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Learning to live together

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Presentation

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Presentation

The primary condition for peace

Imma Tubella

I don't know if anyone has ever wondered if there is some kind of hidden meaning in the decision to invite one person or another to participate in the opening ceremonies of universities. Truthfully, I don't know. I can only talk about what happened in my university. For me, the personality, thoughts and actions of professor Cherif, which are summed up by his activism and determination to ensure that Mediterranean cultures think together and talk to each other, are a clear metaphor of the path that we would like the UOC to take: dialogue, tolerance, openness to the world and a reflection of diversity in its widest sense; all of this, as in the case of professor Cherif, to be accompanied by a strong dose of human warmth, strength, commitment and enthusiasm.

We know who we are; we know where we are going. This is why we can be open to the world and offer platforms of cooperation and dialogue without losing our identity or straying from the path which has been assigned to us: offering high quality teaching working closely with the student and taking into consideration the social and cultural needs of our country.

In his speech Cherif quotes Llull, who tried to understand Islam but did not manage to do so completely; despite this he admires his attempts at dialogue at a time when differences were resolved with swords. Our hope is that in today's world understanding between peoples can be based on knowledge and dialogue, and on learning to live together.

The inspiration behind the open and tolerant Islam of Cherif and his efforts to clear up misunderstandings and avoid humiliation are the tolerant and creative Andalusia of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, where the great theologians of the three monotheistic religions were able to talk to each other and live together in liberty, and the thinking and dialogue-based work of Llull. He attempts to offer a different viewpoint on certain peoples who are today very often associated with immigration, that is, peoples who have been uprooted from their past, from

their history and from their dignity, underdeveloped peoples who are greatly exposed to racism, who Jacques Berque, translator of the Koran and lecturer at the Collège de France, called correctly "under-analysed and under-loved" (*sous-aimés*); under-analysed and under-loved by the media as creators of consensus and by the Eurocentrism of many, too many, "intellectuals" and opinion makers.

We are always surprised to recognise or discover something of ourselves in peoples who up until a particular moment were foreign to us. When I read the efforts to articulate what is personal and what is collective in Cherif's work I cannot forget that it may be that we, as Catalans, have felt colonized and that we also must rediscover our freedom and reconstruct and redefine our identity.

Modernity within authenticity, said Averroes; modernity and tradition, says Cherif: both concerned with the dialectic between being and becoming. Cherif tells us that the future of our peoples depends on the validity of the meaning granted to the relationship with the "different other".

And in regards to this "different other" it is fundamental to learn to live together, because, as stated by Joan Lluís Vives, who is also quoted by our speaker, in his magnificent work *On the Concord and Discord of Mankind*, the primary condition for peace is the desire to achieve it.

And as our speaker has quoted Llull and Vives, a detail I would particularly like to thank him for, I would like to finish with a sura from the Koran which I believe in one way or another gives us a clue to living together: "We have made you tribes and families that you may know each other" Koran, XLIX. 13

Imma Tubella
Rector of the UOC

article

Inaugural lecture of the UOC 2006–2007 academic year

Learning to live together

Mustapha Cherif

Abstract

The new world order is an unpredictable path creating intolerance, injustice and unhappiness. This situation must be remedied by means of three different perspectives: logic, justice and meaning. It is necessary to open up to other peoples, creating relationships that overcome differences, containing common universal values in which these three dimensions are taken into account. The truth does not lie in one people or another, but rather in the relationship between them. Logic and meaning, reason and religion, are not opposites, but should instead complement each other, although without confusing one with the other.

According to the author, there are three aspects of globalisation that are of particular concern due to the destabilisation that they involve in international terms. The first is that globalisation is associated not only with the secularisation of peoples, but also with their despiritualisation and loss of values. The second destabilising aspect is the depoliticisation of society, as we increasingly govern ourselves less in terms of peoples and the individuals who comprise them, and more according to the systems which govern flows of capital. The marginalisation of the opportunity to think – to think differently –, the absence of interculturalism and interdisciplinarity, and the decline in the human and social sciences are the third disturbing aspect of the present world order.

In this context, sensitive, thoughtful and reasonable individuals and peoples must not yield to the international lack of direction and disorder, as nothing less than the future of the world is at stake. In this regard, the Mediterranean peoples have a major role to play in the creation of a new world in which peoples open up to each other and establish harmonious relationships from the point of view of logic, justice and meaning.

Keywords

justice, meaning, dialogue, standardisation, modernity, values, interculturalism

Resum

El nou ordre mundial porta un camí erràtic que genera intolerància, injustícia i infelicitat. Aquesta situació s'ha de corregir des de tres dimensions diferents: la lògica, la justícia i el sentit. Cal obrir-se als altres pobles creant-hi relacions que superin les diferències i assolixin uns valors universals comuns en què aquestes tres dimensions siguin tingudes en compte. La veritat no rau en un poble o en un altre, sinó en la relació que s'estableix entre ells. La lògica i el sentit, la raó i la religió, no són oposats, sinó que s'han de complementar, encara que sense confondre una cosa amb l'altra.

Segons l'autor, hi ha tres aspectes de la globalització que són especialment preocupants per la desestabilització que comporten a escala mundial. El primer és que la globalització va associada no tan sols a la secularització dels pobles, sinó també a la seva desespiritualització i pèrdua de valors. El segon aspecte desestabilitzador és la despolítització de la societat, ja que cada vegada ens regim menys d'acord amb els pobles i els individus que la formen i més segons els sistemes que governen els fluxos de capital. L'obstrucció de la possibilitat de pensar, i de pensar d'una altra manera, l'absència d'interculturalitat i d'interdisciplinarietat, la desvitalització de les ciències humanes i socials són el tercer aspecte perturbador de l'ordre mundial actual.

En aquest context, les persones i els pobles sensibles, reflexius i raonables no poden cedir davant la deriva i el desordre mundial, ja que el que està en joc és ni més ni menys que el futur del món. En aquest sentit, els pobles mediterranis tenen un gran paper a fer en la creació d'aquest nou món en què uns pobles s'obren als altres i estableixen relacions harmòniques des del punt de vista de la lògica, la justícia i el sentit.

Paraules clau

justícia, sentit, diàleg, uniformització, modernitat, valors, interculturalitat

All the peoples of the world aspire to justice, progress and peace. Nevertheless, the road to reach this destination is long and difficult. It seems that the whole world is currently undergoing a serious crisis with regards to moral references, values and the law. The state of mind of the human race is symbolised by the failed aspirations of the achievements of progress and modernity. Certainly major advances have been achieved in several areas; mainly in the scientific, technical and social fields. However, the world is still dominated by inequalities, by divisions, by intolerance and by the concept of the survival of the fittest. There are ever fewer happy people and ever more people who are suffering and feel vulnerable and lost. There are three basic dimensions to the foundations of happiness, or simply progress: logic, justice and meaning. Whilst for the first point – logic – great advances have been made that have allowed the human condition to improve, through research on life, exact and technological sciences, for the other two points – justice and meaning – there are still major inadequacies and contradictions. Modern knowledge still has a lot of work to do. Therefore, we must be modest and humble, and not believe that we alone have the keys to progress. The state of the world contradicts our claims to this effect. As José Ortega y Gasset says: “man is failing today because he cannot keep up with the progress of his own civilisation”, so we need partnerships and exchanges.

The attention of intellectuals has been engaged: what values, moral benchmarks and meaning should we give to life? How can we find a valid vision of society where logic, justice and meaning are consistent and meet the aspirations of the people? How can we learn to live together in a balanced way, whilst respecting our differences? When the world of today is characterised by a loss of meaning, by injustice, by senseless violence, by complexity, contradictions and uncontrollable changes, what can enlighten us? The way to the future involves thinking together and working together so that we can learn to live together. Faced with the uncertainties and risks of existence, nothing can be taken for granted. As a consequence, nothing should be neglected or ignored, much less that which allows us to move towards Opening. Debates between philosophy and religion, between reason and faith, between specificity and universality, between modernity and tradition, all of these bring up the question of the validity of universal truth and the autonomy of reason. How can we agree on common universal standards and preserve the influence of myths and hopes? How can we live reasonably? How can we ensure harmony between old and new and between logic and meaning? In short, how can we reach the universal? The universal is possible. It has been achieved in the past, through theology and Arab philosophy, for example, by Averroes, Maimonides, Ramon Lull, Saint John of Avila and many others in the history of society. During the periods of glory in Andalusia, in the kingdoms of Catalonia and Aragon, in the Maghreb, in Bosnia, in Sicily, in Tashkent, in Mali and in so many other countries, plurality and

the right to diversity were natural. There is an urgent need to deal with this question of relationships with and opening to the other, without which there is no universality. No one has a monopoly on the truth. Politics, and therefore, relationships with the different other in the City have attracted attention in a remarkable way, in the search for truth through debate and exchanges. From Aristotle – “A happy man needs friends” – to Averroes – “Man needs others to acquire virtue. That is why he is a political being by nature” –, meditative thought has always stressed the importance of dialogue, of co-existence, of the link between the two levels, the specific and the universal, and of the relationship with the different other. In Islam, the Muslim is a witness amongst other people, through the declaration of faith – the *shahadah* – he cannot shy away from living amongst others, as that is what makes his faith valid for his whole life. It is a commitment, a responsibility and a sign of unconditionality, which begins with the negation and refusal (the *la*) of all situations of intolerance, of closed-mindedness, of idolatry and of the reference points concerned. In the past, based on this, classical Arab thinkers concerned themselves with questions of meaning and justice, about opening the frontiers to welcome the Wholly Other and the other. In the same way the Catalans, the Andalusians and all the other intellectuals from the beautiful regions of the Iberian Peninsula, like Joan Lluís Vives and Miguel de Unamuno, attempted to consider the question of justice and meaning. If we remain faithful to the notion of being open to the other, we can see today that we would understand nothing in life if we separated or merged reason and religion, oneself and the other, meaning and logic or the same and the different. To separate without care, to merge without self-restraint is neither objective nor measured.

Great Arab thinkers, like Averroes, did not avoid the problems of the political city, by only taking an interest in metaphysics and certain topics related to an ideal morality that have no direct consequences on the political and ethical problems of the relationship with the other. “True interpretation”, says Averroes, referring to a verse of the Koran, “is the duty man has been assigned.” The exercise of reason is indisputable; we simply have to listen to the other, to understand other cultures. Truth is rarely only in A, or in B, but in the link and relationship between A and B. The difference, the distance and the relationship, these are the areas that force us to think, which are likely to help us to grasp the meaning of our united humanity and of our plural destiny. On this subject, the Koran, for example, does not only address the believer, the Muslim or the monotheist, but Man or human beings; and there is no ambiguity in its target: all of humanity is included. Without the relationship with the other, life loses its meaning, which is why the final word in the Koran is *Nass*, humanity or people. The problem today is that narrow and ideological interpretations of the revelation contradict the meaning of the text. In the same way that Greek philosophy

has increasingly been marginalised by commercial and power considerations. The result? Neither life in the spiritual and Abrahamic sense, nor the meaning of life in the humanist and philosophical sense dominate. So we must return to a reflection on life that is open, coherent and just, a search which is both free and respectful of the right to diversity.

Averroes showed the need to recognise that the act of thinking should have no pre-defined limits and, at the same time, that the relationship with different others was the indisputable condition of the search for truth: "It should be our duty to start with studying, and for the next searcher to ask for help from the previous, until knowledge becomes perfect [...] It is clear that it is our duty to help each other in our study of what has been said about this subject by those who have studied it before us, whether or not they belong to the same religion as us [...] They must simply fulfil the conditions of validity". Globalisation, which is uniformisation and the imposition of a single shapeless model, poses the problem of universal validity. We must find a common universal, a new civilisation, which is currently missing. The greatest problem we have today is defining the conditions of validity and the access to the universal. In attempting to work out the question of the relationship with the other, of the unknown and of the differences in values, names and places between each of us, modern thinking should be concerned with working out the question of universal validity and, through this, overcoming the conflicts produced by the differences between civilisations, cultures and religions. By dealing with the relationship between philosophy and religion we should not only seek to bring agreement between them, as has always been maintained by tradition and Orientalism. Here we have a major moment in thinking confronted with the difficulty of the validity of the truth: "Truth should not contradict truth; it agrees with it and supports it", says Averroes. Access to universal truth comes through a sort of appearance before the other, the same or the different. Not everyone who desires it is universal. The open way of thinking challenges those who impose conditions, who are in favour of closing, opposition and rejection, and those who claim to be in favour of conciliation, but without universal coherence. The decisive terms, as with Averroes, are the verbs link, join, relate (*wasl*), and distinguish, separate (*fasl*). It really is a question of relating, of distinguishing without dividing or joining without merging, the other and myself, the worldly and the spiritual, reason and faith, and everything which, when laid out, may make sense, in leading to a form of unconditionality that recognises that one needs the other, and which does not deny that no one has the monopoly on the truth. Obviously it is also true that one should not be a hostage of the other. So, we must practise both being open to the other and vigilance.

The act of thinking makes us aware at the same time of these movements of opening to the other, of putting things in perspective so we can maintain an objective point of view. The

objective thinker can only believe that opening to the other unconditionally and spontaneously is the best method of getting to know each other: through a work of art we get to know the artist. Each of us must overcome the limitations and conditions imposed by subjectivity and blind egoism. Objective thinking leads to rational, reasonable knowledge, without any exaggerated claims, so that humans, as far as possible, can measure up to what is required of them. Currently objective, meditative and non-calculating thinking is missing, but it is more important than ever. It can help us to face the complex problem of how to live together responsibly.

Reasoning is not about giving up or renouncing mystery. On the contrary, it is about accepting the risk of living and the strangeness of life in a responsible manner, by establishing the link. If reasoning does not help us to make this link, it is breaking with both what is required by reason on the one hand and by spiritual values on the other. From Aristotle to Heidegger, via Averroes and José Ortega y Gasset, meditative thinking has always been concerned with keeping alive a contact between reason and faith, without ever mixing up the two. They believed in uniting singularity, difference and the same, in using faith as an act of confidence and the act of reasoning as a risk that one must take to face life. In this Dark Age, where shock propaganda is used widely to isolate us, to divide us and to distract us from the fundamental problems, learning to live together depends on our ability to think together. Some, for fear of the unreasonable, prefer to rely on faith alone, others, for fear of obscurantism and fanaticism, refuse the faith perspective and rely solely on reason. In these times of confusion we must come back to dialogue, debate and respect for difference. The central point resides in the fact that we must recognise that freedom is the foundation of existence. We must not, however, believe that doing whatever we want, without taking anything into consideration, is freedom. Skills and knowledge should help us to behave in a way that leads us to responsibility and development and not to stalemate or to the breakdown of all relationships, under the pretext of emancipation. We must also recognise that it is important not to confuse the different dimensions of life, private and public, spiritual and worldly, specific and general. Distinctions must be made, but we must also understand that we should not set them against each other to the point of unbalancing life. Consequently, we must draw some conclusions. What are the uncontrollable currents, challenges and uncertainties that we must focus on and denounce, in order to try to come up with new concepts and new horizons for the future? So what are the risks and opportunities that the value crisis and the uncontrollable currents of modernity and globalisation bring to bear down upon our future?

Firstly, if we examine the meaning of life and death, the first point of concern is spiritual; for those who abide by scriptures that emphasise spiritual values or a religious sentiment on life and death, globalisation marginalises the field of life. Spirituality

has left our lives, despite the apparent return of religious fervour, often expressed in an antiquated and backward manner. There are ever fewer possible links between, on the one hand, the notion of the modern subject or citizen as implied by globalisation, and on the other hand the meaning of religious life that monotheistic peoples in general, and Muslims in particular, are attached to. It is certainly not the end of the world, but it is the end of a world, and we must understand this and take it in to try to invent another one, which avoids all narrow-mindedness and idolatry. The globalisation of capitalism has produced outrageous secularism; practising religion and Abrahamic spiritual values have been challenged. The world is no longer governed by moral benchmarks, as was the case for centuries under monotheism, but by a rationality that is cut off from meaning. In this atmosphere of emptiness, with neither roots nor foundations, it is true that there are many groups which claim to be religious, which are fanatical and based on cultural identity, and which strive to express themselves according to science and possibly influence the dominant neo-liberal ideology. But all of this is done in a sort of vacuum and to the detriment of morals, authentic spirituality and humanism. Every day we seem to be a bit further away from harmony, coherence and complementarity between what we believe and what we experience, from relationships open to time and space, to beyond this world, to the invisible, to the mystery of life. We must progress to secularity, that is, the distinction between the different sectors of life: worldly/spiritual, public/private, nature/culture. It gives us a real opportunity to break free, to achieve a type of behaviour compatible with real spiritual values; in order to achieve progress and the modern universal. On the other hand, separating these radically, splitting them definitively, marginalising religious values or creating distance between the logic of reason and spiritual meaning can create a fundamental imbalance in the human being, which leads to despiritualisation, dehumanisation, disorientation and difficulties in confronting tensions and in managing one's relationship with oneself, with the other and with the world. The difficulties increase when, in reaction, through fear of change and through fear of an unlimited use of reason, some narrow-minded people are tempted to close in on themselves and confuse the two levels of logic and meaning. On the contrary it is a matter of distinguishing, without either dividing or merging them, reason and faith, logic and meaning, the cultural and the natural, and the worldly and the spiritual. The situation forces us to re-examine the links between the different dimensions of life. Not only does globalisation not concern itself with the questions of meaning or cultural or religious values, but it also tends to render all cultures, religions and ideologies ineffective – nothing is spared – by making them into practices that have no effect on the progress of history. It is precisely in this point that reality is cruel and that serious threats appear, but it also provides the possibility of reconsidering ourselves. Whilst, despite the

prejudices, being originally secular and mainstream, in essence and by nature, Muslims for example are trying to resist this split, this dichotomy, the division between the worldly and the spiritual. The marginalisation of spiritual values, which appears to be a Faustian step, is seen by Muslims as an uncontrollable current of modernity and globalisation. The challenge of those concerned with balance and attached to spiritual values, which they do not want to lose sight of, is to avoid either division or merging. All the more so since the Muslim, for example, is neither a simple anthropological type, nor a simple natural humanity. He has values that have allowed him to live for over 1,000 years in relative conformity with his essence: an ability to make history, a real historicity and not just a sort of natural history. Islam has produced scientific, objective and theoretical meaning; in short, it has contributed to directing humanity towards the truth. Today, globalisation is not just secularisation as a positive step, but despiritualisation and a loss of the meaning of the world and of life. This poses a problem for all the believers in the world and particularly Muslims, who are attached to a spiritual meaning of life. We must not confuse the archaic or criminal political actions of certain individuals who claim to represent Islam, whether they are regimes or groups, whilst in fact they are anti-Islam.

Secondly, on the political front, the problem with modernity as we are experiencing it now, and with globalisation, is that society is essentially viewed as a productive body, subject solely to the interests of those making capital. This risk of depoliticisation of life is without precedent: it quite simply endangers the possibility of making history, of being a responsible people in the noble sense of the word, that is, capable of making decisions, of resisting in the name of freedom, of having its reasons and of being right and of giving life to a societal project chosen after debate. Indeed, in the developed world, despite appearances, democratic debate, the legitimacy of institutions, the predominance of human rights, free enterprise and the proliferation of legal standards – even on a supra-state level –, the possibility of existing as free and responsible citizens, taking part in a collective public quest for justice, beauty and truth, seems increasingly hypothetical and problematic. The future depends ever less on the decisions of each citizen and ever more on the capital-ruling systems. Decisions are made in distant power centres, rather than by the people involved. These changes are so great that we would probably be mistaken if, when we examined the state of freedoms in the world, we did not see the main reason for social situations like unemployment, but also permissivity, laxity, an excess of freedoms, debauchery, liberalism and all kinds of perversions. Even if democracy consists of "Everyone doing as he/she pleases", the result can still be worrying and pose a serious problem. We are aware that we are coming to the particularly problematic nature of these questions. The market dominates the world, not human, cultural or spiritual values. The hegemony is becoming that of the survival of the

fittest and richest. Movements that seek an alternative path to globalisation and more justice and more autonomy, whether for their region or personally, are aware of the injustices and inequalities. Democracy may be effective in the West; but what sense does it have if freedom, rights and know-how are not shared in relationships with other peoples? Freedom through sharing is the goal of life in the City of Earth. Globalisation and international relations are far from being democratic; as a consequence we have no political existence, either in the Greek sense or in the spiritual sense. Beyond the uncertainties, the question of the rule of law as the fundamental reference for human relations and between peoples becomes simply the most important reference in our life. There is a challenge to be met; all the more so since it is in the perception of the risk that we may find what saves us. Globalisation depoliticises us, encourages the survival of the fittest, and removes our responsibility, obliging us to re-examine our skills, our knowledge and our references. Learning to live together is affected by multiple influences, which we must neutralise and overcome.

Thirdly, in the sphere of skills and knowledge, strictly speaking, the third worrying aspect of the uncontrollable currents of today's world disorder and globalisation is that the possibility of thinking and of thinking differently is made more difficult. Certainly, today, in many Southern countries, because of the current situation, the possibility of thinking freely is already limited. But globalisation, which is defined by technicism, by a lack of religion and by capitalism, aims to govern all areas of our life using the results of exact sciences, which are seen as the only results that are relevant to the logic of development. Despite the flourishing of arts and culture, these jewels of the West, modern skills prioritise technology and mathematical applications as intellectual skills, and they are used to achieve the objectives of the market logic. This progressively leads to the marginalisation of thinking, of objective criticism and of plurality, which are essential to make up for the absence of limits and the deviations and inconsistencies, to make free decisions on the objectives of the quest and to give form to existence and to the world. The decay or the hijacking of the human and social sciences, the absence of interculturality and interdisciplinarity, the weakness of representations of one culture to another, these are all reflections of this marginalisation. In the recent past we have had Fascism, Nazism, the Second World War, Stalinism, Gulags, colonialism; today there are new forms of domination based on the survival of the fittest, lawlessness in the service of the centres of power, which attempt to get the whole world under control. In short, terrorism of the powerful, but also terrorism of the fanatics and the weak, are these accidents in the course of modern history or its real nature? Even if everything cannot be brought back to meaning, very few activities today offer a horizon of logic, justice and meaning. The work of reason, which is however the key to escaping bare survival, does not seem to encourage self-development and respect for difference. Money

and ignorance seem to dominate. Learning to live together must start with getting to know each other.

There is no need to add a comment about decadence, about the crisis, about these uncontrollable currents; despite the obvious progress, the disorder in the modern world is astounding. Globalisation in fact prevents us from getting to know each other and accepting our differences, despite the advances in new technologies, dehumanises us and claims to be the answer to everything. So it attempts to mobilise everyone, even though this totalitarianism is no longer presented in the brutally honest way it was in the past. Globalisation is about modelling all our systems – educational, cultural and social – solely on the needs of commercial companies and for the benefit of a minority: "The infinite process of growth in production has, moreover, crossed the limit past which it is no longer possible to hide its inherent need for totality", we are rightly told by a philosopher. Globalisation, totalisation: we are committed to this process; we all have our responsibilities, we are all fragile and misunderstood. The modern individual no longer knows on what to base the validity of his/her acts and plans; any more than he/she knows how to react to events, to be understood, to decide on the future or to verify what is good and useful for them and for society. Irrationality, depoliticisation and despiritualisation are three figures of the non-world or of the world without limits, which is being defined: a world dominated by solitude and without any real solidarity. We are powerless observers of uncontrolled or unjust situations.

However, a rational being cannot avoid living by his conscience, cannot live without fundamental justifications, reasoning, the act of thinking and the relationship with opening and with the universal. The risks of the uncontrollable currents of globalisation and the instinctive reactions of withdrawing into oneself mean that we must keep moving towards new opportunities and the future, and work together, not separately; we must have dialogue between us to reinvent, in all spheres of life, new ideas and innovative ways of reasoning. Globalisation has the advantage of laying bare all our actions; whether good or bad, they are all visible to the whole world. This advantage should allow us to no longer delude ourselves or feign neutrality, but force us to be self-critical and to think about what is no longer decided on in advance, the future. The situation is without precedent; it is the vast and unpredictable which controls our destiny. It is true that the modern world no longer allows meaning to be passed down from History, as in the past; that the liberation of existence, in this Dark Age, is being carried out in a very risky manner: all that, we must bear, because we can still decide that the time of our life is ours, and that it is never given away, that it does not belong to any narrow tradition, or to any central authority, or to the world-market. From the Euro-Mediterranean area, from which the future of the world is being played out, a network of networks, an association of associations, even informal, of seekers and awakers of conscience, could be born. Through

the new information technologies, globalisation also provides us with the possibility of creating new relationships, of forging links with all of those who are passionate about justice and who are committed to seeking beauty and truth publicly and for all. Thinkers, intellectuals and practitioners of the entire world can work together, to ensure the supremacy of dialogue, that worry becomes hope, and so that the reign of quantity, of profit for profit's sake, of the new cannibalism, of pleasure at any price, or indeed of fanaticism and racism do not take over our life. The Open University of Catalonia, like other similar establishments, is an open window onto the world, a bridge that nothing can destroy.

We no longer say "Proletarians of the World Unite!" or "Followers of all Religions get Together!" These can be useful concepts, but on a more simple level: "humans of all places, concerned with liberty, justice and meaning, show solidarity with each other!" We may all be concerned, but we are all basically

human, desperate for knowledge and open to life and generosity, and we cannot restrict ourselves to a single way forward. Does the poet not exhort us to live according to the "the strong desire to last"? And the master of illumination, Ibn Arabi, exhorts us to say to lost or hesitant beings: "You who are searching for the way that leads to the secret, retrace your steps, because it is within yourself that the whole secret is found".

We as Mediterraneans, who are humbly attached to reflection and to reasonable thinking, as citizens of the world and heirs of the "spirit of Catalonia and spirit of Andalusia", must refuse to admit that the time has come where we should just stay silent. The greatest danger is apathy. It is not too late to make demands, to think and learn to live together. The way forward is within us; it does not belong to any geographical area or to any ideology, and is not limited by any borders, it is our serene will, a force we cannot overcome: opening to the other.

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Mustapha Cherif is the author of the following works:
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Counterpoint

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I think that culture can be defined as *deference towards difference*; as the capacity to respect beliefs or differences which are different from our own. Certainly we should not deny them, but nor should we assimilate them to the point of making them "partial visions" of a Truth with a capital T which we — with a direct line to God or who knows who — exclusively possess. Mustapha Cherif's opening speech is a moving argument in **favour of this single**, mythical goal of bringing together the faith and reason which ideologists from both sides — Muslim or Christian — have tried to divide and which we can recover through dialogue — and only through dialogue.

To start with, I can think of two facts from our own country which complement the message of Cherif's speech:

1. In Catalan the word for *to speak* is *enraonar* which means to put reasons together. So the dialogue suggested by Cherif is already written into — encoded in — our language.
2. A beautiful and precise way of translating Cherif's message is encapsulated in Antonio Machado's proverb:

Your truth? No, the truth,
And come with me to seek it.
Your own, keep it for yourself.

Certainly, as Cherif suggests, from Lull to the great Muslim thinkers of the tenth to the thirteenth centuries (Al Farabi, Avicenna, Averroes, Al Ghazali) we have seen a massive effort to tie together faith and reason, *mythos* and *logos*, the sensitive and the intelligible. And it is interesting to observe how Habermas, a typically modern philosopher, suggests that we continue this struggle for unity today.

He says: "If we deny or ignore the interplay and the connection between the cognitivist sphere, the practical-moral sphere and the expressive-aesthetic sphere it becomes very difficult to avoid social codifying by means of the unilateral connection between life and *one* of these intellectual spheres which, being already highly specialized, include social coercion in some way."

We can see here substantial agreement between Habermas, Pope Benedict XVI and our own Cherif in their common appeal for an undivided truth in facing up to what is called "lay fundamentalism". This fundamentalism ensures that the passage from the Weberian position of theocratic legitimisation to bureaucratic legitimization is very easy:

Reason and faith, public and private;
Well separated, and all is good.

I think this makes us forget that reason cannot easily be separated from Myths or Beliefs, precisely because, as Henry Bergson said, they do not come *before* reason, but they come *from* it: to fill the vacuum the wisest animal of all found itself in, where relying on the individual conscience left us feeling distressed, forsaken and unsupported.

So I agree that we cannot content ourselves with self-satisfied liberalism, with a *liquid opinion* which moulds to all the times and contexts in which it is present... But nor do I think that we can rely on the *great stupidity* of a dogmatism which can never be contradicted and which is incapable of developing that deference to difference, and is therefore currently threatening to end up by polarizing opinions and demonizing dissidence until the whole world is destroyed.

Because I believe that there is a sphere where it is particularly difficult to implement the splendid proposal of Cherif (and Machado). This is in the dialogue amongst those who, on one side, believe that it is liberty which can eventually lead us towards truth. They believe that pluralism and Popperian "falsification" are the only path to any non-dogmatic certainty; that the most precious fruit of democracy is, as E. Nicol said, recognition that "the only political truth is having several real policies". This is one side. And on the other side, there are those who believe that it is "the truth which sets us free", and that the variety of opinions around today only legitimize the oppression of the poor and "libertinage, permissivity and other perversions of this

type", according to Cherif, lead us inexorably towards the modern *rationalité coupée du sens* (rationality separated from meaning). This is the dichotomy which both orthodox Christianity and Islam both effectively face...

...But is it always a good idea, I ask myself, to overcome this divide between faith and reason, truth and life, sensibility and understanding, knowledge and beliefs, ethics and aesthetics, public and private? Is it always healthy to try to recover this mythical "original unity" up until the point where we reunite once again – as in a *fascio* – these divided brothers, these mythical prodigal sons, which are science, morals, religion or art?

I understand for all modern forms of fundamentalism or terrorism (and I refer as much to the powerful institutional forms as to the popular and less powerful forms), that the common basis for these is the claim that they can overcome the divisions of modernity through pro-actively recovering the organic integrated social order. I also understand that the attempts at conciliation as so valiantly proposed by Cherif must be based on a different comprehension of this plural modernity (and that this must be viewed in a positive light), which is eccentric, inorganic and deconstructed.

However I continue to think that an alternative political attitude can only be based on a different understanding and evaluation of this plural, eccentric, deconstructed and inorganic modernity. This understanding must establish and recognize: 1) the *existence* of this diversity and deconstruction as a basic characteristic of our condition; 2) the *value* that it has and the new possibilities that such diversity offers, and 3) the functional or *operative necessity* – never substantive or structural – of a certain "mythical" coherence which does not aim to deny or overcome this split, but only to find its natural situation, and which seeks to balance it and make it viable.

Whilst we wait for a modern Kant or Averroes to guide us along this difficult path the message from Cherif's opening speech is a great motivation for which the UOC is very grateful and upon which we place all our hopes.

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