

Ethics and geopolitics overtaking market as Europe's unifying principle

by Pierre DEFRAIGNE

Executive Director of the Madariaga-College of Europe Foundation
 Honorary Director General at the European Commission (*)

SUMMARY

Civilisation began with humans thanking God, not as a herd, not as a crowd, but as a community. And teaching is the first act of civilisation. It is about passing on what we know about the truth, about good and about beauty to the next generation.

And here you are, headmasters of today, belonging to the most ancient and noblest of professions. And it is a privilege for me this morning to teach the teachers, and what teachers you are! You are no ordinary headmasters, you are headmasters of a rare breed, of the Jesuit Congregation, and as such you are the trustees of a precious legacy, a powerful tool for changing ourselves, for changing Europe, for changing the world: Ignatian spirituality.

I am convinced that Europe's political unity, the most pressing task for our generation, will go through its spiritual Renaissance. And you are on the frontline: well equipped, well trained, ready to provide the new generation not only with knowledge, but with the spiritual strength to face the world "ad majorem Dei gloriam", for the greater glory of God.

Why do I make a link between Europe's Renaissance and Ignatian spirituality? Because regaining control of market capitalism and technology, the twin forces that are shaping up our societies, is a task for Europe, but Europe is not ready. Unchecked by ethics and by politics, these forces can destroy our civilisation and revive barbarity. We experienced this 75 years ago. However, Europe has, so far, been confined to market rationale. Reversing the tide and making humanism the main driver of European construction calls for a moral and spiritual revolution. We have to mobilise all the philosophical and spiritual resources of our secular and pluralistic societies to abolish the cult of money and to restore the full dignity to all men and women in all societies and all countries. Christians are rightful in putting themselves at the forefront of this battle because they bear testimony to the Gospel, which exalts love as the first individual value and justice as the central social value. Ignatian spirituality provides the inner strength needed to change one's person and to change the world. Europe's Renaissance, through Spirit overtaking market as a unifying principle, is ultimately the main topic of my paper.

AIMING FOR A EUROPEAN COMMONALITY OF DESTINY

Over two generations, our advanced European societies have been exposed to a new period of radical expansion of two powerful forces: market capitalism and technology. They have been governing modernity in the West for two centuries. And they are now deeply intertwined with capitalism turning knowledge into private property and making science a tool for the benefit of profit and capital accumulation in high-tech industries and services. Both are shaping up our economies which have become more global and more knowledge intensive. However, their impact on society is such that their combination gives rise to a system which now outshines the ancient totalitarian utopias of the XX Century: communism and fascism. They are also challenging Christianity in two ways.

Capitalism indeed makes materialism, through wealth accumulation and consumerism, the central societal value. Technology is supposed to someday provide an answer to all practical and philosophical problems mankind is confronted with. For instance, sooner or later we will find out what happened in the nanosecond before the Big Bang and every disease will have its cure.

The society shaped up by these twin forces is very different from the rural communities and the provincial cities connected only by railroad which were still prevailing across Europe one century ago. Two wars have brought to an end an ancient social, political and moral order which included Europe's supremacy over the rest of the world. But the recent change is all the more dramatic since this time it is not a product of war but of an endogenous development of market capitalism going global in the wake of the revolution of Information and Communication technology and container ships and of biotechnology ultimately bringing about a transformation of man himself.

Yet war is always simmering somewhere in today's world. There is peace on the surface so that business goes on as usual, but new forms of violence accompany the deep transformation of the economy and of society. Firstly, there is mounting social violence, with the middle class anxious about its status and uncertain about the future of its children, from rising precariousness and poverty among the younger generation. There is violence in the ghettos of large cities, petty crime everywhere, civil wars in Africa, religious wars in the Middle East and nationalist war in Ukraine, right on Europe's doorstep.

However, there is no reason for pessimism. There are indeed new buds developing. New endeavours are being undertaken by individuals and groups of people everywhere using the formidable potential of the web to innovate and experiment with new attitudes, new conducts through green communities, social entrepreneurships, collective housing, and crowdfunding. A new world is

already coming forth from the ashes of the old one. Life always prevails. We have to decipher this complex nexus of issues Europe is caught in and must interact with, before addressing the key issue of a commonality of destiny for Europe which is the focus of my conclusion.

I. EUROPE EXPOSED TO THREE MAJOR SHOCKS

Essentially, Europe is facing three ongoing transformations in the guise of three crises of a magnitude and of a speed never before experienced because the world has become more interdependent, more interconnected and more exposed to the rising flow of technological innovations. These are less radical than the wheel, steam power or electricity, but the technological process is nowadays constant and prolific.

It is therefore fair to talk of **three shocks**.

- 1) **The first one is globalisation**, which has been market and technology driven and made possible by policy choices (trade and investment liberalisation). However, globalisation is actually carried out by global firms through the global value chain.

Globalisation has brought about **three major changes**.

- (i) **North-South convergence**, with the rise of BRICs, is tilting the world economy balance towards Asia, with the geopolitical balance following suit. China will soon emerge as the leading economy in the world (2025) and it is building up a Blue Navy to protect its supply lines for when the race for energy and commodities gets tougher at world level. This means that China is going from a continental to a maritime global power. How will we manage this new and fairer, but more unstable, world? Through a balance of power, such like the one which eventually led to war breaking out in 1914 or through the rule of law like with the Bretton-Woods multilateral system in 1944 which has preserved peace between large nations for 75 years? Through negotiation or through confrontation? Are we ready to allow for the peaceful rise of China and to share resources and markets with the emerging South?
- (ii) **The relative decline of Western hegemony** and the loss of the rent attached to it (monopoly of manufacturing jobs and cheap prices in energy, commodities and food). This hegemonic rent was a key pillar

of the European social model. Today the labour market has become global through international trade and through relocalisation. In advanced countries, this represents an opportunity for high flying professionals, but a severe loss for unskilled workers who are exposed to cheap labour in emerging and poor countries. In these new global economic conditions, can we sustain the social model which has been the hallmark of Europe since ‘The Glorious Thirty’? Can we still contain and restrain rising inequalities between mobile capital and workers who are stuck in their own countries?

(iii) **The humbling of politics** stems from a loss of control of global market forces by local governments. MNCs allocate Foreign Direct Investment across the world, creating and off-shoring jobs, picking and choosing among national tax, social and environmental regimes. How do governments regain supremacy over the markets? How do they ensure a fair redistribution of income and wealth if they are stripped of their taxation powers by tax competition between countries and tax optimisation by the big businesses and the super rich? How do governments avoid being a tool of market forces for creating confrontation between trade and currency continental blocks?

2) **The second shock is the systemic crisis of Western market capitalism.**

(i) **The main origin of the crisis lies in the inexorable logic of profit and capital accumulation** which has led to:

- a. growing inequalities with a deflation bias since the poor spend and the rich save and sometimes export this capital surplus;
- b. hyperfinancialisation, with finance, innovative at the start, but eventually predatory and destabilising;
- c. huge debt overhang resulting from the combination of three factors:
 - excessive financial deregulation by governments
 - high risk behaviour by operators (Minsky moment)
 - lax monetary policy by central banks (first case of moral hazard: who wants to turn off the juke box as one is dancing on the stock exchange floor?).

The 2008 financial crisis left households and banks in overindebtedness and led to rising sovereign debt through the banking sector rescue (‘too big to fail’, second case of moral hazard) in 2008

and massive fiscal stimulus to prevent recession from turning into depression in 2008-2009.

This crisis has not yet ended: as mentioned by the Financial Times (18 July 2014), the Bank for International Settlements reminds us that total gross debt burden is still rising in the West. The third recession since 2008 could hit the Eurozone this year.

(ii) Why are we talking about a systemic crisis?

- a. Because the system is blocked: it cannot generate growth anymore its main legitimacy basis;
- b. Because financial solutions, for example bail outs of systemic banks, go against the fundamental principle of patrimonial responsibility of the shareholders in a capitalist system;
- c. Because without deep reforms (finance reregulation, debt mutualisation and restructuring, tax harmonisation on mobile factors, fiscal discipline, work sharing and reform of corporate governance through a better balance between shareholders and stakeholders) Western market capitalism will lose out to Asian state capitalism. In its desperate attempt to recoup its global competitiveness it might collide with society if a fair burden sharing does not take place, between social categories, on structural adjustment.

Can Member States simply recoup growth through engaging in a race for competitiveness by reducing wages and social transfers with an intergenerational bias against the younger generations? Can the Eurozone as it stands today, without a central budget for balancing ECB federal monetary policy, make a difference and pull Europe out of the near deflation zone? The answer is an emphatic no! The Eurozone finds itself under Germany's tutorship as it is the main creditor country, and Germany is leading the Eurozone down the path of deflation simply by imposing austerity on the other Member States whilst itself refusing domestic demand expansion.

3) The third shock is an ecological one.

The planet is exposed to a new Malthusian dilemma: demographic growth combined with North-South economic convergence on the one hand, and environmental constraints, such as climate change and natural resources, on the other. The destruction of the environment is already taking human

lives by the millions in the most exposed regions in the world, including in polluted capitals in China as well as in some Western countries.

An agreement is urgently required on issues relating to the climate, but the odds are against a fair and effective deal because:

- The US gives priority to the ‘American way of life’ and to its competitiveness (shale gas).
- China needs to catch up further (7000\$/head), and this means they need to burn more sulphur coal.
- The EU is ready for more ambitious CO₂ reductions than are set out in the 20-20-20 norms but cannot do it alone.

II. WHAT EXACTLY IS THE EU TODAY?

The EU provides the relevant dimension to tackle these three shocks. But does it have the political capacity to exploit this dimension? What exactly is the EU today?

For half a century, the EU has been a source of huge benefit for Europeans: free movement of people, goods and capital flows in a competitive and open market, a single currency for 18 States, a coordinated fight against pollution, major strides in equal pay between men and women, consumer protection and significant structural funds to speed up growth in new Member States who are emerging as fully fledged advanced economies and democracies.

Yet despite these major advances, the EU is today proving unable to cope with high unemployment and rising inequalities within its borders, and to protect Europeans against nationalist conflicts or terrorist threats on our doorstep in Ukraine and in the Middle East.

Europe is failing because it is ultimately both schizophrenic and hybrid.

1) Schizophrenic

Europe developed a split personality at the beginning of the Cold War, which was the defining circumstance of Europe’s original move towards integration.

The US took the lead in containing the Soviet Union and a division of labour was decided between NATO and the EEC.

NATO (1949) under US leadership would provide a strategic shield which gave birth to 'Atlanticism', an additional identity for Europeans blurring the European one. The EEC/EU would ensure economic integration in order to support reconstruction and growth thanks to a European common market. From its very beginning, European integration was intended to be an open-ended process based on the implicit expectation that someday all Member States would agree on a European social model and on the possibility of federalism in a not too distant future. This assumption was shared by De Gaulle's France and her neighbours, among them Germany who, at the time, was split and was a political dwarf. However, the EU today is very different from the dream of the founding fathers, including Jacques Delors who can be considered a second generation founding father.

De facto EU has simply become an economic space as it is entrusted with achieving growth, through an open and competitive market, whilst wealth and income redistribution are entrusted to Member States, hence a competition between the national social system and the national tax system.

Under Anglo-Saxon influence, epitomised by Thatcher and Reagan's commitment to supply-side economics, the EU set up in 1992, thanks to Jacques Delors' ambitious and determined action, a Single Market where both corporate firms and governments are in competition. Governments battle to attract foreign investment and to prevent the off-shoring of jobs through tax, social and innovation competition. Harmonisation of protection norms and standards is limited to environment, health and consumers; but the race to the bottom prevails for corporate tax or labour conditions.

The truth is that the EU has been surfing on market forces to progress towards unity. From the start, its only rationale has been economic even if the official rhetoric emphasises the quest for peace and the promotion of social Europe as true European priorities.

In Europe, education, culture and the welfare state remain Member State competences in the name of the subsidiarity principle. Not so long after its establishment, Europe is becoming primarily a business project, with little citizen involvement, and this despite European Parliament direct elections since 1979. The EU, which provides the relevant dimension for preserving the effectiveness of democracy in Europe, is placing itself out of the citizen's reach because it has, so far, failed to build up a true European demos.

2) Hybrid

The EU is both federal, with the ECB in charge of monetary policy for the Eurozone, and intergovernmental, with the European Council deciding major issues by consensus¹. The Eurozone, the hard core of the EU-28, mixes supranational power over currency, coordination of national fiscal policies, and de facto taxation autonomy (Irish protocol), that is to say federalism and intergovernmentalism.

European foreign policy truly is intergovernmental because there is no common '*weltanschauung*' (remnants of past geopolitical power among the ancient Big Three are outshined by Germany's mercantilism), no common defence, and because a consensus is needed to for common positions and actions, which amounts therefore to a right to veto for each single Member State.

The EU added a new dimension of complexity with the fall of the Soviet Union (Berlin November 1989) as enlargement eastwards was used as a strategic tool for stabilising Central and Eastern Europe, a fair and sensible move. However, it was not accompanied by a deepening of integration, a serious failure.

Two salient features shared by new Member States made further advances of integration more complicated. Firstly, mistrust of the, formerly Communist, state (swing of the pendulum) and neophyte enthusiasm for neoliberalism (markets know best and regulate themselves); secondly, allegiance to the US, their liberator from Soviet oppression.

Europe today is large, with c. 500 million people; heterogeneous, in terms of languages, level of development, and religious history; and divided among its Member States on issues such as a common social model, Eastern Borders (Ukraine and Turkey in or out), the form of its definitive institutions (federal or intergovernmental), and the degree of strategic autonomy vis-à-vis the USA.

As a result, the EU has become a multispeed one, with the Eurozone (18 Member States), the Schengen space and the EU-28 single market.

But the main lesson for this half century of integration is very clear: market is a unifying factor as long as growth is there; market is a divisive factor when growth comes to a halt.

¹ Although, the nomination of Jean-Claude Juncker as the new President of the European Commission was against the wishes of the United Kingdom and Hungary.

Therefore, for having substituted market as the driver of its unity, Europe is in need of an alternative unifying principle.

III. EU IN NEED AND IN QUEST OF A COMMONALITY OF DESTINY

What Europe needs is to build up, among its citizens and across its national borders, a clear perception of commonality of destiny and a political conscience of its own, different from an Atlantic sentiment and from national identities. The idea is to found a true European demos so as to make participatory democracy possible and effective at EU level. Such a European conscience should be a construction of reason, but should integrate a strong ethical dimension beyond the market rationale. Here, the Spirit is at work.

A sense of common destiny rests upon two pillars:

- **a development or societal model** supported by a common currency and a central budget aimed at achieving a balance between freedom and justice; a preference for equality among the people, which is, according to Tocqueville, the condition for an effective democracy; and ultimately environmental sustainability with respect to climate change.
- **an autonomous strategic capacity** which means Europe taking responsibility for its own security which is the price of freedom. This does not mean breaking up NATO, but reaching political parity with the USA within the Atlantic Alliance. Europe must be able to influence the USA as much as the USA influences Europe. Political parity would make both the EU and NATO more predictable.

1) The road towards a common destiny

The gap between the existing option and the desirable one is enormous nowadays.

On the one hand, the EU is a **loose political coalition** based on a single market and a single currency, which amounts to a single economic space for organising competition between companies and between governments. On the other hand, it could become a **fully fledged union** firmly anchored

on two pillars (a common development model and a common strategic capacity).

We have to take the very fact of EU self-inflicted paralysis, in the face of the creeping social crisis and the mounting violence at its doorstep, as a starting point of our reasoning.

The EU cannot provide the European people with either the economic security, in the face of global markets that dictate their rationale to governments, so as to resume growth and create jobs, with or without growth, through work sharing; or the strategic security, in the face of rising threats: either immediate such as barbarian Islamism and Israel's intransigence, Russian nationalism or an even more significant medium-term challenge such as the inextinguishable Chinese thirst for natural resources.

Two sets of options need to be considered with regard to the goal that must be reached and the path that must be followed.

The goal is about either aiming for an intergovernmental or a federal EU. This is not a question of degree but of nature of political integration: either the US of Europe, or the UN of Europe. In my view the former will work, the latter will not. The path is about Europe either proceeding in small steps using events and urgency as a lever for action, or crossing a threshold, in terms of sharing sovereignty and resource transfers, which calls for a vision of future Europe.

In making a choice between a hard and a soft scenario, one has to consider, firstly the circumstances and events, as these matter a lot, perhaps they even matter the most. A dwelling social crisis about rising external threats constitutes a good motive for moving forward; secondly, the existence or even the possibility of a European conscience transcending, not suppressing, national identities so as to build up a true European demos, the ultimate condition for democratic legitimacy. This is the only alternative to a Brussels technocracy caught in the strait jacket of economicism of the neoliberal sort.

A political identity cannot be decided by decree from the top down. It must emerge from the bottom up through education, debate, experimentation and participation in collective actions. There will always be national identities based on culture, memories and shared emotions. However, a European conscience is a matter of reason and of ethics. It is about a common project to carry out together. It must rest upon a perception of commonality of destiny: the idea that we are in the same

boat going in the same direction and that we are sharing the risks and the spoils of the journey.

Whether Europe develops a sense of common destiny is crucial in order to answer the following questions.

Is it reasonable today to envisage an ambitious goal for Europe in the present state of opinion since it would very likely be rejected in one country or another if it requires any change to the Lisbon Treaty?

Is there an alternative? For instance, proceeding step by step through practical achievements which would pave the way for a great leap forward later? This would not then be a jump into the unknown.

My answer is that we should do both.

We must identify the star above the horizon, so as to give Europeans a sense of direction: the common model without which there is no strong Eurozone Union, and the common defence without which there is no effective foreign policy

Meanwhile, we must also move ahead on a series of concrete advances which are steps forward:

- **EMU governance and debt:** partial mutualisation of debt
- **Automatic stabilisers:** connecting national unemployment benefit schemes
- **Banking Union:** carrying out the resolution mechanism and the deposit guarantee scheme
- **Financial regulation:** bringing finance further back into its riverbed
- **Taxation:** European corporate tax for the Eurozone
- **Investment:** massive effort on R-D innovation and networks through EU projects bonds
- **Energy and climate:** setting up a single market, and launching a common strategy for saving and diversifying energy sources, allowing for a global climate deal
- **Security and Defence:** heading for common procurements and better operational coordination
- **Enlargement and Neighbourhood:** freezing enlargement
- **Trade:** stopping TTIP/TAFTA and going for plurilateral liberalisation.

2) Revitalising democracy and society

Whatever the goal and whatever the path, we need to shift the main obstacles on our road and they are not external but internal.

First, is Europe today morally strong enough to gather the burst of energy needed for a great accomplishment? Second, how can we energise Europe? How can you energise Europe, because eventually the thinking and the education beyond the knowledge are central in shaping up a New European spirit? This is a task for headmasters.

Let's focus on democracy and on society which are irremediably interlocked.

(i) Democracy is deteriorating in the West, and particularly in Europe

- a. As a result of globalisation, politics has given up its grip on market forces. Globalisation has opened up a governance gap between markets and politics and hence between politicians and citizens. After the two dangerous and totalitarian political utopias of the XX Century, Communism and Fascism, our democracies have surreptitiously surrendered to 'efficient and self-regulated markets'. Let's call it the 'neoliberal utopia', which is very far from traditional economic and political liberalism.
- b. The social crisis is severely hampering trade union and social association bargaining power as well as their capacity to fight;
- c. Citizens are caught in the 'twin complexity trap' of:
 - multilevel institutions (Europe, states, regions) which pose problems of accountability and transparency
 - complexity of topics (finance, GMOs, nuclear energy, digital industry) which has led to experts dominating the fields and regulators finding themselves at the mercy of operators.
- d. Citizens are treated as consumers by the media and politicians. They lose faith in collective efforts just when these would provide the necessary countervailing force to contain the excesses of capitalism.
- e. As a result, European democracies look helpless in the face of the economic and social crisis inside Europe, and in the face of external threats. Since the Reagan and Thatcher years, social justice has ceased being the primary concern of the progressive forces. This therefore has aggravated the trend towards rising

inequalities. These progressive forces have replaced social justice with environment, which is indeed a crucial, if not vital issue for the planet and for us, but which cannot be pursued at the expense of justice. Intra-generational justice remains more important than inter-generational justice because future generations will enjoy the benefits of new technological and social innovations to cope with their own environment.

Our democracies have also focused on extending the field of individual liberties and rights, to the extreme limits, sometimes at the expense of the family, both traditional and step, and the person. All the new legislations on equality, which sometimes deny natural differences or exploit all the possibilities of technology without clear ethical borders, for example in the sensitive areas of gender, homosexuality and procreation or the issue of euthanasia, represent both an advance and a danger. We are walking on a razor edge. In particular the transhumanism trend is fraught with severe risks for the physical and moral integrity of individuals. My point is that our democracies focus on the societal demands because they have given up the fight for justice which has been deemed too difficult. Yet justice is the condition of liberty for the weak and for the poor. For Christians justice cannot be dissociated from love.

- f. European democracies are giving up the responsibility of their security and are entrusting it to the US who does not want it anymore and can no longer afford to exercise it. A continent like Europe, once unified, should take the responsibility of its own security. There is no strategic autonomy without a common defence.

European democracies are going through dangerous straits as they are insidiously sapped by scepticism and disenchantment which prevail among citizens. Politicians are perceived as managers or communicators, not as leaders, nor as shepherds. As the needs of the market take precedence over the needs of society, big business imposes its agenda. The fading away of ethical and political beacons has blurred the defining line between left and right with social liberals on one side and conservative libertarians on the other. No political narrative is shedding light on the road ahead: radical neo-liberalism and pragmatism are guiding the conduct of all governments, left and

right wing. An ideological vacuum is setting in in the wake of spiritual and ethical recess. Human rights and democracy are losing their sharpness and their strength; they are becoming the mantra of a lost faith. Our democracies are becoming vulnerable to populism and authoritarianism. True humanism is receding. The formidable social, political and cultural adjustment, called for by the triple shock of globalisation; market capitalism crisis; and ecology, is taking place without a red thread and under the pressure of events. We are a flock walking in the fog. We need a compass and a roadmap. But we need even more than that to develop an inner guide in Europe, a common ideal of justice and brotherhood transcending borders and aiming for universal humanism.

Democracy cannot just be “the worst form of government, except all the others that have been tried”, as according to Churchill’s famous but rather condescending statement. Democracy opens up a space for individual responsibility and engagement for every citizen. It therefore implies the active participation of all citizens, hence the importance of education, a critical mindset and moral principles. Democracy also needs to train and recruit true elites, with the necessary professional knowledge and with high and strong ethical and emotional standards. Speaking from an anthropological standpoint, a democracy is worth as much or as little as its elites are worth.

Jesuit schools have a responsibility to educate social elites so that the younger generation does not study to add new privileges to their present privileges, but to put their privileges at the service of the community. It is expected that political elites have ethics, emotional stability and spiritual strength so they can carry out an ambitious project for Europe. Europe also needs a lively and creative European intelligentsia.

The capacity to translate values into institutions, policies and practices is the sign of an effective democracy. European democracy is in crisis as a gap sets in between rhetoric and practice. The origins of this gap are to be found in a society in crisis.

(ii) Modern society is drifting away from Europe’s civilisation legacy

Modern society, shaped up by the twin forces of technology and capitalism, already identified as the main drivers of our modernity, is drifting away from Europe’s civilisation legacy

Our economies are producing and diffusing innovation at unprecedented speeds and depths. However, they are doing so more and more through market mechanisms (intellectual property rights and uneven access to the best colleges and universities) which make a knowledge economy prevail over a knowledge society. If they are left untamed, capitalism and technology will continue eroding the very values of European civilisation inherited from Christendom, from the Enlightenment and from the social struggles against Dickensian capitalism in the XIX and XX centuries.

What are those values? Human dignity, equality in dignity, liberty and justice and all these values have lead towards a collective preference for equality and a deep sense of collective solidarity in Europe. For a long time these were the hallmark of Europe in the world. Not anymore.

What sort of society therefore has been surfacing in Europe over the last few decades? What are the main moral and anthropological fault lines which undermine our ability to revitalise democracy in Europe?

Our European societies have achieved major progress towards human rights and liberties; equality between men and women which still remains a challenge; a general level of education; and services and care for people with disabilities. However, for all these advances, our societies are displaying serious symptoms of a general '*malaise dans la civilisation*'.

- Individualism without personalisation has given birth to an 'evil triangle' of narcissism, loneliness and fear.
- Relativism with indifference disguised as tolerance.
- Materialism fed by a loss of transcendence and of spiritual questioning.
- Geographical mobility and 24/7 online connection pushed to the point of neurotic behaviours (entertainment, over-information, workaholism).
- A return of soft nihilism: nothing really matters.

As a result our societies suffer from a propensity for depression, a very modern disease at the origin of most addictions.

The EU, as it was previously highlighted, is an economic and technocratic construction which is more connected with market forces than with social forces. It is driven by functionalist thinking and, for

that reason, has been very vulnerable to the neoliberal '*pensée unique*'. Europe today is separating from the European spirit made up of the ancient Greek wisdom, Judeo-Christian tradition, the '*raison critique*', inherited from the Enlightenment and the sense of collective action achieved by workers in the battle for their rights in the XIX and XX Centuries.

European society is therefore departing from the sources of modern humanism, both Christian and secular.

The consequence is a society marred by scepticism and low spiritual expectations, by a great political fatigue and deprived of long term project for Europe, with an attitude of spectator rather than actor on the international front.

How do you combat spiritual anaemia and ethics erosion in Europe? In our secular and pluralist societies, all philosophical and religious forces must be mobilised in the fight for a modern European humanism with a Universalist perspective. Christians, whose singular mission it is to be the salt of the earth, must take themselves to the front line. Here, the Ignatian spirituality is a powerful and modern weapon for engaging in reconciliation with God, with oneself and with others, within Europe and in the world. Reconciliation provides the inner strength to engage in that battle for man. The burst of energy needed to pull Europe out of its lethargy and paralysis lies within our souls. We just have to free it from surrounding and suffocating materialism and individualism. Then we will gather together the necessary wisdom and collective energy to engage in the task of building up a European conscience for the third Millennium.

What makes up a European conscience?

CONCLUSION

The European project must be reconciled with Europe's civilisation legacy. The European conscience will constitute the bridge between the legacy and the project.

The European ideal is the quintessence of a few principles that encapsulate the singularity of European integration seen from a humanist perspective.

- The last word should go back to politics with regard to market and technology forces. Europe is a political project, it is about the society, about man, about civilisation
- Reconciliation provides the breeding ground for a true and genuine peace. However, for Europe, peace does not stop at the border. Europe must rise up to the role of peace agent of the world and for the world, a peace built up on fair access to scarce resources, on the rule of law, and on cooperation between rich and poor nations within a multilateral world economic and political order.
- Openness is a necessity for Europe. Europeans, for geographical and historical reasons, must see immigration as a plus, and cosmopolitanism of society as a wealth drawn from exchanging differences.
- Europe also means solidarity and generosity: in Europe the strong should protect the weak, the rich should share with the poor
- Responsibility for climate issues and the environment calls for a new, more sober, way of life and therefore other incentives than wealth accumulation and consumerism for the younger generations.
- Europe should organise itself as a two-speed entity, with an advanced core, which we could rename ‘ European Community’, open to a wider European Union, so as to combine dynamism and inclusiveness for the whole continent.

The Universalist vocation of Europe is to serve as a pioneering continent for promoting humanism, democracy and justice in the world, and to set up the necessary multilateral institutions and disciplines to make humanity move forward on the road of peace, fair prosperity and spiritual progress.

Such a daunting task calls for moral inner strength. Ignatian spirituality is a unique source of inner strength because it finds hope in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. As headmasters and directors, you are among the architects of Europe’s Renaissance.