

Salvatore Mongiardo

THE COMPLEX NATURE OF VIOLENCE

English Translation from Italian by Elisa A.M. Covello

Project for the creation of a
WORLDWIDE ANTIVIOLENCE ACADEMY
For the study and prevention of human violence

Preamble

It is commonly said that: *violence has always existed and will always exist*. Or: *man is violent by nature and will never change*. Is this statement correct? Or is it simply the verification of violence spreading in the world? In short, can we get away from the violence? And how? And why am I pointing out this problem?

I am the author of three books: *Ritorno in Calabria (1994)* *Viaggio a Gerusalemme (2002)*, *Sesso e Paradiso (2006)*, of which Marina Palmieri wrote:

they are three uncomfortable books with a common denominator, the investigation into the roots of violence.

I will add that violence is the dominating theme in *Journey to Jerusalem (Viaggio a Gerusalemme)* which I recommend you read. It is a short book and is available free on-line in Italian and English. However, I do not claim that the themes contained in the book are the truth: facing such a big problem like violence, everything can be brought up again in discussion.

In any case, which violence are we talking about? There are nature's manifestations, like earthquakes and hurricanes, forces that are defined as *blind* because they are spread without care for living beings: we don't call that violence. There are carnivorous animals, including some fish that feed themselves from other animals: we do not call this violence either, even if it leads to the killing of a living being for food. But the lion, once full, does not take off for the hunt and the killing of every gazelle it comes across. Man, however, since the dawn of history until today, has killed an immense number of his own kind, that he doesn't not only eat, but often he honours with the burial. We want above all to deal with this violence, that we can call the big violence, the one of wars and massacres, to see if it is possible to deal with it. But, obviously there is also the violence that brings to the killing, the wounding, the mistreatment of a person by another person, that is the individual violence, both physical and moral.

As I have written in my books, I consider victory over violence as the goal for my life: this is because I have suffered a lot because of violence and therefore, I am trying to understand its deep roots in order to eradicate it. Saying that, I know that many people have suffered more than I have, and an almost infinite number have been killed. I think about the sea of blood of the victims, and the immense amount of suffering of billions of human beings that have lived in pain, unable to live with dignity. I feel the time to face violence with courage and intelligence has come. My courage can be seen as recklessness or irresponsibility, they are legitimate evaluations that I will not discuss. Intelligence no, if I can convince you that you can analyse, understand, face, and reduce in a considerable way human violence.

1. Violence and Philosophy

It is a topic that has not been developed much by philosophers, with the exception of Pythagoras, which will be discussed in Chapter 3. Perhaps the most incisive expression is that of Heraclitus, who said in one of his fragments:

...we need to put out violence rather than the fire.

Heraclitus, however, argues that war is the mother of all things: from order comes disorder, from disorder comes order. If this is the case, what order should come from violence, seen as disorder? However, there is a lack of convincing attempts to give a philosophical explanation to human violence. This lack could indicate that not even philosophers went beyond the common belief that violence has always existed and will always exist. Philosophers aside, not much is written about violence. There are some works written about individual violence, that is publications on psychiatry or criminology. It can be said that much more has been written at a scientific level about the moon and the stars than about violence.

But philosophy has had a lot of influence in generating political systems that used violence to establish their own political regimes designed by some philosophers. Pythagoras himself, who ruled Croton, was driven out by the revolt of the people of Croton and scolded for his position that led to the destruction of Sybaris by Croton.

In more recent times, the claim that Enlightenment Philosophy lit the fuse of the French Revolution is known, as is the claim that the German philosophers Hegel and Marx were the inspirers of the Nazi and Communist systems.

2. Violence and Religion

I am referring to the great historical religions: Hinduism and Buddhism, the Oriental block on one side, and the Middle Eastern block with Hebraism, Christianity and Islamism on the other side. We can leave out the religions from the past, with the exception of the Greeks and their gods of Olympus, which we will have the possibility to go back to.

Of all religions, it can be said that they tried to curb the violence, to tame or to channel it. It can also be said that the religions were not able to beat the violence or that they were accomplices. At this point, the conversation becomes delicate because the religions represent the deep nucleus of the culture of populations, the mirror of the soul, and therefore we risk to disturb the interlocutor by putting into discussion venerable and sacred principles, encoded in millenniums of lifestyle, art and tradition.

To face this topic with the right spirit, let me tell you what happened to me in May 2006 in Tunisia. I was among the ruins of Carthage, near Tunis, and I was visiting the tophet, the cemetery of children strewed with funerary stones. Behind each stele is a niche where at that time an earthenware pot, containing the bones of children buried alive, was placed. They were offered by their parents to the

Phoenician gods during an eclipse so that the sun would come back to light the earth. There are discussions about this ritual, but it remains true that the sacrifices of children burned alive was practiced in the Phoenician world. While visiting the tophet I remembered the solar eclipse I had observed quietly through smoked glass and, as a father, I could not believe that a parent could sacrifice his child. The only explanation that I could give myself was that fear had driven those parents to commit such an act against nature. Today we know how and when an eclipse occurs, we are no longer afraid that the sun will disappear forever, nobody prays or offers sacrifices.

Can we not then assume that an interpretative model, that is not adequately able to understand reality, generates anxiety that leads to violence? Then, most of the violence is based on ignorance, isn't it?

3. Violence and Nutrition

This argument is the most clearly dealt with in ancient times by Pythagoras. He stated that an animal was man's younger brother, and was to be protected. The philosopher refused to eat meat and fish; he stayed away from hunters and butchers and stated that no man was able to kill another man if he refused to kill an animal. The Pythagoreans dressed in white linen - the wool belonged to the sheep - and offered the gods flour and honey cakes in the shape of animals thus challenging the bloody sacrifice celebrated in Greece and the Magna Graecia. Pythagoras' reasoning was: if you kill an animal to feed yourself, a culture will emerge that would give back to humans the violence given to the animal. The offer of bread in the shape of an ox, which he made in Crotona to thank the gods after he discovered his famous theorem, was memorable: he refused to kill the ox that he had been given for sacrifice. For Pythagoras the need for food was not a valid reason and killing animals still had negative consequences. Today there is an awareness and a tendency for vegetarian food for reasons that are above all ethical. However, scientific research is still lacking the proof that killing animals leads to increased aggressiveness because of substances already present in the meat or generated by slaughtering.

Have enzyme, hormone and cortisone levels in live animals ever been measured? And have the same levels been measured after the animals have undergone the shock of being slaughtered? How do they change, if they change, the brain functions of the person that eats meat? And is it true, as some Pythagoreans have stated, that the longing to feed yourself with living beings triggers sexual desire? What are the substances in meat that generate an excessive sexual drive?

4. Violence and Guilt

It seems to me, that the sense of guilt, especially if it is for sins never committed, brings death along. Take for example the biblical story of Eve and the apple. Today there is no doubt that Eden was the Fertile Crescent where there were all species of

domesticated animals like ox, goat, sheep, horses and vegetation with fruit that the primitives harvested from plants. When Eden dried up because of a natural process of desertification, the phenomenon was interpreted as punishment for having picked the forbidden fruit. At that sense of guilt for an offence never committed, another guilt was added, that of sex. Indeed in the expulsion from Paradise narrated in the Bible, our progenitors saw themselves naked and felt ashamed. Consequently, the Middle East entered into history under the heavy burden of two serious senses of guilt. The suicide bombers of September 11th 2001, who died wearing many pairs of underwear, so as not to appear naked before Allah, are they not proof of the persistence of that ancient sense of guilt? And how can someone free himself from guilt, if he is in the guilt? Then an innocent person must die so that the culprit might be saved. Violence has become sacred, necessary for salvation, and it is much more difficult to recognise and eradicate it.

Didn't Jesus rebel against the sacred violence of the Temple of Jerusalem, which nevertheless has prevailed and has made Jesus look like a sacrificial victim for the salvation of the world? The sacrifice of the lamb, without a blemish, offered morning and evening in the Temple of Jerusalem, to what extent might it have influenced the Jewish culture, leading them to believe that to be a victim is a sign of divine predilection? Isn't Jesus himself invoked every day as the lamb of God who deliberately takes upon himself the sins of the world?

Could this ancient rite have contributed to make the Jews go to the slaughter like lambs during the Holocaust? Does the Bible not mention the words blood, sacrifice, and the victim about a thousand times?

Isaiah says (53, 7):

He was treated harshly, but endured it humbly; he never said a word. Like a lamb about to be slaughtered...

5. Violence and Definition

Behind every murderer there is a definition: define a man a *murderer or heretic* and you send him to the gallows or the stake. Define him the *enemy, counterrevolutionary, Jew*, and his fate is sealed. On the other hand, in an effort to understand reality, man comes up with many definitions that become dangerous when they claim to be immutable. One example known to all of us, is that of Galileo and the Inquisition. Catholic culture was entrenched around the Ptolemaic model of the cosmos and refused to look at the evidence.

Any definition both from truth of faith or dogmas, should not be available to give way to a new interpretation of reality as it happens for science?

It seems to me, that many definitions or doctrines remain imprinted in the depths of the soul without you even noticing. What Stalin said to Churchill about the massacres of white Russians he ordered, has always struck me: *It was horrible!* Stalin himself was obviously upset, but he did not stop the massacre.

Can it be assumed that the Stalinist massacres are ultimately due to the education that Stalin received in the Orthodox seminary in Tbilisi, that is the doctrine of Saint Paul according to which sacrifice and victims are required?

6. Violence and the Bible

When Luther started the reform, the pope was Leo X, the son of Lorenzo the Magnificent. At the moment of his election, Leone X said: *The Providence has given us the Papacy, let's enjoy it!* He was educated in Florence during the Renaissance, arisen from the rediscovery of ancient Greek Civilisation. Under his papacy the Vatican was filled with pagan statues and paintings which are among the greatest world masterpieces. Similarly, the great blooming of the Arabic culture was around 1100, when Islam came into contact with Greek philosophy and Avicenna and Averroes became its most renowned representatives.

Can we state that the Greek thought is indispensable to improve the pastoral culture of the Middle East? Is it also indispensable for all the other cultures in the world?

Going back to Luther, his faith was centred on Christ on the Cross, in other terms he was proposing again the doctrine of St. Paul for which salvation comes from the sacrifice of the cross. At first sight, one could state that Luther had taken the right revenge on the Pope, dedicated to pleasures and to the selling of indulgences. But you can also see Luther as a character that has brought back the story with the doctrine of sacrifice, which certainly Leo X did not do.

Furthermore Luther translated the Bible from Latin into German and so he probably put two very dangerous things together: the desire of sacrifice, typical of the biblical world, and the easiness of killing in the Germanic world, already known by the ancient Romans. The historian Tacitus wrote that the Roman soldiers remained disconcerted when they saw German mothers hurl their own sons against them.

In a few words, can one assume that Luther, without being conscious, had laid the groundwork to bring Nazi perpetrators and Jewish victims of the Holocaust together? Does the destruction of statues, bas-reliefs, paintings, altarpieces and crucifixes made by Protestants in Catholic churches, not constitute an announcement of the Holocaust with the elimination of all Jews depicted as Christ, Mary, the apostles, the patriarchs, prophets and so on?

7. Violence and Happiness

The aspiration of every man is towards what is believed to be the supreme good, happiness. The search for happiness, at least since literature has existed, is a theme around which the story of man has developed. Happiness is imagined as a state of bliss, well-being, health, successes: too many conditions to be satisfied all together.

Then, however there is death... not for nothing the Gods of Olympus were beautiful, free from moral coercion, young and immortal.

In the real world obtaining happiness is practically impossible, that's why we say that happy is only who is convinced of being happy.

Is it then correct to say that the tension towards happiness can generate violent behaviour when life gives unhappiness and therefore frustration and anger?

Would it not be more respondent to human conditions to admit that the goal of life is not happiness, but the experience of all human emotions, like pain, joy, hate, love, anguish and hope? And then, what would it be, if there is any, the aim of living all of these emotions? Maybe the creation of consciousness like history seems to indicate? Is then a statement by a politician like Gorbaciof legitimate where according to him the "final end" of man is to give consciousness to the universe?

8. Violence and Jesus

The evening of Holy Thursday- April 5th 2007, during the celebration at Saint John in Lateran, Pope Benedict XVI stated that Jesus could have celebrated Jewish Easter, his last supper, on the day fixed by the calendar of the Essenes, who were vegetarians. It's a hypothesis of some scholars which the Pope recognises as a *high level of probability*. The hypothesis is based on the Scrolls of the Dead Sea, the books of the Essenes found in the caves of Qumran in 1947. Not far from Qumran there are excavations where buildings from the Essenes community rise, that I visited in 1999. The Pope said textually:

... Jesus probably celebrated Easter with his disciples according to the Qumran calendar - that is at least one day before the Easter of the Temple - and he celebrated it without lamb, like the Qumran community, that didn't acknowledge the Temple of Erode and was waiting for a new temple.

The affiliation, familiarity or influence of the Essenes on Jesus is now accepted by all scholars. But one must wonder, who inspired the Essenes in their rigorous vegetarian practice and in their protest against the Temple and every type of bloody sacrifice. A source that no one can doubt, is the historian Josephus Flavius. He was a cultured Jewish man, from a noble family with relatives in the Sanhedrim, a man of arms who took part in the war against the Romans and predicted to Vespasian that he would become emperor. In the *Jewish Antiquities* (XV,371) he wrote of the Essenes textually:

It is about a group that follows a type of life that was taught to the Greek by Pythagoras.

Things being in this way, can one assume that the *cultural father* of Jesus was Pythagoras with the doctrine based on three principles: prohibition of bloody sacrifices, abstinence from sex and, above all, the communion of goods?

With regard to this, is not enlightening the fact that Jesus' first two disciples were Andreas and Philip who had Greek names? In fact they were Hellenizing, as were called the Jews sympathizers of the Greek culture arrived in Palestine with the invasion of Alexander the Great.

Wouldn't that Greek and Pythagorean aspiration of Jesus be reinforced by the fact that Saint Andreas chose Greece as the land of preaching? And wouldn't another confirmation come from Saint John the Evangelist that in Patmos, in Greece, wrote the Apocalypse which ends with the vision of a heavenly Jerusalem, in which...

*...there isn't a temple anymore and the lamb is adored on God's throne?
(Apocalypse, 21 & 22 and following).*

Christ returns from Crotona, one should say paraphrasing the famous novel by Carlo Levi, Christ stopped at Eboli.

9. Violence and Sex

It is the topic that has been written about the most, above all thanks to Freud, who was a doctor, Jewish, Austrian and undoubtedly had an immense culture. His contemporary Hitler was not at the same cultural level as Freud and suffered from serious sexual problems which seemed to be manifested in his need to be treated badly by women. His first fiancé, his niece Geli, committed suicide, and Eva Braun attempted suicide twice. Freud died in England where he took shelter because of the racial laws issued by Hitler. In his attempt to decipher the sexual impulses, Freud had to go back to Greek culture to describe the most important phenomenon: Oedipus complex, Eros and Thanatos, Narcissism etc. In fact ancient Greek culture had accepted those phenomena which were scandalous for European Christian culture.

One question that can be asked is: How and when do sexual desires create an underground basin of sexuality that make it easy, and maybe even hopeful, to go to war and even die for, just to end the desires that don't find an outlet?

How can we otherwise explain all young people running away from home for volunteers to go to the front? We say "Make love, not war". Is it verifiable that free sexual practice dissuades from the war and from the desire of death? Or on the contrary, was Freud right when he stated that every living thing is searching for peace, that is to say death? Freud then states that man's first pleasure is killing: therefore, how can we oppose violence, if killing is the most important of the pleasures and even surpasses the sexual pleasure that Freud himself had defined as the maximum of all pleasures?

Still, Hitler and Goebbels in the bunker of the Chancellery in Berlin, before committing suicide, carried out the homicide of their wives, and Goebbels of his six children as well. And didn't the Jews in Masada do the same thing, cutting their throats in turn? Could the fear of falling into the hands of the Roman enemy, which certainly would have saved women and children while making them slaves, have masked in both cases the desire to die and the pleasure of killing?

10. Violence and Erotic Surplus

I've read about an astronomic number of daily visits to porn sites in every part of the world, including Arabian countries: it is a totally new fact in the course of history. It seems that all the continents and every social class has been overwhelmed by this unstoppable desire for sex. Reflecting on this phenomenon it's easy to observe that sex unites us, and religion divides us. No one standing in front of a beautiful girl, poses the problem if she is of one religion or another. It would be different if an Israeli young man and an Arab girl wanted to tie the knot. Irate prohibitions would arise from the religious authority that would make the union impossible.

Does this world wide fair of pornography bring people close in a positive way, or encourage paedophile behaviour, prostitution, human trafficking and sexual tourism? Or even change the sexual practices of a couple making them more uninhibited, but even more perverse and violent? Today the religious sublimation of sex is scarcely practised. Which purpose or alternative means can be devised to limit the increase in sexual crimes?

On the other hand, now, it isn't possible to think that the only function sex has is to procreate, we are six billion inhabitants and the average life span is longer. However, sex is a great dispenser of emotions, and therefore pushes towards the knowledge of the body, of the soul, of the person and of the world. Is the argument put forward in my book *Sex and Paradise* correct? I wrote that...

... Sex is an invincible force, which is necessary to uncover the mystery of the Existing and turn it into God. Sex is nothing else but the door of immortality.

11. Violence and Theology

The number of people that have been killed in the name of God is uncountable: if you don't adore our God, you must die; if you adore idols, you will be killed, if you don't recognise Mohammed as a prophet... To me it seems evident that we aren't talking about God, but about a concept of God that varies according to historical cultures. So, we come back to the problem of the definition, not the reality of God, that by general admission remains mysterious and inaccessible. So, therefore can we say that those killed in the name of God died for a definition? And can we find a new definition of God that surpasses all of the previous definitions?

The basic problem of God, from my point of view, is in the concept of creation: the Middle Eastern cultures, but also Greek culture, see the world as a product of divine creation. Buddha doesn't pose the problem of God because, if we assume that God was not created by someone, the problem remains unresolved.

Let's try to imagine a different solution. Instead of God, let's speak about Existing: whereas existing has always existed and will exist forever. Existing embraces everything and by nature is mysterious, but destined to know himself. The moon is round, but it doesn't know that: man knows that. Human flesh is the necessary step between mysterious Existing and known Existing, which we can safely call God, who would then be the son, not the father to the man.

Could this new definition be the meeting ground and surpass historical religions? If we hypothesise that every person flows into God as knowledge, wouldn't it lower the level of clashes among religions?

12. Violence and Desires

The visit to Lumbini, the birth city of Buddha in Nepal, wasn't planned as part of the trip I went on at the end of 2001. A rare fog in Benares, where we were heading to, prohibited landing from Kathmandu. We had to take a bus to reach Benares, that passed through Lumbini, that I really wanted to see. In Lumbini I felt even more strongly within me the strength that I felt in Crotona when I was visiting the school of Pythagoras and in Jerusalem visiting the Holy Sepulchre. It was like a powerful energy that came from distant worlds and said: "Go on, go on!"

Buddha taught us that life is pain, that pain starts from desire, that the detachment from desire is necessary to reach a state of peace, the nirvana.

But if we follow my hypothesis of the Existing, first mysterious, then known, we see that the desire could have the task of unhinging the mystery obliging us to go towards the reality of things. Why did the armies of Alexander and Cesar move, the caravels of Colombo, the expeditions on the moon if it wasn't to give us knowledge? History has shown us that desires, even those that seem impossible, have been carried out. An example for everyone is flight, it was claimed to be impossible for thousands of years, and Icarus was the mythical hero. But also the victory over many diseases, the exploration of the cosmos and so on were made true.

One could then say that, at the base of many of man's problems, is a lack or little audacity in the desire, that is we don't desire enough and with strength. The miracles carried out by saints of the various faiths and the goodness received from the sky, what else could they be except a strong desire that was realised? And aren't prayers the strengthening of a desire?

13. Violence and the Reverse Vision

We have spoken about violence in a field limited to the Western world. Obviously violence involves the whole world, but I've restricted the discussion because I don't have enough knowledge of the various cultures in the world to be able to formulate a hypothesis that makes any good sense.

However, it seems to me that I am able to enunciate a principal that I will call the "reverse vision": what yesterday seemed to be an indisputable truth, today seems to be a deception; what seemed to be a hazard, a new border of knowledge. The history of Galileo is illuminating because it affirms that what is true, is the opposite to what we believed: it isn't the sun, but the earth that turns. Following this track, we shouldn't say that life is a mystery, but it is in life that the mystery reveals. That the cruel sacrifice doesn't cancel the sin, but is the sin itself! The Bible isn't the book of salvation, but the guide of death, seeing the terrible fate reserved for the Jews in all times.

This "reverse vision" can only be practised with free thought. When Athens counted 30,000 inhabitants, at the time of Plato and Aristotle, there were about 20 philosophy schools, almost always in disagreement with each other. And still, it was the age of its maximum splendour, exactly because the thought enjoyed its great freedom.

14. Violence and Fires

In the summer of 2007, the world assisted the flaring up of the fires, obviously voluntary, in Greece and in the Magna Graecia: from Peloponnesus to Puglia, Campania, Calabria and Sicily. It makes me think that a thread united those fires: the abandonment of the gods of Olympus. During those fires, in Calabria we held the *syssitia* bringing bread in the shape of ox as Pythagoras did. The *syssitia* or common banquet, was the foundational act of Italy carried out by the first king Italus. Calabria reacts to its decay with the biggest dream in humanity: the end of violence (see my book, *Return to Calabria* available on line).

The murder of 6 people in Duisburg attracted the attention to San Luca, where we held the *syssitia* in 2001. That day, we placed the basket of food on an ancient altar of marble where we saw the Pythagorean five point star engraved, which would later become the symbol of communism and terrorism. Iamblichus in his *Life of Pythagoras*, speaks about some Pythagorean that took refuge in those parts and lived a solitary life...

15. Violence and Death

Someone has claimed that violence, above all big violence, is ineradicable, because it would be a means of removing the fear of death. It is obvious that death

represents man's greatest anxiety. How did we free ourselves from fear of the eclipse, is it possible to free ourselves from the fear of death by understanding the mechanisms that today escape us? What do the neuroscientists and neurobiologists have to say today about death? Moreover, how do we explain that in the Middle East, life and reincarnation are seen as punishment while the opposite happens in the Western world, where we always hope for heaven, in eternal life, in the God of life? What does this cultural contrast hide?

And what did Heraclitus mean when he stated that, if man could imagine how much beauty was waiting for us there after death, we would be greatly amazed?

16. Violence and Antiviolence

I prefer the term antiviolence to nonviolence. The latter, hides, in my point of view, a dark desire of death, evident in two of the greatest exponents of this, Jesus and Ghandi. Jesus speaks in the Gospels about giving life, for others more than once. Ghandi repeats exactly the same thing when he writes about wanting to pursue an ideal until life is given. One could say, without disrespect, that their deep desire has been heard.

Mathematics says that inverting the order of factors, doesn't change the result. The violence suffered, always remains violence: then is accepting martyrdom like accepting the evil? The concept of antiviolence states that violence cannot be given, but not even accepted.

On the contrary, antiviolence means understanding violence in its most hidden plots and fighting it with determination and intelligence, to the limit, even with the rational use of the violence itself. It seems to be a paradox, but I would like to explain with an example. If a huge fire advances quickly in the prairie, the only way to save ourselves is to light a counter-fire where we are, in such a way that, when the huge fire arrives, you can repair the already burnt part. In other words, nonviolence means to suffer, antiviolence means to refuse and fight.

17. Violence and Economy

The economy has always played a determining role from when primitive man had to obtain food, first as a gatherer, then as a hunter and finally as a farmer. The world today, essentially a producer of goods and services, has changed a lot since then, but the economic necessity to obtain the means to live is always the first problem of every individual, except for rare occasions.

Violence maybe connected to the economy more than it seems at first sight. First of all, violence, like in wars, destroys economic resources that should have had an alternative use. The economic cost of all the wars is simply incalculable. Then, there is the violence born from a claim of political regimes to make the economy work better, like the Marxism-Leninism, with deluding results. And still violence

from wars to take over rich territories that are full of resources, for example the conquering of America by the Europeans.

What could be the correction to the current economic systems to reduce the level of violence? For example, the abolition of the sovereign rights of States over the underground resources such as oil? Today there are the unsolved problems of environmental attacks, high energy consumption and global warming. Could one conceive a more sober social structure, a lifestyle like university campuses, where one could live, work and learn throughout life, eliminating retirement and the abandonment of work?

Moreover, the anxiety generated by the spectacle of violence, coupled with the difficulty of making enough money to live, couldn't this be the cause of the spreading of the drug at unthinkable levels?

18. Violence and Human Nature

Let's go back to the problem of the nature of man, that we started this speech with. Also in this case it seems that we can say it has to do with a problem created by the definition: nature would always be the same, practically unchangeable. It is obvious that the lion from one hundred thousand years ago, hasn't changed substantially. Instead, man has almost changed completely due to the acquisition of knowledge. A long journey, that he has carried out in every corner of the world, causing him to create languages, like poetry, music, paintings, philosophy. But it also brought him to the cosmos and has induced him to question the ultimate reason for things.

One can safely say, that inside the body of a man from one hundred thousand years ago, and in the body of man today, there are two different natures. From primitive animal, man hasn't had another choice, but to go towards knowledge, and all of the resistance opposed to this goal has caused damage and casualties. What will human nature be in the future? It seems that Pico della Mirandola (1463-1494), was right when he wrote:

Other beings are by nature closed and defined within terms and laws... you (man), not confined to narrow limits, will determine your nature only by your free will. You could degenerate into lower beings, the brute, or you can regenerate to superior beings, the divine, at your sole discretion... (Pico, De Hominis dignitate preamb. 18-20).

At the end, the change in nature will depend on choice: can we have better nature if we want one? Is it enough to wish for it and carry out actions in harmony with that wish?

Exhortation

These pages seem to be the cross-section of a struggle between the Middle East, on one side, and Greece on the other. And they are, in part, for the classical culture with which I have been trained. But I am completely aware that the violence has many aspects that haven't been considered here. For this reason I make the proposal to create a:

ANTIVIOLENCE WORLD ACADEMY

For the study and prevention
of human violence

An Academy which gathers the best minds from all corners of the Earth and involves the most outstanding scholars in the various fields of psychology, psychiatry, anthropology, biochemistry, neurology, sociology, ethnology, philosophy, law, history, physics, mathematics, statistics, etc...

Let's try to think about cancer: it is widespread, but endless research and efforts are made to beat it, and often it is possible. Violence is an ancient evil that has proliferated in all forms of culture, religious, social, family, manufacturing, military, behavioural, sexual. The list is endless. Today we have the opportunity to study everything from butterfly wings to galaxies. Yet there is not a global hub, a global university that is dedicated solely to the study and coordination of studies on violence. Without shame and without prejudice, in that centre we will discover the alliances with which violence exercises its domain with unbearable human and economic costs.

I put this message in a bottle and entrust it to the sea of life. Someone will pick it up on a beach.

Europe has lived for thousands of years in war, but over the last sixty years has lived in peace: why did it happen? Is this not a clear example that things can change?

What a wonderful world could arise if the UN, U.S., EUROPEAN UNION, CHINA, RUSSIA AND CHURCHES of the various religions would participate in such an ambitious project! But above all, if every person looks in a new way at the problem of problems, violence!

I end with a statement which may be considered utopian, but I feel deeply my own:

One day the violence will end! For that day I want to live, that day I greet from now.