

National identity and global culture

Michael Marsonet, Prof.
University of Genoa

Abstract

It is often said today that the agreement on the possibility of greater mutual understanding among human beings has failed. Would have led to the resurgence of long-suppressed hatreds, hatreds that have their source in the differences linked to national identities, ethnic and religious. We would be short before the end of universalistic concepts that have permeated the last centuries. In addition, the skepticism resulting from the growing success of postmodern ideas on the philosophical and political.

In fact, if we look at history, the decline of universalistic concepts is not specific to our age. The reassertion of national identities, ethnic and religious is a recurrent phenomenon, which occurs every time some supranational empire, more or less tyrannical, collapses. Neither seems safe to regard the resurgence of identity as a sign of abandonment of cosmopolitanism. Such events have happened in cyclic rhythm in the past and should not cause us to be pessimistic about a renewed success in the future of ideals that point to unite rather than divide, to enhance the factors that unite us as human beings rather than to emphasize the elements that separate us from each other.

The loss of confidence in the sophistication, the current decline of universalist ideas are not phenomena whose origin can be traced to intellectual circles. They reflect, rather, the widespread perception that the future can not be better.

The problem, in short, is not to fight the global society, but to create a just global society. The term "globalization" in recent years has been loaded with negative meanings, has become a sort of fetish which gathers into one the world's ills. All this is symptomatic of much confusion. You do not ever stress enough the positive aspects of globalization properly understood.

Globalization means not necessarily homogenizing force. Globalize not necessarily equivalent to eliminate differences and identities. On the contrary. It may mean, however, give rise to a global society where respect for differences and identity becomes a matter of course.

It is often said today that the agreement on the possibility of greater mutual understanding among human beings has failed. Would have led to the resurgence of long-suppressed hatreds, hatreds that have their source in the differences linked to national identities, ethnic and religious. We would be short before the end of universalistic concepts that have permeated the last centuries. In addition, the

skepticism resulting from the growing success of postmodern ideas on the philosophical and political.

National identity and global culture

In fact, if we look at history, the decline of universalistic concepts is not specific to our age. The reassertion of national identities, ethnic and religious is a recurrent phenomenon, which occurs every time some supranational empire, more or less tyrannical, collapses. Neither seems safe to regard the resurgence of identity as a sign of abandonment of cosmopolitanism. Such events have happened in cyclic rhythm in the past and should not cause us to be pessimistic about a renewed success in the future of ideals that point to unite rather than divide, to enhance the factors that unite us as human beings rather than to emphasize the elements that separate us from each other.

The loss of confidence in the sophistication, the current decline of universalist ideas are not phenomena whose origin can be traced to intellectual circles. They reflect, rather, the widespread perception that the future can not be better. It is not so common today to find someone who really believes in the possibility of creating a more just society. I speak of the hope that an end to inequality between the opportunities that can benefit people of different nations, and even within a single nation.

However intellectuals play a significant role in changing cultural paradigms. Certainly are historic changes to trigger the shift of intellectual interests, and cosmopolitanism is strong when the historical conditions allow dissemination and expansion. But the intellectuals and philosophers in particular, not only record what is happening around them, as all being influenced by the climate of hope or pessimism breathing. Manufacturers are theories, which often anticipates the course of events.

It should be noted that when, for example, think of a classless society seemed to many normal interest in the survival of identity seemed a minor problem. It was certainly not just respect for specific national, ethnic and religious. We thought, rather, that the spread of a worldview and a global culture and would bring many benefits from these sideline interest in the survival of identity. Who cares, after all, the defense of its specificity, whether the target is a supranational society where there is truly equal opportunities? The aspiration is the basis of universal hope that the future is continually improving.

It is a fact that universalism and cosmopolitanism are embodied in two different ideologies. On the one hand the traditional Marxist theory of world society without distinction of class or race, the result of a revolution followed by the abolition of private property

Other perhaps less a worldview developed by the theoretical point of view, but equally influential. It was widely believed in the West after 1945 that peace just obtained, together with scientific development, have made possible a previously unimaginable economic prosperity within the framework of the free market. The “dream”, so if we want to call it, was that economic prosperity would in turn triggered a global process of political renewal, making the end the liberal order is extended to the whole world. Without coercion, but under the sheer force of persuasion, generated by the practical success. Many politicians signed the UN Charter clearly had in mind this scenario veined of utopia. Nothing violent revolution, no abolition of private property, trust in the goodness of his ideas.

And even science has become the bearer of such values. There is a physics, a biology or sociology European or American, but a physics, a biology and sociology tout court. Science, in other words, is a powerful tool for overcoming political barriers, linguistic or racial hatred. It is cosmopolitan culture par excellence is no accident, and she always had problems with totalitarian regimes, of whatever color they were. Science is constantly trying to know the world objectively, and that has nothing to do with political differences, ethnic or religious. Einstein, Bohr and others hope in the advent of a sort of international order intellectuals “to prevent the misuse of nuclear energy and ensure world peace.

And even science has become the bearer of such values. There is a physics, a biology or sociology European or American, but a physics, a biology and sociology tout court. Science, in other words, is a powerful tool for overcoming political barriers, linguistic or racial hatred. It is cosmopolitan culture par excellence is no accident, and she always had problems with totalitarian regimes, of whatever color they were. Science is constantly trying to know the world objectively, and that has nothing to do with political differences, ethnic or religious. The scene today is very different. The Marxist experiment aimed at finding a satisfactory substitute for the market economy has failed. However, the utopia of the free market as a panacea for all social ills has not met better fate. This is because between economic development and equality of opportunity does not exist a mechanical connection and necessary. And even science is saved, since now it insists on its negative aspects.

Therefore, the loss of confidence in all forms of egalitarian utopia to make many look worried in the process of globalization. This is a concern for practical reasons and practical rather than political and philosophical theories.

In reality must overthrow the conceptual framework which has hitherto been mainly used, what he sees the consequences of policy choices such calculations are purely theoretical. The major policy decisions are made not based on specific theories, but looking at the actual course of historical development that unfolds before our eyes. It

is a sequence of events that only in retrospect we can classify and to include in a frame accurate. Political philosophy and the various types of social theory does not play, in this case, a mere role of systematization.

In fact, the philosophy is useful because it provides redescriptions social phenomena if you know what are the goals and where you want to reach. In turn, these redescriptions, initially formulated in a jargon incomprehensible to the layman, may become owner of all when they are translated into everyday language. Only then will operate a trailblazer for social change.

Today we live in a period that sees a lessening of hope and uncertainty about what lies ahead. Some words, then, on globalization. We find no trace of this word - or concept, if you prefer - both in Marxist liberal. The overarching concern for relations between rich and poor, in the writings of Marx, goes beyond any national boundaries or racial barrier. In the democratic context, the key question becomes one of greater social equality, at the same time not discourage entrepreneurship.

The true meaning of globalization is that the economic situation of citizens of a nation-state now escapes the control of the laws of that particular state. Before the national laws regulating, even for social purposes, movements of money within the boundaries. Now is not the case. The absence of a world government that involves the interests of all can not be protected. Interestingly, then, whether intellectuals bearers of a "global culture" may have a role, and if so which, in fighting a similar situation.

The role of the intellectual is of great significance. The intellectual is - as before they were called - a builder of theories, but should never forget the concrete conditions in which it operates. Must draw attention to the need for a comprehensive policy, which might offset the privileges of the oligarchy. The problem, in short, is not to fight the global society, but to create a just global society. The term "globalization" in recent years has been loaded with negative meanings, has become a sort of fetish which gathers into one the world's ills. All this is symptomatic of much confusion. You do not ever stress enough the positive aspects of globalization properly understood. Globalization means not necessarily homogenizing force. Globalize not necessarily equivalent to eliminate differences and identities. On the contrary. It may mean, however, give rise to a global society where respect for differences and identity becomes a matter of course.

I am convinced that, although on a smaller scale, the process of European unity is precisely an example of globalization "virtuous". Who can seriously claim today that within the EU there is little respect for national identities Italian, Dutch or Polish? Who can seriously claim that the Union respects the differences between Spanish, German or Irish? I think anyone, at least if it is in good faith.

Of course we all know that the problems get more complicated when we move from Europe to the world. But this should not lead us to abandon the hope that in a future that is now impossible to trace the outline, the same can happen on a planetary scale.

And it is there that intellectuals play a key role. When he speaks, for example, religious fundamentalism, often forget that in countries where that kind of fundamentalism is strong, there are groups intellettali fighting, risking their life, against any kind of closure. These intellectuals do not understand why religious differences should lead to the abuse of others. We must be grateful to them because their example reminds us that hope can survive in less favorable environments.

We really need to abandon the preservation of identities and differences if we move towards a policy and a global culture? Many believe so, and assume that globalization involves the cancellation of any specificity. Not so. The protection of identities and differences do not need a special kind of politics if we move towards globalization understood in the correct direction. In a global identities are jealously preserved because it enriches the overall picture.

The misunderstanding is to consider globalization as a process of forced homogenization of differences. It should not be seen in the negative, but as a pluralistic project as maximizing the opportunities that give room for variation, individual and group. It is in other words a homogenization that seeks to encourage an agreement between different groups, to cooperate together to create common institutions to ensure the widest possible space for pluralism.

Again, the EU is to provide an example of a similar organization, although still under construction. In this context, the political groups that defend identities and differences does not differ significantly from the traditional interest groups. This is a legitimate and perfectly normal procedure in the history of parliamentary democracies.

Accept the policy of the largest possible space for the change becomes easier when we admit that there is no source of authority outside of free agreement between groups. And the project of a global culture certainly should not be abandoned. This, I believe, the task managers that intellectuals should aim for the foreseeable future.