

The challenges of a complex and global society

Vincenzo Zani*

To study a complex society from a sociological point of view at a time in which national and international scenarios provide unprecedented challenges is quite a demanding task.

Nonetheless, scholars of social sciences cannot avoid this scientific responsibility. Sociologist Z. Bauman recently wrote: "If sociology still intends to fulfil its function, which has always been that of nurturing dialogue between the human experience and its interpretation, then it must necessarily refocus its attention on the changes occurring in the social context"¹.

Faced with the growing complexity of life which is leaving an impact on individuals and modern society, one of the questions which spontaneously arises is: "Does the type of social relationship that characterises a complex society (the constantly changing western civilisation and international relations among different cultures), promote and increase the growth of individual men and women and their communities?"²

In essence, we are asking if in our complex society there are significant experiences in which we can scientifically trace the elements of new sociological paradigms, such as that of "brotherhood," that help us to analyse the typology of social interactions³.

In order to respond to such a question we need to outline the typical traits of a complex society with its negative aspects, but also with the various opportunities that social beings can take advantage of.

1. A COMPLEX SOCIETY AND ITS PRINCIPAL PHENOMENA

We need to consider that the phenomenon of a complex society⁴ took root in the 1980s and soon other challenges were added to it, such as globalisation and a pluralistic society⁵. To theoretically define these concepts, which interlink and overlap, we would need a multidisciplinary approach. Here, I will limit myself to the principal expressions and characteristics of a complex society that influence the lives of individuals and society. I will focus especially on globalisation, which is particularly pervasive and which has almost replaced sociological reflection on a complex society.

1.1. Globalisation

One could wonder whether globalisation is a novel element or whether it is a more advanced phase of development of our market economies, which

* Pedagogist, sociologist. Present "Under-secretary of the Congregation for Catholic Education at the Holy See".

developed from capitalism.⁶ Many hold that globalisation is an expanding process well underway, favoured especially by the use of new technology. It would be a grievous error to think of globalisation only in terms of an economic trend, thereby limiting its action solely to that level. In actual fact it interests the fields of politics, culture and technology besides economics and has spread mostly due to the growth of communication systems.

Various studies on globalisation have shown the positive and negative aspects which characterise this phenomenon, and there are various divergent thoughts among scholars regarding the benefits deriving from the process of globalisation. As Gallino writes, one can identify at least four different opposing views of various scholars in this regard: "In the first place there are those for whom globalisation is an irresistible process which is transforming the whole world, and they moreover insist that there are only benefits to be derived from it. Even though the number of those nurturing some kind of doubt on this view grew towards the end of the nineteen nineties, this position was the one with the greatest number of supporters in the beginning of the years two thousand."⁷ Secondly there are those who do not perceive any big changes in the economic policies of today, and hold that globalisation is a phenomenon which will interest the society of the future. Thirdly there are those who can only see the negative effects brought by globalisation, and fourthly Gallino says that there is a minority who believe that globalisation is an original process of major importance, which creates both negative and positive effects⁸.

In any case globalisation sets in motion a sizeable network of interdependence and interconnection, a type of process of standardisation that unites the different societies into a "global village", a widespread system that produces a worldwide economy, a cross-border culture and promotes international transactions.

Nevertheless this phenomenon brings new elements with it, which are more *qualitative* than quantitative. One can mention three aspects that distinguish it.

- a) the restructuring of our organisational productive processes and our understanding of the connection between the political and economic fields. "Today national governments feel that they are being forced to give up a part of their sovereignty to other emerging players and stakeholders in society, together with economic forces,"⁹ with the result that economic factors bear more weight on decisions than political factors;
- b) the general increase in wealth, which is the cause for a progressive decrease in poverty in an absolute sense, but is contributing to the increase of poverty in a relative sense. We are referring to the disparity among the different social groups; and this is true not only in the case of the North and South of the world, but also within developed nations themselves. This disparity sparks conflicts and protests;¹⁰
- c) the tendency towards cultural standardisation, that is, the annulment or lack of appreciation for the cultural diversity of nations and regions of the world, which minimizes the richness and originality of different identities.

Along with these aspects, globalisation presents another implication: due to the growing connection between nations – which obliterates borders that used to define territories, cultures and societies – the contradictions which exist in every society are projected on a worldwide scale.¹¹ Since there is a dichotomy between the place of origin of a culture and the place where it is adopted, a fragmentation occurs wherein ethnic, cultural, political and economic panoramas merge together and become confused, and their well-defined characteristics are lost.

Above all, these considerations, which are in constant change and always merging into each other, give life to an ever-changing kaleidoscope of new configurations.

Therefore, globalisation constitutes a determining component of modern civilisation that influences it in a contradictory and conflicting manner.¹² It creates interdependence not only economically, but also politically and socially, involving people, organisms and countries around the world and generating new organisational and cultural structures.¹³ Its characteristic drive is the expansion and acceleration of worldwide interconnection in all aspects of contemporary society, be it cultural, criminal, political, environmental, financial and spiritual.¹⁴

Given these sociological conditions, can substantial networks of solidarity widen people's spaces of freedom? In order to answer this question we need to highlight the effects and risks produced by globalisation, and also analyse the phenomena directly connected to it.

1.2 *The risks inherent in globalisation*

The first risk concerns the emergence of a *new form of competition*, foreign to previous generations, which generates insecurity. Whereas historically the creation of new wealth, which brought better living conditions, used to reduce the level of uncertainty in individuals and groups, in the transition we are going through we are faced with a society where the production of uncertainty appears to be endemic to the very generation of wealth itself. This syndrome of uncertainty has become a social illness, evident especially among the younger generations.

A second risk, yet of an economic nature, which may explode, has to do with the *threat to our so-called social rights of citizenship*, or rather the entitlement to *welfare* (wellbeing measured in terms of assistance, social security, access to education, etc.). The global employment market is constantly pushing firms to move their production centres towards those areas with the lowest labour costs. Therefore, the globalisation of market competition can lead to alarming reductions in terms of social assistance, thereby provoking a change in the rules of the game in economics.¹⁵

A third risk concerns the relationship between globalisation and democracy. In a certain way, globalisation deducts from the economic and financial power of the national state compromising its autonomy and the internal balance created between the different social classes. The threat to governments' capability to exercise their internal sovereignty becomes a threat to democracy itself as a result of diminishing trust in democratic institutions.

Thus globalisation creates a contradictory situation: whereas it aids the diffusion of democracy in territories where it was previously nonexistent, at the same time it unveils the limitations of democratic structures in those countries with a long history of democracy, where people seem to become disillusioned in its regards. This creates the need to further democratise existent institutions so that they could be able to respond to the present requirements of global society¹⁶.

Democracy in fact is similar to a container which must be filled with participation, and subsequently with values. Today instead it appears to be stalled, formal and missing the necessary instruments to tackle problems which have become worldwide, and is also lacking in terms of participation.

A mature democracy demands profound rethinking and an appreciable creative capacity to produce new tools and models and bring about change on a global and local level. Above all, it needs stir up in citizens an “attraction” to, enthusiasm and a “liking” for politics as the “art of governing” the city. It is not an easy task, and yet it is necessary and urgent.

To sum up, the subsequent reduction of suitable spaces where discussion and negotiation can take place, where culture and values promoting sociality are nurtured can be considered to be a negative aspect of globalisation. Therefore, to live in the midst of globalisation¹⁷ can jeopardize social relationships and could result in the progressive demise of peoples’ cultures, generating disorientation, rebellion and cultural emptiness.

1.3 Other phenomena connected to globalisation

Besides globalisation there are other phenomena that, in some way, are considered collateral effects or connected variables.

- a) *Migratory processes*. The movement of millions of individuals is producing an unprecedented mingling of peoples, races, societies, and faiths, putting at risk different “traditional” convictions. In relation to the past, the novelty of such a phenomenon can be seen in the fact that these groups are becoming “subjects”, a people clearly identified with their own culture, and no longer exploited, dominated or passive subjects of colonialism. And so the questions of *diversity* and *pluralism* that are typical of a multiethnic society arise.¹⁸ Widespread cultural pluralism is considered to be an achievement of our civilisation, as a result of many factors, such as tolerance, freedom of expression, democracy and the acknowledgement of the dignity of every person.

However cultural pluralism often presents a rigid distinction between the public sphere and the private sphere of life. The public sphere is ruled by laws which are common to all and universally accepted, whereas the private sphere is a place for freely expressing divergent opinions. Evidently conflicts can easily arise in such a context¹⁹.

It is a matter of identifying the means which would allow us to *hold together* a society which is increasingly culturally heterogeneous, indicating principles and norms which regulate the living together of different subjects within the same historic-social configuration²⁰.

- b) The *scientific revolution*, with its numerous applications in the different fields of human endeavour, has not only changed our social context but above all our mentality, creating a growing trust in its daring experiments. Hence shadowy and mysterious areas have apparently vanished as scientific knowledge brought certainties and therefore progress. Consequently, secularisation has rapidly spread forcing religion and faith out of the picture, in the name of formal reasoning. Unfortunately, reasoning alone is lame and comes up short in answering the growing questions that we are faced with everyday.²¹
- c) The latest *technological developments* applied to mass media enable those equipped with these tools to be consumers, receivers and authors of information and communication all at the same time. The media considerably increase the possibilities of communication linking us directly with events and giving us the impression that we are simultaneously living the same reality without being in the same place together. However this access to communication is filtered by the use of languages and tools that create, decompose and recombine a reality that is no longer received directly. The widespread reality is both present and absent, near and distant, temporal and extemporal; it is a virtual reality. While technology offers great opportunities, it also has negative anthropological repercussions; in a virtual world which is instantaneous and controls one's imagination, it becomes difficult for human beings to find a place with a historic and temporal dimension²².
- d) A complex global society has rendered uncertain and confused the system of norms and values that gave meaning and significance to the moral choices that provided a foundation for our common living. The normal guidelines no longer apply – all of them – and we find ourselves in a society without “points of reference” in which each one is called to subjectively build and develop one's own code of behaviour, following – when capable of doing so – his or her own conscience. This phenomenon is defined as *moral relativism*, the absence of certain objective norms, of a set of principles that serve as a reference point for our actions. We find ourselves before a sort of AIDS of the spirit, a dangerous syndrome of spiritual immunodeficiency. The syndrome is spread by the culture and mentality of our times that imparts deviant ideas on men, on women, on life, on relationships, and so forth, and spreads a mentality capable of destroying the values that are at the basis of our lives, of love, of families, of education and of society. This relativism presents a grave danger for confusion in which we see, as John Paul II said, that people's consciences, obscured and darkened by such conditioning, “are finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between good and evil in what concerns the basic values of human life.”²³

To sum up these multiple aspects, we can say that globalisation gives life to a society expressed on multidimensional levels with noteworthy effects on the economy, politics, culture and religious membership.²⁴

From a sociological viewpoint, we note a paradox within these processes: the expansion of an *individualised society*. In fact, while the thrust towards globalisation is spreading, as the sociologist Z. Bauman wrote, “Bonds between people are becoming increasingly fragile and volatile, difficult to nurture for prolonged periods of time, needy of incessant vigilance.”²⁵

2. POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALISATION

In the face of this situation, we cannot nurture a romantic desire of turning back to a pre-global society with the economy, socio-cultural elements and media of that time, and look away from the present and detract our energy from our duty to attempt to promote any possible social action. However it’s a matter of understanding fully the changes occurring around us in order to discover the dynamics of these social processes. Some sociologists, like Luhmann, Beck and Bauman are attempting to do so.

By way of example I would like to mention Prof. Bauman from Poland, who describes our complex and global society in terms of the idea of “liquidity”; every aspect of society is characterised by a strong instability which the author describes using the concept of “liquidity”, and which he explains by mentioning three main themes²⁶.

First of all he mentions the theme of *freedom*. Modernity has freed individuals from several dependencies; however is such freedom good or bad? Individuals today feel lost, precisely because they are not tied by any kind of bond. Today’s modernity is different from that of the past: in both cases individuals try to beat their own limits, but in today’s conditions there are two new traits: one no longer believes that the road to exceeding one’s limits will ever have a reachable goal²⁷ and, above all, there is today a de-regularisation and privatisation of tasks.

Linked to the problems of freedom there is also individualism. The author introduced the idea of a shift towards a less rigid type of capitalism, or rather a Weber style of capitalism oriented towards emphasising the choice of methods and bureaucracy to someone who is instead thinking of the goals to reach. Consequently even consumer attitudes change, so much so that consumerism coincides more with an area of desire, rather than the satisfaction of expressed needs. Consumption becomes an element of constructing one’s identity.

The extent of liquid modernity also depends on a given background in time and space. In many places of contemporary society, in urban situations, people tend to banish others, or to nullify all diversity, hence these places become no place at all. Even the temporal sphere presents new characteristics: due to the greater speed of communication and ease with which people move from one place to the other, liquid modernity has rendered many experiences to be immediately accessible. Precisely because of this focus on all that is immediate, the elements of memories of the past and hope in the future are undermined, whereas these elements have been up to now “cultural and moral bridges between escapism and endurance”²⁸.

It is a question, then, of facing new social issues with courage and creativity and of getting equipped with suitable tools to understand, through sociological analysis, what new roads we have to pursue.

2.1. The need for new social paradigms

These far-reaching and marked social changes call for ideas and paradigms capable of interpreting such complexity: one of them being, undoubtedly, that of “*brotherhood*.” Chiara Lubich, in speaking of this during the second Interdependence Day in Rome, on September 12, 2004, said: “The thrust towards unity is an unquenchable aspiration in the heart of each citizen, of each society, of every nation. I have learned to recognize the signs that mark a step forward for humanity, to the point of being able to affirm that its story is none other than the slow but steady journey towards universal brotherhood.”²⁹

If we consider the past, we realize that the idea of one human family, mentioned by philosophers and thinkers since the 18th century, is more pronounced now; indeed there is an urgent need for it today. In this era of globalisation and interdependence, however, the impulses and attempts to build a common human family can be better appreciated if they are measured by the paradigm of “brotherhood” and social relations, in the context of historical-cultural values integrated into society.

John Paul II has invited us on several occasions to reflect on the need to *humanise and govern globalisation*, recalling that “the processes of the globalisation of markets and media do not have inherent negative ethical connotations, and therefore there is no justification for an outright condemnation of them. Nevertheless those processes which in principle promote progress can generate mixed or negative consequences.”³⁰ This occurs especially where there is a lack of respect for the dignity of the human being and the principle of the common good.

This leads to the conclusion that when globalisation is removed from a humanistic-communitarian dimension this can prove to be an additional support for those who are powerful and create even more serious imbalances than those that already exist. It is therefore necessary to maintain the human element that allows these processes to be shaped by values of equity and solidarity. These conditions could be guaranteed by international law and guided by an empowered government on a worldwide level.

The paradigm of brotherhood enables the forces which push society towards globalisation to be measured and valued for their positive worth. It can also become a useful instrument in monitoring the fate of the individual in a complex society. One notices, in other terms, that this fate is a continuous reaching of transitory solutions capable of opening horizons which always contain the other with whom one can open up in communication. From this one is able to know oneself, and to give sense and solidity to relationships among individuals, social groups and culture groups.

On the basis of the above-mentioned considerations, we can define other possible solutions to the challenges of globalisation.

2.2. *One step beyond human rights*

The juridical-political revolution of the twentieth century recognized the need for worldwide solidarity among people and nations.³¹ Human rights represented the attempt to validate this fact. They were founded on basic human values expressed in their entirety with regard to the whole person and all people.

The code of human rights transcends the division between what is national and international. It surpasses apparently insurmountable boundaries, defining new ones, and raises the personal obligation to observe the basic rules of democracy to a global level.³² In fact, the centrality of human rights allows for the surveillance of conflicts beyond boundaries, and it also opens the doors to other countries through *humanitarian interventions*.³³

Therefore, the question on the basic premise of human rights responds to the need to find a common platform in a complex and multicultural society that allows for intercultural relationships and communication and, when seen in this light, they do indeed make all this possible.

The universal application of the paradigm of *brotherhood* introduces a further observation. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically refers to the principle of brotherhood³⁴, as a criterion which should inspire all persons in their social behaviour. This article nevertheless has not found a concrete application in strictly juridical terms, as it has been overwhelmed by political-economic interests. In this context I would like to give attention to the concept of brotherhood not only as a juridical principle, but as a sociological paradigm. In the typically post-modern debate about the dominion of the West, human rights are subject to criticism due to their excessively western form.³⁵ The search for cultural roots and the subsequent rejection of standardisation go hand in hand with reclaiming one's dignity on the part of the minority cultures.

The debate does not centre on human rights as such but on the fact that they comprise just those (and only those) expressed by the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. We need to go one step further in order to avoid forms of fundamentalism and ethnic-religious conflicts. This is why it is necessary to reconsider human rights in the perspective of the paradigm of universal brotherhood, not so much by eliminating what we already have, but by further developing it in extent and in depth³⁶.

2.3 *Towards a pluralistic democratic order*

To create a new basis for common living and dialogue among peoples and cultures, we need to promote a new order with a pluralistic dimension that subjugates power to democratic monitoring. Here too, the principle of brotherhood can be of help.

This is the very perspective outlined by some philosophers so as to help citizens of the global era to live their multiple memberships within society and their corresponding spheres of governance. Each of these experiences is lived

independently in each realm, and yet, people are also able to live a *communitarian* experience.

For example, the English philosopher Held proposed to build forms of government capable of respecting the autonomy of the people within a limited State, but capable of going beyond the State territory. He advanced the idea of creating “common structures of political action” in which everyday problems can be addressed. In other words, to create spaces in which people, while pursuing shared interests, concretely experience democracy by seeking to satisfy at least two conditions. These conditions are to recognize differences and to work to overcome them, and to apply everywhere the process of public and responsible decision-making, defined as non-individualistic structural self-determination.³⁷

2.4 Towards a trans-national civil society

According to some authors, the challenges of globalisation can be answered by promoting a trans-national civil society reflecting a unitary vision of the world.

If it is true that the underlying drive of globalisation shattered the political and democratic balance between society and the State, typical of the onset of modernity in which the State contained society, then it is necessary to build a trans-national State with a worldwide outlook, capable of valuing the different local expressions.³⁸

To avoid the risk of standardisation and to safeguard diversity, we need, first of all, to welcome and respect the riches and potentials of these local expressions without expecting to fit everything into a set framework. The task of interrelating people, places, cultures and institutions in line with the principle called “pluralistic empathy” by the sociologist U. Beck still remains.³⁹

This can be achieved through cross-border venues by applying the principle of horizontal subsidiary character, allowing organisations of civil society to go beyond the mere task of *advocacy* and to assume well-defined tasks of *polycymaking*.⁴⁰

Clearly, to welcome the principle of subsidiary character in all its possible applications requires the adoption of a new legal framework that gives ample recognition to these types of social agents even on a legal level.

2.5 Towards humanising globalisation

The sociological paradigm of brotherhood can be the right instrument to trace and highlight, through personal biographies and social experiences, the human elements of globalisation in a complex society. It is also the tool capable of deciphering the signs of interdependence that call for “communitarian” perspectives.

Here are a few examples.

First of all, the paradigm of brotherhood can be converted into measurable criteria to gauge the interest of citizens in institutions and political debates and their participation in civil life.⁴¹

These criteria can also capture how “pure relationships” (a term coined by A. Giddens), founded solely on the stimulus of a primal and incessant desire to satisfy one’s needs, if enriched by motivational content and stability, create stronger bonds⁴². This is true because one’s personal life and the social bonds that ensue from our relationships are at the root of the larger macro picture.⁴³

These measurable criteria can demonstrate how one’s personal life, understood as an active and creative existence, roots a person in a specific social milieu to which he or she contributes (no man is an island onto his own). Thus one’s personal destiny is connected with collective societal conditions. We are speaking about the very essence of democracy where personal capacity is directly connected with institutions, making it possible to reinforce the link between private and public.

Finally, the paradigm of brotherhood allows us to measure the possibilities for peace on a macro-social level. Here one should analyse this matter more deeply due to the great relevance this theme has in the present context, but we will limit ourselves to mention it briefly. In order to give a human face to globalisation, it is not enough to bear peaceful witness in the modern world. We need to get the public sector involved on two fronts. The first is to recognize the need for a world authority that can regulate conflicts and which transcends national borders. This means that it is not enough to work towards the education of non-violence, but we need to give a rational outlet to the moral consensus for the qualified use of force. In this regard, it may be of help to consider that economic and military power can no longer guarantee security today as it has done in past centuries. The second front is to raise awareness about the options for resolving conflicts that do not involve war⁴⁴. Such credibility should be based on a principle which is an alternative to the now obsolete principle of deterrence⁴⁵

3. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES?

The social changes described above pose a question as to the role of social sciences and the task of the sociologist.

Today a new current of thought is developing⁴⁶, which holds that sociology continually goes beyond the existing boundaries between academic speculation and the subjective experience of its “empirical subjects.”

Certainly, the paradigm of brotherhood draws the sociologist nearer to everyday life and the human condition. It cannot negate the reasons that prompt this current of thought to state that sociology “cannot be limited only to the reality that it wants to observe. Rather, in the process of examining the empirical world’s essential features, there begins its very transformation. We can say that this is the task of the sociologist: to question reality.”⁴⁷

The many experiences of solidarity and brotherhood lived at the grass-roots level by ordinary citizens, are silently filtering into our global society. They give us some insight on the development of social projects that are rooted in different geo-political environments both on a micro and macro level.

To be a science at the service of concrete human experiences, sociology will have to objectively sharpen its measurable tools to capture the evolution of

these experiences. It will have to show those aspects that go beyond the individual sphere, clear out the cobwebs that have formed obscuring the cause and effect between individual choices and the collective circumstances that produce them.⁴⁸

Therefore sociology must play a role in the processes of a complex and global society in order to intercept them with the tools that can capture the signs of innovation, even if only embryonic, and thus contribute to forging new roads for the future.

-
1. Bauman, Z., *Una nuova condizione umana*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2003, p. 60.
 2. See Araújo, V., *La persona nel cuore della società complessa*, in "Gen's" 3-4 (2005).
 3. As previously underlined, the paradigm of fraternity is here proposed as a new sociological concept, and one must clearly state that this term has hardly ever been used in sociology, and is thus not found in any sociology dictionary.
 4. It is difficult to define in sociological terms the concept of a complex society, or better yet, of "complexity" in reference to social systems. This is due to the fact that there is a considerable delay in social sciences in developing a concept that takes into consideration the current changes and the new theories being developed (See Luhmann, N., under "*Complessità sociale*," in *Enciclopedia delle Scienze Sociali*, Roma 1992, p. 129). Certainly one way to study this complexity is by discerning the effects of such a widespread phenomenon or its multiple aspects. One of the ways to identify a complex society is by noting the multitude of emergencies that are distinguished by their diversity, to which the social systems are called to respond immediately even though in different ways, with the end goal of recomposing a sense of wholeness. This intergration has characteristics and developments that over time are marked by, at a conceptual level, principles of group inclusion and hierarchy or, instead, by a discontinuity understood as differentiated inclusion, in which the right to diversity is recognized (See N. Ammaturo, "Individual Identity and Globalization," in "Studi di sociologia" 3 [2004] pp. 350-351).
 5. See Beck, U., *La società cosmopolita. Prospettive dell'epoca postnazionale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2003
 6. See Zamagni, S., "*Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazione*", in F.U.C.I., *Globalizzazione e solidarietà*, Studium, Roma 2002, p. 34.
 7. L. Gallino, *Globalizzazione e disuguaglianze*, Laterza, Bari 2000, p.98.
 8. In this regard the thoughts of the sociologist Z. Bauman are of utmost importance. He says: "To resist the process of globalisation would be similar to hold a protest against a solar eclipse. Globalisation, seen as that process which creates bonds of interdependence on a worldwide level, intertwining traits of vulnerability that is reciprocally induced among the inhabitants of the whole world, regardless of their distance in space and time, is now a reality." (Z. Bauman, *Una nuova condizione umana*, cit., p.76).
 9. See Zamagni, S., "*Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazione*", cit. p. 36.
 10. See George S, *Un altro mondo è possibile se...*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2004. This volume gathers the alternative proposals to globalisation that matured within the anti-global movements that gather periodically in worldwide forums.
 11. See Ferrari Occhionero, M. (ed.) *I giovani e la nuova cultura socio-politica in Europa. Tendenze e prospettive per il nuovo millennio*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2001.
 12. See Giddens, A., *Il mondo che cambia. Come la globalizzazione ridisegna la nostra vita*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2000, p. 25.
 13. See Villagrasa, J., *Globalizzazione, Un mondo migliore?*, Logos Press, Roma 2003.
 14. Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., e Perraton, J. (ed), *Global Transformations*, Stanford University Press, Stanford 1999, p. 2.
 15. See Acocella, N. (ed.) *Globalizzazione e stato sociale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1999.
 16. See Zamagni, S., "*Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazione*", cit. p. 52.
 17. This is also the title of a work of Z. Bauman, *Dentro la globalizzazione. Le conseguenze sulle persone*, Laterza, Bari 1999.

-
18. Multiethnic societies, also present in the past, are more widespread today. They call attention to the issues which multicultural milieus present in terms of traditions and lifestyles (See Cesareo, V., *Società multiethniche e multiculturalismi*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2000).
 19. Only through proper multicultural behaviour can cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all be fully respected and valued. (see Rex, J., *Le multiculturalisme et l'intégration politique dans les villes européennes*, in "Cahiers internationaux de Sociologie", Puf, 45 [1998] 105, pp.261-280).
 20. See Cesareo, V., *Società multiethniche e multiculturalismo*, cit. p.134.
 21. See Araújo, V., *La persona nel cuore della società complessa*, cit. p.85.
 22. See Du Retail, G., *Les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication et l'avenir de l'humanité*, (typewritten text), paper delivered during the General Assembly of FIUC (Entebbe, 22-26 July 2003) dealing with: *Nouvelles technologies et progrès de l'humanité*.
 23. John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* (25 March 1995), n. 4.
 24. Given the process of economic globalisation, many firms create an atmosphere of competition that can involve businesses and even nations. Transnational politics is growing without democratic legitimacy thus creating a dilemma for democracy. The changing face of our societies with the multiple ethnic realities can generate a certain amount of confusion, but it also gives rise to the need for a worldwide society (See Beck, U., *La società cosmopolita*, cit., pp. 78-80).
 25. Bauman, Z., *Una nuova condizione umana*, cit. p. 67.
 26. See Bauman, Z., *Modernità liquida*, Laterza, Bari 2002
 27. See *ibidem.*, p. 19
 28. *Ibidem.*, p. 147.
 29. Lubich, C., "Il nostro orizzonte," in "Città Nuova" 1 (2005), p. 7.
 30. John Paul II, "Discorso alla Fondazione Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice," in "L'Osservatore Romano", 10 maggio 1998, p. 5.
 31. See Cotta, S., *Il diritto naturale e l'universalizzazione del diritto* in *Diritto naturale e diritti dell'uomo all'alba del XXI secolo* (ed.Unione Giuristi Cattolici Italiani), Giuffrè, Roma 1993, p. 26.
 32. "The language of human rights changes the basis of world politics and society opening them to outside criticism, monitoring and interventions. (Beck, U., *La società cosmopolita*, cit., p. 65).
 33. See *ibidem.*
 34. "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." (Article 1)
 35. For example, one scholar affirms that "human rights are universal if they are considered from a western point of view, but they are not universal if they are considered from outside." (Pannikar, R., *E' universale il concetto di diritti dell'uomo?* in "Volontari e terzo mondo", 1990, pp. 40-41).
 36. During the *World Conference on Human Rights* held by the United Nations in Vienna (Austria) from the 14th to the 25th of June 1993, numerous problems arose in the international debate regarding the different interpretation of some fundamental rights, especially that given by emerging countries. These rights were not, moreover, "new" rights, needing an initial analysis of their content, their objects and situation, but rights which were considered to be consolidated in their substance, efficacy and observance. One need only mention for example the request to revise the following: the right of individuals and Nations not to be subject to any form of *discrimination* (the concept of discrimination today has implications which are very different from those encountered fifty years ago); the right of *self-determination*; the relationship between *democracy* and *human rights* (which today must necessarily include also a third element, *development*) (See Buonomo, V., *I diritti umani nelle relazioni internazionali*, Pontificia Università Lateranense – Mursia, Roma 1997, pp.61-80).
 37. See Held, D., *Democrazia e ordine globale*, Asterios, Trieste 1999.
 38. See Beck, U., *Che cos'è la globalizzazione*, Carrocci, Roma 1999.

-
39. *Ibidem*, p. 16.
40. Such an objective is based on the availability of nations to transfer “portions” of internal sovereignty to other entities, such as NGOs or other types of social structures, better equipped to work in certain local or transnational areas. Actually, in many international experiences promoted by these entities, we note that because they have no particular interests to protect, they are able to conclude projects that meet concrete and universal needs better than the various governmental bureaucracies (See Zamagni, S., *Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazione*, cit., pp. 59ss).
41. See Bourdieu, P., *Propos sur le champ politique*, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, Lyon 2000, pp. 46-47. This author holds that by increasing participation, risks are reduced of what he defined as *pensée unique*; a sort of uncontested common sense that rules and is mentioned daily by the media and by public figures of every political persuasion.
42. “A pure relationship possesses a dynamism which is totally different from the more traditional social bonds: it depends on a process of active trust which induces one subject to open up to another person [...]. A pure relationship is implicitly democratic [...], it is based on communication, in a way that the understanding of the other person’s point of view becomes essential. Discussion or dialogue is the basis which builds the relationship, which is at its best if the persons involved do not hide too much from each other, and practically nurture reciprocal trust. And trust has to be cultivated; it cannot be taken for granted. Finally, a good relationship should not be subject to arbitrary power, coercion or violence. All these qualities relate to the values of political democracy.” (Giddens, A., *Il mondo che cambia*, cit., pp.78-79).
43. “Personal relationships, whose first objective is sociability, when imbued by loyalty and authenticity, become part of the social situations of modernity as well as the global institutes.” (Giddens, A., *Le conseguenze della modernità*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1994, p. 122).
44. See Zamagni, S., *Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazione*, cit., pp. 63-64.
45. It may be useful, in this context, to be acquainted with the social teachings of the Church, which have been well summarized in the recently published Compendium of Social Doctrine: “The search for alternative solutions to war in order to resolve international conflicts has today acquired an urgency of a dramatic nature, due to the terrifying force of the present means of destruction, accessible even to medium and small powers. The ever increasing close connections existing between nations all over the world render the task of limiting the consequences of a conflict extremely difficult or practically impossible. It is hence essential to search for the causes giving rise to a conflict of war, especially those which are linked to structured situations of injustice, of misery and exploitation, and all effort should be made to remove such causes” (n.498). “States do not always possess adequate instruments to effectively guarantee their own defense: hence the need and importance of international and regional organizations arises. These must be able to cooperate so as to intervene in conflicts and favour peace, establishing relationships of mutual trust capable of rendering impossible the idea of resorting to war” (n.499) (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2004).
46. See above all the positions of Bourdieu, P. (*La misère du monde*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris 1993, pp. 1449-1554), shared also by Bauman, Z.
47. Bauman, Z., cit. p. 45.
48. “Those who have the good fortune of dedicating their lives to the study of the social world cannot remain in a neutral and indifferent position, detached from the struggle which involves the very destiny of this world” (Lanzmann, C. – Redeker, R., *Les méfaits d’un rationalisme simplificateur*, in “Le Monde,” 18th September 1998, p. 14).