.

By rejecting such precepts, Rousseau radically transformed the way politics and history were seen. In fact, up until

that point politics had been predominantly understood as the attempt to limit man's wickedness through the constraints of authority and the strength of the law. To claim – with an argument that would be explicitly or implicitly taken up by the Jacobins and by all the partisans of modern-day revolutions – that man's nature is good means to perceive history as a great march towards a goal consistent with the recovery of original goodness. This in such a way, however, as to take stock of the changes that human nature has undergone during the course of history. Thus, history, which at the beginning of modernity was understood as the narration of a series of events made comprehensible by recourse to Divine Providence or naturalistic principles (one of which was, for example, the Machiavellian cycle of the birth, maturity and old-age of states), links itself to utopia, in the effort to explain itself through an internal dynamic.

What are the consequences of this union? If we situate perfection in the future, or at a time which can be arrived at gradually through the course of history, history becomes suffused with utopia, it acquires an independent finalistic logic that the old forms of theological narration did not possess. Utopia loses its former quality of impossibility and becomes a reality within the process of history which, in turn, is dynamized by the drive towards a goal. At the same time, utopia – having to weigh against 'harsh reality' – reduces its own claims, takes leave of the impossible and turns its attention to what are, at least, remote possibilities.

We are now in a position to understand how the insertion of utopia has transformed the meaning of history: it has introduced into it the pathos of constraints and possibilities, of obstacles and historic ways through them. It intensified greatly the idea of the tortuous but necessary road which led to the

promised land (and demanded sacrifices). Historiography and the philosophies of history that were closely associated with it have in this way – for nearly two centuries – acted as a great road network guiding the direction of lives which were subjected to the shock of constant change. This became the framework that replaced the idea that you go wherever the invisible hand of God directs you or that history does not have any preferred or discernable direction. Once the axis of history's movement has been identified and the model of perfection is aimed at (the abolition of social corruption, the development of individuality, a classless society), history can be interpreted as a kind of treasure map which everyone believed would show them the routes and the obstacles to be negotiated in order to reach the longed-for destination.

What is today in crisis is not ideology or the philosophies of history, but the alliance between history and utopia declared at the end of the seventeenth century and in force until a few years ago. The idea that events have an intrinsic logic – which can be explained according to their own principles and which runs throughout the course of man's history – is no longer adhered to. For this reason, history now seems to be breaking up and separating into two branches again: sacred history, championed by the so-called 'fundamentalisms', which celebrate the failure of modernism's attempt to build a history which is wholly immanent; and 'postmodernism', which has bid farewell to the illusions about emancipation and the forward thrust of modernity.

I should like to put forward the theory that what we call a 'reduction in historical meaning', the preponderance of the present, results from the waning of the belief that the course of history tends spontaneously towards improvement. The dominance of the previous view of history lasted as long as it was

secured by the faith in the gold reserves accumulated by 'progress' over the centuries (like central banks, this need not cover all the currency in circulation: 30 to 40 per cent is enough; the trouble starts if, due to some loss of faith, all the citizens simultaneously decide to convert all their paper currency into the noble metal). When the feeling that history has a single unifying purpose fades and you find yourself immersed either in many local histories, seemingly connected by tenuous links to history in general, or in a global history whose meaning you cannot quite grasp, then in a certain sense you return to a pre-modern understanding of history.

It seems paradoxical, however, that today the idea that events conspire towards a common goal should be losing credibility, exactly at the time when the world market and systems of communication are quickly and easily putting all the populations of the earth in contact with one other, at the moment when the networks of global interconnectedness are continually growing.

For the first time, we are virtually in a position to gather contemporary history into a whole. What was once the premise of Polubius' work (the belief that Rome's politics had unified many local histories into one) has developed into an awareness of the wider process of 'globalization' which is happening right before our eyes and which touches every aspect of our existence. None the less, we have to take into account a kind of skewing of our perception, since we are witnessing the advance of 'globalization' on the one hand, and, on the other, the introversion of local cultures and their desire to save themselves from global homogenization – even if this divergence is not, in itself, negative and nowhere is it said that in order to be happy and to enjoy peace, humanity must necessarily share a consensus about its goals.

From this point of view, it can be said that the diminution in historical meaning results from the fact that we have lost sight of any single path of history led by a clearly identifiable protagonist. That is, the criteria for selection implicit in the models which interpreted history's progress as a unitary process guided by 'great subjects' are losing their validity. Therefore, we are entering a period in which we must make the difficult transition to new selection criteria, which are necessarily 'skewed'. The reasons for this skewed perspective originate, on the one hand, in the importance now attached to the tendency towards 'globalization', in whose unifying view diverse human histories which were previously entirely separate now interact with each other and, on the other, in their continuing to remain fragmented, uncoordinated and, at times, opposed to the idea of general history which has lost some of its particular charm. This has happened in two ways: first, because its unifying action no longer follows the logic of the collective consciousness (as in the slogan 'Workers of the world, unite!'); and, secondly, because the action of the global market does not seem to favour the expansion of democracy and the participation of all people with equal dignity in the creation of a common destiny. The consequence of this has been a kind of turning-inwards of history, that is a lack of interest in integrating local histories into world history, and in its place the emergence of an intense distrust of the processes of globalization and modernization. Given that these are seen as steamrollers capable of wiping out all differences, many peoples and groups are increasingly reaffirming their independence from world history. With a loss of faith in the meaningful development of world history comes a tendency to shut oneself inside a history which, being restricted to the area of immediate and direct experience, is more easily apprehended. We could summarize our current position with the

dismal observation that we no longer seem able to give meaning to general history, nor to return within the protective confines of local history.

This is perhaps why we do not know what we should ask of history and the magnetic field of questions does not direct the needle of the answers. As a result of this, perception separates itself from history, in that, even if we are immersed in a global event, even if we are able to participate simultaneously in events sometimes thousands of kilometres away, our sense of history tends, in order to stave off the dangers of deracination, to give more value to the local or private dimensions. These are held to be more rewarding or more definite when faced with the misfortunes and miseries of the planet. But the desire to escape from the world's history, to close one's eyes to the flashes of meaning that analysis can extract from the wider connections between events results in an impracticable, as well as useless, project. We are chained to 'external' events and will never succeed in achieving independence from them, not even if we were to live like a hermit in a desert for the rest of our lives. Because even in that solitary place we would not be able to rid ourselves of all we have learned from the society that produced us. For this reason, the isolationist strategies which aim to free us completely from historical conditioning are as ill-conceived as those that seek to immerse us so totally in events that we lose our individual autonomy.

The vehicle for history's development, even in its attempts at theorizing, has always been propelled by some kind of protagonist (the 'great subjects' such as God, Providence, the Nation-State, the People, Class). Now they have lost their monopoly over the direction by events, and find themselves playing, at best, a supporting role in a story without a plot. But this does not mean that the great actors have vanished from the tide of history, nor that events should be left to drift.

Tanella Boni

Philosopher Côte d'Ivoire

# Each human being is the source of time

1

*You do not feel like going out, but school is waiting. Up till now your progress has been faultless, in spite of the cataclysms that Planet Earth has endured, in spite of the numerous wars, killing so many people since the beginning of the twenty-first century. During the first half of the year, your city is beaten down by the rains; then scorching heat takes over for six months. Sometimes, the weather is so capricious that the weather forecast is unable to predict anything. You have learned, looking at the data banks on the climate, that the situation has deteriorated since the disappearance of the tropical rainforest. The Amazon, the earth's lungs, exists virtually. In reality, it is no longer there. You are conscious of being a miraculous survivor of all the scourges that have escaped from Pandora's Box.*

*Now, you take your courage in both hands and you enter the great glass bubble that is your classroom. There are no teachers here. You have never met any. You take out the 'megamemory' from your pocket. You put it in front of you. You programme the tests that you will have to take. Then you read on the screen which enlarges instantaneously, that your exam allowing you to enter into adulthood will take place over the course of the next seven days. From Monday to Sunday. Each day, you turn on your megamemory and*

*you will receive a letter recorded fifty years ago, in the year 2000. Seven icons appear on the screen. You open the first icon, that for Monday. You read:*

Monday: Take care of your body.

Do you still know the days of the week? Before, the days of the week had a name, related to a daily activity or to the weather. There were days that were good for going to market, for debating, for ploughing or for offerings. There were days when one spent time cultivating relations with others, whether close neighbours or strangers, and other days when one spent time by oneself. There were days reserved for divinities and others where the fauna, the flora and the other powers of nature were worshipped. Everything had its own time.

Then the centuries went by, cities appeared in their thousands, activities multiplied. Time was not as it used to be. It was counted. The living occupied the universe in a different way. It no longer belonged to them. Other seasons appeared. But if you accept the cycle of the seasons, it is your duty as a human being to stay alive. I know that you are taking up this challenge.

Because you are still alive. I do not know what you look like. But I dream that you are still upright. I know that you think, that you feel, see, hear, that you are capable of imagining and loving. I imagine that you are made of flesh and blood. I think that you still have a man's or a woman's heart, in spite of everything. That is why I can tell you: take care of your body!

I can see you smiling. You are saying to yourself: 'They had no idea of the great revolutions in memory, those people in the year 2000!' You are asking yourself what the body of *Homo sapiens* is like. You see glass, plastic and iron organs all around you. They are positioned and connected to each other in such a way that the whole thing can move around, make sounds, give orders.

Besides that, other living species have made their appearance. Genetic engineering on humans was prohibited for a long time. But one fine day, the experiment spread. No law had the authority to put to death these species that had been created. At the point in history where you are, it sometimes happens that you mistake the nature of the beings that you pass on the street. Are they robots? Clones? Other species whose names you do not know? 'And as for me, who am I?', you say. You have the right to ask all these questions. Since you have access to what I am saying, you are still part of the species of women and men that lived at the end of the second millennium. I would really like you to be able to give fresh meaning to these words that I am sending you and that to you seem completely outdated.

Your body asserts in broad daylight that you are a human being. A few ancient philosophers, from Aristotle to Descartes, might have said: 'You stand upright, you have hands, your body is put together like a machine, but you speak and think, you have a soul, you are a man. . . .' The body that I am speaking about is not simply an external arrangement that you drag around the world. Your body is the crossroads where it is inscribed that you possess life. It is the sum of all the sensations, dreams, ideas and words that shape visible, tangible, perishable matter. You are first of all your body. Plato would have said once, a long time ago, that 'man is his soul'. But experience shows that it is the body that carries you, that brings you into the world, that permits you to travel through life as a single entity and to gravitate towards death. It is the body that, in good health, allows you to go about your daily business. Is not the heart the organ that manifests the first and last breaths of life? Take care of your heart. I know that medical science will have made enormous progress. But I seriously doubt that, in reality, the immortal elixir, imagined by Simone de Beauvoir in

her *All Men Are Mortals*, will leave the realms of science fiction. That is why you must take care of your body.

A last word, before ending your Monday. Your body is what you breathe, what you see, what you feel, what you consume, what you hear. You will have the fibre of those who succeed, if you nourish your body in such a way that your double can benefit from it. Speaking of your double, I will tell you about that one day. Today, know that your body expresses itself through your eyes and ears. It is the place where you see the world and where the world takes possession of you. Your body expresses itself as well through your hands: your hands that think and create, the ones you greet your neighbours with. Be at one with your body, because the road that awaits you is long and the passage across the frontiers perilous.

## 2

*You need time to understand this idea: 'Take care of your body'. You seek assistance from your megamemory that never leaves your side. You wait for it to look through the dictionaries of all the languages of the world. You end up admitting, after suspending your judgement for a long time, that the word 'body' fits perfectly with the vocabulary needed for Homo sapiens to express himself in daily life. But is not the megamemory part of your body? For once, you answer 'no!', without consulting it. You have the proof, by experience, that it cannot, in any event, be 'your body'. It is without doubt a useful instrument that saves time. What time?*

*You are already worried that it is Tuesday. The hours have made their rounds without your realizing. Time has passed so quickly. Fear seizes you by the throat the moment that you click on 'Tuesday'. The fear that you feel is further proof that you really are a remarkable representative of humanity. For you, this is a heavy*

*responsibility. But rest assured. Other representatives exist all over the world and it is the solemn duty of all of you to support one another. I imagine that each one of you will receive, once in your lifetime, a few words that come from the distant past. It is your task to pass them on, from generation to generation, after adding some new words to the old, inspired by the light of the future.*

Tuesday: Of the tranquillity of the soul.

Every day you are worried, without knowing why. You do not have the slightest notion of 'the tranquillity of the soul'. But rest assured: I do not intend to teach you. I simply ask that you open a whole new file, not just an image or window, when you are asking the megamemory about the words that I send you. You have heard people talk about the soul. In the streets, you can see great halls open their doors for hours on end for the purpose of teaching the best theories about 'the tranquillity of the soul' and the relationship between man and the hereafter. The wave of spirituality that is sweeping across your city seems to take everything with it in its path. It takes the route back to 'the tranquillity of the soul', does it not? And you, deep down inside, what do you think about it?

Today, is your soul tranquil in spite of all the efforts that you are making? Are you filled with peace, nothing but peace? The answer will not be found in the megamemory, but first of all in your body. When your body has found a few answers, continue your investigations face to face with yourself. After this experience, you will understand that anxiety spurs you to act, that the fear of what will happen tomorrow enables you to start looking for a solution today. You are so worried because you not only have a mortal body to keep alive for a time but also a memory to preserve. It is there that all the essential knowledge and expertise of civilizations past and present are stored.

You will succeed, I am sure, in saving your body and memory from the flood, but will you be conscious of the danger that hangs over the whole of humanity? If there was an arch to be built with your hands, would you think it is for you and your family? You learned a long time ago, I suppose, to transcend the restrictions of tribe and locality. I encourage you to break all the chains that prevent you from going further, ever further . . . as far as the edge of the sun, in your imagination.

Today, the dangers that threaten the integrity of your body are so great that you are defenceless. There is no certainty that science can give you the answers. It needs the constraints of a system of ethics in order to stay, as far as possible, within the limits of what is acceptable and tolerable. What are those limits? You think about it. Religion, for its part, has not found a fail-safe road leading you to happiness in the here and now. Will you wait for the hour of death to drift off to paradise where eternal peace and happiness reign?

The society in which you live imposes an infernal tempo. You live in a state of urgency, in the midst of noise and hubbub. You clamour for silence. But nobody answers you sincerely, nobody succeeds in making the theory and practice of happiness coincide. Everything proceeds as if men and women had a natural tendency to transform themselves into robots and gadgets. Maybe they have become creatures ready to serve any cause, to be used like zombies, beings without inner lives, that can be dispensed with at a moment's notice. Do not ask whether they have a soul. You will not find an answer. Refrain from making judgements. 'Am I like them?' you wonder. Carry on being worried each time you step outside and each time you come home. That will enable you to think up remedies against humanity becoming robots. I urge you to be responsible until the very end, because what your memory

as a man or woman keeps intact resembles those words that are passed on from age to age: 'Save yourself so that others, in turn, can save themselves.'

### 3

*Wednesday morning – you wake with a start. Your dream was interrupted. Your hand was reaching towards a rainbow-coloured box. There was a book in the box. You did not have time to open it. And the alarm went off. Now, you are sitting comfortably in your glass bubble, with your megamemory turned on in front of you. The words that you will hear today, you hope, will bring peace to your soul that is in anguish at the idea that it has missed out on life's treasures.*

Wednesday: Does the market make any sense?

Every day starts with 'Good morning'. So, you can say to your closest neighbour, 'Are you filled with peace, nothing but peace?' To a passer-by that you meet on your way, 'Did you have a good night' or 'Are you still there?' Yes, you should worry about whether the other person, be he neighbour or stranger, is still there, still alive. Ask him if the wind, the rain or the sun has been beneficial for the health of his heart or his liver. Before saying 'Good morning', you need not know the identity of the person whom you meet in the middle of the city or out in the countryside. Recognize his humanity by his simple and unmistakable gestures: the smile that he bestows on you or the hand that is extended towards you. These are signs that do not lie, the first human gestures that prefigure the idea of exchange and the market place.

So, say something to the first person who comes towards you. But distrust all those who want to smile at you. You are

afraid of that steely smile. You are right. Take the trouble to respond. In a virtual society, just like in our old folk-stories, you are allowed to talk to the phantoms and monsters that are around you. You do not know what they might bring you. And you will certainly teach them something. Because in this way you create, perhaps without realizing, the first threads of social fabric. But does your memory recall that Wednesday was – like the other days of the week, it varied according to the different regions – a day for bartering and the market? In some villages buried in the mists of time, women and men met on the square devoted to bartering. There, they would give and receive news of their family, the region or the weather. They bought and sold commodities. It was also here that they could declare war or conclude a lasting peace. It was the place where everyone had the right to speak the word, which, like every new currency, circulated in a restricted circle, and assisted in the survival of individuals in the context of a given community. But let me tell you, now, the little story of the global market.

Was the idea of the global market born in the minds of men at the end of the twentieth century? Was it not latent for a long while? It evolved very rapidly. After the discovery of America at the end of the fifteenth century, for the first time in history, men and women were exchanged for arms and trinkets. This trade lasted for centuries. The black man was bought and sold on a large scale in the public square. When he was released from his chains, another market, just as fierce, was awaiting him. Whole territories were divided and colonized. The place where he lived did not belong to him. The continent was divided and placed under tutelage. I am reminding you in a few words of this episode in the history of humanity so that you never forget it, and so that you understand why the world is so unequal, why certain continents like Africa are still looking for a place on the world map.

You see, there was a time, in the second half of the twentieth century, where the loan became a currency in circulation. With loans, debt was extended across the countries of the South. People said that they were poor, that they needed international help. I can tell you all about poverty. Is it necessary? Know only this, that it is not always what we think: being without money or material goods. Is not real poverty to be found in the dryness of people's hearts? I cannot find another word. I am trying to translate an idea from my language that you are not supposed to know. Real riches are not what you have in your hand, your possessions, but your hand itself. It is also in the fullness of your belly and not in simple repletion. That is why the most impoverished of human beings retains his dignity, because he hoards deep down inside the most beautiful riches in the world: riches that he can give out to everyone, in words, gestures, attention, without ever becoming poor.

But, at the moment you open this letter, you ask yourself if the words exchanged between two people still have value among the thousands of contracts signed with closed eyes. You feel intuitively that buying and selling do not constitute the meaning of one's relationship to others.

Today, know that the first manifestation of the market is a collection of relations that make living together both possible and meaningful. This symbol of humanity, you would call it solidarity, wouldn't you?

As you can observe, the four points of the compass are still as far apart from one another as ever, in spite of all kinds of networks that spin a spider's web around the world. On this web, there are a few essential threads missing – those that connect faces to one other.

Will you have time to look for the missing threads?

## 4

*You do not see the time passing. You have the impression that you hear voices. Be reassured, it is not madness lying in wait for you. With the help of the megamemory, you learn to cross the frontiers of space and time. Now you know that the virtual world to which you are accustomed can bring you back to reality: the integrity of your body, the history of humanity, the relations that you maintain with the world. This Thursday, you are impatient to know what awaits you. You have opened up a new house that you are going to explore.*

Thursday: The crossroads or the path of the double.

For a long time, all learning was done at the side of a living source, a master or initiator whose words one listened to. Listening, in the shadows and in the silence, enabled one to see better, to question better, to hear for oneself better. Whether child or adult, one submitted to the ordeal of continuous education, in the search for points of reference. The written word and images became essential means for the transmission of knowledge at the end of the twentieth century. But has the living word disappeared? It exists, more than ever, in different forms. You are still looking for it, aren't you? Today, you are your own master. You have eyes to see with and ears to hear with. You decide what you will do with your life. You are in a labyrinth. But follow the best path for yourself. Do not cry over the death of old masters. Awaken in yourself all the capacities that are still slumbering. This is where a persona appears that you were not expecting at all: your double.

I was looking for a suitable word, so you could understand the idea better, but I have not found one. I am not talking about your soul, or your shadow, words that have too many connotations. You have a soul, certainly, and you always travel with your shadow. Since you live in the age of clones, imagine

for a moment that another person, identical to you in every aspect, exists. He will not leave you. Sometimes you do not have the impression that he is there. Unlike a clone, your double is not distinct from you. Together you form one and the same complex, very complex, person. Your double can multiply himself infinitely. This is how you are one and several at the same time. You form a whole, don't you? Your body is there to prove it. Devote the whole of Thursday to venerating your double. Ancient Socrates would have said, 'Know thyself'. Does not knowing oneself mean paying a visit to the crossroads of all the paths that emanate from you? Stop for a moment in this place and listen to the music created by all the doubles that inhabit you. They are all there: your doubles who develop your sensitivity, elevate your spirit, cultivate your sense of responsibility, lead you on the paths of good sense, allow you to hope, to imagine and to dream. Without the presence of your doubles, who are you? A being without defences, deprived of liberty, incapable of taking initiatives.

But you have learned, you do not know when, to distinguish between good and evil. You know how to admire beauty. Because you are a being of correspondences and communication. You are capable of grasping the most diverse languages, telling of different things and beings – as long as you tend your ear to the movements of the universe. Satellites are instruments that imitate what man was already capable of: hearing sounds, seeing images, and transmitting them over long distances. You are a being of genius, but you are far from being God. Mortal you will always be.

If you no longer need to work to prove that you exist, it is by the *way* that you are that you will show society and the world *who* you are. Are you a dynamic person, full of energy, able to adapt to new situations, ready to create new things? If

you are, then you have integrated all your doubles into your body and mind. That is what is known as developing your multiple intelligence. You will see, soon, that your mega-memory will be of no use to you any more. Your mind will be much more powerful, much more efficient. You will enter into communication with the universe in its entirety. You will be able to communicate with your fellow human beings beyond all the screens and the instruments that block your vision and prevent you from hearing on your own.

Only then you will meet the other, a relative or stranger, your sister, your brother, your friend, your fellow human being.

5

*Your mind has been travelling for four days now. It does not seem to you that you are taking the same route, carrying out the same actions. Leaving early in the morning, saying 'Good morning' to your parents, taking the road to school, coming home at nightfall. On Monday morning you said to yourself, 'I am going along this road for the last time in my life.' Now you have doubts about that. You are not sure of anything any more. That is why you are taking this path or another, each time you ask yourself questions. You do not always receive the answers that you were expecting. But the multiple intelligences that form your mind are searching with you. This Friday, you are again sitting in the same place. With feverish hands, you cross the threshold of another doorway.*

Friday: 'Can I sit next to you?'

In certain religions, Friday was a day for offerings, fasting and prayers. People would give a neighbour, a passer-by, a poor person, a tiny part of the possessions they thought they had. They would also address prayers to Almighty God. In this way,

everyone would mark his presence, by giving and receiving, in a world made up of gestures, words and attitudes.

'Can I sit next to you?' You have heard this voice and you do not know where it is coming from. Somebody has dared speak to you. In the bubble where you spend your days, you are not alone, have you noticed that? Other humans of the same generation as you are on this journey of knowledge. You have not had the time to see them. Afterwards, your mind wakes up to their presence. They can see you too. You were all anxious to discover other worlds, other ways of seeing and thinking. But each one of you has been a lone rider. You have tested the resistance of your body and of your inner resources. You know you can count on your own forces. Your body and mind form a single unit as if you had to face imminent danger. The danger is there already. I urge you to transform it into tremendous happiness.

Today, a living being signalled to you, with his voice. He troubled the universe of your glass bubble that you thought was reserved for you alone. You thought you were at its centre. By virtue of the other whose presence you had not imagined, you see yourself from outside, you exist. You have to confront his shadow, his image, his outline, his face. Is it not through this ordeal that you learn to know yourself? Does existence have any other meaning? Yes, to make the world habitable wherever you go. Because there is always room next to you for two or three.

Somebody will come and sit there, a fox or a snake. You will not have time to tame him, like Saint-Exupéry's Little Prince. And it is your duty, as a free and responsible being, not to declare war on him first. You will acknowledge his right to come and go freely and his right to be different from you. Your multiple intelligences with whom you are in constant communication dissuade you at every moment from imagining war,

from considering it, from declaring it. They prescribe to you the fragile laws of peace that you have to take great care of. Because existing means first of all making peace with oneself, in order better to construct lasting peace with the others that live in the glass bubble. Imagine for a moment that the universe is this bubble. The air is rarefied, it is a world in miniature where the inhabitants put in place daily strategies in the fight for survival. You must exist in this bubble whose roundness and transparency are diametrically opposed to the infinity and the opacity of the universe as conceived by scientists. How will you find the means to nourish your mind and body? You worry about this. So, listen to a history lesson before continuing on your way.

In the past, a long time ago, Man lived in a time of profundity, in a state of permanent awareness, in symbiosis with the mineral, plant and animal worlds. They talked to one other, exchanged secrets, and respected one other. Every human learned from birth the elementary rules of hospitality. He lived in peace with his social and natural environment. And everyone was aware that the peace sought after was in no way comparable to the stony silence of the graveyard.

At the end of the twentieth century, the fear of invaders from outer space or a neighbouring country produced devastating consequences. Thousands of human beings were turned, by sheer force of circumstances, into refugees. From Liberia to Rwanda, by way of Sierra Leone, Colombia, the Congo and Kosovo, they were dragging the weight of war, in among their sparse luggage, across borders. They survived at the crossroads of foul weather and international aid that fell from the sky. Keep these images in a part of your memory so that these occurrences that destroy human dignity are never allowed to become a distant memory.

Today, you heard a voice talking to you, you passed the other person in your bubble. Take the time to recognize his presence.

6

*Another day is dawning and you are ready to enter the bubble that you have not finished exploring. It is round and transparent and, at the beginning, you thought that its shape was of no importance. In the course of these days, you discovered that other humans were there. You took your first steps in life together. For the moment, distrust prevails. You take possession of the bubble as if you were strangers, separated from one another by insurmountable barriers. Each one of you takes out a megamemory from his pocket. And you click, at practically the same second, on Saturday's route.*

Saturday: What are we doing together?

Here, you feel like wresting out the anxiety that seizes your heart. At the moment you take this path you do not know, look around you. You are still in the glass bubble. You notice, to your great astonishment, that your world is in full metamorphosis. This morning, the bubble has expanded considerably. You can see houses, roads, rivers and streams, oceans. You then become aware that you are choosing your own itinerary with the steps you take and your multiple intelligences. Here, you cross thoroughfares that were opened by other people millennia ago. Here, you also know that your contemporaries are present and are sharing the same space and time as you. They are far from being invaders.

Sometimes, whole countries shut their borders, close in on themselves, and start to hunt down foreigners. Individuals brandish the quest for identity as their only weapon and means

of appropriating the world. This doubtless enables them to resist. Resist what? Is this not another manifestation of the great fear of hell created by the presence of the other? Do not forget, you are also the other. Absent or present, here or elsewhere, the other is always there, in dreams or in reality, on this earth that every human has the duty to render habitable. This earth made up of minerals, plants, animals and *Homo sapiens*. Where are the strangers on this earth, then? Your imagination can create them, certainly. But your multiple intelligence asks you to have some common sense in this matter. That is why you must recognize other ways of thinking, feeling, seeing, listening and loving. Cultures that are different from your own also deserve respect.

Today, you are going to share a meal with your immediate neighbour. You did not know him. He came and sat next to you. You have both been attempting to pass the same tests at the same time. It is noon. And, for once, you feel the need to be together. To do what? The meal that you are sharing does not consist only of cereals, vegetables, fish and fruit. It could even be, if you did not have the time or because there was nothing else to eat, a sandwich bought at the corner of the nearest street. It would not matter. You can finally talk to one other.

You did not have time a minute earlier; now, you find some. Each word that you exchange gives you time. Human beings, in this way, mutually enrich one other. Are not the real riches that one hoards up every day made up of the trivial words that one exchanges with another? Do not forget that Saturday might be a festival. The time when you can let go of your fears. The time when your heart becomes lighter because you have shared in conversation. The time when, deep down inside, you can execute a few dance steps. I can see you smile and you are right. Men do not eat together any more except to discuss business. When they have a drink together it is because some urgent

matter forces them to deal with others, be they friend or foe. But what kinds of contracts bind human beings together? You live in a world of speed, efficiency and utility. But remember, you are neither artificial intelligence, nor a chemical or nuclear weapon. You still bear the heavy responsibility of remaining human.

Remember: as well as the living word that enriches you, all the arts come to your aid to fill up your leisure time on Saturday and the other days of the week. Writing brought the word into history. It has created libraries, the primary resource for keeping humanity's awareness alive. The plastic arts, cinema and all the products of creative imagination enable you to withstand the passing of time. Listen to music every day. In your mind, there is a primordial place for sound. It opens your existence up to the intensity of time. In this way, you learn that in every life there are strong moments and weak moments. Music is rhythm. The most powerful moments are accompanied by poetry: the only defence that gives us hope when all moral values have collapsed, when market-value governs the world.

Today, you are not alone. All of humanity's creations accompany you in your daily life. But that is not all. Create in your turn and contribute to the frugal meal that human beings can share together.

7

*It's the last day of the week, and you are feeling lighter because your mind is ready to take flight. It is perfectly integrated with the body it has come to know. It can move around in the immensity of time and space. You look for your megamemory in your pocket. It is not there any more. But you have already got into the habit of opening a window onto the world. You hope to be able to go farther, ever farther. You no longer see the limits of the glass bubble. You have*

*gone out onto the streets of the city. And you are already thinking about how you are going to fill in your day. Everything happens as if a voice were giving you a commentary on Sunday's route.*

Sunday: Love and friendship.

Your multiple intelligence will be with you throughout your life. It weaves together the subtle threads that unify all the parts of your body. It connects your body to your mind. It makes of you a whole, living being: human, feeling, desiring, reflective, capable of knowing, full of good sense, connected to your social and cultural environment and seeking your place in the world. You are imaginative, creative and inventive. During your passage on earth, the megamemory is nothing but a provisional, derisory guide. You have just met your true master: yourself. But remember, because you are a human being, you have rights, just as others do – all others – regardless of race, sex or religion.

Since coming into the world, you have benefited from the presence of your parents. You will benefit from the upbringing they have given you for many years to come. Since you are a child of your age, you have had access to a megamemory, where all the databases are stored, windows on all the cultures and civilizations of the world; these are messages sent by other living beings, other inhabitants of the universe. The megamemory has put you on the path of what you can know, what you have to do, what you can hope, in the words of Emmanuel Kant, the German philosopher who lived in Königsberg in the Age of Enlightenment. The story goes that, during his entire life, he took the same road every day. Imagine the sum total of the knowledge that he accumulated! He posed the question of how to find direction in one's thinking. Today, you are a free agent. Do you know where you are going? All

paths are open to you, at the crossroads of life, but know how to take the path of virtue. There is another outmoded word that most humans would like to erase from the dictionary! But be reassured, you need virtue as well as steadfast principles to serve as a compass. In this way, you can hold on to life and retain your dignity whatever the weather is like. You can also, in case of floods, keep your skin. You are not a piece of wood that floats on the water, buffeted by the wind, and which, from one day to the next, changes into a crocodile, as an old saying goes.

Even if nobody can tell you what virtue is for, imagine that it is useful for one thing: to govern yourself, to maintain the harmony of your multiple intelligence, to make peace with it. Because governing oneself is the only schooling that can enable you to govern a company or a state as well. If you learn to maintain the balance of your intelligence, you will see the difference between goods that are yours and those that belong to the public domain. You can then continue on your path and say, 'I am a human being, but I am also a citizen.' You are a born explorer. On your journey of discovery, you are flying across territories and borders. You dream of being a citizen of the world and maybe of the universe. Is this a utopia? The obstacles that impede the realization of this beautiful dream are many. But you have hope and that is enough. One of these days the walls dividing individuals, nations and states will come down. That will also be your victory. You will be one of those to have fostered the idea, from the very beginning, of a world without frontiers.

Yes, how can we get humans closer to other humans? You are convinced that all the technologies, old or new, do not have the answer to this. You are right. Only you can find the path that suits you. As you know already, it is your duty to make the world habitable. But the most difficult thing is not what you think.

Reducing social inequalities, fighting poverty, relieving suffering are all essential practical tasks for lasting human development.

Someone comes up to you and greets you. He gives you a big smile, as a bonus. You lose your train of thought. It is the person who, in your glass bubble, sat down next to you. You both remember the few words that you exchanged on your respective paths. He starts to tell you about his day. You have to admit that you are happy to see him again. You do not ask him what he is doing there suddenly. You accept his presence. Because you are already linked by a mysterious, beneficent energy. What connects you is much more than sympathy. When you left home, you were looking for him without admitting it to yourself. It is a face that you would recognize among a thousand others.

Later, much later in the day, you resume your train of thought. You feel less anxious. An insignificant incident, meeting someone or spending time with another person takes you far away from a thousand preoccupations. Maybe this is how the world is constructed, beyond the struggle for survival. In this way, connections between people are woven together, face to face, heart to heart, outside of grand universal declarations and all the beautiful theories that give everyone a good conscience. In the end, is not being human a personal test? But will you have to stop on the good path that you are on? You are there, or almost. You have your feet on the earth. Always keep your eyes fixed on the horizon, that magnificent line. And do not forget its image. It could be the image of humanity.

As you have learned, humanity is constructed on a daily basis, beyond urgency and anxiety, unsatisfied needs, unemployment, war and suffering. But the idea of death does not leave us. So, imagine that each one of us, endowed with our multiple intelligence, gives a thousandth of our real riches to

each passer-by at the corner of the nearest street or at the other end of the world. We will have the horizon at our feet, the most beautiful foundation stone for a dwelling place. But this is just a dream, isn't it? You can, without risk of making a mistake, devote time to this dream.

Apart from the dream, which takes up some of your time, give yourself the time and take the risk of loving. Love with love but also with friendship and fraternity. All love needs friendship so as not to die. And all friendship is also loyalty and fidelity. Fraternity is not only a bond of blood, this you know. These are words to which you have to give meaning here and now. You will not wait to possess the time that continues to slip between your fingers. You, yourself, will be the source of time that you bestow, that you give, that you create.

Now, face to face with yourself, with your memory and your imagination, and in the absence of the megamemory, you know where you come from, but do you know where you are going?

Have a good day!

Rita R. Colwell

National Science Foundation *United States of America*

# Sciences, truth and freedom

The celebration of a millennium sets our sights on the future as well as on a review of the past. During the last five decades of this millennium, advances in science and engineering have transformed society in unimagined ways for much of the world's population.

On 10 May almost fifty years ago, the United States Congress chartered a unique organization, the National Science Foundation (NSF), 'to promote the progress of science' by supporting science and engineering research at American colleges and universities, and science education for all students at all levels. The NSF is beginning its fiftieth anniversary celebrations and is reviewing its accomplishments. The foundation's support of research across all disciplines of science and engineering has led to profound and often surprising insights into the natural and the human-modified universe. Thus, the foundation has added substantially to the evolution of our common culture. The social and economic impacts of this new knowledge have been enormous.

During the next fifty years, I hope that the insights resulting from the scientific activity supported by the NSF can be focused more purposefully. It can address problems we now

face as a global society and prevent or substantially reduce challenges that loom on the horizon. If the NSF succeeds in engaging a wider, more diverse range of human talent in science and engineering, and if the values inherent in our scientific culture come to be more widely understood and practised, then I believe all cultures and nations will reap the benefits. This is my vision for the future fifty years hence.

Science, engineering, and technology were recognized as important to economic growth and quality of life long before the NSF was established, as was the importance of creative, well-trained people to the progress of science. However, those benefits were often not shared as widely as was desirable. The visionary scientists and statesmen who conceived of the NSF in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War were convinced that if the American public provided adequate support for basic research and science education, then the resultant social, economic and cultural returns would benefit our larger society. In the United States and in many other countries, government support of basic research in the past fifty years has transformed that vision into a reality. We must now build upon these achievements by extending that fifty-year-old vision beyond the boundaries of individual disciplines and individual nations. The spectacular advances that have been achieved in so many science and engineering disciplines have set the stage for integrated, multidisciplinary approaches to the significant common problems we face, such as assuring the sustainability of life on this planet.

The insights provided by science into both old and newly recognized problems are equally if not more significant than the tangible benefits that have resulted directly from fundamental research. Thanks in large measure to advances in scientific understanding, we now know, as we did not fifty years ago, that

human activity can have profound impacts on the natural environment. It is also now widely acknowledged that science and engineering must include the social and behavioural sciences as indispensable elements in addressing such large-scale problems. We also realize, as we often did not fifty years ago, that gaining insights into large, complex problems and developing the means to address them require practitioners from a broad spectrum of science and engineering disciplines to share and merge their differing perspectives.

Understanding and addressing the complex set of problems associated with sustainability during the next fifty years will, for example, require a further convergence of the disciplines. This convergence is almost certain to result in the creation of new science and engineering fields. Researchers in these new fields will, in turn, discover novel means to address the problems we continue to face, and produce insights into the natural and human-made universe that we cannot at present envision.

During the last fifty years, many countries besides the United States and the Western European nations have acted on their own recognition of the significance of science and engineering to social and economic progress by investing resources in research and people. While substantial disparities still exist, scientific resources are much more widely available throughout the world today than they were fifty years ago. Opportunities for mutually beneficial international scientific co-operation will continue to increase as more and more nations improve their science and engineering capabilities and make fuller use of their scientific talent. Such co-operation is essential if we are to address successfully the most serious problems that we face. Establishing and carrying out co-operative programmes effectively will continue to require the free flow of people as well as the free flow of ideas and information across national boundaries.

It is worth recalling that many of the impressive scientific advances of the last fifty years occurred during times of significant, often dangerous global tension. In 1950, for example, relations between the United States and the Soviet Union were at a nadir. The Korean War further escalated world tensions and conflict. To their enduring credit, the leaders of the National Science Foundation reaffirmed at that time that rather than seeking a role in defence-related research, they intended to adopt a policy of investing in fundamental research and people, confident that such investments would best serve the long-term interests of the United States. Today, with the Cold War conflict a matter of history, the science and engineering communities in the United States and its former military adversaries enjoy mutually beneficial co-operation. Indeed, scientific exchanges between the United States and scientists from adversary nations were a significant factor in building the mutual trust that preceded the easing of political tensions.

It is an unfortunate reality that the end of the Cold War did not entirely eliminate political hostilities between and within nations. Sadly, those conditions may well persist during the next fifty years. As in the past, however, the promise of science, and its values such as openness, adherence to truth and respect for ideas that characterize the scientific culture can help overcome the suspicions and fears that create barriers between groups and nations. The openness of science and the scientific process creates an environment and opportunity to appreciate the rich cultural diversity of the world's peoples.

Looking back to the time when the National Science Foundation was created, it is clear that even the most far-seeing visionaries could not have predicted the scientific advances that would take place over the subsequent fifty years. Similarly, we could not have foreseen the profound changes that would occur

as a result of those advances. Future advances hold the same exciting, mysterious and beneficial potential. What we know with confidence is that investments in people that continuously enrich the reservoir of new scientific talent represent our most important key to a peaceful, prosperous, sustainable future. That talent in the service of society promotes a mutual benefit for all the world's people. By ensuring access to careers in science and engineering to all qualified individuals who seek them, we benefit from the rich multiplicity of ideas and perspectives that can only strengthen and extend our scientific expertise in the future.

While not everyone would choose a career in science or engineering, we must ensure that all members of society possess the means to understand and appreciate the positive and pervasive impact that science, engineering and technology have across the whole of society. Only with this understanding and appreciation can all citizens be active participants in the science, engineering and technology decisions that affect their lives.

In September 1948, President Harry S. Truman concluded a speech in which he urged the United States Congress to create a National Science Foundation with the assertion that:

Now and in the years ahead, we need, more than anything else, the honest and uncompromising common sense of science. Science means a method of thought. That method is characterized by open-mindedness, honesty, perseverance, and, above all, by an unflinching passion for knowledge and truth. When more of the peoples of the world have learned the ways of thought of the scientist, we shall have better reason to expect lasting peace and a fuller life for all.

Those words are as prescient and wise today as they were in 1948. They will serve us well in our coming fifty years and beyond.

Nadine Gordimer

Writer *South Africa*

# The human face of globalization

Dear citizens of the twenty-first century,

There is no escaping the past, and so you must take an honest look at your inheritance from the twentieth century. There are many aspects; I choose that of the new, never-before concepts that arose during my life as a child of the time. One which is of great significance to your lives as you take over is the concept of globalization.

The feasibility of globalization has been made possible by the huge technological advances of the twentieth century, particularly in means of communications, from the satellite up among the stars to the computer on every office desk. Information may be exchanged across the world in real time; distance means nothing so long as jet aircraft have the fuel to overcome it. Globalization has all the means of efficiency to regulate itself as it is conceived so far: primarily as a one-world of investment, a super-tool of international finance.

Has it a human face?

The real necessity for globalization – which you will have to tackle – is nothing less than the question of whether the gap between rich and poor countries can be narrowed by it. What

role can globalization play in eradicating world poverty? For poverty puts an inhuman, outcast mask on more than 3 billion of our world's population.

If globalization is to have a human face in your century, its premise is that development is about people in interaction on the planet we have occupied, so far without sharing.

This will not be achieved, however, through worldwide shopping on the Internet. In the twentieth century, consumption has grown unprecedentedly, reaching around \$24 trillion in 1998, but the spending and devouring spree, far from widely benefiting the poor, in some aspects undermined the truly human prospects for globalization: sustainable development for all.

Runaway consumption by the developed world has eroded renewable resources such as fossil fuels, forests and fishing grounds, polluted local and global environments, and pandered to promotion of needs for conspicuous display in place of the legitimate needs of life.

While those of us who have been the generations of big consumers need to consume less, for more than a billion of the world's poorest people increased consumption is a matter of life and death and a basic right – the right to freedom from want. And this is not want of food and clean water alone; there are other forms of want – illiteracy, lack of technological skills: the basic qualifications for benefiting from the concept of globalization. Illiteracy is the basis of global cultural deprivation, and it exists among great numbers of the world's population. From it comes isolation from any of the forms of culture that are essential to the human right to develop individual potential for a full life. There can be no global culture while there are inhabitants deprived of the ability to read, to have access to the powers of the imagination released through the written word, through literature; deprived of the intellectual and spiritual bounty of libraries.

Then there is the matter of the translation of the world's munificent store of literary enlightenment. With all the ease of technological reproduction of the written word now attained, there remains the fact that the human process of translating creative literature from one language to another – which certainly, so far, cannot be achieved by any electronic brain – is not recognized as a highly important means of bringing about the ideal of global understanding, which surely must be the underlying philosophy of globalization?

In the new millennium there will be the need to remedy this by establishing schools of translation in universities (they are rare in the twentieth century); by the action of publishers to co-operate in joint enterprises across language boundaries; for government ministries of arts and culture to provide subsidies for this work; and for the ministries of foreign affairs to wake up and realize that this is an initiative of diplomacy effective beyond the conventional cultural limits of providing cultural exchange mainly in the form of scholarships abroad.

Consumption is necessary for human development when, as cultural consumption does, it enlarges the capabilities of and improves people's lives without adversely affecting the lives of others. And a brake on material consumption need not, as some fear, bring about closed industries and shops if the power of becoming consumers is extended among the population of the globe.

Whose responsibility will it be to bring these things about?

That of many, international and national.

It is the responsibility of the European Union, which flouts the principles of globalization through its blatant protectionism. It is the responsibility of national governments to bring about just consumerism. Theirs is a legal one: the

framing of laws in each country for justice in the access to and share of its resources. And it is the responsibility of international law, an aspect of globalization long contested, for example, with respect to fishing rights and, towards the end of the twentieth century, the essential process of establishing an international criminal court. For globalization, we must admit, posits the most difficult secular morality possible: a moral authority above all those individual ones of the global concept's component countries.

Non-governmental and civic organizations have the responsibility both in building human capability and in ensuring that a development philosophy prevails, that projects are not imposed upon people according to others' ideas of their needs, but are planned and brought into being only with the beneficiaries themselves, according to their knowledge of their community and environment. Let the remnants of the age of social engineering be deeply buried in the twentieth century, not with a backward glance, but a shudder.

Now if we are realistic, we have to see that on the doorstep of the new century there is delivered a new threat to globalization with a human face. Some 35 per cent of our world is in recession as the old century ends. Many countries are in strife. This means millions more refugees, driven homeless and starving to swell the count of the globe's 3 billion poor, calculated before the tragedies of Kosovo and Angola, to name only two. In the Russian Federation, the winter of 1988/89 froze over impoverished people in their disillusion with international openness in trade and investment; these elements of globalization, as it has been evidenced so far, have not shown them a human face.

But we know that what you absolutely must not do is to allow the shadow of a world economic recession that fell upon

the last decade of the twentieth century, reaching from Asia over West, North and South, to become an excuse to postpone the inescapable responsibility of the developed world, in the new millennium, to pursue the eradication, rather than the traditional band-aid amelioration, of poverty which exists alongside the globalization of economic power.

Never send to know for whom the bell tolls – when it sounds in one stock exchange its note reverberates throughout the world, shaking the haves as well as casting down even further the have-nots.

Global free markets mean nothing in the end, if there is no one able to come and buy. The hazard of decline through the very interdependence created by globalization of world economies, this negative impact upon what is progressive and positive in the concept, is what surely must cause even the most complacent acceptors of the time-disgraced division of the world's resources between rich and poor to realize that the billions of fellow men and women in abject poverty are in coexistence with them, not safely quarantined in isolation. The financier George Soros has come to the reflexion: 'There are collective interests that don't find expression in market values.'<sup>1</sup>

And perhaps those five permanent member of the United Nations Security Council – the United Kingdom, China, France, the Russian Federation, the United States – who among others enrich their national economies by selling arms for the globe's conflicts and wars, will hear when Amartya Sen, 1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics, says of production of arms, 'Human benefits that flow by redirecting these forces can be

1. George Soros, 'The International Crisis: An Interview'. Interview with Jeff Madrick, *The New York Review*, January 1999.

remarkably large',<sup>2</sup> and when Kofi Annan says, 'No development without peace; no peace without development.'<sup>3</sup>

No globalization without a human face.

The twenty-first century will achieve a new and radiant definition of progress if you can work to put that face upon your world.

Sincerely,  
Nadine Gordimer

2. Amartya Sen, 'Economics Laureate Condemns Arms Sales', *The Star* (Johannesburg), 5 January 1999.

3. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations. Speech at the launch of UNDP's 'Eradication of Poverty' programme, New York, United Nations, 1997.

Muhammedin Kullashi

Philosopher *Yugoslavia*

# Letter from a Chinese traveller returning from Yugoslavia

*Hong Kong, 12 July 1999*

Dear friends,

I have just returned from a long journey in the Balkans, that region of Europe that people call benighted. I spent several months there, and the voyage has left me extremely tired. It was not so much the travelling that tired me as the bewilderment I experienced during my stay and the conversations I had with the people there. An oppressive atmosphere emanated from the landscapes I visited – this heaviness weighed on my soul and I felt exhausted.

Moreover, this continent had, in spite of this, known peace for half a century and prosperity had improved the quality of life, particularly in the western part. Then war returned, in its most terrible guises. A decade after the turn of the century, the First World War ignited in the Balkans, in Sarajevo. And a decade before this century ends, the cyclone of war has ravaged a part of this peninsula. There are many docu-

ments that testify to what happened during this decade. I spent several years preparing for this journey: I read numerous documents on the history of the Balkans in the twentieth century, historical accounts, research papers and various dispatches. I ordered many books from Europe, for the library in our town. My interest in the dramatic events in this region, so distant and so little known to us, was stirred by the particular contrast between, on the one hand, the idea I had of the history of one part of the Balkans – Greece (a light shining across the centuries with its works of philosophy, literature and art, and its way of life) and on the other, the tragic fracturing of present-day societies that are situated so close to the cities of Ancient Greece. It is not that there was an absence of war in ancient times. But today the wars seem to me to be significantly more cruel and more devastating, not only for man's environment but also for his soul. As if the development of knowledge must necessarily be accompanied by an intensification of suffering. It is the scale of the disaster that caught my attention. As if all the great texts about the absurdity of war, taught to generations of children, were powerless to make an impression on them, as if it were imperative that the experiences of destruction be repeated, each time becoming more devastating. Never, in the past, have such great numbers of civilians been the victims of war.

In my reading about war, I remembered a letter by the French philosopher, Voltaire, who showed such an interest in our civilization. Voltaire replied to a letter from the king of Prussia, Frederick II, in which the latter boasts about his latest victory, saying:

I do not much like heroes, they make too much noise. I hate conquerors, proud enemies of themselves. Who have placed supreme happiness in the horrors of combat. Seeking death everywhere, and

making a hundred thousand of their fellow men suffer it. The greater their glory shines, the more detestable they are.

Heroes, who have been so adulated throughout history, and who find happiness in the horror they inflict on others, are presented as enemies of their own humanity. Voltaire believed that the figure of the hero encouraged a mythological interpretation of history.

Although I do not think that the wisdom of education can greatly temper man's behaviour and inclination to violence, neither am I able to accept these as natural. And then, I thought I understood that it was not so much an innate predisposition to violence which had brought about these sad events in the Balkans. It has more to do with the way public affairs are managed. And the old Greeks (in fact they were young, with that youth which constituted the dawn of European civilization) let it be understood that this was the most difficult and yet the most sublime of tasks. I do not yet understand why this task should have been so badly executed in this region that it causes such a great deal of suffering.

I talked with many of the people of these regions, in particular those from the country which was known as Yugoslavia, the country of the Slav peoples of the south. But I learned that other peoples lived in this area who did not belong to the same family: Albanians, Hungarians, Italians, Gypsies, Vlachs. In the past, the king of the Serbs, Tsar Dusan, who ruled over the southern Balkans in the thirteenth century, saw himself as 'The King of the Serbs, Albanians, Greeks and Vlachs'. I could not understand why, in this region, highly educated people in the twentieth century would want to deny or simplify the enduring presence of cultural, religious and linguistic diversity. I could name any number of historical

accounts testifying to the wars between these peoples, but also to long periods of peaceful coexistence. Strata of different civilizations have been built into the identities of this region. Each one seems to carry traces of other cultures, the intermingled nature of which was apparent almost everywhere: in the surnames, the names of the towns and regions, the clothing, the cuisine and the style of the houses. And you could trace these interwoven threads back through time, although each group retains certain characteristics that distinguish it from the rest.

I was under the impression, however, that the differences and the similarities between these groups were not static and that the way the inhabitants of the Balkans perceived their own identities was more fluid in the past. The representations of their identities only became more rigid in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Their elites constructed their groups' identities on the particularities of their language and history. And I noticed that in their history books the words 'glory', 'grandeur', 'heroic sacrifices' recurred regularly and were used to create a prodigious past. I said to myself that these prodigious monuments must have been crushing for the minds of the pupils who had to assimilate them. A heavy burden to bear. In these textbooks, knowledge is conceived of, by some, as a weapon to be used against their enemies and, by others, as a weapon which the enemy must be deprived of. In the same way, I remarked that, in their textbooks, they have a tendency to see the past through the eyes of the present, imposing on it the same narrow view of their peoples and relations between them. Paradoxically, modern European man seems to me to perceive himself in a way which is more independent from these so-called natural traits, since he attempts to construct his identity on the basis of his ability to act, and to create and shape himself. Moreover, in the Balkans these rigid identities seem to me to be at odds with

the Middle Ages when the dividing lines between the groups were not fixed. It is rather strange. It seems that they built their states based on these criteria for identity, combined with the political model of the French nation state. All of their elites refer to the French Revolution of 1789 and its slogans. The creation of their states at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century, was accompanied by a great deal of violence, especially towards those who were considered different from the dominant group concerned. I saw that a great deal of effort had been invested in the attempt to assimilate minorities, to change their identities, to homogenize diverse populations, whatever the cost. I have the impression that there was more tolerance in the Middle Ages than there is in this century, which promised prosperity and progress. It is not that I am filled with nostalgia for the past, but rather with a sense of unease faced with present-day events that invite comparison with certain other events in the past.

I endeavoured to understand the reasons for the recent war in Yugoslavia. I questioned many of the people who were living there. I learned that the crisis which led to the break-up of the country began in Kosovo. Once again, I felt that the question of how to govern a political entity, in other words a state, had shown itself to be incredibly important. Yugoslavia was a federation, composed of eight units, one of which was Kosovo. Each of these federal units had their own parliament and government and, at the same time, were linked to a federal government and parliament. This Yugoslavia, which was created at the end of the Second World War (in 1945), replaced the former Yugoslavia, created in 1918 as the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The party which founded the second Yugoslavia, the Communist Party led by Tito, announced its intention to guarantee fraternity and equality

among its peoples, to create a Yugoslavia that was different from the one that preceded it, which was referred to as 'the prison of the peoples'. His party controlled everything: the state, the economy, culture and education, the media and non-governmental organizations. It could be said that this party worked rather like a political police force. However, particularly after the split with Stalin's USSR, control over certain areas was weakened, at least in comparison with other Communist countries. It opened up to the Western world and allowed its citizens to travel abroad freely. This was not a democratic regime – there were no free elections – but it did attempt to copy the liberal democracies in certain respects. Through an idea of 'self-administration', it hoped to make it seem that its citizens were participating freely in public life.

Nevertheless, there was one issue which its leaders handled with caution: that of nationality. It seems to me that they made an effort to affirm the different cultures and languages which made up the country, to integrate them into an institutional framework and promote the idea of their equality. Apart from the Serbs, the Croats and the Slovenes, who were the founders of the first Yugoslavia (1918–41), in the second (1945–91) the Montenegrins, Bosnians, Macedonians, Albanians and Hungarians were given institutional recognition. In fact, the leaders had judged that, to sustain this federation in all its diversity, with the explosive weight of the memories of past conflicts, and with the divergent interests of the different regions, it was necessary to find a way of reconciling these interests without stifling cultural diversity. I am not convinced that they found the best model for resolving this question, as they claimed to have done, but they did succeed in establishing a certain equilibrium. The representatives of the different groups expressed themselves in their own languages in the federal

parliament; a simultaneous translation was guaranteed. Often they spoke the majority language (Serbo-Croat) but the right to speak their own languages created a sense of equality. In Kosovo itself, bilingualism was guaranteed in all the institutions; in the administration at all levels, at the university and in the media. Economic prosperity seemed to have accompanied this state of affairs in the late 1960s and 1970s. I do not mean to suggest that the relations between these groups were ideal, but in this period they were better than they had been before.

At this point I would like to present, via the testimonies of some of the people I spent time with and some of the documents I read, possible reasons for the break-up of this country, an event which shook the whole of Europe.

To begin with I would like to quote a history professor, V.B., a Serb from Pristina, Kosovo's capital, with whom I discussed at length the past and the present, the genesis of the crisis and certain events in greater detail. Here is a fragment of the notes I took during our interviews:

Everything began with the revolt by the Kosovar Albanians in the spring of 1981, with their demand for a republican status, even though this province had a very considerable autonomy, with its own parliament and government. This claim was unacceptable. Our army and police force had every right to intervene against the demonstrators. Besides, I think Tito had given them too many rights which they did not deserve: the Albanians are a minority in Yugoslavia, even though they form the majority in Kosovo. More importantly, Kosovo is the cradle of the Serbian nation; several important monasteries can be found there, such as Decani, Gračanica and the patriarchate of Pec, which has some very beautiful frescoes. Key events in our history have taken place in Kosovo – in particular, the Battle of the Field of Blackbirds in 1389, when our soldiers fought valiantly against the

Turkish troops. These were greater in number and won the battle: following this defeat, the Balkans were under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for five centuries. This event left its mark not only on our epic literature but also on our modern national conscience. Kosovo is also the graveyard of our martyrs and of our freedom. We drew the strength to rebel against this empire, in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, from this same event. We had to put an injustice right, to reconquer Kosovo and rebuild the Serbian nation.

This is why I believe Tito was guilty of a grave injustice, a betrayal even, in giving Kosovo, whose population today is 90 per cent Albanian, too great a degree of autonomy. He allowed another state to be created within our state which has proved to be a Trojan Horse. In fact, Tito and the Yugoslav Communist Party did this on purpose to weaken Serbia. But they also created another state, Macedonia, which was once a part of Old Serbia. It is true that the Serbs are now in a minority there; however, in medieval times, this land belonged to us. The blood spilled in these territories in the past is proof of our people's courage and greatness and of the legitimacy of our claims.

The Albanian historian from Pristina, S.R., gave a markedly different version of the events and the facts, but his account was similar in its vision of history:

In fact, the Albanians, along with the Greeks, are the oldest inhabitants of the Balkans. Long before the arrival of the Slavs in the Balkans, the Albanians' forebears, the Illyrians, commanded not only the Albania of today and Kosovo, but also the entire coast along the Adriatic Sea.

The Illyrian princes, Gneç and Teuta, made the powers of the region, including the Roman Empire, tremble with fear at the sight of their ships. In the interior, our ancestors were peaceful cultivators of the land. Their calm life was to be shattered by the arrival, from the

Carpathians, of Slav hordes who invaded these territories, brutally ravaging them.

Our people had already been Christian for several centuries when the pagan Slavs settled in the Balkans. After the arrival of the Turks, some of our people converted to Islam, for several reasons, notably to avoid absorption by the powerful Serbian Church. The prayers, in this church, which was also attended by Orthodox Albanians, were said in Serbian; the Albanians had also undergone the schism between the western and eastern Christian churches. Converting to Islam allowed us to keep our national identity, by marking us out from the Serbs.

Even though they converted to Islam, the Albanians continued to fight against the Ottoman Empire, demanding their independence. A typical example is that of Skenderbeg, our national hero, who, while a commander of the Turkish army, took advantage of an opportunity to organize the Albanian rebellion in Albania: for a quarter of a century, he led a courageous struggle against the Turks. The philosopher Leibniz and the poet Lamartine praised his courage.

Moreover, in the nineteenth century, it was Kosovo that would become the centre of military and political resistance for all the Albanians in the Balkans against the Ottoman Empire and for the struggle for independence. But history was not kind to us. The Great Powers gave Serbia half of our lands, leaving half of the Albanian people under the cruel domination of the Serbs.

The English historian, N.M., a well-known expert in the history of the Balkans, whom I met in Tirana, the capital of Albania, told me one day:

Serbian and Albanian historiography both suffer from myths of grandeur and heroism, from a unilateral approach to complex historical events. They project onto the past nineteenth-century nationalist programmes, and thereby distort it.

The Kosovo of the Middle Ages was not, as it is held to be, purely Serbian, nor was it purely Albanian. The movements in population are often obscured and portrayed in accordance with current political interests. However, serious Serbian historians do not deny the presence of Albanians in Kosovo, before or during the Middle Ages. Others who are less scrupulous misrepresent the numbers involved in the exoduses which marked the centuries in this peninsula.

Serbian political thinkers, like Dimitrije Tucovic and Kosta Novakovic, in their works at the beginning of the century, and unlike those who identified the Albanians with the Turks, have underlined the Kosovar Albanians' struggle for liberation from the Ottoman Empire. They also emphasize the terror to which the Serbian state subjected the Albanians, after establishing its control over Kosovo in 1913, against the will of the majority of the population (as also happened in Macedonia).

As far as the Albanian historians are concerned, apart from glorifying the history of the Albanian people, they have a tendency to portray the relations between Serbs and Albanians as one of perpetual conflict, omitting periods of peaceful coexistence and the intermingling of the two cultures. They portray the Albanians as eternal victims throughout the centuries, suppressing any negative aspects which might tarnish the golden image of their people.

In Belgrade, I met a well-known sociologist, N.P., who was regarded as a critic of Milosevic's regime. He said to me:

I have to admit that the Serbian state has inflicted a reign of terror, in particular since 1981, on the Kosovar Albanians. But, on the other hand, the Albanians have made their position in the conflict worse by aiming to create a national state, instead of working to democratize the federal structure already in place. In this way, their political orientation is just as nationalistic, it plays into the hands of Serbian

nationalism and, as a consequence, what we have seen is the confrontation of two nationalisms, rallying around two different ethnic causes, both of which are exclusive and intolerant.

The Albanians have used the Serbian state's human rights violations against them as justification for their nationalistic demands for independence. It is a confrontation which is leading nowhere and the blame is shared by both sides.

I questioned another sociologist from Belgrade, N.K., who ran a human rights organization, about this interpretation:

Whilst I admit that, in a general sense, the situation in Kosovo can be defined as a conflict between two nationalisms, I do not believe that, in the analysis of concrete situations and concrete events, we should be content with generalizations: we must return to the actions of the different players in these complex situations. Thus, I do not believe that the terror inflicted by the Serbian state and its police in the 1980s can be compared to the demonstrations by Albanians who were protesting at being expelled from all public institutions on the grounds of their ethnic origin. You cannot compare the actions of an army which terrorizes a population for ten years with those of an armed movement from that population, which tries to resist, having lost all hope of a peaceful solution. The indiscriminate use of the term 'nationalism' can contribute to the mystification, rather than the clarification, of certain situations.

I found an interesting explanation for this crisis in the comments of a Serbian lawyer, S.P., whom I met before leaving for the Balkans, in New York, where he was in exile:

The tensions in Kosovo have been used by a new political class, which was formed in the 1980s, to make possible the perpetuation of a non-

democratic regime. After Tito's death, his Communist regime began to crumble. At this time, certain intellectual currents were involved in trying to democratize the Yugoslav federal system. But they were in the minority in Serbia. It was the nationalistic tendencies that were to have the upper hand. And not just any nationalism: with time, it became increasingly aggressive and exclusive. It was not a romantic nationalism which was content to glorify its past and its people. It was inspired by a serious political and economic crisis and, primarily among the Serbs, aroused resentment towards the Albanians, and later towards others: the Croats, the Bosnians, the Western world and finally the whole world.

The agents of this aggressive nationalism were to be found within the former apparatus of the Serbian Communist Party but also in the ranks of the intelligentsia of all complexions, the Orthodox Church and the army. The party in power responded to the discontent among the Serbian people resulting from the crisis within the system, by inciting, through the powerful tools of propaganda, first fear and later resentment and hatred. It required a long and systematic effort, to which numerous intellectuals dedicated themselves.

Fear was incited by portraying the Kosovar Albanians' political demands for republican status as a diabolical plot to destroy the very foundations of the Serbian national entity. They suggested that behind all the activities in which the Albanians were involved, whether in education or the economy, lurked plans to harm Serbia. They claimed that the Albanians were preparing for the 'genocide' of the Serbian people and that urgent measures were needed to save the Serbian people from the threat of extermination.

The media would regularly provide 'examples', either invented or taken from common law conflicts of daily life in Kosovo. In this way, cases of individual violence were presented as the first indications of the planned genocide. The Albanian birthrate was presented as a diabolical plot to conquer Serbian territory. The fear aroused by this

policy was cleverly transformed into hatred for the Albanians, which became increasingly overwhelming. Then the ancient myth of Kosovo was resuscitated: it was interpreted as a promise of revenge against 'the enemies of the Serbian people', as a call to recover the purity of the people by excluding others from Kosovo, especially the Albanians who made up the majority of the population. This myth could have been read differently. Other conclusions could have been drawn from it. But it seems that the political class found in ethnic hatred a powerful means of mobilizing the masses, of leading them (in Serbian, the word 'leader', *rukovodilac*, means the one who guides somebody by the hand) into policies which promised them salvation.

The Albanians were referred to as the source of all the Serbian people's ills. The hatred of Albanians, brought about by the propaganda, allowed the political class to close its ranks, excluding the moderates or anyone who did not agree with this policy, whilst bringing together the most disparate political currents. All their differences were blurred as a result of the hatred which united them.

The slogan of fraternity between the peoples was contemptuously rejected as a ruse thought up by the enemies of the Serbian people. For years, in towns all over Serbia, the Serbian authorities drove its people to attend mass demonstrations which created the illusion of spontaneity, of rediscovered freedom, of refound dignity. In this way, I saw with my own eyes how these words were perverted by a practice which made them devoid of meaning. This despicable manipulation was to have serious consequences. The regime succeeded in creating, using different mechanisms, a very strong support base, which was to continue to grow, for its policy of war and destruction. In Albanians, it created feelings of humiliation and hostility with regard to Serbia.

This regime was to lead the Serb people from one war to another, from one disaster to another. I do not want to deny the responsibility of Yugoslavia's other nationalist movements in its tragic

break-up, but I believe that the main responsibility lies with the regime in Belgrade. And not only the regime in the narrow sense of the term. I am speaking of the responsibility of all those who actively supported this regime in its actions which were so devastating both for others and for Serbia itself. Those who gave their eyes and their hands to the sovereign, as La Boétie says in *Voluntary Servitude*.

I was able to read, in the Belgrade newspapers of the 1980s, a profusion of articles devoted to subjects referred to by the lawyer written by well-known philosophers, historians, sociologists and writers. I was astonished at the level of intellectual erosion that was apparent in these articles, as I had previously read other articles by the same people that exhibited a wealth of ideas and critical judgement regarding issues of contemporary society, the challenge which technology presents for man today, for his life and his thoughts. I was dumbfounded to see the same authors adopt a style which panders to their compatriots' basest impulses, stirs up their passionate hatred, blinds their judgement by urging them to see no behaviour as taboo in their relations with Albanians, and falsifying reality.

I listened attentively to and questioned at length an Albanian philosopher from Kosovo who had lived and studied in Belgrade. It was Sh.M., whose writings I had had the opportunity to read in several collected works. Here is one of the comments I noted down during my interviews/our discussions:

It is true that the Kosovar Albanians, especially since 1981, have been subject to systematic and diverse forms of terror perpetrated by the Serbian regime. This harsh reality was to be used by the radical current of Albanian nationalism. Their conclusion would be: 'You see, it is impossible to live with the Serbs, they are by nature bloodthirsty criminals.'

The use of terror is explained by the Serbs' nature, which is seen as a constant, instead of seeking an explanation in the character of the political regime. Radical Albanian nationalism works along similar lines to those of Serbian nationalism: it calls for the unification of all Albanians in the Balkans in one state, at any cost and by any means. It excludes all possibility of communication with the Serbs, even with the moderates or with those who show themselves sympathetic to the situation of the Albanians. Its vision of history is reductive and exclusive: the denigration of the entire past of the Serbs is accompanied by the glorification of that of the Albanians.

This vision is not only the work of extremists, it is fed by an entire historiography and literature of national Albanian romanticism, which creates many harmful illusions and which weakens people's critical judgement, particularly among young people. This influence makes them ill-equipped to deal with political realities, which require clear-sightedness, flexibility and moderation. Extreme demands, provoked by the extremist policies of the enemy, create a vicious circle which is broken only by violent solutions.

A human rights activist from Belgrade, who led one of the two associations which denounced the Serbian regime's campaign of terror against the Kosovar Albanians, S.B., said to me one day:

I have followed the human rights violations in Kosovo for years. What strikes me most is the continual intensification of this terror, its upward curve. This curve is a good illustration of the nature of Milosevic's regime: having suppressed Kosovo's autonomy by force, he embarked on successive military campaigns, from 1991 onwards, against Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, only to return to Kosovo. Each of these attacks has ended badly, not only for those attacked but also for the Serbian state. The other regimes also share some of the blame, at

least politically, but ours bears the bulk of it. It is the obstinate pursuit of a policy of destruction which is only able to feed and sustain itself through the ravages it inflicts everywhere, by the resentment and the despair of those it has drawn into these murderous exploits.

The Serb regime was particularly determined to expel, by whatever means necessary, the Albanians from Kosovo. At the end of the 1980s, having accused them of being the enemies of the Serbian people, it expelled them from all the institutions (schools, hospitals, businesses, etc.). This exclusion severed relations between Serbs and Albanians, at least in the public sphere, because it established one group as the oppressors of the other. Some years later, in 1998, the Serb authorities launched a massive military offensive in which they bombed and burned villages, on the pretext of pursuing 'terrorists'. However, the great majority of the victims were civilians. And when the Western powers decided to put a stop to these criminal acts, by initiating a campaign of air strikes, Milosevic's regime used the opportunity to carry out the most sweeping operation of what has been termed 'ethnic cleansing': in a few weeks he deported more than a million Albanians, emptying in particular the towns where there was no military resistance. Massive deportations were accompanied by appalling massacres of numerous civilians.

The continuity of the Serbian state's policy towards Kosovo, as the English historian, N.M., also points out, can be seen from the Balkan War (which preceded the First World War) onwards. Serbian socio-democratic writings from the beginning of the century offer a similar interpretation: they denounce colonialist policies, accompanied by crimes against civilian populations. Thus, in 1913, Tucovic, describing the actions of the Serb army in Kosovo, speaks, in the paper *The Worker's Voice*, of the 'barbarous crematoriums where hundreds of women and children were burned alive'. His analyses are not limited to a

description of the policies of the Serb regime. They also point to an outcome:

If Old Serbia [Kosovo] is reattached to Serbia, for every free Serb there would be two oppressed Albanians, Turks, etc. We want a freedom for our people which does not involve destroying other people's freedom. This goal can only be achieved by creating a political entity in which all peoples are equal . . . regardless of which monarch ruled in which region several centuries ago.

I was struck by the far-sightedness of this Serbian political thinker. The great Croat and Yugoslav writer, Miroslav Krezla (1898–1982), in one of his essays entitled *Ten Bloody Years*, presents Dimitrije Tucovic as a brilliant and noble figure who fought to change the cruel and miserable reality which was tearing the Balkans and Serbia apart. The critical attitude of these Serb intellectuals at the beginning of the century is all the more striking since, in many of the writings of contemporary Serb intellectuals, even of those who criticize the Belgrade regime in various ways, the policy towards Kosovo is either justified, or at best, passed over in silence. And the crisis was only beginning in 1912. Mirko Kovac a writer from Belgrade living in exile who, unlike the majority of his colleagues, has formulated a clear analysis of the question of Kosovo, refers in a recent article to Tucovic's moral courage and political far-sightedness.

In a refugee camp for Kosovar Albanians in Macedonia, I met a journalist from Pristina, who had spent many years in France and had come to cover the events for a Parisian newspaper. He told me of the latest developments:

Hundreds of thousands of Albanians have been deported in trains, trucks and buses to Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro. Hundreds

of thousands more, having been driven from their homes, have been wandering for weeks in the forests and mountains of Kosovo, without food or any kind of security: men reduced to the state of wandering shadows, stripped of everything, exhausted, sickened by the violence they have been subjected to and seen; stripped of everything which, in the towns or villages where they lived, gave them the distinctive traits of humanity.

As wandering shadows, these people must correspond to what the architects of the policy of 'ethnic cleansing' dreamed of: dehumanizing the Other, reducing him to nothing. The images of towns emptied of all their Albanian population, where the roads are strewn with identity papers torn up by the police – ghost towns, emptied of children's laughter and the sound of conversation in different languages.

The towns of Kosovo contain reminders of a shared history between Albanians and Serbs throughout the centuries – in the architecture, but also in the memories of the relationships built up in daily life, in chance encounters. Pristina, Peje and Mitrovica, the biggest towns in Kosovo, where I have spent many years of my life, haunt my dreams as towns which have been emptied of everything which gave them their life.

Something sinister hangs in the air in these towns, something emanates from the smoke of burnt-out homes, houses where so many dreams were born, so many desires, moments of tenderness, but also disagreements and quarrels. This sinister element is a sign of the disaster, conceived in the monstrous project of 'ethnic cleansing', and which was realized in this the last year of the twentieth century.

This journalist told me, one evening, how moved he was at the understanding that his fellow journalists, but also intellectuals, and even certain politicians had shown, in France, in their statements on the Kosovo question: the universal ramifications of

this particular situation, the perceptiveness of their analysis, their moral outrage over the atrocities, the clarity of their positions which did not imply a black-and-white view of events, and their openness towards a problem which for others was obsolete, being simply 'infra-historical'. He was moved by the moral position taken by some in the face of the manifest indifference and cynicism of others, who preferred to consign this dramatic situation to the hell of oblivion.

A Serbian refugee from Kosovo whom I met in Belgrade, devastated by his experiences, explained to me the reasons for his flight:

After the arrival of the NATO troops, some of the Albanian refugees who had come back to Kosovo committed acts of violence against Serbian civilians. The soldiers of their liberation army came late one evening and told us to leave the village as quickly as possible. As we were leaving on a tractor, we saw our house go up in flames. And yet we had not touched our Albanian neighbours. The Serb civilians who had committed crimes had left with the Serbian army and police force, several days before.

An Albanian from Prizren recently told me he was saddened to see that the Albanians were removing the statues of Serbian historical figures from the town of Prizren:

The Serbian authorities had forcibly removed all the monuments belonging to the Albanian cultural heritage, in the beginning of the 1990s. This desire to wipe out all traces of the Other's presence is being reproduced, this time by the victims. One has the impression that, after all they have suffered, some Albanians at least see no other option but revenge. The repetition of the same acts, following the same logic . . . a vicious circle.

What I was able to understand, dear friends, is that this tragic part of the former Yugoslavia's history has been a hard test for Europe, during the last ten years of this century. I have tried to reflect on this situation, remaining open to the plurality of voices which give their accounts of it, to the divergence of the interests and the passions of those involved, and refusing to apportion blame mechanically, in order to avoid reducing the situation, despite its complexity, to an indistinct haze. I do not, however, propose to give you clear-cut conclusions regarding this problem, neither do I intend to bore you with a moralistic lament about the hopeless fate of humanity.

The fall in 1989 of the Berlin Wall, which had divided Europe, awakened the hopes of the countries of Eastern Europe that they might gradually become part of the institutions of the European Union, by developing the stable structures of a liberal democracy (the least-bad system of government we know of): the rule of law, a free press, a market economy and political pluralism. After the initial enthusiasm, this march into the future revealed itself to be full of disappointments, as much for the people of Eastern Europe as for those in the West. In the majority of Eastern European countries, and in the Balkans in particular, the market economy was characterized by powerful mafia networks, the parties that won the elections adopted very authoritarian styles of government, making life very difficult for opposition parties, blocking changes in power, retaining strict control over the media, and cultivating state intervention in the economy. But these general faults, which have marked the countries of Eastern Europe, are almost benign in comparison with the scale of the crisis in Yugoslavia, where a whirlwind of destruction swept away everything which made peaceful coexistence possible. Looking into this crisis, I was struck by the energy that had been devoted to destroying the conditions

allowing for cohabitation, by the shrewdness employed by people to destroy others and themselves. An abyss which was opened, I would say, deliberately. An enterprise in which the educated elites played a very important role. A course of events which seems deceptively natural. Yet this disaster was in no way a natural process. It was brought about, above all, by the actions of men – a fact which makes it all the more difficult to envisage how these events, which have obliterated so many lives, so many dreams of happiness, so many hopes, can be overcome. I have the feeling that the question that hangs over the future of this region is 'How can the deep wounds inflicted by this disaster be healed?'

Rita Levi-Montalcini

Nobel Prize for Medicine/Physiology *Italy*

# Everything around us

The antidote to the all too common tendency to be preoccupied with ourselves is to develop, from the earliest age (the role of parents and teachers can be critical in this), the habit of being interested in everything around us.

People, animals and the infinite variety of nature, from the blade of grass we tread on to the stars we marvel at in the heavens, may become – for those who have the necessary gifts – a subject for study at the highest level for a whole lifetime.

You must get into the habit, from a very young age, of being interested in everything around you, and of devoting time to contemplating questions of a philosophical, humanitarian and social nature.

This attitude will not only prevent you from becoming self-absorbed, but will be of tremendous help to you at every stage of your life.

# Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger

Archbishop of Paris *France*

## A message in a bottle

In the days when sailing ships ruled the waves, castaways would throw a bottle containing their final message or a cry for help out to sea, in the hope that one day it might be discovered. . . .

I too am casting these few lines out across the seas of time, not knowing who they will reach half a century from now. In the meantime, our generation will, in the words of Saint Paul to the Colossians (Colossians 3:3), have long been ‘hidden with Christ in God’.

I think that it is actually more likely than not that my message will be simply appreciated for its amusement value. I hope this is the case; if it is not, I fear these lines may cause my hypothetical reader to be nostalgic for an imaginary *belle époque* – that is, if the period he is living in turns out to be harsher than our own, as may well be the case. For anything is possible.

*Anything is possible, both the best and the worst*

Where humanity is concerned, anything is possible, both the best and the worst. This is the first point I wish to make, and as it is such an obvious one, it may seem naive. Yet it has never been an easy fact for me to accept, since in this century we have so been carried away by colossal projects that have

transformed humanity, believing that tomorrow would bring happiness, that it was only a matter of time before a 'brighter future' inevitably appeared.

I say 'both the best and the worst' because humanity distinguishes itself in possessing the spiritual freedom to choose. Humanity was conceived to choose good, and yet men have been damaged to such an extent that they actually reject goodness. It is the mystery of the human condition that man transcends what determines him – the mystery first put into words in the first page of the Book of Genesis where we men are described as being both 'created in the image and likeness of God' and turning away from Him.

If we are capable of both the best and the worst, then we ought to have been able to choose good for thousands of years instead of rejecting it. Because we never choose evil. Those who believe we do are under an illusion; suicidal illusions like this are only entertained by those who cope with the difficulty of living by hastening the arrival of their own death.

*Experience cannot be passed on*

Having come this far in my argument, I can imagine how it must seem strange to you that I am offering advice and recommendations concerning a future that I cannot conceive of. All the more so as that same advice and those same recommendations have been repeated over the centuries by so many men and women in search of the truth – people who have put all their energy into trying to be faithful to that truth. You only have to refer to the classics of our literature to find evidence of this.

You may have been expecting my proposals to be rather less ambitious. Perhaps if we were to take stock of the errors committed by our generation, or even our century, we might be able to draw positive lessons from them that might be of use to

you – though here I am not so sure of myself, as a second obvious fact springs to mind, namely that experience cannot be passed on.

Knowledge can be passed on, as can expertise, but nothing can replace a human being who is committed to, and experiences freedom; who opens his mind to manifest truth, follows the light, and enters into a true apprenticeship of what Saint John called Love. Saint John used this term to refer to God and to give a name to the mystery that is God. Love can also be defined as complete and utter selflessness; it is in this gift of oneself that one receives life. Christ's paradoxical warning: 'Whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake, will find it' (Luke 9:24) can be explained with reference to this definition of Love.

When I write 'experience cannot be passed on', I mean that nothing can replace that first-hand experience of the love that brought you into being. Inherited wealth will never be as valuable as the freedom gained in the act of giving rather than receiving. Life should not simply be received as a gift but should be lived – by which I mean offered up. Knowledge cannot replace the illumination to be gained from reflecting upon the call 'he who does what is true comes to the light' (John 3:21), or 'he who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life' (John 8:12). This illumination is one of the Messiah's secrets concerning the salvation of men, and is only revealed to those who follow his path.

### *Peace is impossible*

If I were to assess the successes and failures of humanity, I would begin with one single idea – that peace is impossible.

Our century has involuntarily succeeded in creating a number of areas of disturbingly total peace. In such places, human life has been utterly annihilated, and everything else

with it. A much more extreme peace reigns there than in our cemeteries. This is because our cemeteries contain graves which are visited by those still alive who wish to maintain a link with past generations.

Our century has succeeded in creating 'absolute' cemeteries, where there are no graves and which no one can visit. This was the case in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan where, at the end of the Second World War, atomic weapons destroyed all forms of life and prevented people from returning because if they did, they too would die.

The same phenomenon occurred in that hell created by a group of self-appointed 'supermen' who took it upon themselves to degrade and exterminate those they designated as sub-human. This is what the Nazi regime in Germany did when it annihilated several million Jews on European soil. Those who carried out these crimes also destroyed themselves morally, if not always physically, in the process; they became the living dead and stripped themselves of their own humanity.

Neither Hiroshima nor Auschwitz, nor any of the other places whose names you may come across as you look through the history archives, are models for peace.

What conclusions can be drawn here? That we should have realized that working for peace was an ongoing struggle, and that defending it requires the mobilization of every human resource. In a number of cases this century we have only been able to establish peace using the means of war, and have done so by claiming the right of intervention. Many believed this to be a sign of great progress. They hoped that it would then be possible to establish an international legal framework capable of guaranteeing fundamental human rights in all places and for all time. Examples of this can be found in the annals of Africa, Asia, Europe and so on.

But how difficult it has been to weigh up which was worse, the suffering caused by the expansionist warfare of tyrants or the suffering caused by the defensive warfare of peacekeepers!

These 'just wars' have been carried out in the name of international law and basic human rights, but will they not seem to your generations like just another form of war perpetrated by people who were able to find some justification for their actions? How can war be destroyed through war, violence be stopped by further violence, or hatred wiped out by still more hatred?

*Love your enemies*

Could we actually devise another form of war capable of bringing about peace? For this, we would, by definition, have to use quite different weapons and strategies. Evil cannot be dispelled by evil but only by good. The choice of means must be in accordance with the desired ends.

We have to find a form of violence which is good – radically different from the violence of evil, a violence of love capable of withstanding and conquering hatred.

This force for good has been at work for centuries. It is called forgiveness or mercy. It appears in an utterly radical way in the message of the Gospels. They tell us that the crucified Messiah is not simply a victim upon whom violence was inflicted: he also carries within Him the divine power of love, and it is this power alone which can transform a torturer's heart, even as he is committing his crime. The divine power of forgiveness dwells within him, and it is this power alone which is capable of breaking the vicious circle of retribution.

It is not just a question of bringing about peace at the cost of one's own life as some of the great figures of our century

have done – men such as the pacifists Martin Luther King, Gandhi and Dag Hammarskjöld – who championed the cause of the oppressed. Inspired by these and others too, a number of people have adopted the power of non-violent techniques to counter the violent techniques of warfare. But non-violence is not sufficient to name the sin, to heal the wounds sustained by the sinner, nor to give the victims the strength to forgive, and even to love, those who have sinned against them.

‘Love your enemies’: this divine commandment given by Jesus invites us not only to oppose by non-violent means those who hate, attack and hurt us, but to love them too. Is this humanly possible? The Messiah did it, for ‘with God all things are possible’ (Matthew 19:26). He calls on his disciples to put into practice this same divine power of forgiveness.

*Love life itself*

What I have just been describing may seem impossibly utopian. However, we have learned from experience, not only in this century, but throughout the millennia that have passed, that this force acts like leaven on the obscure dough of humanity.

It would be naive to assume that the future history of humanity, as I described it at the beginning of this text, could avoid the conflicts and battles that have been its hallmark up until now, unless men were reduced to blind obedience or to slavery. And even then, slaves have been known to fight one another; and drug addicts to tear one another apart for their drugs.

The violence of forgiving love is the only violence capable of countering the surfeit of evil of which man is capable. This love is embodied in God Himself, to Whom we turn when we pray. Of course, we first need to be willing and able to pray.

One of the great qualities of humanity is its ability to continue this struggle; to give hope where many of our fellows are in despair; to build bridges where all contacts have been broken off; to help people to respect and accept themselves where contempt and self-interest have distorted human relationships.

I pray to God that there will be 'naive' and 'ecstatic' visionaries in the generations to come who will continue to keep alive the flame which saves humanity as it pursues the mad course it has chosen.

Our century has given recognition to people like these who lived in the midst of the worst horrors of the concentration camps. But to conclude my text, I have chosen instead to set before you the figure of Saint Francis of Assisi, who appeared in the heart of a war-torn Europe at the start of the second millennium. He embodied that generosity which involves accepting poverty so that others might be rich and embracing pacifism so that conflict might end. This means inviting man not to prey on the Universe that God has put in his care, but instead to love life, because life is given to us by God Himself.

## Danielle Mitterrand

President of France-Libertés *France*

# Building for the common good

Youth is forever ephemeral; it is certainly a long time since I was 15. I used to dream, like all teenagers of my age. They were dark times, during the Second World War. But I have never forgotten 'the sizeable dream I pursued, and nourished so it might never be lost from view', as William Faulkner said.

At that time the people I mixed with were dreaming of peace. They dreamed of being able to get up in the morning without fear of being arrested and becoming their torturers' plaything; they dreamed of being able to travel and meet friends without having to conceal their movements; of being able to think, write and criticize freely, and of being able to speak their minds openly.

People dreamed of living freely in a fraternal society they could trust; of being at one with themselves living among and with others; they dreamed of living healthy, peaceful and dignified lives in a strong and generous world that watched over them.

In the fight against barbarous cruelty, the first act was one of resistance. We had to harness all our energy and join forces with those who were several decades our senior, whom we mercilessly considered at the time as 'old'. To be able to make

the same sacrifices and defend the same just cause, it was crucial that we act in solidarity, and that we control the fear which would grip our insides when we were denounced and pursued by the enemy. We wanted to create a peaceful Europe capable of slowing the pace of increasingly deadly wars.

Half a century later, our dream has admittedly come under attack, but still remains central to the reflections on humanity which I put before you now.

When I speak of humanity, I am thinking of you, my readers, but also of myself, of those we know, and those we will never meet but whose existence we know of and with whom we act in solidarity. I am thinking of those who love life, those who suffer in silence and those who fight against the inevitability of hardship and live their lives in accordance with their dreams. I will also discuss those for whom money, success and profit are the only goals, and those who are in search of a better world for everyone – a world which exploits modern technology, and human and natural resources, in a sensible way.

The year 2000 is a milestone, but should only be accorded the significance it has for those who will be living through this time. People have begun to think about and fear the transition to the third millennium. What will the twenty-first century be like, given all it will have inherited? Doubtless, life will go on providing a source of energy for all known and unknown species on our planet. Likewise, the ineluctable cycles of birth and death will continue for everyone.

Intelligent men are beginning to think again and wonder if they should not reconsider the belief that they are the strongest on the planet. Quite obviously, they are unable fully to grasp the nature of the world around them. They congratulate themselves, become desperate, leave everything up to God knows what, denounce the world and rebel.

And does the youth of today, tomorrow and future generations seek to rediscover the origins of its heritage? If it did, it would find – wonder of wonders – a brain endowed with constructive, creative intelligence; in other words, capable of invention. It would also discover a brain capable of great good and great evil, a brain endowed with memory, able to synthesize information, to reflect and to make plans for the future.

Prehistoric man took the first step towards discovering this potential with his as yet inexperienced neurons. He realized that, miraculously, using a stone made work easier and, even better, if he sharpened the stone to a point he could use it to plough the earth and provide himself with food, cut down branches as shelter from bad weather, carve in rocks to tell his story and so on and so forth. . . .

Since then, man has continued to progress. We are living in an age where machines make life easier, where robots are replacing us in factories, and computers are taking over from human memory. Is it now that we are forced to acknowledge that seven-eighths of humanity are in distress and the state of the world's natural resources catastrophic, because a handful of privileged people have confiscated all the benefits of our common heritage?

And yet for two hundred years, and notably throughout the century which is drawing to a close, humanity has considered and defined itself as being united as one in its diversity. Individuals now recognize the rights they have with regard to those who govern them. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been proclaimed and applies to everyone.

There are now numerous international conventions whose aim is to resolve conflicts between states. The United Nations declared at its outset, 'We, the peoples of the nations here united . . .'. Within national borders, different social

groups have negotiated with one another in order to distribute wealth more equitably.

In short, in the industrial age attempts have been made to place limits on capitalism. This was deemed necessary by many intellectuals, trade unions and social organizations who feared that the wealth created by the capitalist system would be concentrated in the hands of a privileged few. The privileged few will swell their fortunes through infinite investment. This is the inevitable order of things! The natural law of the stock market! And everyone accepts it.

The result of this is that while humanity has never possessed so much wealth, never has there been such a huge underclass, such a large number of people living in poverty and despair.

This is what strikes an alert mind as it travels the world. But how, you may well ask, have we arrived at this bewildering paradox whereby the greater the wealth in the world, the greater the number living in poverty?

Capitalism is based on established rules which were immediately diverted from their original purpose of sharing profit. And those who had most to gain from seeing the rules applied did not react in any significant way. A large proportion of the population became apathetic and blind to what was going on because they were ignorant of the way capitalism worked; this was aggravated by the fact that during the period of industrial expansion they did not suffer directly.

Is this the ideal we have been working towards? We want to live without being slaves, and yet we are slaves of production.

Our problem is that we need to bid farewell to the injunction: 'You will earn your living by the sweat of your brow' – the biblical notion which today is no longer relevant. The triptych of 'work, job, wages' has been called into question.

Robots are busy, but what about the human workforce? Must it pay the price of discoveries which were themselves the product of human intelligence?

What an achievement those discoveries have been! But who really benefits from them? Several hundred million businessmen and speculators, bankers and a few faceless acronyms, while 5 billion men, women and children live below the poverty line. Good sense would have it that everyone who has participated in creating the wealth of our planet, to whatever degree, should benefit from this wealth.

Unfortunately, the ethos of 'profit for profit's sake' is pitted against good sense. The very technology which has improved working conditions is supplanting man. Only a very few are able to reap the benefits made possible by the progress of humanity. All we have been able to conceive of is a many-headed hydra – money – which towers over each and every state. This hydra turns the wealth belonging to the whole of humanity to its own advantage.

It scoffs at the powerlessness of states in the face of its imperatives. It is all-powerful, anonymous and unassailable.

*Y basta!* Isn't enough enough? Peoples of the world are dreaming of democratic freedom. They are attempting to persuade their respective governments to face up to the choice between democracy and financial dictatorship with all its attendant injustices.

Networks of resistance have been joining forces. This cry of 'enough is enough' which has been taken up throughout the world has encouraged people to unite in their struggle. It has taken inspiration from models for alternative ways of living, and identified initiatives already under way, as well as innovative practices. There are many good reasons for believing in this movement.

A world without poverty would only be conceivable if there were someone willing to promote a currency not ultimately destined for investment. Such a currency would represent the true value of exchange and would allow everyone to put forward his own skills and to demonstrate his detachment from the unutilized, invested wealth that has been accumulated.

To all those fresh out of business and administration schools, equipped with their knowledge of financial performance, I say: look at what is happening beyond your immediate circle, listen to what others have to say about their experience. If you do this, you will perhaps concede that a certain quality of human relations can counter the violent world we fear so much. All this is on an infinitesimal scale, sceptics will say. Probably so, but you can act locally while thinking globally.

Do you not feel there is a great adventure opening out before you? Such an adventure would involve:

- Building a world without fear, where trust prevails: trust in others and confidence in oneself.
- Adopting a 'What can I do for you?' attitude when someone knocks at the door, instead of the security codes, locks and chains and barbed wire you see in so-called affluent neighbourhoods.
- Countering warfare with negotiation and pacifism. Would this really be possible?
- Setting the ambitious goal of building a world where the right to life necessarily includes the guaranteed right to water and land for everyone.
- Giving substance to the idea of the common good.

Can you imagine putting money, that vulgar tool, in the service of the common good? This would necessitate:

- Working towards a profound transformation of the ethos and priorities currently in place.

- Creating a shift from present policies which encourage huge investment in saturated markets and the disposable economy which will suffocate us with its refuse, to the promotion of sustainable development and the financing of centres and networks where knowledge and expertise can be exchanged.

The future does not belong to those who exploit the situation for short-term personal gain, but to those who are ready to build something together.

So, the citizens of the twenty-first century are at work. Those who refuse to be defeated are preparing for a new spring. They are sowing for future generations. And believing that 'no one moves from sowing to reaping overnight, that the scale of History is not that of the local rag, but that with patience, the spring will arrive', they continue to put their hearts into it.

Luc Montagnier

Biologist *France*

## Dangers and awareness

At the moment that I am writing to you the year 2050 is not so far away. It is, therefore, possible to imagine that the future which you will live in will be, despite many differences, a continuation of the era that I know, with an accentuation of its trends. You will very probably experience greater globalization, an exacerbation of the conflicts in developing countries, economic wars, the divide between developing countries and industrialized countries will still be without resolution, and diseases will continue to emerge and to re-emerge. In short, compared to the world of the twentieth century, no major changes.

None the less, as a biologist, I consider my responsibility to anticipate extreme situations which might occur. Humanity is a new biological system, a level of organization of living organisms which, in contrast to the living systems that came before us, has yet to find its mechanisms of regulation. In many countries, *population growth is not controlled*. A hypothesis that can be envisaged is that the existence of huge numbers of young people without work could overturn social structures, leading to wars, authoritarian political systems, or situations of total anarchy. Moreover, *the absence of economic regulation* increases the risks. We are in fact going in the direction of increasingly

large economic oligarchies wielding immense power which far surpasses that in the hands of politicians.

The third factor tending towards chaos is the *modification of our environment*, which is also uncontrolled: the greenhouse effect, industrialized agriculture and food production, chemical pollution, and so on. It can lead to health disasters through exposure to carcinogenic products, respiratory illnesses and the depression of the immune system. Dioxins disseminated by waste incinerators and heavy industry, pesticides with carcinogenic effects, prions in mad cows – these instances are in danger of multiplying in the absence of a rational environmental policy on a global scale. What are the other factors that favour chaos? The increasingly pervasive impact of the visual media which, increasingly, discourage reflection and prevent people from putting the events they see broadcast into some kind of perspective. Indifference to the suffering of others is another factor.

If all of these factors accumulate, then I fear that you must be living in a kind of new Middle Ages. There are already fortified zones in towns, areas of controlled access, where ‘decent’ people live among themselves and the outcasts are kept at bay. All of this can lead to a sort of disintegration of humanity.

Even without being catastrophic, the factors of chemical, atmospheric and food pollution can lead to a stagnation in the evolution of life expectancy and physical well-being, since all these factors can lead to premature death through cancer, degenerative illness of the nervous system or auto-immune or cardiovascular illnesses. Biology, which can provide powerful solutions to prolong life, cannot totally eliminate these factors whose general origin is in the socio-economic structure of the world and human behaviour.

New epidemics of infectious agents threaten to spread because of the proliferation of areas around big towns where the marginalized live without access to health care. And this is not only in developing countries, it is also the case in the industrialized world. It can be seen around very big cities like New York or Paris. These areas can be the breeding ground either for the re-emergence of known illnesses such as tuberculosis, with germs that can be multi-resistant to antibiotics, or else new illnesses linked to agents that already existed but which are finding opportunities to develop which they did not have before. This is the case with AIDS, for example. But there may be others. I am thinking particularly of illnesses which affect the brain. There are viruses which cause encephalitis and infections of the brain with very significant psychiatric after-effects.

The greatest danger comes from insidious illnesses which lead to chronic infections and kill people over the course of several years. These illnesses are much more difficult to detect than visible epidemics. They can be linked to a combination of factors – chemical pollution and infectious agents, for example. This, in my opinion, is a still greater danger, because it will be very difficult to detect these factors, and when they have been detected, it will be too late.

Having said this, highly contagious epidemics, where the virus is passed on via the respiratory tract, are also to be feared, even in the family of acute illnesses such as influenza, for example. The origin of the so-called Spanish Flu in 1918, which killed many more people than the Great War of 1914–18, has still not been explained. Some estimates speak of 30, 50, or even 100 million deaths linked to this epidemic. The few analyses that have been carried out on bodies do not show, for the moment, essential differences between this virus and those that are widespread today. We will not be able to prevent

such an epidemic from recurring if we do not know the factors involved.

Obviously, I hope for your sake that this will not happen! Perhaps you will find my fears excessive. I hope you do! In any case, you must know how to prepare yourselves and the spirit of responsibility which arises from this is the most important tool in reaching that objective. We have accumulated an enormous body of knowledge. Unfortunately, it has not been properly assimilated by humanity as a whole. A small elite are familiar with it, but the greater part of humanity does not really have access to it. However, it is only with this knowledge that modes of behaviour and a sense of responsibility can be developed.

We now know that we are like specks of dust in an immense universe, which is so much larger that we believed just one hundred years ago. On earth, we possess 3.5 billion years of accumulated genetic information. Each individual is, therefore, not a creation but the result of biological structures that were beginning to take shape 3.5 billion years ago when the first memory molecules were formed. We should be aware that every individual is a link in an extremely long chain. This teaches us about both humility and greatness, because we are aware of all that has gone before us.

We are also aware of the vastness of space. We know that we are the only living beings in our solar system. We are ourselves, as biological organisms, a 'super-organization' based on cells and each cell is itself a 'super-organization' based on a certain number of molecules. We have both this continuity of quantity but also of qualitative change, since each level of organization has properties that are completely new and different from the previous levels. This knowledge should inform our behaviour and encourage us to be aware of the ethical implications of our actions.

We only really exist as part of a social fabric. As individuals, we have responsibilities. We have rights and we also have duties. It is our right to have access to this knowledge; our duty is to be aware of our individual responsibility. Each biological organism, in the past, has arrived at its own system of regulation. We have not yet achieved this.

It is your task to discover these regulation systems. It is not easy, because we are the last level of organization. There is no pressure from outside. Each preceding level of organization was selected to regulate itself because it was under pressure to do so. The only pressure acting on us is our awareness of the necessity of this regulation. It is a lot more subtle. And it is only through education that this awareness is developed.

But education presupposes certain socio-economic conditions. Therefore, we must find the means to counter the centrifugal forces which make the rich richer and the poor poorer. If we are aware of being polluters, then we can avoid pollution. We must also be aware of the fact that research must continue if we want to avoid the danger of epidemics, these potential biological catastrophes about which I spoke earlier.

Biology is also leading to something completely new: we can now change our own heredity. At the moment that I am writing to you, the arrival of clones is already imminent. We are able to manipulate our heredity. The entire past of 3.5 billion years can now be overturned thanks to our technology. We can create sub-humans as well as super-humans: we can qualitatively modify human evolution.

Therefore, even more than other people, scientists have a great responsibility. In the same way that doctors take the Hippocratic Oath, every scientist should solemnly undertake never to do research leading to the destruction of human nature.

David M. Neuhaus, SJ

Biblical scholar *Israel*

## Letter to a future generation

Choose life! These two simple words sum up what I would like to say to you who inherit this planet. In my own life, I have seen our world radically transformed by breathtaking technological progress. I have been able to do what my grandparents would not even have dreamed of doing. New possibilities have opened up every day. Yet within ourselves, we human beings have remained very much the same. We are driven by hunger which so often becomes insatiable greed, by passion which so often becomes uncontrolled violence.

Choose life! My generation, faced with the basic choice between life and good or death and evil, frequently failed to discern where life is and was too often seduced by death. My fervent hope is that you succeed where we have failed. Will you be able to channel the basic hunger that drives us into a hunger for justice and a thirst for peace? Will you find a way to transform the primordial passion that animates us into a passion for the dedicated promotion of life and for the humble service of the poorest of your neighbours?

Choose life! You will no doubt overtake us with your level of technological sophistication. Exceed us, too, in venerating this planet, in obeying its rhythms and cycles, in

respecting the creatures that teem on its surface and in finding supreme fulfilment in the service of the most diminished among your neighbours. This planet has been ours and now it is yours. Choose life over death. That will be truly revolutionary progress!

# Adolfo Pérez Esquivel

Nobel Prize for Peace *Argentina*

## Opening the doors of hope in the new millennium

In the course of their existence, all people have experiences and respond to the roots and traditions of their culture, spirituality, and the social, political and economic conditions in which they find themselves. These foundations nourish us and forge our consciousness, which interweaves with other cultures, systems of knowledge, individuals and histories.

We are reaching the end of the twentieth century and we need to open the doors of the next millennium with hope and construct new horizons of life.

I am sure that this will happen thanks to that person or those people capable of dreaming up and generating visions and utopias, those individuals and peoples who take up the challenge of adopting a critical attitude and of being the protagonists of their own lives and destinies. They are like the gardener and the artist who love their work and who tend the flowers in the garden of life, who will plant dreaming trees and create new spaces of liberty.

No one has formulae for living one's life, but every life has unfathomable secrets, and in this way we can transmit

experiences and knowledge, which are like sediments which enrich the soil of our garden and enable us to share it better.

In this way, I want to share some of those experiences which have helped me in my life. Mother Earth receives with gratitude the seed which will give forth good fruit, while at other times, violence invades her and she suffers from the ingratitude of her sons and daughters and the harm they have done her. The Mother feels attacked, violated by irrational exploitation, the destruction of nature, the contamination of the environment, financial speculation and the consequences of ecological devastation. The waters of seas and rivers are contaminated, and the madness of war has planted mines in the heart, the mind and the bowels of the earth, which cries out its pain. An Indian brother once told me: 'Everything that we do to our Mother Earth, to Pachamama, has consequences for today and tomorrow . . . that there are sons who sell their Mother and hurt her and she suffers in her entrails the evil of these children. But everything has its cause and effect, and Father Sun, who knows everything, will punish them.'

Life offers you gifts, and often we look at them without seeing and hear them without listening. Everyone must find his own way and drink from his own fountain. I had the good fortune to have at my side a woman who taught me at an early age to listen to the silence of God and to the voices of silence.

She was an illiterate old woman who spoke the Guaraní language, mixed with Spanish. At her side, I learned to know, to love and to respect Mother Earth. She taught me that, before planting or cutting a flower, or chopping down a tree, or sowing seeds, we must ask permission from the Mother, from the tree and from the rosebush. They are living beings, which offer you everything, and in return ask only for respect.

The old Guaraní woman understood the language of the birds and the secrets of their flight. I saw her and heard her

speaking with plants and animals; she knew how to listen to silence, to bless life and to honour the memory of her ancestors, who had taught her the ancestral wisdom of the Guaraní people, their secrets and their magic, and their rituals to honour the gods. They taught her to keep alive, through changing times, their history which was not written, but profoundly lived, by the people in their unending search for the 'land of freedom'.

An ancient Guaraní legend tells of the quest for the 'land without evil'. It is the land promised to all peoples like the one we read about in the Bible, in the book of Genesis. It is this incessant yearning for freedom, for justice and equality for all, which is nourished by their culture, by the struggles and hopes of those who went before and will come after.

It is the story which is transmitted from mouth to mouth, from gaze to gaze, from hand to hand, from generation to generation.

This woman was my grandmother, who shared with a small child her everyday trust in life. And in the passing of time, memory is the present between many moons and suns, between light and shadows which colour the path of life. The past makes itself present and contributes to the building of the future. Memory is the history of life.

One day, at one of these special moments of communication with my grandmother, sitting in the garden, surrounded by her plants and animals, I asked her: 'Grandma, what will you be when you grow up?' Her dark face, lined by deep wrinkles, lit up with a wide smile and she was silent for a long moment, her eyes shut, looking inwards and then she said: 'Well, my son, when I grow up, I shall tell the story of my ancestors, of my people dispersed in the mountains, in the forest and of those who went far, far away and never returned. Without memory, a people slowly dies.'

She stayed looking at the fields and at her garden, listening to the harmony of the dusk. I knew that in those moments, my grandmother had crossed the frontier of the everyday and was meeting with the ancestors. They were moments of profound communion. Being a child, I did not comprehend many things, but I sensed them, and I dared not move, wanting to continue enjoying this mystery of life.

Many moons and suns passed, many winters and springs, and in the garden the flowers bloomed and the trees stretched towards the sky. It is at these times that one grasps that wisdom is a gift of life that allows us to understand its essence and to share the capacity to live in hope. Wisdom helps us to construct new dawns together, and to pass on and make a gift of these seeds of life.

We are reaching the end of the twentieth century and the great challenge for humanity is to open the gates of hope to the new millennium. Everyone, wherever he is, should remember what has gone before and contribute to making possible a more just and fraternal world for all.

What we have the courage to sow today is the fruit that we will gather tomorrow. All of us have a history of struggles and of dreams that we want to realize. In this way, we must 'look within'; in other words, look at our inner worlds as individuals, at our national culture, at our spiritual values, at the memory which allows us to re-encounter ourselves and our fellow human beings.

If we look back over the twentieth century as it draws to a close, we see a century filled with violence and great technological and scientific advances, of light and darkness, in which humanity holds in its hands a momentous decision. As the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, put it: 'We must decide for co-existence or no existence.'

The horizons of life of humanity at the end of the twentieth century are ablaze with wars, conflict, poverty, social exclusion and an ever more rigid system of global domination. Systems of domination have been created which subjugate developing countries, such as 'external debt' – that which I call 'eternal debt' – which excludes and condemns two-thirds of the world's population to poverty, dependence and social exclusion, creating a lack of resources to meet people's basic needs.

Economic and political power favour their own interests above the life of whole populations, imposing consumer societies and free-market policies and encouraging individualism. The values which make a society cohesive have been destroyed.

Social and structural violence exist in our societies, in which the human being has become an object and has lost control over his own life and liberty.

Light and shadow dominate the international scene and confront us with questions about the present and future of our peoples.

The next generations will be the active protagonists of human history in the twenty-first century and we who go before them must rise to the challenge of bequeathing them paths of hope.

Many of us are sure that not all is lost, that we may even construct new spaces of freedom, of values, of identity and spirituality for each people and develop a culture of peace, created out of awareness and practical experience of life. We have learned that nobody can plant seeds with a clenched fist. To sow, one must open one's hand, otherwise sowing is impossible.

In the granary of life reside the seeds of solidarity, which should bear the fruits of truth and justice. Everything depends on the sowers and on those who gather the harvest. The fruits will be in accordance with the love which is invested in them.

As a teacher, the aims and objectives of education have always preoccupied and exercised me. The great Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire spoke of 'education as the practice of liberty', of the role of the teaching-educator and the learning-educator. We educate one other in reciprocal and fraternal relationships. This exercise is necessary for practical living and for the eradication of authoritarianism from the ABC onwards.

To educate is to bring about the awakening of critical awareness in each person in order that they might correctly discern true values. It is to awaken the awareness of freedom in men and women. Only by being free can we fully love.

It behoves us to remember what has gone before and to discover in the values of each people the legacy bequeathed to us by our elders – not in order to remain in the past, but to help us to illuminate the present and construct the future. We are the architects of our own future.

UNESCO is right to point out that peace is born in the minds of men – and women – and it is there that the strongholds of peace must be built.

Along these lines, I would like to share some thoughts that might contribute to negotiating the challenges of the new millennium; to the creation of the spaces of liberty so necessary for the good of humanity.

I would like to refer to the faces of those millions of brothers and sisters in the world, of children, young people, old people, women, native peoples, black people, people of mixed race, those of different religions, who feel God whatever name He bears, to be the Creator of the life of humanity and the universe.

These very real faces appeal to and question us, claiming a place in life, the right to live with dignity. Millions of them have been robbed of their hope for life and

submerged in poverty and social exclusion. They have been subjected to the violence of hunger, that silent bomb which kills more than any war.

At every moment, we must keep in mind these brothers and sisters who demand the right to a life of dignity, in which the rights and equality of all prevail. It is said that people live in democracy, but reality shows us that social inequalities are becoming ever greater.

Behind the statistics, behind the financial balance-sheets of the economists, behind the political speeches, which are empty if there is no correlation between what is said and what is done, behind the programmes which are publicized but never materialize, are these faces which demand a fraternal and supportive hand. These millions of brothers and sisters demand of us love and solidarity.

Is it possible? Or is it an unrealizable dream? Or is it, as the poet said, a case of 'Dreams are dreams'?

In Greek mythology there is a demi-god, who is condemned to eternal activity without ever being able to realize his destiny: Sisyphus. The giant heaves an enormous rock onto his shoulders and attempts to ascend the mountain to place it on the summit; but time and again his load rolls to the foot of the mountain and he returns determined to retrieve it and to try once again to reach the top. His punishment is to be the 'useless hero' for all eternity.

How many Sisyphuses exist in our time, in the continuous present, that of the century which is ending and the millennium which is beginning? Perhaps we ought to think about the existential anguish of Sisyphus and of our civilization.

There is an essential point, impenetrable for many, in the existential anguish of Sisyphus and the Sisyphuses of today. His thoughts, feelings and desires, are they resignation and failure?

Or are they the desire for freedom and rebellion, the refusal to continue with the burden of oppression?

What does he think about when he heaves up the rock and attempts to reach the summit of the mountain? What passes through his mind when the rock falls from his shoulders, when his strength is at an end and all his efforts fruitless?

Sisyphus sees the rock roll once more to the foot of the mountain, and begins to descend to recommence his drama: that of obstinacy, rebellion and powerlessness to understand that all his efforts are in vain and are concentrated on this rock, the pointless burden of his useless heroism. Historical fatalism eventually erodes away free will.

'The end of history' is proclaimed. But it is often peoples who write history during the course of their lives, this unwritten but profoundly lived history, in the search for the 'land without evil', the land of freedom.

Peoples are forged in resistance and the struggle for freedom, in the defence of human rights. As a result of this, they safeguard values which give them vitality and grow in the protection of the aspirations forged by their elders.

The twenty-first century will be the fruit of the efforts and the advances of the culture of peace and of understanding between individuals and peoples.

The spiral of violence must be broken by the new alternatives of respect and coexistence, which allow the growth of the collective awareness of the values of peace and non-violence.

Human rights are, in the democratic system, indivisible values and instruments of liberation for individuals and peoples.

Everyone who loves liberty, justice and equality for all must be a defender of the law. Thus, Henry Thoreau proclaimed that the law is necessary for life and coexistence between indi-

viduals and nations, but it is also necessary to retain critical awareness and social responsibility. Not every law is just. Unjust laws must be resisted until their permanent repeal. What is legal is not always just.

Today, we are faced with many unjust laws and situations which affect humanity and which coming generations will have to confront. I will cite some of these and their repercussions both on the international situation and the particular situation of individual countries.

External debt, an immoral and unjust debt which excludes two-thirds of the world's population, the cause of hunger, unemployment, lack of resources for education and health, of poor quality of life and environment, represents the exploitation of the most impoverished peoples.

Wars, armed conflicts and dictatorships, with their resultant dead and disappeared, imprisoned and tortured, affect peoples in many different parts of the world. It is not the people who win, but the traffickers in death, the arms manufacturers.

Not to take on these injustices is to repeat the story of the useless hero, the existential anguish of being condemned to the terrible spiral of violence and the inertia that prevents us from changing the course of history and from confronting the challenge of constructing new possibilities for life.

This is possible if we keep in mind the real faces of these thousands, millions of brothers and sisters who demand a place in life and the right to dignity. They are the protagonists of their own lives and the artisans of their destinies.

The horizons ablaze with the deaths that have tarnished the twentieth century must be superseded by horizons of life, of new societies. A building is in the process of collapsing and it is not good enough to shore it up and think that it is possible to keep it standing. A new building must be built in which there

is light, spaces of life and hope, and where the environment corresponds to the needs of human beings.

In May 1968, in Paris, students raised banners of resistance and creativity, and said: 'Let's be realistic, let's ask for the impossible.' The challenge of making possible the impossible is a beautiful one. To achieve it depends on every one of us.

Alfred Einstein said: 'In moments of crisis, creativity is more important than knowledge.'

To conclude, sharing in this means starting to join together each person's dream in order to construct and realize a dream for everyone.

# Ilya Prigogine

Nobel Prize for Chemistry *Belgium*

## The die is not cast

I am writing this letter in complete humility. My work is in the scientific domain. It does not give me any particular qualification to talk about the future of humanity. Molecules obey 'laws'. Human decisions depend on the memory of the past and on the expectation of the future. The perspective in which I see the problem of the transition from the culture of war to that of peace – to use Federico Mayor's expression – has darkened over the past few years, but I remain optimistic. In any case, how could a man of my generation (I was born in 1917) not be optimistic? Did we not see the end of monsters such as Hitler and Stalin? Did we not witness the miraculous victory of the democracies in the Second World War?

At the end of the war, all of us believed that history would start afresh, and events justified that optimism. Landmarks of the time included the foundation of the United Nations and of UNESCO, the proclamation of the Rights of Man, and decolonization. More generally, there was the recognition of non-European cultures, from which came a decrease in Eurocentrism and in the supposed inequality between 'civilized' and 'uncivilized' peoples. There was also a decrease in the gulf between social classes, at least in Western countries.

This progress was made under the threat of the Cold War. At the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall, we believed that at last the transition from the culture of war to that of peace would be made. Yet the following decade has not taken this path. We have witnessed the persistence, and even the amplification, of local conflicts, whether they be in Africa or in the Balkans. This could still be considered as a result of the survival of the past into the present. However, in addition to the ever-present nuclear threat, new shadows have appeared: technological progress now makes possible 'push-button' wars, something in the manner of an electronic game.

I am one of those who helped formulate the scientific policies of the European Union. Science unites peoples. It has created a universal language. Many other disciplines, such as economics or ecology, also require international co-operation. I am, therefore, all the more astonished when I see that governments are seeking to set up a European army as an expression of European unity. An army against whom? Where is the enemy? Why this continual growth in military budgets, whether in the United States or in Europe? It is up to future generations to take a position on this. In our age, and this will be all the more the case in the future, things are changing at a speed never seen in the past. I will take an example from science.

Forty years ago, the number of scientists interested in solid-state physics and in information technology did not exceed a few hundred. It was a 'fluctuation' when compared with the sciences as a whole. Today, these disciplines have such importance that they have decisive consequences for the history of humanity. Exponential growth has been recorded in the number of researchers working in this sector of science. It is a phenomenon of unprecedented proportions, which has left far behind the growth of Buddhism or Christianity.

In my message to future generations, I would like to propose arguments designed to fight against feelings of resignation or powerlessness. The recent sciences of complexity give the lie to determinism; they insist on creativity at every level of nature. The future is not given.

The great French historian Fernand Braudel once wrote: 'Events are dust.' Is this true? What is an event? An analogy with 'bifurcations', which are studied above all in non-equilibrium physics, comes immediately to mind. These bifurcations appear at special points where the trajectory followed by a system subdivides into 'branches'. All branches are possible, but only one of them will be taken. One does not generally see a single bifurcation; in general, a succession of them appear. This means that even in the fundamental sciences there is a temporal, narrative element, and this constitutes the 'end of Certitudes', which is the title of my last book. The world is a construction, in the building of which we can all participate

As Immanuel Wallerstein has written: 'It is possible – possible but not certain – to create or to construct a more human, more egalitarian world that is better anchored in material rationality.' Fluctuations at the microscopic level decide the branch that will emerge from a bifurcation point, and therefore the event that will come about. This appeal to the sciences of complexity does not mean that we are suggesting that the human sciences be 'reduced' to physics. Our enterprise is not one of reduction, but of reconciliation. Concepts introduced from the sciences of complexity can serve as much more useful metaphors than traditional appeals to Newtonian physics.

The sciences of complexity therefore lead to a metaphor that can be applied to society: an event is the appearance of a new social structure following a bifurcation; fluctuations are the outcome of individual actions.

An event has a 'microstructure'. Let us take an example from history – the 1917 Russian Revolution, for instance. The end of the Tsarist regime could have taken different forms, the branch followed being the result of numerous factors, such as the Tsar's lack of foresight, the unpopularity of his wife, the weakness of Kerensky, the violence of Lenin. It was this microstructure, this 'fluctuation' that determined the outcome of the crisis, and thus the events that followed.

From this point of view, history is a succession of bifurcations. A fascinating example of this is the transition from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic age, which happened at practically the same time all over the world (this fact is all the more surprising given the long duration of the Paleolithic age). This transition appears to have been a bifurcation linked to the more systematic exploitation of vegetable and mineral resources. Many branches emerged from this bifurcation: the Chinese Neolithic period with its cosmic vision, for example, the Egyptian Neolithic with its trust in the gods, or the anxiety-stricken Neolithic period of the pre-Columbian world.

Each bifurcation has beneficiaries and victims. The transition to the Neolithic age gave rise to hierarchical societies. The division of labour meant inequality. Slavery was established and continued to exist until the nineteenth century. Though the Pharaoh had a pyramid for his tomb, his people shared a common grave.

The nineteenth century, in the same way as the twentieth, presented a series of bifurcations. Each time that new materials were discovered – coal, petrol, electricity, or new forms of usable energy – society was transformed. Could one not say that, when taken as a whole, these bifurcations led to greater participation of the population in culture and that from

then on inequalities between social classes that had been born during the Neolithic age began to diminish?

In general, bifurcations are at once a sign of instability and a sign of vitality in a given society. They also express the desire for a more just society. Even outside the social sciences, the West presents a surprising spectacle of successive bifurcations. Music and the arts, it could be said, change every fifty years. Man continually explores new possibilities, conceives utopias that might lead to more harmonious relations between man and man and between man and nature. And these are themes that come up again and again in recent opinion polls concerning the character of the twenty-first century.

Where have we got to? I am convinced that we are approaching a bifurcation point that is connected to progress in information technology and everything associated with it, such as multimedia, robotics and artificial intelligence. This is the 'networked society' with its dreams of a global village.

But what will be the result of this bifurcation, along which branch of it are we going to find ourselves? What will be the effect of globalization? The word 'globalization' covers a variety of very different situations? It is possible that the Roman emperors were already dreaming of 'globalization' – of a single culture that would dominate the world. The preservation of cultural pluralism and respect for others is going to demand the entire attention of future generations. But there are also other dangers on the horizon.

Around 12,000 species of ant are known today. Their colonies range from between several hundred to many millions of individuals. It is interesting to note that the behaviour of ants depends on the size of the colony. In a small colony, the ant will behave as an individualist, looking for food and then bringing this back to the nest. When the colony is large, however, the

situation changes, and co-ordination of activities becomes essential. Collective structures then appear spontaneously as a result of auto-catalytic reactions between ants bringing about chemically mediated exchanges of information. It is no coincidence that in large ant or termite colonies individual insects become blind. Population growth shifts the initiative from the individual to the collective.

By analogy, we may ask ourselves what the effect of the information society will be on individual creativity. There are obvious advantages to this type of society – one thinks of medicine or the economy. But there is information and disinformation; how can one tell the difference? Clearly, this requires ever more knowledge and a developed critical sense. The true must be distinguished from the false, the possible from the impossible. The development of information has meant that we are bequeathing a heavy task to future generations. New divisions resulting from the 'networked society' based on information technology must not be allowed to come about. But one must also examine more fundamental questions. In a general sense, will the bifurcation to come diminish the gulf between rich and poor nations? Will globalization be characterized by peace and democracy, or by overt or disguised violence? It is up to future generations to create the fluctuations that will give direction to the event corresponding to the advent of the information society.

My message to future generations is, therefore, that the die has not been cast, and that the branch taken following the bifurcation has yet to be chosen. We are in a period of fluctuations in which individual action remains essential.

The more science advances, the more astonished we are by it. We have gone from a geocentric idea of the solar system to a heliocentric one, and from there ideas of galaxies and,

finally, multiple universes have developed. Everyone has heard of the 'big bang'. For science, there is no such thing as a unique event, and this has led to the idea of the existence of multiple universes. On the other hand, man is so far the only living creature that is conscious of the amazing universe which has created him and which he, in turn, can change. The human condition consists in coming to terms with this ambiguity. My hope is that future generations will also come to terms with this amazement and this ambiguity. Every year, our chemists produce thousands of new substances, many of which are to be found in natural products: this is an example of man's creativity within the creativity of nature as a whole. This amazement leads us to respect others. No one possesses absolute truth – as far as that expression means anything. I believe that Richard Tarnes is right: 'The deepest passion of the Western soul is to rediscover its unity with the roots of its being.' Such passion leads to the Promethean affirmation of the power of reason, but this reason can also lead to alienation, to a negation of all that gives value and meaning to life. It is up to future generations to construct a new coherence that will incorporate both human values and science, something which will put an end to prophecies of 'the end of Science', 'the end of History' or even the advent of a 'Post-Humanity'. We are only at the beginning of science, and are far from the time when it was believed that one could describe the whole universe in terms of a few fundamental laws. We meet the complex and the irreversible in the microscopic domain (such as is associated with elementary particles), in the macroscopic domain that is all around us, and in the domain of astrophysics. It is up to future generations to build a new science that incorporates all these aspects, for at the moment science is still in its infancy. In the same way, the end of history would be the end of bifurcations and the realization of Orwell's

or Huxley's nightmare vision of an atemporal society that has lost its memory. It is up to future generations to be vigilant in order to ensure that this never comes about. One sign of hope is that the interest in nature and the desire to participate in cultural life has never been greater than it is today. We do not need any kind of 'post-humanity'. It is up to man as he is today, with his problems, his pains, his joys, to see to it that he survives into future generations. The task is to find the narrow way between globalization and the preservation of cultural pluralism, between violence and politics, and between a culture of war and one of reason. These are heavy responsibilities.

A letter to future generations is necessarily written from a position of uncertainty, from an always hazardous extrapolation from the past. However, I remain optimistic. The role of British pilots was crucial in deciding the outcome of the Second World War. This was, to repeat a word that I have used often in this text, a 'fluctuation'. I trust in the emergence of such necessary fluctuations in order that the dangers that we perceive today might be successfully navigated. It is on this optimistic note that I wish to end my message.

Hubert Reeves

Astrophysicist *Canada*

## That the next century may exist

André Malraux wrote of the twenty-first century that it would be spiritual or not at all. Paraphrasing him, I will say: the twenty-first century will be green or there will not be any twenty-second century.

These words refer of course to the threat posed to life on earth by human activity in all its forms. One only need mention the words 'deforestation', 'desertification', 'air and water pollution', 'the greenhouse effect' and 'the destruction of the ozone layer' on the one hand, and 'the exhaustion of natural resources such as petroleum, gas and coal' on the other, to become conscious of the disasters that are piling up at an ever faster rate.

In parallel with this, we are witnessing a rapid and dynamic increase in environmental awareness. This movement is attempting to slow down and stop this planetary destruction by taking specific measures, and by organizing international conferences devoted to research into technologies for environmental protection and sustainable development.

The stakes could not be higher. The survival of the human race, as well as that of innumerable animal and plant species, are in the balance.

In this regard, the twenty-first century will be crucial.

Let us make certain that there are still people around to celebrate the start of the twenty-second century.

The responsibility for this lies with all of us.

## Richard Rorty

Philosopher *United States of America*

# Don't forget the nuclear weapons!

In my time, the second half of the twentieth century, we lived with the knowledge that all the good things that our ancestors had left to us – constitutional democracy, religious tolerance, great universities, advanced technology, widespread literacy – would probably not survive the use of nuclear weapons. Somehow this use did not occur. But as I write, at the end of our century, the citizens of the democracies seem to have forgotten something that seemed obvious in the wake of Hiroshima: that the first priority of world politics must be to get rid of these weapons.

For decades now there has been no serious discussion of doing so among candidates for public office in the countries that possess these weapons.

Perhaps the next fifty years will see the end of the nuclear threat. Perhaps some use of nuclear weapons by terrorists will have awakened the citizenry of the world to the continuing danger. But it is possible that you who receive this letter may still be living in the same situation that we are in: knowing the weapons are there, ready to be used at the touch of a button, but doing nothing about it. If that is your situation, I would urge you to be wiser than my generation was.

I urge you to remember that everything the human race has built up over the centuries could vanish overnight if those buttons are pushed.

# Mstislav Rostropovitch

Musician *Russian Federation*

## Beauty will save the world

Each of us can only imagine what trends will develop in the next century, especially during the first fifty years to 2050. However, it seems to me that we are faced with one great danger – that of people becoming isolated from one another. This danger stems from the incredible advances made in electronics, particularly in computer technology, in a comparatively short period of time. In the United States especially, I have noticed that people interact with the computer screen, often with quite vacant expressions, more than they interact with each other. It seems to me that this development brings with it a great danger. When you are speaking face to face with someone about the problems of existence, you look into their eyes and are, in some sense, within the influence of their aura. This is completely absent from a computer: however interesting the information you download may be, it remains cold. At the present rate of progress, technology will reach the point where it will be possible to send letters without having to type them: the computer will write them for us. In the near future, people will be replaced by computers for many tasks.

The limitless intellectual baggage available on the Internet, which is impossible to collect in one human brain, will

make people a little less responsible for their own education, their own intellectual development, even for their social behaviour. The essence of social behaviour resides in one's relationships with other people, in one's understanding of the trials and tribulations of one's friends and family.

To counterbalance this tendency – it would be pointless to try to stop it – I think we should think about elevating those works of beauty given us by the Lord, such as music, painting, sculpture, and the wonder of nature. These we are liable to forget as we sit in front of our computer screen, without leaving the house. One of these days we will stop seeing the sky properly, we will stop paying attention to the trees that line the route between work and home. You see, I am afraid that we will be hypnotized by the computer, hypnotized by all the superfluous information we keep receiving. On the other hand, it seems to me that when one is enriched by culture, a knowledge of the history of one's country, by architecture, painting and music, one develops a completely different sphere: that of the emotions and one's perception of life, out of which are born love, children and the family. However, this is not simply a process of mechanical reproduction – forgive the vulgarity of the expression – it is a product of human relationships, of human love, and time must be devoted to it. I have noticed that people who love music and who shed tears over an opera by Verdi, Puccini or Tchaikovsky, have a deeper kind of love, experience with greater sensitivity their attachment to their wife, the mother of their children.

All of this is not without significance for the coming generations. We need to solve many problems, including those that are national in character, and we need to arrive at the conclusion that the world belongs to everyone. Whether our country is called Russia or America, we should not drive away

people who are seeking refuge, but rather help them in a Christian way. However, people should also know, love and respect the laws, customs and history of the country that receives them.

It seems to me also that young musicians might set themselves the task of penetrating as deeply as possible into remote areas of the countryside, of which there are many in Russia. I don't know if it is possible to realize this dream, but I have already made a modest start, via Columbia Artist Management, with my tours with a student orchestra around African villages, in Uganda and other countries. Such activity by young, talented people should not only take the form of charity concerts, useful as these may be: philanthropy should also be concerned with opening up new aspects of the soul, new emotional dimensions for people. I have made three journeys through Russia, accompanied by a bayan-player and a singer. We performed with a bayan, because in those tiny villages in Siberia they did not even have an upright piano. I myself learned a great deal performing in front of people who were seeing a live musician for the first time, playing such a strange big violin, accompanied by the bayan. I shall never forget the gratitude of the people on their first encounter with the wonder of musical emotion. It was somewhere in the steppe, in northern Russia, on the peninsula of Taimyr, not far from Khatynga. It is a place where tiny flowers grow and bloom for only a very short time, flowers of which there are perhaps two or three per square kilometre. Before the concert the schoolchildren and their teacher went to pick these flowers; they walked many kilometres in order to make a bunch of not more than ten little flowers. These flowers were much more precious to me than the huge bouquets of roses that I have received in the course of my long career. In my eyes, love and human relationships are more important than all the account

books (very necessary though these are in certain fields) and than all the knowledge acquired with the aid of a computer.

I believe that religion should play an important role in the future. People should have greater awareness that there is something holy above them, a spiritual power. This will enable them to exercise control over their actions and prevent them from thinking that they are the ultimate arbiter of their existence, that they can do whatever they want. For God is constantly watching over us. The Lord's commandments should be learned by heart; one should know them from the age one is able to clean one's teeth unaided. I myself am a Christian, so for me Jesus Christ is my God, but I have exactly the same respect for Buddha, whom many peoples revere and for Muhammad the Prophet and his believers. It seems to me that when religious disagreements arise, we regress, we behave like animals. That beauty which ennobles us all should play a very important role, we should integrate it into our lives. A long time ago, when I was a child, I was taken to a baptist church in Moscow. There I heard a sermon by a priest who spoke of how you cannot – if you have not personally approached God or if you are not receptive to Him – feel His goodness and His influence, just as you cannot feel the warmth of a stove if you do not get close to it. We need to move closer to this warmth that emanates from our faith, as it will surely help us to overcome the difficulties that face us. Dostoyevski's magical phrase, 'Beauty will save the world', retains its significance, and will do so not only until 2050, but also for several centuries beyond, if we do not lead ourselves to destruction before then.

Fernando Savater

Philosopher *Spain*

# Some cautionary words for my descendants

*Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow*

SHAKESPEARE, *Macbeth*

My dear and (happily?) unknown descendants,

To begin in the most obvious manner, when you read these lines – assuming you have not yet lost the ability to read – I shall already be dead. To be frank, this particular circumstance bothers and concerns me far more than any of your own. Do not judge me overly egocentric: the same will happen to you in due course, namely when you begin truly to think. Here, one first word of warning, specifically about thinking: in the majority of cases when we say ‘I think’ we ought to say ‘I repeat’, for our supposed ideas are as second-hand as the fancy-dress costumes hired out for the festivities at carnival time.

That is not to say that genuine thought should mean unprecedented ideas or the most original strokes of genius. On the contrary, as a rule, to think something that no one appar-

ently has ever thought before tends to be a bad sign; to startle is not to innovate, although some innovations are startling. To think is to mentally register our experience of life. As human lives are fundamentally alike, it is not surprising that what we think should already have been thought before, and perhaps thought better, but by *others*. What is original is not the content of what we think, but the subject who thinks it: me, me and forever me.

I do not have words of advice to offer you, or at least I have nothing different to what was said in their day by Epicurus, Seneca, Spinoza or Schopenhauer. Thank me for not repeating it. I will allow myself, however, a few modest words of caution. Do not believe that the life you have been allotted to live is more difficult or the world more benighted than in other ages; nor believe that it is simpler or more enlightened. Do not delude yourselves – it is the same human life as ever: horrific, enchanting, graced with wisdom and tainted with superstition. Do not waste time ridiculing the superstitions of the past: identify and fight against those of your present. And do not yearn wistfully for the wisdom that others possessed, because in essence it is still within your reach and because only you – in your day-to-day lives – can render such wisdom truly wise. The life you live lacks nothing and yet it contains nothing new of real importance that did not exist before. You are where man has always been and face the same challenge as us or our great-great-grandfathers: you must deal with the terrible strangeness of the here and now. Change the set, the props and the staging but the old drama remains the same.

Your true instruments will never be the advancements of technology, but love and hate, compassion and cruelty, deceitfulness and truthfulness – those most ancient of things, that never miss an appointment or walk out of a meeting. Prepare to

be extraordinary, unique and fragile . . . as we have all been, as every woman and man will always be. And do not believe the prophets who proclaim the end of time or the arrival of a new age or new Messiah. Do not believe them and, above all, do not be weak enough to believe you need them or need what they promise.

To sum up, ingenuously and disingenuously: for human beings nothing is as important as the company of, and dealings with, other human beings. Only this matters. But it implies so many things, so many desires, so many demands and sacrifices . . . that each one of you will have to confront them in your own way. For the rest, I wish you much luck and that you may live with full awareness until the end. And now I return to my own affairs, which is the best way of remaining true, in anticipation, to you.

## Darius Shayegan

Philosopher *Islamic Republic of Iran*

# The horizon of mixed influences

I do not know if my eventful and tormented experience of this dying century can serve as some kind of example to future generations yet I am a most complex product of it. Having lived on the margins of the great changes of this century, I have been subjected, often to the point of having to defend myself physically, to all its positive and negative consequences, without having had the opportunity to participate in its creative process.

Moving from the periphery to the centre, I had to learn an enormous number of things from scratch which, in the new world in which I was settling, were taken as self-evident. When I look back on the path I have taken, I am surprised and sometimes even frightened by these episodes fraught with obstacles, by my very naivety. For how can I put it? I lived in a world devoid of colour or form. The old civilization to which I had belonged had more or less thrown in the towel: modernity had won the day and everything that came from the West had the irresistible attraction of the siren's song. I had to learn the languages and the cultures of the countries of which I was a passive admirer.

As far back as I can remember, I lived in disjointed worlds where nothing was in its place, where disparate and incoherent

pieces of knowledge had been patched together, pieces which, juxtaposed in random mosaics, jarred with one another, with the result that I always had the impression of living in a no man's land. By this I mean that my generation received the full brunt of the clash of cultures. And I assimilated this culture-clash very early on. All of this happened, it goes without saying, at an unconscious level. It was later on that I became aware of the fissures that had, in some way, fashioned my being.

Gradually, through the process of bringing to the surface the contradictions of my own being and the different milieux in which I lived, I succeeded, as best as I could, in recognizing the mechanisms at work both in terms of behaviour and knowledge. Taking an interest, first of all, in the great spirituality of India, then in the great moments of Western thought where anxiety is the main driving force, then in Iran and in Islam, I became a specialist in comparative religions, then a committed observer of the fractures which constantly oppose the traditions of the past with the great changes of modern times. Moreover, my works, written in the course of my peregrinations in the interstices between all these disjointed worlds, describe their salient points and the traces they have left. It is in this way that I found myself the bearer of multiple levels of consciousness, where all the sedimentations of the past – from the oldest to the most recent – exist side by side. I then tried, as far as it was possible, to untangle the inextricable web of this kaleidoscopic vision of things whose numerous facets I embodied, without my knowing it.

Now that I can take a bird's-eye look at the world, I notice that the simultaneity of all the world's cultures has replaced their successive appearance over time: all the changes of paradigm, all the layers of consciousness – from the Neolithic age to the computer age – now demand to have their say. The different levels of being are juxtaposed, follow on from one

another, overlap and interconnect, without it being possible to reorder them in a linear structure. Thus we are struck by the confusion of genres, by the mixing of incompatible elements, by miscegenation of all kinds. When we consider the history of ideas, we realize that, at every threshold, we are faced with two concomitant phenomena: the emergence of a new idea followed by the suppression of the preceding one. If we look at them in terms of long stretches of time, we notice that nothing has actually disappeared. All the discourses have been displaced, they have been piled up in areas of shadow, buried there awaiting their hour of glory. With perhaps the exception of the universal discourse of modernity, whose tenets deriving from the Enlightenment have become, for better or for worse, the heritage of all humanity, no claim prevails exclusively, no ideology becomes so dominant that it overshadows all the others. While there are quite a number of exceptions, this current of thought remains, none the less, an unprecedented example in the history of humanity. But what does the analysis of this new state of affairs reveal? First of all, that rigid identities, nation-states and ideological hegemonies are progressively disappearing in a world where 'relational thought' is replacing truths set in stone. All great changes happen in this manner: the rejection of the monolithic blocks of belief, the fundamental bricks of matter, tree-like systems of thought. Instead, they place value on nomadic thought, relational modes of developing empathy, hybridism and the cross-fertilization of cultures. From this spring three inevitable consequences which, in my opinion, are going to determine our future in the next millennium. The interconnectedness which characterizes our mode of being in the world expresses itself at all levels of reality.

First, on the level of cultures and identities, it emphasizes rhizomatous relations through a sort of a mosaic pattern where

all identities fit into one another. Hence the phenomenon of multiculturalism and the emergence of plural identities. Essentially, in the time we live in, no one has a single identity, we are all composite beings, we all have more or less a 'hybrid consciousness', hence the idea of 'frontier identities', go-betweens who traverse the historical faults of consciousness. In this criss-crossing chaos of identities, one thing is certain: modernity is not a superfluous phenomenon that we can do without. We are all 'Western', whatever our ethnic background may be, to the extent that we embody certain inescapable aspects of the Enlightenment. Whatever identity we have – and God knows we have a multitude – we have to add on this last one which connects us to all other human beings on the planet, independently of our race, religion and cultural origins. In other words, it is our modern identity alone that is endowed with a critical faculty, it is this identity alone which, paradoxically, can strip away the most archaic strata of our consciousness and facilitate their multiple articulations, linking worlds living in different ages. If we withdraw from the constantly changing world, preferring to live in a bell jar, looking for fictitious genealogies and founding myths, we are jumping out of the frying pan into the fire, going from immobility to obscurantism. Is it possible today for dialogue to take place? The answer is probably 'yes' if we take the necessary precautions. First of all, by putting the rhetoric of resentment aside, the discourse of anti-this, anti-that, which, for lack of convincing arguments, resort to anathema, while all the time accepting that we are no longer dealing with autonomous cultures in the literal sense, but with modes of being which can only flourish within the prevailing modernity; that the articulations of these dislocated modes of beings represent the dialogue of man with himself; that the problem is above all epistemological, even if there are

inevitably social and political consequences. The fact that this dialogue is possible on a horizontal plane, since the zone of hybridization from which it draws its arguments – and by that I mean frontier identities, the cross-fertilization of consciousness, nomadic thinking – reveals another phenomenon: patchwork, and the fact that this patchwork brings the combinatory art of multiple relationships into play. That is why man today, unless he is wearing tight blinkers, has no option but to resort to different kinds of patching-up in which he restructures his being, resculpts the existential landscape of his life, giving himself a certain coherence in a chaotic world – finding, in other words, a way out leading to other realms of existence.

Do these spiritual dimensions exist? By referring to other realms of existence, we are probably speaking about traditional cultures which, even if they do not exist as articulated wholes which are sufficient unto themselves, none the less invite us to other universes of meaning. These are situated beyond modernity, beyond the epistemological ruptures of modern times. In other words, they draw on the collective unconscious of humanity. If we can be in tune with the contemporary world solely by virtue of the critical faculty which procures us our modern identity, on the other hand, to enter these higher realms of being, we need other keys to knowledge. Because in this space of transmutations, situated through the looking-glass, modernity slips away, becomes ineffective, incapable of guiding us. In this sense, we are dealing with a disorienting experience, another system of organization. Here we must cut ourselves adrift. Here there is dialogue; not the playful dialogue of cultures, but that of meta-history.

Second, these relational links which govern our modern world also manifest themselves in terms of knowledge through the array of possible interpretations that exist. To the extent that

the great metaphysical truths which founded the ancient ontologies have collapsed and lost their value, the fragmented self becomes itself an infinite process of diverse interpretations, with every person being able to interpret each aspect of existence according to his or her subjective values. The ancient structures of our intelligibility have been shattered. People speak of the return of the sacred. This 'divinity', which is so longed for by some, will never again be able to don the masks of the ancient gods who used to reveal themselves, as René Girard put it, through violence. Rather, it makes itself felt in the weakening of tribal ties, in the infinite opening out of our choices. We are no longer confronted with a Kierkegaardian alternative 'either . . . or'; neither are we caught in insurmountable dilemmas. Our choice is opening out like a fan. It is iridescent with the colours of a rainbow. The kaleidoscope of varied spiritual landscapes makes a *homo viator* of all of us, but of a very particular type. We are all pilgrims, but our pilgrimage is not restricted to a preordained route. We have retained a sense of quest, without it being necessarily that for the Grail. It changes according to the playful patchworking of mankind. It sometimes takes the form of samsara, sometimes that of maya, and sometimes that of shamanic initiation rites. In this way, the gamut of choices, expanded by cultural cross-fertilization, breaks the restricted circle of hermeneutics to venture into territories beyond space and time. As if, by rewinding time, we were going backwards through history; as if, leaf by leaf, we were unfolding the layers of palimpsest that had accumulated in the memory of humanity.

Curiously, as a result of the retreat of the gods, our world has become more magical and more irrational than before. Not only has our unconscious, which is saturated with suppressed images, become active like an awakening volcano, but the images that it projects reveal the greatest confusion of figures:

half-divine, half-demonic. Just as we are witnessing the myriad mixing of concepts on the level of culture, in our projections we are also manufacturing amalgams of symbols where mandalas, icons, the yin and the yang intermingle, creating a thick forest of allied signs where all combinations become possible. Yet, paradoxically, this re-enchantment is related to secularization. Without secularization, we would never have seen the birth of this new pantheon of hybrid images.

Third, where the media are concerned, this new state of affairs is giving rise to a 'virtualization' which is weaving a network of interconnectedness on a global scale. The instantaneity, the immediacy and the ubiquity which characterize it, result in the fact that, besides the contraction of time and space, we are witnessing the synthesis of all the senses, thus giving us multisensorial perceptions. At this point, we are seeing the appearance of a curious symmetry. On the one hand, all the floating ideas that are coming to us from the incredible blending of traditional ideas are creating a kind of meta-reality which hangs over our world. On the other hand, the revolution in communications is bringing real time into play through new technologies and is creating a virtual world parallel to the tangible world around us. If we choose to compare these two modes of 'virtualization' – by which I mean the world of visions, myths and angels and the feats of the computer age as manifested in cyberspace through digitalization and the Internet etc. – we realize that we are confronted with two parallel worlds which can never coincide on the same level of reality.

If virtualization is situated in an 'outside-of-here' which cannot be located, but which actualizes itself by virtue of digital technology, the archetypal world of images has its only epiphany in the realm of the creative imagination. Therefore, they are not on the same level of perception. Virtualization, as

Baudrillard puts it, eliminates illusion by making reality a hyper-reality, even a simulation, whereas the other transforms the illusion into active imagination, which is consistent with the idea of angels. But in spite of this, it remains the case that their modes of virtualization offer surprising similarities. In both cases, we are dealing with different registers, in both cases the Moebius effect is in full operation, since each is equally a mode of transformation from one state to another. Both are 'deterritorialized'. In both cases, we are confronted with nomads or migrants, one of which navigates on the network of all networks according to his whim or needs, while the other, a pilgrim-migrant, pursues the upward path of his spiritual quest. These apparent similarities point to the fact that modern man is strongly inclined to the intangible, to the magic of the instantaneous, to the metamorphosis of forms. In a certain sense, the world is rediscovering enchantment in the transmission of information which passes through the stratosphere at the speed of light. The ubiquity that mankind dreamed of in days gone by is being achieved through the fax machine, e-mail and teleconferences – all things that, just a few years ago, would have appeared impossible and the products of the most fanciful imagination.

What is there to conclude from all this? This interconnectedness which embraces the media, human beings, culture and plural identities, this patchwork which is becoming the lot of everyone, is projecting a many-hued world of mixtures that could not be more colourful. I have called this world the zone of hybridization, that is to say the in-between zone, the peripheries, where all levels of conscience concertina down and slot into one another. Because here, the fractured historical perspectives overlap to create a universe whose coherence owes as much to the structuring power of the imagination as to the discon-

certing divides of reality. If the literature of the in-between zone limited itself in the past to a certain form of literary experiment, with globalization and the many forms of cross-fertilization which are resulting from it, this state of affairs is becoming a universal phenomenon and hence the destiny of contemporary man. Moreover, the monumental creations of peripheral literature bear witness to this fact – by this I mean Anglo-Indian, Latin-American, Afro-American literature, etc. It seems to me that the coming decades will see the successful exploitation of this in-between zone, where all levels of significance meet, from the oldest to the newest. This will require the ability to extrapolate them, to keep one's distance in relation to them, to wittingly give oneself over to the game of reflecting mirrors, to construct bridges over their crevasses, to somehow negotiate their coexistence by putting their enormous potential to good use. In the future this will perhaps allow us to reintegrate all of the sedimentations of the past which, because of the accelerated fracturing of knowledge, are no longer able to communicate with one another and confine themselves to the stifling limits of a particular discipline. This will also allow us to discover the relationship of dialogue that connects them, to emphasize the value of the 'horizon of mixed influences'. This, in a few words, is the colossal task that falls to future generations, who are condemned to live in a multicultural world where fusion and cross-fertilization have almost become the natural mode of existence. I notice with pleasure, moreover, that the new 'peripheral' novel is, with rare daring, exploiting the imaginary landscape of this very same cross-fertilization.

The interest in hybrids in the domain of fiction arises from the fact that, here, the in-between zone and the mutant forms that derive from it have become a universe unto themselves, a realm of new creation, where cross-fertilization is the

product of an unprecedented exploration of the world of the imagination. Incidentally, the people that experience this and write these novels are themselves hybrid creatures: they have one foot in the prehistory of their own cultures and the other in the metamorphosis of the future. To conclude, I would like to cite what the great German critic Robert Curtius said about the universal genius of Goethe. In the poet's vision, we find

Ionic hylozoism, Plato's world soul, Aristotle's entelechy, Spinoza's *natura naturans* and *natura naturata*, the Leibnizian doctrine of monads and the philosophy of Schelling. But all of these very disparate elements are linked together by the idea of metamorphosis. This is Goethe's central idea and it is this which makes him part of the continuity of the *philosophia perennis*, as well as, moreover, part of the ancient mysteries of Christian revelation.

The double metamorphosis that Faust undergoes – by this I mean his rejuvenation and transfiguration – is perhaps also the fate of the generations to come.

## Leopoldo Zea

Philosopher *Mexico*

# A letter to people I shall never meet

I would like to live for ever so that I could see and talk with people whom I shall never meet. I can only do this through this letter, by talking to them about my experiences and hopes. I was born in Mexico City in 1912 and so was a very young child at the time of the revolutionary civil war which had started in 1910. The horrors of fratricidal conflict unfolded before my eyes, without my understanding what they meant.

Years later, Arnold Toynbee, the man who would become my friend, set out in a personal letter to me something that he had already written about in his books. The revolution to which I had been an unknowing witness was the start of a bigger revolution which the conquered and colonized nations would wage on a global scale to break the constraints that had been imposed on them. A revolution that would spread first to Latin America and then throughout the world, to Asia, Africa and Oceania.

The Mexican revolution started from defensive nationalism, but it opened up solidarity with other nations that were looking for the same thing. In 1917, another revolution broke out in Russia, which sought social justice. It was through the cinema, to which my mother was addicted, that I became aware of the First World War: a war, started in Europe by a hegemony

that would extend to its colonies overseas and later involve the United States, which was fighting for the same thing. Obviously, as an adult, I learned how this war would engender another war, which would be more bloody and on a worldwide scale. Again the United States was drawn in, this time with Japanese militarism allied to European fascism.

Two revolutions and two world wars. At the end of the Second World War came the struggle for world hegemony between the two great victors: the United States and the Soviet Union. The Cold War was peace under the threat of a war that could wipe out humanity. The two rivals produced weapons of deterrence and mass destruction, sacrificing human happiness and well-being in the name of security. In 1989, the Soviet Union withdrew from a war that was preventing it from fulfilling the goals of socialism, in which the capitalist way of life was not at odds with a socialism that wanted the same for everyone, without discrimination.

It was the end of the Cold War and the walls that were dividing the world collapsed. And so peace, justice, security and freedom came to the fore. Hopes were soon dashed by a 'dirty war', in which the perpetrators used repression to maintain order and strengthen their own regimes: those of capitalism and communism. It was the end of the Cold War and the escalation of the 'dirty war' which led to the break up of the Soviet Union and the economic isolation of the United States.

The two great losers in the Second World War, Germany in Europe and Japan in Asia, being unable to participate in the production of arms for the Cold War, stimulated the capacity of their peacetime industries to manufacture those goods that would create happiness among those who could afford to buy them. The Soviet Union and the United States, which had taken on the burden of producing obsolete weapons, were left

out of this market economy. Western Europe sought self-sufficient integration within this market economy, restricted exclusively to its own development.

The emergence in this economy of Japan, which was improving its products and reducing prices, assisting the development of the abandoned European colonies in Asia and making them partners and agents in their own economy, changed the project of European self-sufficiency. This was the start of the emergence of the marginalized so-called Third World that Arnold Toynbee had foreseen in his time. The response of those who opposed this change was the 'dirty war'.

This war was global because the change was global. War generates meanness, sows hatred through the fear that the other, by virtue of his happiness, freedom and development, limits or obliterates one's own happiness, freedom and development. Worse than the threat of death on a massive scale during the Cold War is the hatred born of meanness that makes people exterminate one other.

Wars! All the time, wars creating more wars! It was during the Spanish Civil War that I felt sorry for a whole nation. I felt sorry for Spain. This war was the starting point for the Second World War. I felt sadness over the defeat of France and the occupation of Paris, as I had before over the wars in Abyssinia and other places in the world. Wars with the threat of large-scale destruction and wars that foster hatred so that men go on killing each other. Why? Just because the other person is different – as if people always have to be imperfect copies of one another? Because other people's claims to freedom, well-being, security and happiness limit our own? Purely and simply, it is meanness that has been, and still is at the root of all wars.

And so we have reached the end of the century and the millennium. Two world wars, two revolutions and it is all a

continuation of that same age-old human meanness. Does my longing to survive make any sense in the light of this experience? Will this message make any sense?

It does and it will, because I would like to witness what is already being promised and what will happen inexorably: the unintentional effect created by the perpetrators of this same age-old, mean-minded violence. I would like to witness all this, because, in the midst of the age-old world of violence, wars and revolutions, I have had other experiences. I have experienced generous, supportive and big-hearted people.

During the Mexican revolution, my wonderful maternal grandmother went out of her way, although beset by the great shortages caused by the conflict, to protect and feed the child she had taken on. The grandmother filled her grandson with stories of goblins and witches and also memories of Mexico's history through which she had lived from the middle of the previous century. There was a determination that this child should study and achieve what she would not manage to see. By seeking the help of old suitors who still courted her because, in spite of her years, she was still beautiful, she managed to get grants for her grandson to attend primary school in the midst of the conflict.

Having completed this stage, the inescapable obligation to work in order to help her in her efforts presented itself. I knew that my future was something that was entirely my responsibility. I had to study and work at the same time. And it was in this way that I completed my secondary education and my university entrance classes. I studied law in the morning to be able to earn a living and literature in the afternoon because I felt it was my vocation. For this determination I relied on generous teachers. In this regard, I cannot fail to mention my teacher par excellence, José Gaos – he who liked to call himself

a transplanted Spaniard, not an exiled one, and who presented the Spanish Civil War to me in a masterly way. With him I learned why I felt such sadness for Spain. Gaos was a tough and seemingly gloomy man with a heart of gold. From him I learned not to see my teachers as hindering me and my potential students as negating me. On the contrary, I learned that it was with the support of my teachers that I could see and travel further and that it would be with my support that those potential students of mine would do the same.

I will never forget the kind words he wrote in his Confessions:

Dear Zea,

Forgive me for admitting it to myself, having also admitted it to you a little. But what do you expect? Which of us two will be to blame for your being the greatest success of my teaching career? If every vocation and profession must justify itself by what it creates and you did not exist, I would have had to invent you.

What I feel now is great sadness because my teacher cannot see what I have done, as I believe I have achieved it thanks to what I learned from him.

And so in the violent world that I have seen, I have been privileged to meet marvellous people, far removed from the mean-spiritedness engendering the hatred that creates violence. I have been privileged to start life with the love of my grandmother. I have been privileged to rely on the generous influence of my teacher. And in addition to this are the no less generous impulses that as an adult I discovered in the outstanding people who have been, and are, my friends in the cultural sphere that has been my vocation, both at home and abroad. Arnold Toynbee was one of them. There have

been so many that I do not want to name them for fear of forgetting someone.

I have been privileged that through these acts of generosity and without means of my own, I have been able to discover and return time and again to America, my Latin America, of which Mexico is a part; and through Latin America, its inseparable historical partners, the United States and Canada. The America to which I belong is my prime concern. It was through UNESCO that, in 1953, I was able to visit Europe for the first time and I have returned there many times and believe I am familiar with nearly all of it as far as the Urals. As a government official and by invitation, I have covered nearly all of Africa and have returned there several times. I have also, on several occasions, visited the greater part of Asia and Oceania.

Because of these privileges, I have maintained the conception that I learned from my teachers of mankind's diversity and its incontrovertible equality within that difference. My multicultural and multiracial vision has been strengthened and with it the possibility of the nation of nations that Simón Bolívar dreamed my beloved America would be. A dream based on the race of races, the cosmic race of which one of my renowned teachers and friends, José Vasoncelos, spoke.

I am privileged to have been, in my field, the subject of recognition, honours, prizes, decorations, medals and doctorates, in my own country and abroad. This recognition has surprised me, because I did not ask for it. Because I also learned that to ask for recognition that is undeserved and then not get it can result in resentment and an inferiority complex. At times I have wanted it, but have not asked for it. This has allowed my thoughts to be freer. Why have I got what I did not expect? I honestly do not know. I have been told that I am sometimes too direct and specific, and that can make me troublesome and even

irritating. Nevertheless, I have made some magnificent and generous friends.

It is also because of this privileged experience that I am optimistic and would like to carry on living to witness what human generosity has created in spite of everything, thus reversing the age-old pattern of violence. The European expansion throughout the world has brought, together with suffering, an awareness of the human qualities of those who have been subjected to this violence and who recognize and reclaim this awareness as their own. These qualities are not exclusive to any particular way of being human, but are a true expression of what it is to be human.

Take heart that the president of a great power at the end of the century and the millennium has on his agenda the aim that a way of life, portrayed as exclusive to one social class, be extended to include all his countrymen, without racial, cultural, sexual or social discrimination. Take heart that he declares his goal is to make his country the biggest multiracial nation on earth. Take heart that in Europe a new left proposes to share development without discrimination and that this same Europe, together with the United States, confronts the repressive policies and ethnic cleansing in which the violence of the Second World War originated.

The expansion of the capitalist world has engendered an economy that is changing the relationship between rich and poor, the colonizers and the colonized. The extraordinary advances in science and technology in our times, combined with the contributions to these areas made by scientists from different parts of the world throughout history, gave political leaders reason to believe that this was the end of History and that they could manage without those nations that they considered had done nothing for the economy, science and technology.

Technology at the end of this millennium, through recycling and automatization, renders the cheap raw materials and labour supplied by the colonies unnecessary. Thus, further countries are consigned to the ranks of the marginalized. What is also clear is that scientific and technological development must imperatively take account of these countries. Their production capacity is so great that, in order not to halt it, consumers are needed to absorb what is produced.

The greater the production, the greater the consumption, which means development has to be extended to nations which before were simple instruments in the process. Having a share in development creates jobs and with that the capacity to consume what could be infinite production. The emergence of the Asian nations, encouraged by Japan, will show not only their capacity to use new production tools, but also their capacity to improve them, make them cheaper and put them within the reach of the majority of people. On finishing his first term of office, President Clinton of the United States announced that the transformation of his country into a market economy was the result of the excluded minorities of the United States participating in the American way of life.

The changes that are taking place are creating new attitudes to concepts that seemed to be an inevitable part of capitalism, such as that of competition – which means that some nations achieve their goals while others are condemned to marginalization. Compete, yes, but share the achievements in order to benefit all the countries of the world. Compete not so that those who are supposedly the best survive, but so that no one remains excluded from the fruits of a united effort for the greater good.

With this competition, take care that no one fails, because the failure of one affects the progress of everyone. Help

those who fall behind. If this is not done, the development that science and technology makes possible in our time will fall into a vacuum. The series of deadly goals has made the imperative nature of this solidarity clear. The 'tequila, dragon, vodka, samba' effect has repercussions not only for those nations who suffer directly from it, but for the system as a whole.

Nevertheless, in spite of the inescapable fatalism that fires the desire to see the immediate future, there is an even stronger resistance to accepting equality within difference and the notion of competing while sharing at the same time. The opposite of success would be to have the 'dirty war' achieve its goal, with nations wiping each other out through the rancour and hatred that is rooted in meanness. As a start, it will be important, as UNESCO suggests, to make education a tool for building a world of genuine peace, eliminating hatred, rancour and meanness from the minds of men.

It is from this starting point that I would like to be a witness of what is taking shape, but I hope that the people to whom this letter is addressed will be too. These new generations are already present, in history in gestation, for whom it will be, I hope, a milestone between what has already been and the future of what must be – for the glory of humankind.

With my best wishes.