

# IDENTITIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

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As we begin this century, our society is exhibiting tendencies that, although they may seem opposed, manage to exist simultaneously. On the one hand, we have those who believe that this century will be a *cosmopolitan* one, in which States and powerful cultures will see themselves making way for a more global culture. They predict that this trend will be made increasingly clear within supra-statal bodies that have real power over States (such as economic and political unions, global social movements, more specialised supranational organisations, etc.). Those who foresee a return to a more *tribal* social model represent the other line of thought.

Within this latter trend, there are two very different visions. There are those who lean towards this so-called *clash of civilisations*<sup>1</sup> among the great cultures, and those with a more positive outlook who foresee a type of rebirth, respect and sense of community among different cultures. This co-existence would manifest itself on a political level by showing respect for the right of different cultures to exist within a global umbrella of fellowship, as it were, and would also allow this cultural diversity to be appreciated as a source of enrichment for all those living in the world. They would therefore consider it beneficial, particularly in the case of minority cultures, to protect those who lack the means of making their voice heard or who are facing difficulties in ensuring the continued survival of their people.

Consequently, we are currently facing a crisis, either the loss of strong cultural identities in favour of a more global identity; or on the other hand, the struggle to preserve cultural identities, regardless of the fact that serious differences may exist between cultures, and with the aim of obtaining a peaceful co-existence.

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## 1. WHY IS THE WORLD DIVIDED?

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If we look at the legacy left behind by the last century, we realise that the twenty-first century must tackle several issues that were raised during that period, but that still remain without practical solutions. Throughout the twentieth century, many great thinkers, whether political, scientific or otherwise, proposed solutions, yet these solutions always conflicted with the interests of the privileged classes, members of the more dominant nations, the rich West, those that held military and economic power, etc.

### 1.1. A world marked by several divisions

If we look at the legacy left behind by the last century, we realise that the twenty-first century must tackle several issues that were raised during that period, but that still remain without practical solutions. Throughout the twentieth century, many great thinkers, whether political, scientific or otherwise, proposed solutions, yet these solutions always conflicted with the interests of the privileged classes, members of the more dominant nations, the rich West, those that held military and economic power, etc. We should therefore

acknowledge that divisions in our world do exist, whose roots we will look at further on, and we will also go on to examine those divisions that need to be healed if humanity hopes to survive in a dignified way. While these divisions can be looked at from a relatively alarmist viewpoint, the extent of their seriousness very much depends on the point of view from which they are being examined. However, when analysing these fractures in society, there is a need to maintain objectivity. John Rawls states that in order to look at a theory from a balanced perspective it is necessary to cover oneself with a *veil of ignorance*, in other words, if anyone ho-

pes to develop the right criteria for the distribution of wealth in the world, they should carry out the following exercise in imagination: imagine yourself before you were born, without knowing which social class you are going to be born into, and from this perspective you can then go on to develop a just economic system. Only in this way can one be capable of developing a theory that favours those who find themselves in the worst social situation. We do not all look at the divisions in the world from the same perspective, but rather from our own individual point of view and from the way in which we view the world.

The first of these divisions brings the *solidarity of mankind* into play, such as the problem of the environment, which can be viewed as an issue of solidarity due to its impact on our descendants. So firstly, there is the need for us to leave the planet in a good condition for future generations, while the problem of the unequal distribution of wealth in the world can be seen as an issue of solidarity within the present generation (poor countries and marginalized people in rich countries). We only need to glance at the statistics published by the UNDP that measures the economic imbalance that exists between countries, and we can see how some of these countries are being completely left out of the advances made with new technologies. This phenomenon, in relation to information technology, is labelled by some authors as the *digital gap*. Important statistics from January 2004 tells us that the percentage of internet users among the total population of Africa is 1,4%, but stands at 34,4% in North America<sup>2</sup>.

This lack of solidarity is already leading to instances of fierce competition in relation to securing energy, mineral and water resources. We only need to look at many of the ongoing conflicts over combustible fossil fuels or water resources: the so-called petrol wars (some taking place in the form of an outright war, and others in the form of smaller armed conflicts) as well as the lesser known conflicts over river water that is shared by different countries, or conflicts over the subterranean springs that exist in places that are becoming increasingly arid, a trend that could be seen as a possible consequence of climatic changes<sup>3</sup>.

Another division present in society is linked to *problems surrounding the so-called meaning of life*, and this is reflected in a number of ways: the high crime statistics that are seen among those living alone in the world, the rise in stress levels as well as the increasing number of people turning to sects to feel a sense of belonging, acceptance and to be given a clear code of conduct. It is very significant that in the same countries where mainstream religions are on the decline, there has been a marked increase in the number of sects, therapy groups, self-help groups, etc.

Another fracture can be seen *in the heart of families*, in which it is becoming increasingly difficult to educate and spend time with one's children given current working patterns.

This is particularly true in western countries and in many foreign branches of multinational companies that have been set up in southern countries. Another problem that affects family li-

fe is that of the growing awareness of the issue of gender equality, a subject that leaves many men confused about how to take on a more equal role in the family, and in turn leads to a rise in violent forms of *macho* behaviour. In many countries, gender equality is still very far from becoming a reality at all, in spite of improvements in the law that have taken place in some of these countries.

We could continue to give examples of divisions that exist in our world today, such as *the division in the employment sector*, which can be seen in several countries, between educated people with high salaries and uneducated people with lower salaries (people that did not have access to a good education) or those who are unable to be retrained, given their age and other factors that have caused them to leave the workforce for a period of time (illness, mental health issues, family problems, etc.).

If we were to look at the divisions that exist in our world from the perspective of another planet we would be able to see clearly that for the entire second half of the twentieth century *all these divisions have a solution, given that the progress of the Earth in the last century was the greatest that has ever been seen by humanity.*

This hypothetical inhabitant of another planet would then reach the conclusion that the real problem is not one of resources (or ideas), but rather one of distribution of the same, as well as being a question of political goodwill, that is, the desire to seek justice on a planetary scale, and not just for the good of a particular nation, group, or company.

## 1.2. The root of the divisions: atomism

So what is at the axiological root of these various divisions? Or in other words, what are the values that guide our lifestyle, and structure our community (whether at a local or more global level) that have made these divisions occur? It actually appears to be a case of *the invisible hand* referred to by Adam Smith: no one seems to want these divisions, or explicitly cause them, but in actual fact they are the result of our actions, or our way of allowing certain things to happen, of supporting certain policies, our way of living with others, etc.

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Let us examine further the hypothesis which suggests that *the main cause of these multiple fractures appearing in our increasingly globalised world is this so-called social atomism.* This atomism, a theory that asserts the importance of the individual in relation to all around him, is encouraged by our growing individualism and our lack of a sense of community, a situation that is becoming more and more common in the modern world. Symptoms of this atomism could be: feeling like we are islands in the midst of many people, a dis-

integration of our links with others, no one worrying about what is happening to their neighbour, the fact that we are becoming less and less involved in what is happening to those around us, etc. We have ceased to be political beings concerned about what is happening in our city *polis* and we have simply given the job title of politician to a small number of people, forgetting that the very notion of politics begins with the involvement of each one of us in matters that concern us all. We have built democracies without really participating in their construction at all, reducing our involvement to going to cast our vote at a certain specified time. These are just some of the symptoms of this atomism.

The theory that is at the heart of atomism is that the individual can be fulfilled, and happy (in the sense of having things and enjoying life) without needing others. We could perhaps explain this better if we were to say that the only purpose of other people is always in how they can contribute to one's own personal fulfilment. This theory ignores the fact that as an individual we are born into a situation in which we are not self-sufficient. This atomism is a consequence of understanding men and women as being products of liberalism, by emphasising the importance of our ability to choose and have freedom more than the importance of our links with others. Although extreme, this is an improvement on the medieval understanding of man and woman as having no individual rights at all, since their rights would have been dictated by which social class they belonged to. For this reason, the awareness of people's indivi-

dual rights is a historical step forward that we cannot ignore, and yet this step forward still needs to be modified so that it incorporates a more social perspective of the individual, and yet still does not deny their fundamental individual rights.

This atomism goes against the more social theory that suggests that men and women are not self-sufficient outside of their *polis*, given that without the existence of a specific social context, they cannot assert their autonomy.

### **1.3. A solution to these divisions: restoring communitarianism**

In order to heal these divisions, let us put forward the idea of complementing the liberal understanding of men and women as individuals with rights, with the idea of *restoring communitarianism*<sup>4</sup>; in other words, this sense that we have been born into a specific community which holds common shared values for all its members. This model of the community can take on many forms: whether it be a family, country, religious community, action group, social movement, small non-governmental organisation, etc. From within this communal standpoint it is then possible to become aware of the value of others in relation to one's own personal self-fulfilment. This sense of community emphasises the fact that, as well as having rights, we also have duties to others (*obligations*, literally, links with other people). In other words, a community can be seen as a building or construction of some sort, in which all members are necessary for its completeness.

We are not suggesting that the fundamental rights of the individual be put aside, but rather pointing out the fact that ahead of our identity as individuals, we are first and foremost social beings, and our development has come about as a result of our interaction with others, our first point of contact being with our family, whose link with us is an unconditional one, and not materially motivated. In our own development, we only accept correction from our father or mother, when we have first experienced their unconditional and freely given love, offered without any ulterior motive and expecting nothing in return. It is in this primary community environment where we gain our ethical values, in other words, we learn what is good for the community and what is good for oneself, without there being any radical opposition between oneself and others (the community). My welfare depends on the welfare of others. These values, or realisations of what is good, are picked up in the heart of the community from our interaction with others; on seeing these values acted out in others, we then learn to appreciate them. A community possesses a system of values that is shared by its members, in other words, their understanding of life will be relatively similar, and any minimal differences that do exist (or those who see things differently), will be accepted from the standpoint of mutual respect.

Some theories on the development of nations, which are not centred solely on economic growth, put forward the importance of so-called *social capital*. Development within social groups is more constructive among those that

adopt a system of shared values, in which they feel a sense of community, since it is only under these circumstances that our concern for others outweighs our individual interests (among leaders, experts, and the entire population). The appearance of the European Welfare State was primarily due to the fact that in the aftermath of the Second World War, it was easier to create a sense of community, and in this way nations were able to reconstruct Europe, which had been destroyed by war. This is how a society with a greater sense of solidarity was created. An intergenerational solidarity emerged, that paid more attention to elderly people, and a generational solidarity emerged (incorporating means-tested tax rates, with the ultimate aim of reducing the inequality that existed, and creating a society made up of middle classes). Solidarity can only be sustained if duties towards one's social group are acknowledged and taken on (duties of ensuring fairness), and also duties towards future generations (ecological duties). Sadly, the latter have often been forgotten in a culture that is so focussed on the short-term.

In the context of community groups, *the notion of justice* is not an abstract term, or a palliative virtue (created to undo the great injustices caused by the economic system). This is due to the fact that within a community, solidarity exists in the form of a *solid fraternity* which means that the virtue of justice is created automatically. One example of a *strong community* would be the family, where it can be more clearly appreciated that principles of justice are

not needed to resolve internal conflicts. Outside parties or external controls such as governing laws or rules should not be needed, since this basic fraternity we have just talked about, coupled with mutual respect, should already exist. However, we are not saying that principles of justice are not needed in the heart of a community, particularly since community models are becoming more and more complex and can include several individuals with different sensibilities, resulting in the fact that they are not as homogenous as we might initially think. Still, we are affirming that these principles of justice would be better observed within the context of a community, since a basic consensus on values and cooperation would already exist among its members.

Let us remember that, in the liberal system, where individuals are more independent and have few links existing between each other, justice acts as a means of regulating this individualism and also ensures that the rights of certain people do not outweigh the rights of others and thus create a situation of extreme inequality in relation to the distribution of resources. From this need for principles of justice we then see a legal framework emerging, which assures that the distribution of goods and resources does not violate the rights of any individual. The responsibility for this distribution within the market of a social economy lies with the free market, which acts as a mechanism for distributing wealth. This should also include corrective mechanisms to prevent any unequal distribution of

wealth from occurring (imposed through means-tested tax rates, taxes on inheritances, economic assistance for the poorest people, etc.). The more liberal the economy, the less these corrective mechanisms are incorporated. Without denying the need for this legal framework, it is clear that people benefit more from it when their social context possesses a greater sense of community.

*Nevertheless, despite the current social trends of atomism, we do continue to see the presence of community models in which there are internal links of solidarity. The problem exists in how this is lived out. Many people experience tension in trying to live in two opposing environments, one a more community-orientated context, and the other, an environment in which competitive and very individualist behaviour predominates. For example, when in their workplace, someone may behave like an aggressive executive facing extreme competitive stress, and after a few hours behave like a good father or mother within a family, where relationships are characterised by cooperation. Taking into account that human psychology tends towards an internal unity of the person, there can often be a very damaging conflict between these two environments. This would happen, for example, if competitive elements were introduced into the relationship of a couple or in a person's relationship with their children. It could be equally damaging if a compassionate approach interfered with one's dealings with business clients.*



## 2. MODELS OF IDENTITY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

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A theme that is very much connected with the idea of community is that of identity. Our identity is defined in part by how we are accepted, or not, by others. A lack of acceptance can lead someone to hold a poor opinion of themselves. The notion of identity can also be studied on a purely personal level, such as whether I can remain true to my uniqueness in dialogue with others, in order to be a more complete human being myself. But it can also be looked at on a broader scale, in relation to the identity we acquire through our need to feel as though we are part of a group of equals.

### 2.1. Our identity

This identity can be found in communities where a good model of coexistence prevails, one that is entrenched in a set of values and encourages the idea that our life has shared aspects that allow us to identify with other people (people in my community). This community environment is the most appropriate in which to experience true acceptance, and feel that we are someone who is there for others and able to find our own place in society. In this environment, a person can grow into adult-

hood gathering a set of values and also learning how to deal with adversity in life, from within an atmosphere that is fundamentally cooperative. They can forge their own personal identity (the unique *I*) and as a group can internalise shared values, becoming an individual among equals.

We can thus conclude that our identity is at the heart of our understanding and experience. Personal identity is built within the community framework into which a person is placed and, at the same time, the identity of the commu-

nity is built by the contributions of people that belong to it. In the words of Calhoun quoted by A. Castells: “There is no such thing as people without names, or language or culture, in which there is no way of establishing a difference between myself and the other, us and them. Self-knowledge is always a construction based on what can be considered a form of discovery, it is never completely separate from the fact of being seen by others in a certain way”<sup>5</sup>.

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Castells<sup>6</sup> singles out some collective or community identities as being different, as depending on their origin, they may be more contrived and the result of practices within a certain social structure. One example would be *legal identity* as in that which is fabricated by the ruling institutions in society in order to extend and manage their dominion over members of that society. *Dominant nationalisms* are a good example of this form of identity. A second type is *the identity of resistance*. It is generated by those members of society who find themselves in an underprivileged or marginalized situation due to the logic of the ruling authorities. In order to survive, they create walls of resistance against the powers. One example would be cultural or religious groups, who find themselves in a minority (due to the fact

that they represent a small number of individuals in society or because they are not given legal or political recognition).

A third form of identity could be called *an identity with a plan*: members of society, basing themselves on certain cultural models, build a new identity that redefines their role in society. In doing so, they hope to bring about a transformation of that same society. One example would be when feminism came out of the trenches and defied the ruling patriarchy in society. A collective identity can begin as one of resistance, and after forming a plan of action with the passing of time, can become a legitimate identity.

In modern-day societies, belonging to a community does not necessarily mean absolute exclusivity (as in, if I belong to one community, I cannot belong to others), given that membership can apply to several different overlapping groups. This is why in our opinion, being part of a community is central to one’s own identity. We would all have a primary or birth identity, but this does not mean that other complementary identities are excluded or seen to be at odds with our primary identity. One example of these overlapping collective identities would be when one belongs to a family, a group of friends, an action group, a cultural community, a town or city, a nation, and a collective of countries, for example the European Union<sup>7</sup>.

## **2.2. The market’s answer: consumer identity**

Our very atomised world also has its reason for men and women to have their

own identities. We know that as members of modern-day society, we have an increasing need for an identity, so as not to be lost in this competitive market in which it is very easy to become isolated or simply a cog in an ever more complex machine. We yearn for an identity that allows us to dream of a better life, and gives us the shared goal of overcoming the challenges that exist in our world: a better justice system, a more sustainable planet, etc. We have an inner desire to distance ourselves from the often-predatory individualism of the world and to search for a more friendly spirit of cooperation and community.

We live in a society in which employment is becoming increasingly precarious and unstable, and we also face a growing lack of emotional foundations within the family environment for various reasons: couples that separate, parents that work and spend little time with their children, people that live alone, etc. We find ourselves in a situation where work is becoming more and more mobile, to an extreme in countries like the USA, where people often have to move city, and leave neighbours and friends behind for their work, meaning that they are unable to put down their roots in one place. We also find ourselves with types of work in which, in order to survive, or avoid being sacked or given early retirement, one is forced to enter into a spiral of increasing competitiveness, in which one's own work colleague becomes a possible rival. This unstable environment causes us to live our lives feeling constantly under threat<sup>8</sup>.

The market culture has its own way of satisfying our deep-rooted need to be-

long to a community. On the one hand it does not encourage an overly pacifist way of thinking that would undermine the importance of the consumer market, but on the other hand it tries to avoid forms of violent expression, by excluding identities that spring from fundamentalist attitudes. In response to our profound need for an identity, the market offers not only products that will satisfy our material needs, but also through its product advertisements, it offers an imaginary, ideal world that seems to provide us with an identity and meaning to our life.

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In this way, we can actually buy our identity in the market, just like we can buy any other product. It is not given to us, as with our family or social class. We build an identity through what we buy, how we dress, etc. This is how collective identities that indicate social status are created, and this is what we use to categorise others, for example, as sport enthusiasts, rebels, *trendy* young people or *posh* people, etc. Our capacity to buy products and the type of brands that we buy, makes us part of a certain subculture which gives us our identity, and therefore also gives us a certain sense of security.

As we have already mentioned, some identities exist that we ourselves have chosen and therefore they are not just given to us. This means that since they allow us to make use of our freedom of choice, we are happy to claim them. However, this may not always be the case with adolescents, since their choice of identity can have its roots in a desire to be part of the group or sometimes a desire to deliberately veer from the norm. Nevertheless, our sense of identity allows us to escape our insecurities, escape our fear of failure and satisfies our desire for acceptance, while fulfilling our emotional needs at the same time.

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people  
who are living  
within a society  
that is as individualist  
as our own  
take refuge  
in fundamentalist groups

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The groups that are most vulnerable to the appeal of brand names are those that have yet to face many of the challenges in life we have mentioned. A group that is often cited as being the most vulnerable are adolescents due to their search for personal identity. They also have vast amounts of energy to play with as they go through physiological and psychological changes, and at this stage remain very open to outside influences. They are the group that is most in need of acceptance and a sense of be-

longing to a certain group. This is primarily obtained through external appearances at this stage: whether it be habits, way of dressing, taste in music, even by trying to control more personal features too, such as one's physical appearance through dieting and exercise. Some believe that the market offers a form of *global adolescent* who, wherever he is, and regardless of the culture of that area, will prefer *Coca Cola* to tea or coffee, *Nike* trainers to sandals, and *Chicken Mc Nuggets* to home-cooked chicken<sup>9</sup>.

### **2.3. Identities that kill: the darker side of identities**

We believe that if this communitarianism in its multiple forms and with its intrinsic sense of solidarity is not regained, other more closed or *fundamentalist* behaviour patterns will begin to emerge. Giddens<sup>10</sup> states that people who are living within a society that is as individualist as our own take refuge in fundamentalist groups (whether they be cultural, religious or economic) in order to regain a strong sense of group identity that will provide them with a sense of psychological security when faced with the uncertainties of our changing world. This is how the dark side of communism emerges, these are closed communities with a great sense of internal solidarity, but so much so that they are ready to attack anyone that does not belong to that community.

Communities are then created with a strong sense of identity that do not allow their members to have loyalties elsewhere. If you belong to this com-

munity, your allegiance to their values, customs, and traditions must be complete, in such a way that it excludes other identities. These are communities that are closed to the influence of others and at the same time, do not allow internal dissidence because it would be seen as a betrayal of that community. Nothing can be questioned, neither symbols, nor customs, however mundane they may be. These two characteristics ensure that the community will remain totally homogeneous.

Today we are witnessing the consequences of this type of fundamentalism. In fact it is often seen as a response to the treatment endured by minority cultures in many southern countries due to aggressive forms of economic and cultural imperialism, by which western values were imposed on these societies with complete disregard and lack of respect for their cultures.

By the same token, other communities can adopt a different pattern, which still shows little solidarity with others but in a more subtle way. Although they may support the existence of other cultures, they also support the idea that these should remain separate and isolated in order to survive. They adopt the model that is labelled by some authors as

the *multicultural mosaic society*<sup>11</sup>. These are societies in which cultures are grouped together in the form of a mosaic community, where they remain very isolated and have little interchange with each other, and where invisible borders exist between cultures, borders that are nevertheless incredibly clear to those that live within their boundaries. These societies maintain minimal cohesion due to the nature of the minimal State, or legal framework, that unites them.

One example which some would identify, would be some areas in the USA where there are neighbourhoods in which one particular culture dominates such as Chinese, Latin American, white European, etc.

Another model that is put forward by some northern countries supports a certain degree of isolation of southern cultures. Using the excuse that they want to ensure the survival of these cultures, what they actually want is to avoid the emigration of persons belonging to these countries towards their own northern countries. It is a form of concealed xenophobia, since by claiming to defend minority cultures they still do not want to welcome them into their own country.

### 3. WHAT PATTERN SHOULD COMMUNITIES IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY FOLLOW IF THEY STILL WANT TO OFFER INDIVIDUALS THEIR OWN IDENTITY?

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Faced with the liberal perspective that highlights the citizen and his rights as an individual, the communal perspective should highlight the advantages of living as part of a community, avoiding being closed to others, and at the same time respecting that individuals have their fundamental rights too. The emphasis on community should not necessarily mean a loss of personal rights or casting aside the essential individuality of people.

#### **3.1. A different way of understanding individual rights**

As we have already mentioned, we need to start from the point of understanding men and women as primarily social beings, who need as their primary foundation a community in which they are born and grow up into, and from which they learn values. The individual should always be aware of others who have allowed and made possible their own life and its development. This is

how one's sense of duty towards others emerges, a bond that allows other people to live as fully as I live. Within this area of duties towards others are the rights of men and women. Let us not consider men and women as individual people with rights, but rather people with rights and obligations to build a world together where everyone can live and develop their life to its full potential. This understanding of rights and duties brings us to a more complex understanding of justice and human equality, given that not

only does the individual have to be taken into account, but also the community in which he or she develops.

### **3.2. A different way of understanding human equality and justice. Equality from the perspective of diversity**

#### *A liberal understanding of rights*

Liberalism saved the individual from more collectivist models in the past and instead gave him liberty and autonomy, allowing him to break the chains that bound him to a certain social status or role in society, or to particular religious beliefs. It gave the individual *fundamental rights* to aid his full development as a person: freedom of thought, of religion, of conscience, of association, etc. Little by little, the individual's rights to participate in public life were also acknowledged: so-called political rights. This is how modern democracies were born.

This liberal movement brought with it an emphasis on freedom. Its economic standpoint (of a free market economy, minimal State, etc.) led to a very productive system that generated great wealth. Nevertheless, it produced clear economic inequalities within the population at the same time. We only need to recall the criticism made by K. Marx on capitalism of the time, the *Ashley Report* in England or the *Villermé Report* in France. Halfway through the nineteenth century, they all respectively denounced the working conditions of women and children in the mines (12 to 16 hour days for 6 year old children who were responsible for opening and closing the gallery doors) or working conditions in the textile industry (17 hour

days and 7 year old children working in factories). The socialist response to the system created by liberalism in the nineteenth century was to struggle for equality. This allowed the theory of liberal rights to reach the majority of the population. It was from these two traditions, after the Second World War that the Welfare State was born.

#### *Two ways of understanding democracy*

If we look at the history of democracy in the West we will see the existence of two very different models<sup>12</sup> that imply two different ways of welcoming the foreigner that comes to the country. The North American model underlines a more individualist and competitive lifestyle. The individual is allowed to pursue his own interests and morality while respecting a basic legal framework that protects the rights of everyone in the country. From this basis, a pluralist society emerges in which different cultural communities can co-exist and accept a basic legal framework that applies to the whole State. The example of France on the other hand, is one that leans towards a more unitary vision of what is good for the citizen and also good for the whole of society. Whoever enters the country must fully submit themselves to this ideal of the common good, that brings with it the notion of one common culture, and laws that try to homogenise cultural diversity. The State is culturally speaking homogenous and therefore assimilates and destroys examples of cultural diversity if they are found to exist within what it deems to be its political domain. This takes place in such a way that if these cultural communities wish to survive, the only

option open to them is to merge with this new State (and thus have the force of legal power behind them).

### *Building equality*

How can we build a sustainable equality that still respects differences in modern nations that are no longer culturally homogenous, if at one point they were? When socialism was first emerging, a difficult relationship existed between freedom and equality. In the present day, a difficult relationship exists between equality (that already includes freedom), and respect for what is different. Historically, real socialism sacrificed aspects of freedom in order to put an emphasis on equality, but it also sacrificed cultural differences and religious beliefs. It is interesting to note that years later, in the USSR for example, when political parties that preached uniformity first appeared in power, cultural groups that were supposed to be part of this more universal social model imposed on them, re-emerged with even more vigour, groups that merely represented the European part of the Soviet Union.

Therefore, there should be two types of behaviour based on the notion of *equal respect* towards others<sup>13</sup>. According to the first, the principle of *equal respect* would require us to treat people completely equally. At its heart, it essentially requires respect for that which is fundamental to us all. According to another way of understanding equality, we should recognise and even promote diversity. And yet the first group would accuse the second group of positive discrimination, while the second group would accuse the first

of denying people's identity by treating all people in a homogenous way and therefore lacking in sincerity. It would also find fault with viewing people from a neutral perspective, a perspective that does not identify itself with anything, no culture or community. Yet this supposed neutral way of looking at things and applying blind principles to others' differences, is simply a reflection on the culture of the majority. This blindness in the face of people's differences is in its own way a more subtle and subconscious form of discrimination.

We must therefore ask ourselves if equality should mean ironing out any inequalities between people (giving people the same rights or economic equality), or if the notion of equality has instead become much more complex, allowing a variety of responses.

### **3.3. Features to take into account when building a more complex notion of equality**

1) Real freedom is possible within a community. People have more liberty when bonds are freely made between members of a community.

2) From the legal point of view, it is necessary to differentiate between those that are different. Differences may necessitate different rights. It is necessary to identify the issues where basic equality must be created and on what issues these variations between people need to be addressed differently. The politics of difference has also got a universalist foundation: everyone must be acknowledged for their unique identity. It is precisely this difference that has been histo-



rically ignored, hidden or assimilated by the majority culture.

3) Certain theories of justice must be introduced that look at equality in a particular way. One author that proposes a theory of justice while taking into account the complex notion of equality is B. Walzer<sup>14</sup>. This author tells us that everything should be distributed to suit the need of the person at the receiving end, which contradicts the simple idea of equality where all justice requires is that resources be distributed as evenly as possible. For Walzer, when we recognise the different meaning that different resources and goods have, only then will we understand *how* to distribute them, *who* should distribute them and for *what reasons*. The same author illustrates this point by giving an example that is perhaps more understandable from within a North American context: in our societies, the ultimate aim of health is physical well-being and cover for medical needs. When we acknowledge this, we will then notice that most medical benefits do not fall on those most in need, but rather on those who have more money. So the distribution of resources should be carried out with the participation of everyone in society. And neither should those with more resources use them to influence other spheres; for example, monetary wealth which gains its meaning within an economic sphere should not occupy a significant role in the giving out of honours, and nor should it offer the wealthy privileged access to certain rights such as health and education.

4) Another contribution from an author who favours a community approach is that justice should be viewed as being

a *corrective* virtue<sup>15</sup> in a system that has little community spirit. In this environment, there would be little spontaneity in the appearance of virtues such as solidarity, due to the lack of a pre-existing basic set of values. Principles of justice are not as necessary to communities, because any conflicts or methods of wealth distribution are based on bonds of solidarity, as if the community were a large family. Without examining this notion of justice within communities further, we have to acknowledge that it would be difficult to achieve in our society, and that maybe it would only work in an ideal world without any egotism or evil.

Yet this consideration reminds us of an important issue. Without a community environment, principles of justice can be viewed as something more external, like abstract principles and universal needs that have been taken from this ideal environment where strong solidarity exists, and where justice emerges in a more spontaneous way. For this reason, they usually become something very minimal and only worth supporting when it suits the individual. Justice cannot be achieved in a world that is too atomised, since this environment does not favour any type of external justice that would require considering others as having equal rights to us. Another theory of justice would be to perhaps give up what I have (what I have a right to) so that someone else can also have it if his need is greater. For example, in regards to the unequal distribution of sanitation resources, my desire to acquire some new resource should be regulated by the fact that there are still other people who do not have even the most basic sanitation.

## 4. REALISING THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL DIVERSITY. VALUING DIFFERENCES

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Firstly, let us not forget that every generation that has an identity also possesses a certain degree of exclusion, allowing people to distinguish between *us* and *them*. Given this supposition, we should ask ourselves what degree of exclusion can be considered ordinarily human and what can lead to (and has in history led to) considering others to be *not as equal as us* by exploiting them, dominating them, and even exterminating them (colonialism, slave labour, genocide, etc.). The historical proof that certain beliefs about identity have led to people making a distinction which has brought about the destruction of others, could easily lead us to the conviction that the solution for such abuse would be in finding one global identity for everyone, even at a political level, such as by having one Global State, although we will not go on to look at the concrete form it could take here.

### 4.1. Diversity implies a certain degree of exclusion

Nevertheless, we know that historically, tendencies that favour globalisation also carry with them the danger of deciding that one particular cultural attribute should apply to all, and going on to impose this on others. This specific characteristic is usually taken from the majority culture, or the group that has the most economic resources, the most

political power, etc. In other words, the western cultural model is passed off as a global one. The solution instead lies in maintaining people's different cultural identities, accepting that there are universal variables, and understanding that identities should not exclude others and nor should their diversity always lead to conflict, such as those so-called win-lose situations where there must always be a victor. Instead they should not simply exclude others and instead

should be a mutual source of enrichment. We will go on to discuss this further later on in the text.

#### **4.2. Categories of distinction between “them” and “us”**

The distinction between *them* and *us* on a social level has been developed historically by identifying four separate categories: 1) race, observed through physical differences (ie. Physical features); 2) ethnic group, centred on cultural differences; 3) nation, from which the origin of our historico-biological community is found; and 4) State, which underlines the political boundaries people live in. These four categories are not exclusive of each other, and revolve around concepts that contain a certain level of ambiguity.

As for the first category, the difference of race does not have any scientific foundation. It has been used throughout history however as a basis for discrimination. Today racism often appears in more subtle forms. One of these is in favour of the absolute separation of cultures, and using this as grounds for there being no interaction between cultures. This last argument has been used by some xenophobic voices from the extreme right in Europe asking that immigrants not be allowed into the country, not out of racism they argue, but so as to allow every culture the right to their own space without interference; such arguments have been used to say that North Africans have the right to their own culture in their own place of origin, but do not the right to go to Europe.

As for the second category, ethnic origin<sup>16</sup> is difficult to define, and many different theories exist: from the most basic and objective standpoints (with defining characteristics being: mother tongue, religion, parentage, etc.) towards more subjective ones (a feeling or awareness of belonging to a certain place).

#### **4.3. The different forms identities take in modern States**

Identities appear in several forms in modern States. Among them, having citizenship and the rights that go with it in the context of a political constitutional framework is normally the preferred scenario. Nevertheless, different cultures that coexist within the State are not always respected. These States tend to adopt one of the cultures, usually the majority culture, and make it applicable to all citizens. Consequently, we either find the remaining citizens being *minoritized* (lacking the legal and political means to protect themselves) or alternatively being given the legal and political means to protect themselves in the face of the majority culture (given a different legal framework, and receiving measures of positive discrimination that are normally accorded to a minority culture, etc.).

Mutual harmony between cultures is not easily obtained given that although States place emphasis on the rights and duties of citizenship, they usually end up favouring the majority culture as opposed to minority cultures. Furthermore, some modern States have not made a constitution since the time of what Habermas called *Constitutional patrio-*

tism<sup>17</sup>, in other words, since the agreed acceptance of a basic common framework for all national citizens that allowed cultural differences. This was an improvement on the time when these States struggled to suppress internal national differences and attempted to make the State culturally uniform by eliminating some of the existing cultures. The most classic example of this was France. Although the situation has changed somewhat now, the memory of this recent past means that difficulties persist between the ruling culture and others.

Another situation that is seen in modern States is that of people arriving to look for employment, fleeing political persecution, hunger, drought or unemployment, and who bring their different cultural identities to the State in question, and for this reason can sometimes be seen as a threat to those citizens living in the State. The threat is often perceived not for cultural reasons, but rather as to how it may affect the welfare of the receiving country. These fears are very controversial in the European context given that they are unfounded from an economic point of view: those who arrive usually represent a young workforce, which it has not been necessary to train and, if they have a legal status in the country, they can help to maintain and support the ageing European Welfare State. The media has even told us about the surplus of the *Social Security* in Spain thanks to the regularisation of illegal immigration (statistics from 2005).

The so-called threat can also be perceived as a cultural one, due to the arri-

val of different customs or languages, particularly in States that are not accustomed to much diversity. Areas that have in the past received immigrants from different regions of their own country and possessing different cultures, are those that actually experience the greatest difficulty in accepting this new wave of immigration coming from countries with incredibly different cultures to their own.

We would need to examine the factors responsible for this phenomenon as it could be that their own cultural identity is still in its stage of formation and not yet consolidated, or because they have anxieties about possible competition in the workforce or increased competition in regards to services offered by the State (education, health, social welfare). Immigrants who have fewer resources experience positive discrimination in this regard, since the State does not allocate more economic resources to these services in spite of the increase in population. This discrimination does not come about because they are immigrants, but rather because they have to fulfil more criteria in order to receive social welfare, for example: have more children. This could still be seen as discriminatory by the natives, and become a potential seed for xenophobia.

#### **4.4. Two ways of understanding the response to the foreigner**

In the West there are two ways of viewing the arrival of a foreigner that has as much to do with how their culture is viewed by those already living in the State, as it has to do with how the

new immigrants view the culture of the country they enter. These different perspectives are not always clear-cut, but nevertheless represent typical points of view.

The first way views integration as being a complete assimilation of the culture of the new country, and only allows the culture of immigrants to be expressed in their own private environments. In order to become a good citizen of the new country, one must speak the language well, follow the customs of the welcoming country, etc. If this is not the case, and although in theory immigrants should acquire the same rights of citizenship for having taken on the nationality of the welcoming country, in practice they will find it hard to find work and will always be regarded as an *outsider* by the natives. This will also happen with the second generation, despite the fact that they are born into the receiving country.

A second form of integration allows people from different cultures who have recently arrived to have collective rights, and spaces in which they can develop. They are only asked to accept the shared legal system of the country and show a loyalty to that country's constitution, which is usually just a very basic framework. In spite of the shared legal system, this more multicultural model can often lead to, a *ghetto-style* division of minority cultures in specific areas, which then perpetuates discrimination against them and leads them into a vicious circle of poverty, exclusion and lack of educational opportunities. In other words, what begins as multicultural respect, instead leads to a physical

separation and a lack of real opportunities. The State then becomes a mosaic of asymmetric cultures with little contact between them.

A third form of integration could exist which would respect multiculturalism in a more active way, by favouring intercultural communication based on an educational model that teaches people to respect and appreciate different cultures. This model would promote the equality and symmetry of different cultures, with active policies of positive discrimination, favouring educational opportunities and promoting an economic equality between cultures. This model would also lead to different cultures, in particular, minority cultures, not feeling threatened and being more open to outside influences. It would allow cultures to develop as they wish, giving them the right to free expression and historical continuity.

This last model is still something of an ideal, given that what we usually see today are the first two models with little chance for real dialogue between cultures or any form of mutual enrichment. In order to make any progress here, an educational system would be needed to give support to this third solution. The economic and social means to make this a reality would also be necessary to avoid divisions in society that, in the short term, will only lead to minority cultures feeling discriminated against and displaying a defensive attitude towards other cultures that belong to the native majority that controls the economic power. As we will see, in order for this model to work, it is necessary to adopt a basic shared legal framework

that must come from an agreed basic system of values that steers clear of intolerant cultural extremism. This is a difficult but necessary step, given that the defence of people's cultures does not automatically mean that every aspect of that culture is beneficial to people.

#### **4.5. Respect for diversity implies supporting minority or minoritized cultures**

As we have mentioned in the previous section, respecting diversity involves supporting minority cultures, cultures that are shared by few people, and supporting cultures that have been minoritized, cultures that were through time suffocated by the majority culture of that State and beyond. This support must be given in different ways since these cultures are already at a disadvantage to begin with. The minority culture has in the past and continues to have fewer legal and social tools to aid its survival. It may not possess means of communication, whether it is that these have not been offered by the education system, or it may have been ignored by the administration system, or worse, have faced blatant persecution.

We may immediately think of offering some form of legal protection to them, but what is first needed is a general awareness by all, and within every community, of the value of diversity. Legal assistance would be the next step that would help the minority culture to survive while remaining part of their community and ensuring its continuation, by transmitting it to new genera-

tions. This survival must not be understood in simple terms, but rather from a dynamic perspective, that is to say, people from that culture should be allowed to decide how they wish to continue and how they wish to inter-relate with other cultures, as well as entering into this necessary intercultural dialogue. They should not feel attacked, *minoritized* or inferior to others, and should be allowed to develop as they wish. We should take into account that many of these cultures have often come under attack, whether through overt prohibitive laws (which forbid them from handing down their culture or expressing themselves), or whether through more subtle forms that have left many people feeling ashamed of their culture as though it were inferior, or uncivilised. In certain areas of Spain, being able to speak the local dialect is still perceived as a sign of being uncultured.

We must also take into account that that it is possible that cultural communities may ask for rights that up to now would not be seen as the norm, in order to protect their culture. For example, the right of representation in the political institutions of the State so as to prevent a national or ethnic minority from being ignored when it comes to decisions that will affect the whole society. They may ask for a system of quotas to be introduced in Parliament to compensate for the fact that the democratic system only represents the majority of the population. They may look for political rights of self-government (autonomous governments, different legal systems) so that the minority can have a voice in decision-making, in particular relating to

any issues that concern their culture (educational issues, development of resources, language, etc.). They may also look for political rights that would protect their cultural or religious practices that are currently not given enough protection in a Market environment or that are at a disadvantage due to the dominant legislation agreed by the ruling culture, such as laws that close businesses on Sundays.

We will not look in depth here at the different rights claimed by these cultures, as they are very much dependent on each cultural community, their situation in relation to the State and their historic tradition.

However, we could examine, like W. Kymlicka<sup>18</sup>, two types of objection that cultural communities may make in order to protect themselves. The first type, based on external restrictions, would constitute an objection against society, or the framework of the State. The objective here would be to protect themselves against the potential impact of any external decisions made by the ruling society, the State. A second type of objection, based on internal restrictions, would be accusations of one particular group against their own members, whose objective would be to protect the group from internal dissension, for example: possible decisions made by individual members to stop following traditional practices.

By giving one example, we can perhaps gain a better understanding of the difference between internal and external restrictions. A community within a State may take legal measures to protect their language from the overwhelming in-

fluence of the language spoken by the majority of the State, often put forward as the official shared State language, or may take measures to encourage the teaching of their own language, of the need for its use by the administrative powers in their dealings with any of that community's members, of the need for help in the domain of publishing in that language, making films in that language, etc. These would be types of positive discrimination requested in the hope of obtaining some form of symmetry with the main language. We should remember that all modern States have given support to those languages they have adopted as their own and that are spoken by the majority. Therefore, it is not unusual that these minority languages should seek such forms of positive discrimination also. Another example would be when a community takes coercive legal steps against those people within their group to ensure that they conform to their culture on a private level, for example: by prohibiting the use of other languages within the community.

External restrictions deal with the relationship between various communities and the State. Internal restrictions, for their part, deal with a violation of individual liberties in the name of community solidarity, and for this reason are not looked kindly upon by society. External restrictions do not imply the advantage of one culture over another and are in fact necessary to ensure cultural diversity. This type of protection can only be offered in multinational or multiethnic States, since they protect a national or ethnic group against the des-

tabilising impact of decisions made by the society of which they form part.

Internal restrictions on the other hand can seem quite dangerous since they force people within a community to reject the majority culture, and thus represent another example of a lack of respect for diversity. Nevertheless, we should not forget that the desire to protect one's own community from internal dissension exists to a certain degree within all cultures, even in the most homogenous and uniform nation-States. The reality is that, within western democracies, these internal restrictions have not been met with opposition from ethnic minorities, whether they were born in the country or are immigrants. One example of this internal restriction that is tolerated by a State is the special status that the Amish have in the USA. This Christian sect that is centuries old remains exempt from certain educational directives.

#### **4.6. Other ways of restoring so-called communitarianism**

In our previous points we have focussed on ways of restoring communitarianism in relation to more established communities, similar to what we have described as an *ethnic* or *national* group (bearing in mind all the problems that these loose definitions incur). On discussing this matter, we have also included small entities that to all intents and purposes behave like social *communi-*

*ties*, in that they distance their members from individualism and have them participate in the setting up of common ideals and projects. They thus share different values and ways of thinking from the rest of society: they represent the subculture of private organisations, social movements, etc. An example of these would be non-governmental organisations that offer help to the Third World, the elderly, the ill or marginalized people; as well as protest organisations, voluntary groups, green organisations, religious groups, sports associations, etc.

Perhaps these members do not identify themselves as a community or a culture, but they behave like social groups that have solidarity among their members by sharing common values. These community groups give strength to States because they are a way in which citizens can participate in public matters that concern them through a variety of initiatives. However, we cannot look at this too simplistically, given that some of these community groups have the dangerous tendency of taking on a criminal form, which we will be looking at in another section.

There is also the danger that each of these different groups are looking for very different things that are difficult to reconcile with each other, which does not alter the fact that some common ground is needed to suit them all (whether within their own State, or beyond that on a suprastatal or global level).



## 5. WHAT FOUNDATIONS NEED TO BE PRESENT IN ORDER TO RESTORE COMMUNITY MODELS?

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Following our previous section, we can ask ourselves how can we preserve different identities in the twenty-first century, or in other words, how can we restore community models? We are not going to look at the different political forms of self-government available that can sometimes offer cultural communities the legal and political tools they need to ensure their survival. These policies come in a variety of forms, both cultural and economic, and offer several ways in which cultural communities can express themselves. For this to take place, it is first necessary for a set of basic or global values to be developed.

### 5.1. The need for basic or global values

At the other end of the argument for maintaining our respect for diversity within the boundary of a State (and beyond, in the future), is the need for establishing a common legal framework, assuming that the communities are living within the same territorial boundaries (whether these be within a State as in the present day, or suprastatal as is predicted for the future). The starting point for developing these legal frameworks should be a global or basic agreed set of

values that apply to all communities, since laws will always reflect the basic ethical system of values of a nation. A type of global ethics would help to formulate laws for the whole planet on common issues so that the survival of all peoples could be protected. Within States, these global values should establish a foundational structure for the co-existence and solidarity of the various cultural communities living there.

The need for shared or global values is clear when we look at the new problems that are emerging in our society

today (whether ecological, relating to the distribution of wealth, the appearance of new medical technologies affecting circumstances where life is at its most fragile, etc.). These problems make us realise that we belong to the same human species in spite of all our differences. It also makes us realise that we share the same biosphere. Many of the issues mentioned above affect the entire human race. Therefore it is necessary to seek global solutions that are not limited to specific communities or States, or limited territorial boundaries. It is therefore necessary for us to agree on the basics, and at the same time to leave a wide margin of freedom for all the other issues of liberty that are more connected with different cultural traditions.

These basic values should be sought by all through common dialogue. The result of this would be a basic consensus on certain issues that would ensure the basic equality of all people. Other issues, such as values and ways of achieving happiness, should be left open so that all cultures can live them according to their principles. This dialogue would therefore be an intercultural dialogue. These *global ethics* would not be attempting to reconstruct a whole new form of ethics like those *lengthy discourses* that offer guidelines for all areas in life. It would only act as a guide, in the form of permanent values or basic principles, to enable the continued survival and humanisation of this globalised world.

These *basic ethics* would help to make up the global framework for co-existence at both a universal and national level. They would ensure respect for

cultural diversity, while at the same time guaranteeing a basic respect for all. These basic principles could be formed in the same way as a Declaration of rights and duties for all human beings. We are therefore proposing a broadening and modification of the existing Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. This was limited to affirming the rights of liberty and equality. Today we should add to that the rights and duties linked to cultural diversity and in relation to the environment

## **5.2. Some foundations to take into account when restoring identities in the 21st century**

It is now time to formulate a list of criteria and considerations in order to restore identities in the current century. To this end, we can outline the following:

### *1. The notion of justice to be used is one of equity*

Societies should understand justice as equity. This concept helps articulate liberty, equality and a respect for that which is different. It allows us to recognise that different rights apply to different people.

### *2. It is necessary to develop basic values in order to create a basic legal framework*

This acknowledgement of different rights also assumes that societies (whether they are States or suprastatal bodies) should not remain axiologically indifferent. Instead they should commit

to specific concrete values that develop *basic ethics* and should renounce their interference in the lifestyles of their citizens from different communities. They should then renounce their more detailed and intrusive system of values and guarantee they will instead follow the pattern of *basic ethics* in the interests of the public good and the rights of all communities. These basic or global ethics (supervised by legal structures of the State and suprastatal bodies) should incorporate basic equality between all members of the planet as a fundamental point, and this should be applicable regardless of culture, of the governing regime of the country or of the degree of political sovereignty that they wield. Although some would consider that one shared identity is that which defines citizenship within a nation and allows people to enjoy their constitutional rights by following democratic procedures (the context of basic values), we believe that sharing one single identity does not define citizenship. A set of basic values alone will not provide the complete axiological universe a person needs in order to develop fully. Let us remember that this so-called universal citizenship that is proposed by some authors can easily turn into one particular model being adopted as a universal one. Often the culture of the majority is taken as the universal culture, a trend that is seen in western civilisations. A truly universal citizenship should include permanent and shared moral foundations (basic ethics), which every inhabitant of planet Earth should possess as a human being, regardless of their culture or socio-economic status. This type

of citizenship could be outlined through real intercultural dialogue.

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societies should educate  
their members  
to appreciate diversity  
as a value

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### *3. It is necessary to educate people about the value of diversity*

Societies should educate their members to appreciate diversity as a value. The existence of different cultural communities can be seen as an enrichment of one's own culture. The right to belong to a particular community should be considered as being a primary right of a person. We should avoid models that preach uniformity or the assimilation of minority cultures, as well as discrimination in the name of culture, religion, etc. Nevertheless, for this to happen, we must understand that by promoting the rights of minority cultures to protect themselves, (whether they be immigrants, national minorities, those living in the receiving country, etc.) this does not mean going against other cultures.

### *4. Showing loyalty to a global framework that unites all cultures*

The different identities that live side by side within State or suprastatal boundaries should be equally loyal to the

common framework that unites them. Nevertheless, this is not as easy as it sounds; for example, in European countries where a common framework has been established through historical agreements that did include different cultures, but which still does not recognise the different cultures pertaining to more recent immigration patterns. These *new citizens* still lack a sense of belonging to the State in whose formation they played no part, and which often reflects western models. This is why it is difficult to talk about basic ethics or a basic legal framework when the existing model was originally developed by one particular culture. One example would be that of a new legal framework needed in a European State where there is now a large Islamic presence. According to the system of pre-existing values, when people want to reach an agreement on which religious festivals should be observed as holidays, it would seem logical to think that the decision should be reached by achieving a balance between festivals of Christian origin, the main historical tradition in European States, and festivals of Islamic origin.

##### *5. It is possible to have several different types of identity*

Every individual belongs to a community that gives them a primary identity and yet this identity should not pre-

vent other identities from complementing it. These multiple identities of individuals help communities to avoid becoming enclosed and help individuals to see that identities are dynamic (they evolve). One identity should not necessarily exclude another. One can be a good citizen of the USA (and show loyalty to one State), while following Islam (loyalty to a more far-reaching set of religious values). By being more European (a suprastatal boundary), it does not mean that we are being less Spanish (a State boundary), or less Catalanian (a cultural community with a non-State political background).

##### *6. Identity is built*

The identity of communities is built through dialogue with the current generation (individuals that currently belong to the community), in search of their collective desires. Let us remember that cultural traditions are constantly reinvented. We should not idealise historical cultural models to create our present identity. The history of a shared origin undoubtedly helps to create an identity, but this also needs to be able to respond to a constant process of rejuvenation by current generations. It should not remain entrenched in historical models, when the current reality has clearly changed. In conclusion, the notion of identity is continually being reinvented.

## EPILOGUE: WHAT CAN CHRISTIANITY BRING TO THE DEBATE IN ORDER TO CREATE A MORE COMMUNITY-ORIENTED SOCIETY?

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In our pluralist world, it is a good thing that these so-called basic values are beginning to appear that try to find some fundamental shared values in society, or as we would call them, rights (Declaration of Human Rights), with the aim of expanding upon them.

But as we have seen, communities with a more detailed set of values are also necessary, so that members can feel like they belong to that community. This plan for establishing a basic set of values, which we would call rights, is both a duty and a challenge. It should be created from the starting point of the various moral sensibilities that currently exist, in order to respond to the problems faced by humanity as a whole. It is also important that this basic set of values should require, as a shared principle, the fair distribution of resources among communities, so that no significant dif-

ferences exist among them. However, we should not forget that in order for this principle of fairness to prevail, it is first necessary to internalise another principle: that of one's duty towards others.

Christian ethics are capable of bringing about so-called: "*Agapean ethics*"<sup>19</sup> (which is not very different from the moral intuitions of other religious traditions, such as the Buddhist notion of *compassion*). This morality can work efficiently within the discussion to create a shared set of basic values. The values of Agapean ethics, such

as fraternity, are usually found in all systems of morality as the resulting outcome and not at the very foundations of their set of basic values. These values recognise the moral goodness of solidarity and unconditional love, but are usually found within a more detailed set of religious teachings. Instead, we would propose that solidarity and our duties towards the development of others should be found at the heart of this system of basic values, in the very foundations of this morality that would be shared by a variety of cultural communities.

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Christian ethics, based on faith in God the Father (and His Holy Mother), makes the rest of humanity into our “*brothers-sisters*” and on a social level, this belief should aid the construction of a society that is based on solidarity. If our duties towards others are the primary foundations for our behaviour, then the system of justice will no longer

be limited and equality will extend to incorporating a respect for that which is different. Communities that show solidarity towards other communities will be created because they would know that beyond cultural differences, a radical form of equality exists: that of being the son or daughter of the same Father/Mother. Therefore, a morality that is based on our obligations towards others will be expressed in the form of duties rather than individual rights, or at least, there will be a clearer correlation between the notion of duty and that of rights.

It is understandable then that this notion of morality would include, as a responsibility towards others, giving up our own individual rights, when these rights show any form of clear prejudice over another person. This notion of giving up one’s own rights should also bear in mind however, if it would cause others to lose the same rights in a non-voluntary way. If this were the case, in the context of collective rights, the rights of minorities would be placed in danger, and in the context of individual rights, the rights of the weakest or more disadvantaged members of the population would also be placed in jeopardy. The duties we have talked about then, would be our duties towards *others* and towards *future others, those belonging to future generations*”.

## NOTES

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1. S. HUNTINGTON, "The clash of civilisations", *Foreign Affairs* (Summer 1993).
2. Statistics (January 2004) from the Nielsen/NetRating group collected at the site [www.exitoexportador.com](http://www.exitoexportador.com). Figures on worldwide access to information and communication technologies are very significant, as they have developed a ranking system of access to IT resources for different countries.
3. M.T., KLAIRE, "La nueva geografía de los conflictos internacionales" (The new geography of international conflicts), *Foreign Affairs*, (Summer 2001), [in Spanish]. An interesting article on the conflicts surrounding energy and water resources and their link to geopolitics.
4. We will use the word "communitarianism" in a general sense. We understand that this word incorporates a variety of studies done in the eighties that focussed on a critique of liberalism. Within this movement some authors leaned more towards liberalism (C. Taylor), while others adopted a more socialist or republican stance (M. Sandel). Some took a more conservative standpoint (A. MacIntyre), while others like M. Walzer were more difficult to categorise. Later on they would also tackle issues relating to the right to diversity of cultures (W. Kymlicka).
5. G. CALHOUN, (eds.), *Social Theory and Politics of Identity*, Oxford, Blackwell, 1994, p. 9-10. Quoted in M. CASTELLS, *La era de la Información*, Madrid, Alianza Editorial, 1997, vol. 2, p. 28.
6. CASTELLS, *La era...* p. 30.
7. A. CASTIÑEIRA, "Ciudadanía e identidad en el contexto de la globalización" (Citizenship and identity in the context of globalisation), *Frontera 17* (January -March 2001), p. 35-49.
8. An interesting text by an American sociologist, that analyses the results of different types of work on people's character: "One of the unintended consequences of modern capitalism is that it has strengthened the value of place, aroused a longing for community. All the emotional conditions we have explored in the workplace animate that desire: the uncertainties of flexibility; the absence of deeply-rooted trust and commitment; the superficiality of teamwork; most of all, the spectre of failing to make something of oneself in the world, to get a life through one's work. All these conditions impel people to look for some other scene of attachment and depth". R. SENNETT, *La corrosión del carácter (The Corrosion of Character)*, Barcelona, Anagrama, 2000, p. 145.

9. N. KLEIN, *No Logo, el poder de las marcas*, (No Logo: taking aim at the brand bullies) Barcelona, Paidós, 2001, p. 155. The publicity agency Brain Waver, a division of DMB&B, interviewed 27,600 middle-class young people between the ages of 15 and 18 from 45 countries and drew these conclusions: "In spite of the cultural differences, they live in a parallel universe. They get up in the morning and put on their Levi's and their Nikes, they put on their coats, get their Sony Walkman and go to school" Chip Walker, Can TV Save the Planet, *American Demographics*, May 1966, p. 46.
10. A. GIDDENS, *Un mundo desbocado. Efectos de la globalización en nuestras vidas* (A runaway world. The effects of globalisation on our lives), Madrid, Taurus, 2000, chap.3.
11. Some authors describe "multiculturalism" as being aggregates of diverse cultural communities existing within a State that accepts their cultural diversity and does not attempt to assimilate them into one culture. These communities remain very isolated and live side by side within the State, accepting the basic legal framework that is often particularly representative of the majority culture. They describe "interculturalism" as something different, in that it begins by recognising the pluralism of cultures and the right for each culture to assert its own identity, yet it also asserts the necessary openness and dialogue that should exist between them. It possesses a more dynamic notion of culture, (cultures can evolve and interact with each other). Their common framework must be reached together and in a symmetrical manner.
12. F. REQUEJO, "Diferencias nacionales y federalismo asimétrico" (National differences and asymmetric federalism), *Claves de la Razón Práctica*, 59 (1996), p. 24-37.
13. C. TAYLOR, "Multiculturalismo y la política del reconocimiento" (Multiculturalism: Examining the Politics of Recognition), *Comunitat i nació* (dir. A. Castiñeira), Barcelona, Proa-Enciclopèdia Catalana, 1993, p. 209.
14. M. WALZER, *Spheres of Justice*, Oxford Blackwell, 1983.
15. M. SANDEL, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1982.
16. "In its strictest sense, the word race can be used to identify a group of individuals with the same mother tongue. In a broader sense, race is defined as a group of individuals united by common anthropology, linguistics, political history, etc, and whose very association constitutes its own system, an essentially cultural structure...": L. BRETON, *Las etnias*, Barcelona, Oikos-Tau, 1983, p. 11-12.
17. J. HABERMAS, "Ciudadanía e identidad nacional. Consideraciones sobre el futuro europeo" (Citizenship and national identity. Considerations on the future of Europe), *Debats* 39 (1992), p. 11-18.
18. W. KYMLICKA, *Ciudadanía multicultural* (Multicultural citizenship), Barcelona, Paidós, 1996, p. 57-66.
19. A concept introduced by E. Pellegrino (E. PELLEGRINO; D. THOMASMA, *The Christian Virtues and the Medical Practice*, Washington D.C, Georgetown University Press, 1996, p. 29) applied to medical ethics and identified with Christian morality, due to its standpoint on unconditional obligations towards others. The study of F. TORRALBA (*Filosofía de la medicina*, Institut Borja de Bioètica-Mapfre, Madrid, 2001, Chap.13) on the work of E. Pellegrino is interesting.