

Franco Troiano

Entrepreneurs and the small modern business

Entrepreneurship
as the duty
and virtue of salvation



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Cover image

Visual metaphor of small entrepreneurs
saved by their small
religious and creative wings.

About the author

In 1977, Franco Troiano (born in 1944) founded the Eurologos Group in Brussels. Nowadays, the group comprises of three pilot companies (Eurologos, Littera Graphis and Telos) and more than twenty "glocalized" offices on four continents.

Since the 1990s, Franco has written and published several books on applied translatology, which are available on the Internet. A practising Catholic, he is Head of his communication group which, of course, constantly opens new agencies across the world.

Active in the fight against the nihilism and relativism of our time, he gives several talks, even in European universities, of which some texts have been published on his companies' website (www.eurologos.com).

Other published works from this author:

Translation, Adaptation & Multilingual Editing

With J. Permentiers and E. Springael,
TCG Editions, Brussels, 1994,
translated in 5 languages
(EN, DE, IT, ES and NL)

“Destra, sinistra o centro? Sopra”

TCG Editions, Brussels, 1994,

“Traduttori, Tre racconti”

two editions in Italian,
then translated into French, English,
Spanish and Dutch
TCG Edizioni, Milan, 1994 and 1996

Jerome

written in Italian,
translated in English, German,
Dutch, Spanish, Greek and Italian
TCG Editions, Brussels, 1998

Imaginary dialogue between Gutenberg and Saint Jerome Imaginary dialogue between Gutenberg, Berners-Lee and Saint Jerome

written in French and translated into five languages
TCG Editions, Brussels, 2006

Glocal

written in French
and translated into five languages
TCG Editions, Brussels, 2007

Multilingual services betrayed by monolocalism

The honour of the language industry saved by “glocalism”

written in french and translated into Italian, English, Spanish and Dutch

TCG Editions, Brussels, 2010

**To my two children,
Didier and Odile,
who have, since childhood,
stood on the shoulders
of their parents.
I hope that they continue
to reach even higher.**

The layout of this book and the illustration
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**“Homo sine pecunia
imago mortis”
(A man without money
is the image of death)**

Cardinal Giuseppe Siri
(Genova, Italy, 1906 – † 1989)

Note from the editor (or the blurb)

Entrepreneurship by the entrepreneur

Writing a book advocating entrepreneurs and, also, small entrepreneurs is always going to be a challenge fit only for daredevils nowadays.

The dominant culture of work has often relegated businesses to where they make a loss or where soul, welfare or justice play no part in the business.

In addition, this terrible reputation – which is barely concealed – is several centuries old. Even Catholics have done it, with pseudo-theological justifications, resorting to almost shameful categorizations.

Therefore the author of this book, promoting the traditionally “outrageous” small entrepreneur, must be a prototypical example of these little-known heroes.

Our author has been one for more than thirty-five years: without having ever attended university (of which he is very proud). But he is regularly invited to hold conferences in various countries in Europe.

Founder and manager of twenty of his business’ offices over four continents, author of several professional books published in different languages, also available on the Internet, and renowned by his peers and competitors as a leader in applied research for his profession, Franco Troiano expresses himself as a modern citizen of the globalized world. Or, as he prefers to specify, the “glocalized” world. In the third section of this book there will also be a more direct and personal interview with him.

Introduction

Eight words to say it

What am I going to discuss in this little book?

In essence, it is based on eight words. These make up the title and subtitle of this essay: “entrepreneurs”, “business” but more specifically in this case, “small” and “modern” business; “entrepreneurship”, “duty”, “virtue” and finally, the third adjective, the most important, “saving”.

With the last word, it speaks of the objective, the very purpose of our existence: work.

In fact, what could be put – humanely, modestly and without over-exaggeration – in the eulogy at our funerals?

Our jobs. Our work, our activities and the results, however big or small.

We must analyze and reanalyze our most important – always our first – job not only in quantitative terms.

And, as all human action is but limited, I will try to focus my remarks regarding business: besides, it is spoken of so little and often using incorrect terms, regularly in a preconceived manner.

I have especially tried to do it shedding some light on the general concept of *entrepreneurship* in its most eschatological form. What is highlighted as an endless attempt to add value to God's Creation.

For the “common good”, according to the directives that the fundamentally Christian Western spirituality has always significantly followed (at least up to our nihilist era).

I am speaking about it as a categorical imperative that all teenagers and young people feel when the word *duty* fills their search for a personal vocation in adult life.

The many and frequent Western economic crises in the last quarter-century have forced us to begin to evaluate and, rightly so, reevaluate the silent (too silent) heroes of our time.

In fact, we have begun to notice the sinful perpetrated neglect towards entrepreneurs who are often victims even from Christians. They often despise them as a result of absurd, even pseudo-theological prejudices.

In fact, the last Popes, from Leo XIII to Benedict XVI (through to Pius XI, Paul VI and especially John Paul II), began to radically deal with their essence and their social status by bringing them closer and placing them in a topical priority of leading catechesis: it is true that globalization – that, as we know, began with Alexander the Great after he came to directly admire the Indian Ocean – illuminated and boosted these very modern Popes.

Thus, the eight terms at the heart of this small book are founded on the first and perennial of these words: Entrepreneurs. In particular those who own small businesses.

F.T.

Brussels, 10th September 2011

Section One

Entrepreneurship as the nobility of existence

**The whole of our era
is apparently devoid
of aristocracy. In fact,
small businesses are hiding in
the great forest of
entrepreneurs, the true
aristocrats concealed in
our postmodern era.**

***“Man is only
truly free
if he lives in
a market economy”***

Gianfranco Miglio

(Senator, professor and political scientist,
Como, 1918 – † 2001, Domaso, Italy)

***“The intellectual is so often a
fool that we should
only consider them as not
when they have
proven otherwise”***

Georges Bernanos

(Writer, polemicist and patriot,
Paris, France 1888 – † 1948)

1.1 – The projectual desire of the small business owner in the face of modern day sloth towards the “slavery” of our secular world

The basic and truly central theme of this book paradoxically surrounds the modern slavery of work. All antiquity, from Egyptian to Greek civilisation, in part, Roman, resolved and classified work with a separation between free people (nobles) and slaves who were obliged to work. Work was confined to the latter and it was considered as the practical fatigue of people who were considered inferior: of the defeated, the submissive, the subdued. Moreover the abolition of forced servitude in our time has only been achieved, almost everywhere, for the past two centuries: although not peacefully.

Therefore what is the relationship between slavery and the protagonist of this essay, the small entrepreneur? What is the question that this relationship highlights and which genuinely defines the existential dimension of people, all people, on the planet?

It is Christianity that stated, firstly and profoundly, that captivity is humanly unacceptable. The law of brotherly love, and not that of classic oppression, is at the heart of the Gospel. And, since our so called modern civilizations have begun to secularize, to move away from Christianity, the subject of idle and servile work has correspondingly come back to the fore. The positivist and fatally materialistic philosophy of the nineteenth and twentieth Century has tragically returned the subject of slavery as the order of day, even in new and amazing ways, into our willing – naturally rightly so – and very modern societies. This submission, by now pathological, is voluntary and not forced anywhere. Moreover the legality of our democratic societies would not allow it, it goes without saying. In fact the word slavery has all but disappeared from language even from the modernist more than modern dictionaries and the sociology of our time. But its significance gradually takes shape as transcendent Christian values are challenged by materialistic and nihilistic ideologies that want to dominate them. Thus we speak of mass oppression, of the passivity of populations to “think” and to the (apparently rebellious) conformity of standardized behaviours... Work itself has become more and more like that of the slave era.

We work because “we have to”, “we need to”, “for the money”. Consequently, we are “reluctant” “apathetic” with a “lack of energy”: these are the most widespread claims... Moreover, the same national work contracts are aptly named, in all Western countries, those of “subordination”. We live, as is often said, in an era of genuine passive indifference.

Free and voluntary work, designed as free by Christianity, in its ontological sanctity, has been replaced by that of a release and very subordinate. In a world where everything is inevitably coordinated, work sinks into often the most refractory and bureaucratic subordination.

The idea of work, naturally well-paid and profitable, conceived as a final activity to add beauty and function to the splendor and harmony of the universe, is sometimes judged now as subjectively naive and senseless. Workers and employees – including, as we will see in the next chapters, managers – are reluctant to become truly active and “untiring”.

Work as a realizing vocation, as an evidence-based approach in which we can realize and save our fate, not only professionally, disappears amongst the smoking and unproductive ideas, flat and prey to spiritual torpor. Thus we often forget that *accidia*, sloth, the sin that Thomas Aquinas¹ spoke of in the 13th Century in Paris, has already been judged as one of the worst deadly sins of man. However, the greatest theologian of the Middle Ages could never have imagined that this sin could become the most widespread sin of a whole age: ours. The figure of the small entrepreneur, active and constantly enthusiastic, thus emerges in this context where the soft and slovenly slavery of our false modernity takes root. All the values that they embody run counter to this great decline that the incredulous, relative and materialistic West is sadly pursuing. In fact, the small entrepreneur is an exemplary human that, not only is governed by the teleological dimension that accounts for their rare “projectual desire”, but that animates their actions by this same desire that has become more and more difficult to find in our world.

Not by chance in permanent crisis.

¹ Saint Thomas Aquinas masterly wrote about it in his celebrated work “*Quaestiones Disputatae de Malo*” (his masterpiece on the seven deadly sins), that is what is known nowadays as an indolent refusal of exertion and an inertia of will.

1.2 – The entrepreneur in search of reason against degraded rationalism

Firstly and in their approach, what characterizes an entrepreneur or, more specifically, a small entrepreneur? Their rationality.

The ultimate substance of the first hands-on and direct approach of a small entrepreneur is always the reason. The totality of their being is systemically collected in the logical strength of their activities: it represents the most accomplished human synthesis in its constantly judicious, sensible and wise attitude.

Their *raison d'être* itself anticipates the reason that is at the heart of their being and that foreshadows the profound identity that they embody in their life and work. The activities that spring forth from personal work and from their business – however small it may be – are almost able to be seized, even before we can fully understand them, in the attitude of the person, in the types of behaviour and in the realism of their relationships. The habit of being constantly submerged in their work, business and market, bestows upon them an even psychological positioning, completely dedicated to legitimacy, nature and common sense.

Thus rationale becomes an indispensable and necessary customary travel companion to accomplish their practical and economic activities. This rationality of their daily activities can only remain – generally – inside the realism, precision and high practicality of their business. The rationality that we can thus call the essence of the entrepreneur, subordinate – as we will see in the next chapters – only to freedom, has also been the privileged object of research by philosophers. There also – we can say – this object of understanding and study has of course been treated as subordinate to, rightly, freedom itself.

One of the greatest philosophers that deepened the sense of reason and rationale in our modern era was Kant². In order to well present the nature, the intrinsic essence of the small entrepreneur, it is therefore necessary to critically begin there. But what confirmed to this great philosopher who is truly emblematic of modern thought, that reason is the basis of all entrepreneurial activity?

Knowledge, to sum up briefly and as the Christian vision has always ascertained, can only begin with facts. But, as all positivist and antimetaphysical philosophy from the so called Enlightenment remains confined to the subject that produced it, Kantism also first built a fatally limited reason in order to then judge and criticize it. In this vision, very much like that of the French Revolution, Kant ends up overlapping objective reality with a projection of the subject!

In other words, he ends up limiting reality to factual and non-metaphysical capacities: thus (transcendent) faith, according to him, in no way allows knowledge...

The idea that is the “foundation” of this positivist and atheist vision is that of a self-sufficient man, master of his destiny and achievements. For the first time in history, mankind presents itself as arbitrarily “free” of their eternal Master and perfectly capable of “mastering” their existence which would be devoid of transcendence. Thus the description of reality does not start but stop at the collection of only materially proven facts. In other words, it is also about – to remain in the German culture of the same time – of the Faustian vision (by Goethe) of an “infinitely powerful” person that must make a pact with the devil to completely master their intrinsic limited life...

Such profound and articulate Kantian analysis cannot therefore integrate and explain the totality of reality! As the phrasing of the definition of mankind itself is reduced by this philosophy of virtually materialistic knowledge, human reality is curtailed and handicapped.

Where will we put the ideal and mysterious force, invisible and pre-operational, of the entrepreneur that has created, founded and developed their business alone (and apparently against the odds)?

The small entrepreneur, as indeed big business, spends their days making and taking decisions.

They cannot allow a vacuum or handicap of subjective suspension of operational continuity into their business. Their relationship with reasonable practice is complete and seamless.

They therefore do not know what to do with fatally mutilated and ideological rationalism.

² Immanuel Kant lived in Germany (Königsberg, now the Russian town Kalinigrad), between 1724 and 1804 : a great thinker of the Aufklärung (the German Enlightenment philosophy), his research on reason is in three books, which have now become classics, *Critique of Pure Reason*, *Critique of Practical Reason* and *Critique of Judgement*.

1.3 - An ideology of mangled understanding and the continuous need for reasonable decisions. Not perfect ones

The small entrepreneur who takes care of their product, manufacturing, business partners, dependants, advertising, marketing, the financial structure of their investments and salaries, in short all the problems of big business itself, must note that with such a limited rationalist and illuminist vision of knowledge and of reality will not give them a way out. Furthermore, is it not always said that "one thing is theory, another is putting it into practice"?

With this positivist and materialistic limitation, even philosophy, as it is thought underpinned by behaviour, is negated to a use that cannot purely remain "theoretical", that is, as we commonly say, useless.

But *theoros* originally in Greek, means "description of reality", of all reality. And not, as in modern philosophy, a hypothesis, the sophisticated and articulate fruit of intellectual speculation and independent research for truth. Our contemporary small entrepreneur needs something else: therefore it will not, generally, be "philosophical".

Antonio Rosmini, the priest beatified in 2007 by Pope Benedict XVI and whose theological work was completely rehabilitated after more than 150 years of condemnation by the Vatican, had severely criticized Kantian philosophy on rationality.

Even a Cardinal, ex Anglican and convert to Catholicism, John Henry Newman, also beatified in 2010 by the same theologian Pope during his trip to Great Britain, had similar criticisms as Rosmini regarding French-German rationalism. Many philosophers, critics and theologians of our third millennia believe now that Father Rosmini, thanks in part to his exhaustion of the partial but essential mutilation of reason (and even the faculty of judgement) in Kantian analysis, can be counted amongst two of the greatest theologians in Christian history: Saint Augustine for the first millennia (5th Century) and Saint Thomas Aquinas for the second (13th Century).

As an entrepreneur, especially within a small business, is always practical, operational and applied to their fundamental cause of the inevitable continuing of their business, they need an original theory founded on the truth of reality and its metaphysical formats.

Even a rigorous and researched analysis of knowledge, such as that of Kant or other Enlightenment philosophers, cannot be useful for the complexity and globality of the small entrepreneur's activities, with all its economic and, above all, ontological components.

Reality is intimately and intrinsically linked to the people who are integrally part of it: there is no separation or division – as the rationalists (future nihilist, as we will see) state – between the Subject and the Object. In this concept not only of knowledge but also of life, it is the individual who makes themselves arbitrarily master of the universe with their subjectivity that defines everything, even the Object. In fact, life should – as it is specified in a more and more assertive and arrogant way by the modernism of relative nihilism – be meaningless and without truth. Everyone can "make one up" as they please and outside of all cosmic reference.

But the essential point for the entrepreneur is, in this ideology of knowledge (ergo of reason), the process of decision-making: the entrepreneur is very interested and concerned seeing as their days – as I have already said – have their pace set by the innumerable and almost irretrievable decisions and the practical accomplishments.

There are countless books and marketing publications to advise on the best methods for making decisions. But, of course, they must solve the first problem that is equally the foundation: what Rosmini, towards the middle of 19th Century, defined as the problem of "perfectionism".

This problem, that traditional theology of the Church has already analyzed and substantially resolved, is a system that believes that perfection in human things is possible without any limits. But the small entrepreneur understands their own limits and those of their business very well. As they created their businesses, they know very well that they themselves are nothing but creatures as fragile as they are willing. Moreover, they have always been very resistant to abstract or utopian theories.

Their destiny and their decisions, they have always invariably seen them as in the hands of the reasonable and the possible, therefore the Lord.

1.4 - The Ocean of subordinates and the minority of small entrepreneurs

We can suggest that most people are just content with surviving.

Another part, incomparably smaller, take the trouble to actively engage themselves, autonomously and creatively, in their existence.

Within this second group, definitely in the minority, is where you can find entrepreneurs.

Is this subdivision too vague, insufficient and crude?

Of course it is. But, throughout this book, I have tried to describe other “intermediate segments of humanity”, people who, using work, are very different but oh so complete on the existential scale.

In fact, many other categories of workers, defined by the multiple “forms of production” of our modern productive organisation, are there to populate a very sacrosanct and vast spectrum of activity.

A first example as a warm-up? “Intrapreneurs”, those who are not yet entrepreneurs, still allow themselves to be drawn into training for a career convergent to the latter³...

However, the oceans of men and women in our era who are, regarding economic activities, “subordinates”, according to the definition explicitly written into their work contracts with their employers. Who are, according to this definition, the entrepreneurs? People who are economically independent and freely active in their professional business.

They are the founders and managers of their activities, that is their businesses, so they take on - it goes without saying – all the possible risks and benefits (which are constantly becoming less likely, in our statist and, consequently, overtaxed societies).

Of course, these entrepreneurs must also bear the costs for their businesses, even often with important financial debts for them and their spouses, in their nuclear or extended family. It is what Americans call *love money*, the always “miraculous” transformation of feelings and family ties into completely risked money for the foundation of a new business.

Of course, it goes without saying that I am speaking about small businesses, and not big business, often known as *public companies* (with State participation) and sometimes even as a listed company.

SME or SMI, generally reduced in terms of personnel and high-performing on a computing and technological scale, constitute the modern model of productive activity in which the large majority of men and women work.

Thus I will speak about small businesses which contain more than 70% (!) of workers in the world.

Without counting the self-employed and individual artisans.

As already mentioned, I am interested in the countless small entrepreneurs: I have been one for more than 35 years. Throughout the world and amongst the most reserved and anonymous in our (what is known as) Communication era, they get up mute every morning to face their destiny and tasks which, generally, do not excite our contemporaries much. And this despite the fact that the small businesses determine the economic trends in every country and are considered as the main basis for the possible exit from the last economic crisis.

But who are the protagonists of the myriad of these small businesses? What is the most remarkable – if we can say that – characteristic of these untiring ants at the head of their activities?

Their total freedom! We can claim that no other category of people can say as much.

Small entrepreneurs pay cash, to the highest degree and continually, for their freedom. And they are immensely aware of this. And proud. No more noble immediate human value can be extolled than freedom! It is the reason that there are no personal or daily “sacrifices” that can discourage their laborious and highly under-estimated continuity.

³ This word “intrapreneur” is a neologism invented by the English couple Gifford and Elizabeth Pinchot who, in 1977, used this new term to describe an entrepreneurial reality which was already well known : those workers who have launched themselves into the work of an entrepreneur but all the same have begun – often with no turning back – to work from a constantly pedagogical proposal. In these chapters I will come back to this rapidly multilingual word, largely used on the net and in contemporary publications: in 2007, my business counted over a million hits for this word, in the seven most spoken languages in the world.

1.5 - Entrepreneurs, as great builders and multipliers of techno science, with regards to transcendence

Even big businesses were once small: giants, of course, were once babies.

And often, when they inherit a fortune, they are not capable of saving it if they did not know how to also save (or to connect to) the little wisdom founded on the relationship between simple reality and brave common sense.

There is always the dominant heart of the small entrepreneur in the approach of an efficient and great industrial captain.

The most advanced and excellent management schools, after having gone through the principles of organizations and management of big businesses, even multinationals, have largely returned, towards the mid-80s, to rules used by ... grandmothers to classify, match and account for pots of jam.

Have all management schools done this? Unfortunately not really.

The precision and sophistication of production, planning, logistics, computing, advertising, sales and Internet management technologies will never affect the conceptual simplicity of an activity or of a business (even the most modern).

Almost all small entrepreneurs know it very well. Their daily activity, small and practical, allows them double protection which has already fixed their reputation (although still very underappreciated).

On one side, the first protection comes from the permanent fact of their multiple and always global occupations which keep small entrepreneurs constantly at work. Thus they are protected from devastating abstracts that techno-scientific theorists (sometimes techno-scientists) obscurely – and dishonestly - propose amongst their truly created and circulated innovations.

On the other, small entrepreneurs resist much more than any other modern person the countless nihilist temptations that contemporary culture propagandizes everyday.

Likewise, their very laborious alacrity seamlessly keeps them in touch with the limits of the means and the end of their jobs, which is often very important. And whoever sets these limits inevitably brings up the relationship between the person and the unlimited nature of their desires and plans as evidence.

Small entrepreneurs are “obliged” to pursue, nearly constantly, their relationship with reality. Therefore with everything that continually exceeds them: transcendence. This is by no means foreign to the humanity seen daily. This is not a fanciful, marginal or useless dimension which can easily be done without. The habit of living in relation to limits, all factual and personal limits, usually helps to make us feel and view ourselves as not only a created creature, but one that needs to “feel for the bottom” to realize anything: towards truth, on our paths and for all our lives⁴.

It is not by chance that several surveys and statistical studies – especially American – show an undeniable and immeasurable level of religious faith amongst entrepreneurs compared to other professional categories.

At the bottom of the list with the most non-believers there are normally teachers and journalists: two categories of professions mainly dealing in pedagogy and modern information⁵.

Thus, the further away you get from fact and directly productive activities, the closer you get to materialistic ideological concepts that mock the truth and trample over reality without having ever really seen it.

An entrepreneur, whether in a big or small business, should count themselves lucky to have the privilege of working in a factual and, we can say, true way. Normally they are only proud secretly.

However, the totality of the radical problem relative to the permanent and deliberate relationship with transcendence must be resolved, even for entrepreneur (as for all other people). With the truth that makes life a permanent gift, including the most factual and “apparently” produced manmade creations, sometimes, with their own prodigious applied intelligence.

⁴ Any reference to the famous saying of Jesus is intentional: “I am the way, the truth and the life” John, 14,6.

⁵ See the formidable essay from the American theologian Michael Novak, *L'entreprise comme vocation* (references in the Bibliography).

1.6 - The Mystery of everyone's existence and the goal of adding value to it

Two major events can enlighten us regarding of the true essence and, at the same time, the intangible nature of human existence: birth and death.

Every parent, in the moment of seeing and delicately cuddling their new-born, cannot help but wonder and lose themselves in front of this real miracle which has happened: a human being, someone else, beyond all possible imagination and – despite everything – beyond any prediction, is there!

They might turn out to be the new Mozart, an even greater scientist than Einstein or an important business owner... (Which never really has a name, a model at hand)⁶.

After several decades, the natural death of this baby, however their life may have been, we can only remain dismayed, speechless and meditative on the word eternity or on life after death.

Both their birth, inevitably joyful, and their passing, always sad, puts us clearly face to face with what all populations refer to as the Mystery with a capital M which shows their indisputably supernatural nature, except for the eternal materialists and positivists.

How can we reasonably think that, between these two incomparably mysterious events, the life in the middle, the whole life, can avoid being affected by this same Mystery?

From when our baby becomes aware, even before its youth, the infinite beauty of the Creation, by understanding – if we dare say it – the origin and nature's grand design, we can see a natural propension to perfect reality, to add value to it, in them and everyone else.

The vocation of each young person emerges in their spirit as a need to leave their mark on the world which welcomed them and watched them grow. The question “What do you want to do when you grow up?” is never impertinent when talking to a child. They “think” about it all the time just like breathing and they always feel accomplished when they say fire-fighter, mechanic or doctor, depending on their interests. For little girls, it is the same, *mutatis mutandis*, that is changing what needs to be changed. Later, he or she will discover that the value added that they dreamed about so much, prosaically, has a heavy and generalized tax on it: VAT.

And yet, the realization, their own self-fulfilment, that will never be more separated from this added value that intuition has made them ontologically understand as a daily and factual goal of their existence. In the Bible, already in the first book Genesis, there is a commandment, the prototypical narration, describing the original sequence of the human vocation. That of naming all the things and animals on Earth to subjugate and order them in a harmonious development, subjects and torchbearers of a bigger plan⁷.

From this awareness, freedom begins to be completely and profoundly at stake. And the resolutions that are tied to it. The even initial awareness of our own limits, our own talents and our own desires coincides with the beginning of self-awareness that makes up the foundations of each and every person. When an individual wants to actively engage with the value of the world and desires to take their rightful place – their own, unique and small place –, their work activity is born: from this moment the individual begins to work. However, nothing is automatic or simple. The person must discover everything, often on the back of various detours. They must “earn” their life. They must merit, vanquish the darkness, the fog of their being to make it capable of contributing to the marvellous Creation that they have encountered. To try to enter the unknown means to locate and, above all, accept hosting the Mystery of life. We can call that the contribution, nothing but the value added by each person and that life waits for, produced by each individual. The whole universe “demands” this, as only this creature can offer it, and no one can do it for them.

Public opinion in Italy was very impressed by the case of the unemployed woman who, on winning a million euros in a sponsored game on the television in January-February 2011, stated that her dream remained to find a job. Even though her need had been diminished by the million that she won, her joy of being could only be satisfied by an activity that could bring and add value. Value to her.

⁶ I will speak about it again, of course, throughout this short analysis.

⁷ Bible, Genesis, 1, 11-30.

1.7 - The false self-sufficiency of the nihilist, the war of the metaphysical and the modern entrepreneur

In his permanent mission to combat atheism and nihilism and, at the same time, attest to the immediately observable truth of the Mystery of Creation throughout the world, Pope Benedict XVI finished his umpteenth rigorous work on the essential meeting point between God and science. At the end of October 2012, speaking to the Academy of Sciences of the Vatican, the Pope simply stated: “Scientists did not create the world. They learn things about the world and try to imitate them”.

He continued: “The scientist’s experience as a human being is therefore that of perceiving a constant, a law, a logos that he has not created but that he has instead observed”.

The day after the start of the publication of his theological *Opera omnia* in several languages (sixteen big volumes, with a grand total of more than twelve thousand pages!), Pope Ratzinger shows how “this experience brings us to admit the existence of an all-powerful Reason that is different to that of mankind, and which sustains the world”⁸.

The entrepreneur, who, contrary to most scientists, does not have the sinister tendency to produce (always preconceived) ideology despite evidence of reality, does not claim to affirm nihilist theories, which are so dear to 20th Century science. However, they also remain perplexed and bewildered regarding the superficial immanentism of the army, all the more aggressive, of all the scientists claiming the self-sufficiency of modernist and late-positivist mankind. They even claim to have won the war against the metaphysical and transcendence.

When we speak of the entrepreneur, we are led to prototypically identify them as belonging to small or – at most – medium business.

For a long time – at least half a century – big business has been almost deserted by entrepreneurs who are generally abdicated (very conveniently) in favour of managers.

These are by no means entrepreneurs (or rarely), they belong to another very different anthropological and socio-economic corporation. Nowadays new big business is the fruit of a true cession of businesses to anonymous and broad shareholdings, instead becoming majorities and represented by a new specimen of “leaders”, fundamentally mercenaries. Generally, their entrepreneurial skills are unreliable and routinely founded – whatever they may say – on their personal greed which is almost always motivated by overriding lust. I am exaggerating, but only slightly.

They are so obsessed by the desire to line their pockets and arranging protective and complicit armies for self-defence, managers can generally only submit to one other purpose, which has inevitably become mechanically objective. Moreover, their status remains subordinate: they do not risk almost anything even when they are gotten rid of, stipulating in their huge contracts (always to the expense of the unfortunate big companies that have them at their head) that they receive incredible pay-outs several hundred times bigger than the average worker can expect.

It goes without saying that I am well aware of the market value that this treatment involves: “if they are paid it is free competition that imposes it”. But shouldn’t we remind ourselves that this market competition is not sacred or untouchable? Furthermore, there are also – although it is rare - some very good managers who are almost entrepreneurs in their own right.

In these generalized conditions, how is it in their interests to consider the words of the Pope regarding life and the destiny of man? Or even regarding the so-called eschatological self-sufficiency of modern mankind? Even on the war declared on metaphysics by many scientists?

We can state – without much analysis but without limiting ourselves to the recurrent scandals in the press relating to their behaviour – on the pathetic and sad level of moral, intellectual and religious commitment these managers have at work to create, as they always say, “value”.

Small entrepreneurs, on the other hand, overrun with their multitude of daily and actual problems beyond all normally acceptable limit, usually manage to keep an active and possibilistic attitude regarding a global dialogue on their transcendent existence.

⁸ Benedict XVI at the Plenary Assembly of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences on the 28th October 2010 in Rome.

1.8 - The small entrepreneur, the privileged actor in the continuous Creation of the world

What is it that allows, as a rule, an entrepreneur this much more solid bond than the manager's fundamentally flimsy, inefficient and temporary bond with transcendence and the Creator?

The social doctrine of the Catholic Church teaches that the Creation of the world is continuous: it is people themselves that have been apparently charged with this task that, being eternally divine⁹, can only take place in God's true eternal creation.

Even if big business often produces some great innovations, often much more cutting edge than their small business counterparts, the great management leaders of these big companies – frequently multinational giants – appear as almost cut out of activities that are presentable as adding value to the Creation. The reason why is simple: if you doubt or negate the reality of the Creation by assimilating all the phenomena – against all the evidence – to the mastery and exhaustive control of mankind, to their allegedly infinite power, you can only confine yourself to a self-sufficient, therefore arrogant and essentially nihilist projectuality.

This type of human being loses all reference and direction. They become unreliable and even unavoidably devastating for the ontological destiny of mankind. It must also be said that, despite the convictions and proclamations, whether they are small entrepreneurs or “great” managers, their factual achievements can intertwine mysteriously with the plans of the Holy Trinity, with a logic unknown or beyond the comprehension of people.

Meanwhile, the small entrepreneur is directly and intrinsically internally involved with the activities of their business on a daily basis. They are also intimately linked and always decisive within it. The success of their company coincides with their own success, including the limits and the faults that constantly overwhelm them. Their own sense of working to make everything better, more competitive and useful, can also be interpreted as obvious in the great project of ensuring a real and concrete *common good*.

And, above all, the principle that a person, people, and not only an administrative or purely economic business, add to the obvious value in the world manifests itself in them.

It is this degree of identification between entrepreneur and business that allows this creative and recreational miracle. The more this link weakens, disembodies itself, the more the human disappears and their work becomes problematic, even damaging: what we think of the murderous and monstrous progress of the manipulative and premature so called bioethics, when it hinders or criminally prevents life.

Fundamentally, mankind's saving project is nothing but the destiny that makes them spread their wings in this huge and consistent task to add value to the divine Creation. Helped by their objective modesty and their subjective humility, the small entrepreneur is almost always closer to this project devoted to the accomplishment of the human purpose than anybody else. Potentially and as a vocation, the small entrepreneur works for the fulfilment of the intelligent, very intelligent design of God on Earth so that they can tear themselves away from the pure primitive naturalness, whilst retaining their original and purposive essence.

The fact that, unlike managers, the irrepressible destiny of the small entrepreneur is intimately forever linked to their business, typically makes their job unique as their life and work. Independently of their apparent calculable importance!

What we assign to the small local baker, who every morning lifts his railings filling the street with the perfume of fresh bread and prepares to honestly serve his customers, which we therefore give all small entrepreneurs the dignity and prestige that they deserve. And that we stop “celebrating” in the newspapers and the television screens, the putative and often overblown “virtues” of seemingly very powerful managers thanks to their relatively huge (functional) purchasing power. A concentrated shot of humility would not do them any harm.

Unfortunately, modern and modernist production methods are radically changing the characteristics of the performance of activities: the challenge has been set, especially for small entrepreneurs, so that they creatively change their businesses. And their relationship with those in society.

⁹ In 2005 the Catholic Church published a critical work covering all teaching on Christian social doctrine: the famous Compendium composed by the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (see Bibliography).

1.9 - Creating or adding value to God's Creation?

When we hear numerous important managers boast in the press, on the TV or on the Web (and not forgetting in the economy manuals in universities) that their job is to “create value”, the comparison with the modest talk of small entrepreneurs does not use marginal and useless rhetoric. My heroes, especially, generally do not even create relative definitions for the essential gains and menu of activities. Their reduced or proportionally constricted size keeps them well beyond the boundaries of the ordinary and the sober. The obvious dichotomy in the title of this chapter introduced the nihilistic concept with the metaphor of the current economic crisis that continues to destroy western countries.

It could be said that managers do not even notice that they are shifting the meaning of the word *value* towards that of the word *gain*, of profit: thus their job risks no longer succeeding in creating real value, producing tangible goods and services, but all too often (it doesn't matter how often) in ensuring a good turnover and a healthy return on investments. The true classic purpose of all activity, to make practically or emotionally useful products, to ensure the necessary services for the ease and true wealth of modern man, is consequently betrayed and deceived: you do not create value but pretend money. When we think of the current economic crisis, also known as the “financial” crisis, of the monstrous scale, provoked or triggered by the misleading virtual nature of subprimes, how it continues to repeat it, even at the end of 2010¹⁰. By its immoral and not legally punishable nature (indeed something to ask ourselves about!), important managers are all trying to re-offend with new economic speculations, still inconsistent, surreal and dishonest. In 2009, only one year after the start of this huge crisis created by the malpractices of the very financially criminal and endemic operations, the banks – after having cashed in the “very generous” economic bailouts from politicians in the western world (covered by the future taxes of the eternal taxpayers) – returned to lavish profits which were distributed amongst the shareholders and executives.

Under the noses of the world they re-offended in 2010 and 2011, everywhere. And politicians, as naive as they are oblivious, have not even been able to recuperate the brainless subsidies that they had to grant. All under the always powerless and stunned watch of small (and medium) sized business owners that have, as per usual, been taken for a ride. But it gets even worse: nothing seems to have changed. Managers continue to speak, as before, of *creating value*, whereas we have seen and we continue to pay cash for the arrogant trickery of this statement that often creates no value and only ensures an economic crisis of which we do not know the outcome (growth has been predicted but occasionally more or less laughable and sporadic).

Meanwhile, the magnificent encyclical “*Caritas in veritate*” by Benedict XVI was welcomed and commented on favorably by numerous world leaders as essential principles where the human economy can only base itself on people. It is also presented, explained and further analyzed as an activity which adds value to the Creation and not something which creates *ab nihilo*, from nothing, financial gain which does not correspond, in addition, to any real value. Monseigneur Michel Schooyans, the great theologian of the social doctrine of the Church, affirmed this on page 24 of his book *To meet the challenges of the modern world*: “Strictly speaking, only God can create, but when man works, he collaborates in the divine creation”¹¹. The problem is that man can really work and not limit himself to speculation.

Furthermore, all the great leading master economists (always more prudent as a result of the continuous fixed rate in their “predictions”) strive to predict that only the solid recovery of small businesses can assign, to the alleged small temporary Western recoveries, the characteristic of a historical overrun. Finally, the numerous small businesses are recognised as the structural solution for developed countries, the main point for a successful economic system in terms of quantity, stability and explicit desire. As far as adopting their benchmark principles based on humility and their productive concepts based on helping the development of added value, it seems we are still quite far off the mark.

¹⁰ I especially recommend reading the small pamphlet, but very special book, by Carlo De Matteo, *Contro l'azienda etica* (Against ethical business), Basic Edizioni, Turin (IT), 2010 : there is a ruthless and amusing analysis of the nihilism of so-called financial managers across the world who have irresponsibly created the loss or ruin of millions of investors...

¹¹ Michel Schooyans is professor emeritus of the historic and prestigious University of Louvain (Belgium) and a member – amongst others – of the Pontifical Academy of Sciences.

1.10 - The Hobbesian origin of materialist ideologies, fascist as well as communist, which are at the root of current relativist nihilism

The small entrepreneur, the current and future main solution – with the money from their taxes – of the huge mess made by negligent so called value creating managers in speculative and devastating banks, ask themselves, or should ask themselves, where these criminal and economically faulty ideas come from. They have overrun – to give just one example—the financial institutions in our modern societies. He, the creator and head of his small business, responsible for all the burdens of statist societies in which we still live in Western Europe, must eventually make themselves aware of the history of thought that, progressively, has generated the destruction and pillage of the so laboriously accumulated wealth. The destructive ideas are so far removed from the basic principles of work and from the always simply recordable added value of their know-how, that they are compelled to do some historical research to discover its origins.

How did we arrive, in fact, at reselling subprimes at 40-50 times their true value, instead of adding value, with real work, to what was already there as we say and do all the time?

Refractory to intellectual worries with their direct pragmatism and hostility to surreal theories (or theories only verifiable when it's already too late), our small entrepreneur – at risk of being constantly treated as a headless slave good only for paying everything – must also try to educate themselves on a philosophical scale. Thus, they discover that the socio-economic theories of the English Thomas Hobbes from four centuries ago, for example, are directly and indirectly at the heart of this current monstrous recession. They will also discover a book, *Leviathan*, published by this materialistic and mechanistic philosopher in 1651, had already created the theory of a super powerful State that would crush the simple ultra-millenary concept of a society founded on the model of people and on businesses indebted to their real, sacrosanct and directly measurable activities.

Our small entrepreneur, profoundly anti-nihilistic – even without knowing it, as they are forced daily to resolve the hundreds of practical problems that their business throws at them – will discover that it is this same totalitarian concept of the State that is the source of our economic crisis. Paradoxically, this same bureaucratic State, inevitably heavy and uselessly extravagant, presents itself as the apparent solution to all the most fanatical ideological conflicts that have amassed not only consecutive economic crises, but also hundreds of millions of deaths: Jacobean rationalism, Nazi fascism and communism in less than 150 years¹². And, finally, they will also discover that even the relativist scepticism of our time is the pseudo-utilitarian and individualistic grandchild of Hobbes' Patron State that has created the historically radical rupture with the communal and naturally pluralistic universe of the Middle Ages: with the inclusive and, as we say nowadays "subsidiary" *Corpus Christianum* for the common good.

The hero at the heart of this book thus realizes the huge error they have made in remaining silent over the centuries. To settle with producing, innovating, inventing new technologies, high-performing procedures, more modern products and organisations everyday. Wealth and solutions of a never before seen factual beauty. Whilst their techno science connects with the global web of the Internet in a click, obscure and inhumane forces never cease in trying to destroy the marvellous constructions built over the creative centuries with a deadly virus. They have, also, begun to understand how "the entrepreneur, as well as a creator, is also a philosopher, an artisan of the being. His actions are political, a founder of socio-genesis"¹³. And so we are equally reminded of the metaphor by the Catholic poet and writer Chesterton¹⁴. He described the history of modern (and not modern) man as a spider: it wickedly decides to cut the thread that it attached further up in order to come down and build its ingenious web and, suddenly, it becomes fatally trapped in its own threads that inevitably shrivel once they are deprived of their transcendent attachment. This is an excellent example of the eschatological risk that humanity is running in our time.

¹² It would be sufficient to scan several dozen pages from 494 onwards which are very famous such as *The Black Book of Communism*, published by Laffont in Paris in 2002 and translated into dozens of languages so that people can understand the huge crimes, terror and human repression perpetrated by Communist ideology in the 20th Century.

¹³ Jean-René Fourtou, French professor (1939 at Libourne in Southwestern France), *La passion d'entreprendre*, Édition d'Organisation, Paris, 1985.

¹⁴ Gilbert Keith Chesterton, 1874 - † 1936, the English author of *The Man who was Thursday* and the short stories of *Father Brown*.

1.11 - Never cut the red thread of work that should always be considered free and sacred

Methuselah, according to the Bible, died at the age of 969: mythical, legendary¹⁵!

It goes without saying that he did not have any welfare benefits or a pension. And yet, we can easily imagine him being happy and satisfied. Surrounded by several generations of young people, he had several large flocks of sheep and goats. Of course he still ate frugally everyday: two small cheeses, a small piece of bread and olives with some wine, a few figs and some honey from his beehives... What he produced was vastly larger than what he consumed. He lived blissfully with this abundance and everyone profited from his produce. Two considerations are to be gleaned from this very pre-industrial and evidently archaic picture. First of all, mankind must never cut the red thread that links them to the universe of production. Even if their activities are reduced to very little, with regard to their health and their own strengths, the elderly should consider work as a form of salvation and a privilege, right up to their last breath, contrary to popular belief in our current civilisation. Therefore continuing to work, in ordinary business but also where the work produces a vital link with the “other” (also through volunteering). If not they become nothing more than exclusively an atrocious consumer, an inevitably alienated over consumer: pre-human! Secondly, work can only be free as Benedict XVI has already pointed out and shown in his magnificent and apparently prodigiously received encyclical, *Caritas in veritate*¹⁶.

Of course, a salary that is worthy, just and proportionate to talent, effort and results obtained must be awarded to all work. But it does not prevent creative passion or the search for the absolute in activity and the social (community) dimension can only materialize in total freedom and in ontological sanctity: as, in practise, all small entrepreneurs know very well. We must hope that future generations are particularly merciful with regards to the irresponsibility of our contemporaries, when they come to examine the horrifying loss of work on the part of the stupefied masses in our western time. We can reflect on the example of the scandal of the 2010 general strikes, which were not organized in vain, in France, to try to prevent the increase of 2 years in age to the now baby-aged pensions, from 60 years to 62 years. This was brainlessly put barely in place by Mitterrand’s socialists in the 80s. Furthermore, the average age that people go into retirement or early retirement in Europe has gone down to 56-57 years old, whereas we already have a life expectancy of over 90 years old!

All this, whilst young people, the true unaware victims, generally support this wicked refusal to work (flagrantly against their own interests) whilst claiming to be paid – not meagrely, for that matter, on credit, at the expense of future generations: by “distribution” as they coyly say. In order to become horrible and monstrous hyper-consumers, we have “forgotten” what Hemingway– at the beginning of the 50s – called retirement from work: “a dirty word”. Already two western generations have consumed a lot more than they have produced: the enormous State debts and the anti-democratic commitments for healthcare expenses and the treatment of pensioners, that their children and nieces and nephews will have to pay, are the quantifiable, but at the same time, unpredictable proof (also due to an increasing longevity).

Do you know that the actual contributions paid by pensioners in Western Europe do not exceed 15-20% of the costs that will have to be paid to them? And who pays the other 80-85%? The public debts across the whole world make up the most important handicap and brake on development. The economic immorality of current adult generations is not even very curable: me, I find myself writing in these pages on this subject, the same thing and with the same analysis that I published 15 years ago¹⁷. I know an honest 70 year old worker who, after having taken early retirement, repaints his friends’ houses for free: “the State pays me”, he says. Methuselah was respected and admired by the young people who listened to him as the historical memory of their people. Legions of psycho-sociologists examine in vain why young people nowadays have no interest or respect for adults and the elderly...Small entrepreneurs, always working, are almost mute with regard to these horrors which are commonplace nowadays.

¹⁵ Bible, Genesis. 5, 21

¹⁶ Op. cit., Libreria Editrice vaticana, Rome, 2009 : 34, 35, 36

¹⁷ Franco Troiano, *Left, Right or Center?* Above, a dialogue between a liberal entrepreneur and a young statist unemployed person, TCG, Brussels, 1994.

1.12 - The entrepreneur will be treated by God in his Kingdom just like everyone else: judged according to their talents

Christians – as we know – live in the world but they do not belong to the world.

By claiming like I, as I am about to do, that work falls within the free sphere; that we must work up to the age of Methuselah; that the end of life is not to consume but, fundamentally, to produce; that the first goal of a business is not to generate economic wealth (it only has one outcome, often final, to add value to the beauty and substance of Creation); that freedom is the first value of mankind and from where they acquire all their creative or productive choices; that all life is nothing but a gift from God even and especially if we engineer our own existence as a general and active...business; in short, by following these rather outdated and rare principles that I have presented in the chapters you are about to read, the mental health of the entrepreneur, of the small entrepreneur, is not really in danger.

On the contrary, this double belonging to immanence and transcendence allows mankind, the entrepreneur, to remain in the true wisdom and even in the knowledge where all life assumes its grandeur and all its twofold dimension: horizontal and vertical, like the sign of the Cross.

The earthly logic of mankind does not necessarily correspond to the divine logic of Heaven. Thus, after these first chapters, I have the feeling that I have to justify that I am pretty well and that I live in reasonable humanity, despite how it may seem from what I say and write.

Furthermore, I do nothing but follow, in flat and very small, much more radical misunderstanding of the words and behaviours of the Church, especially Catholic, that are ambiguously interpreted on a daily basis in the world – our world – which is dominated by a nihilist, relativist and secular culture.

On the teachings of Christ, tortured and crucified with the most complete injustice, Christians are always passed over on the dock, judged crazy by some and heretical or sacrilegious by others. Whilst they are not out rightly imprisoned or killed, as always we can state current endemic persecution over the whole country. We see frequent and current interventions against the persecution of Christians throughout the world, by the European Parliament and the ex-Vice President of the EU, Mario Mauro, of whom I have suggested a book in the bibliography. Reason and the reasonable are gifts specific to mankind who, by following rational logic (not rationalism!), discover God and the Mystery of the Trinity.

I would also like to reassure my four readers that an entrepreneur is generally aware, more than others, that they are in no way worthy to enter this category and to live in their closed-off world to earn paradise on earth and beyond. Yes, you can enter the kingdom of Heaven, if we can say that, as a worker just as you can enter it being an important entrepreneur, a civil servant, soldier, lawyer or employee...: individually, under the watch of the Creator who judges us on the deepest and most intimate of our actions and thoughts. Even the handicapped, either with mental disabilities or reduced to a “vegetative state”, are treated with a total humane dignity that reflects the immense harmony of God and that mysteriously enters into his grand and sometimes unfathomable designs. All of this goes without saying, of course. This book, on the other hand, is set in our history inside the incomparable permanent history of the Creation of the world in which mankind is obviously a custodian. In their condition of total and free dependence on the will and designs of the Great and Only Master. Is this “positioning”, as they would say in operational marketing, humanly crazy or unacceptable? The story of the Bible – from the Pentateuch up to the Gospels including the Acts of the Apostles and the Apocalypse – and the whole two thousand year-old Church tradition, shows the merits of the only and unique knowledge of this world that mankind can appeal to. The small entrepreneur, by definition balancing fragily on the tightrope of their business and on the final edge of immanent factuality, knows it – I will say it again – more than others.

It is for these reasons that I continue to write this short essay defending small entrepreneurs.

By receiving the talents to create their business and having received the grace to develop it, they must live up to their responsibilities. On this point, Uniapac, *the International Christian Union of Business Executive*, the world organization of Christian entrepreneurs, insist upon CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) in the world: “Man remains the first end of use when using the tools of CSR”¹⁸

¹⁸ *La valeur des valeurs*, Brochure Mars 2008, Brussels (See Bibliography).

1.13 - Freedom as an essential characteristic rooted in the small entrepreneur's efforts before the value of justice

What makes a man or woman decide to become an entrepreneur?

What are the fundamental characteristics of their complete transformation into being active and a producer of projects?

Normally, these questions remain implicit. We never really get around to formulating them: we speak, incidentally, generically of the “entrepreneurial streak” as if it were a specific psychological or character trait, somewhat rather random. Even necessarily borne of circumstance.

At most, we describe very ordinarily socio-economic situations, and almost never cultural situations, that may have influenced this choice. This happens, on the other hand, structurally as a vocation.

The usual nihilist perspective is to trivialize and flatten first choices as if they can be considered equal and compared with a natural indifferentiation. As if it was an ontological destiny against

which we cannot argue: the fact that, in certain regions, there is a higher concentration of entrepreneurs or that in certain historical periods in relation to others many businesses were created, we tend to classify them *sociologically* (and not only sociologically) into indistinct and objective possibilities. Of course, all these casual elements, which are approximate and convergent in the formation of an entrepreneurial vocation, always remain marginal.

In my opinion, the original element which makes people want to become entrepreneurs is by nature cultural and even ideological: in the neutral sense of an ideology, as in a vision of the world and an objective system based on at least three corroborating ideas. What is it about?

Simply the cultural priority on the value of “freedom” over “justice”.

All the aggravated problems, that lead our contemporary age to culturally and politically divide itself in a very startling way, emerge from this inversion of values.

Even after the virtual disappearance of communist and fascist ideologies, the fact of continuing to place justice over freedom is a radical error that creates all the uncompromising disputes of our dependent time.

Christianity, and nothing else, brought to history – despite its hesitations – the founding, absolute and first concept of freedom. All other values are derived from this. Justice is contained within freedom and it is dependent on it. And not the other way round.

Furthermore, all the attempts at societies founded on justice have been beaten or they have clearly failed. Justice, indeed, is by definition always relative. Freedom is on the other hand absolute and unbreakable.

Christ explicitly taught it throughout his life, evangelically demonstrated: he even died – and rose from the dead –, which is critically important, to precisely affirm this value without which no actions, not just purely religious ones, would be possible. God wants mankind to be fundamentally free: so that we can truly love Him.

How can we think to be able to even found a religion in which freedom is not the first value?

Simply, what sense would an attachment to God have without the fiendish possibility of recoiling away from Him? The controversy with Islam begins on this point.

In his famous Regensburg *lectio magistralis*¹⁹, Pope Ratzinger, demanded, in the name of Christianity and Catholicism, in a clear and resounding way, this founding principle of all humanism and religiousness by directly attacking coercive and violent forms of proselytism (or to maintain the “faithful”). The entrepreneur, who tends to be a rebel, spends their days roaming the totality of their freedom measuring themselves only by their finiteness and by the omnipotence of the Creator.

The widely broadcast idea of placing justice before freedom has never been tried in practise: from this point of view it is a being that takes up the whole human area before submitting – as we have seen, very often – to the transcendent dimension that makes them recognize that they are but creatures. All the rest of mankind, those who tend to “relax”, find it much easier to follow trivial, superficial and one-dimensional ideas specific to the priority of justice over all other values. If even small entrepreneurs are not always aware of this firmly rooted priority in their spirit, nothing can change in their efforts and behaviour.

¹⁹ Benedict XVI, Conference at the University of Ratisbonne, *Foi, raison et université*, 12th September 2006.

1.14 - The double transverse movement of the priority of freedom in relation to a single train of thought: the entrepreneur against nihilist hate

Before continuing the descriptive analysis of the reasons that lead to choice to become and remain an entrepreneur, what represents the principles of their actions, this is a good moment to reflect further on the pernicious consequences of the reversal between the supreme value of freedom and the relative subordinate value of justice. In essence, the error is in the fact of consenting to be attracted and to favour the connotations specific to justice and the most general ones: equal distribution, impartial treatment, correctness or normative legality, righteousness and social legitimacy. Thus we prioritize the value of exclusively human virtues, and its supposed “possible perfection”, and we lose sight of the only true qualitative excellence, hierarchically essential and necessary, *freedom*: this choice compels us to dream, in an abstract and parasitic way, of the “perfection” of the world and not to search for possible and total salvation, in humble free and immediate daily work.

The search, simply for the salvation of mankind, for their freedom is thus immeasurable and, finally, antagonistic to any well-intentioned utopia of equality and charity.

It makes up the pre-condition, that should be unavoidable, the only thing that can quench the thirst of every creature, even “fools”. In reality it corresponds with the ocean of trivial and conformist ideas to become a unique and massively expanded thought especially over the last several decades. Obviously opposing and now officially passed over ideologies, such as fascism and communism, are in this horrible heap of good intentions which line the hell of irreconcilable individualism.

In this difference of priority, to the advantage of so called justice, there is a profoundly incompatible dichotomy between the natural religious sense and its opposite, relativist ideology.

This is why, across the West, there is continuous dispute and division. Everybody finishes by picking fights in solipsistic and endemic scepticism, with their neighbour, with their own Head of Government, their professor, their spouse, their own parents, their boss...

It is by now on the transversal plane that the split marks the difference between "Tory" Blair (as he was known, not only in the UK, the deeply Catholic “socialist” turned practically Thatcherite Conservative ex-Prime Minister) and Gordon Brown, his partner in the Labour party, ousted by Cameron, the new leader of the Tories, as a result of his classic statist extremism in the last elections.

In the same way, we can speak to the strategic convergence of the ex-fascist Fini in Italy with the positions of immanentist (ex-) communists that continue to fill up the leftist parties in the Botte.

In reality, new ideological and political parties, who are in the process of re-shuffling and reconstructing the panorama, in particular the European panorama, found their apparently surprising regroupings on the, what is known as, ethical opposition, “atheist nihilism against experienced religious sense”.

Generally, entrepreneurs, almost all of them, naturally find themselves on this second side of the double movement. They cannot allow themselves the vicious luxury, contrary to the mass of intellectuals who have no productive or social obligation, of uncertainty on being.

They must ensure the continuous production and functioning of their business: any irresponsible suspension of judgement is impossible to them before being economically absurd.

Above all small entrepreneurs are obliged, by production restrictions and social obligations, to ensure, without limits – either in quality or quantity –, the production of their products or services.

Fortunately, the market restrictions are located at the opposite of procrastination, hesitation and arbitrary extrapolations that are always possible for all the vast numbers of politicians and intellectuals, even often uselessly alongside our markets that have thus become parasitic and hateful.

The pathological shortage of the practical exchange of goods and services specific to our modern time in deep recession is nothing but the extreme consequence of a spiritual shortage: a shortage – for example – of births and a shortage of people with an entrepreneurial streak.

Despite the increase of the word “creativity”, especially amongst young people who stubbornly believe in it easily and deceptively, the attachment to nihilistic ideologies of unique thinking specific to the immanent principle of justice is at the heart of the inevitable state debt, the refusal to work and the Western economic crisis.

I shall have the chance to return to this last consequence which can seem like too easy a shortcut.

1.15 - The entrepreneur as a victim of an ideological steamroller, with their secular nihilism, and our religious culture

I have used the words *nihilism*, *relativism* and *secularism* several times without having specified their meaning or put them into context. I am not sufficiently capable of describing them from a philosophical point of view: I am – of course – only a small entrepreneur... And, above all, I could not analyse them, let alone theologically, in their true meaning: do we not say, in addition, that “philosophy is the servant of theology” (*ancilla theologiae*)?

But, like everyone, I must, even I must, understand the main, especially the existing sense of them and to present - in this case – the most common meanings that I use when I speak of them. All contemporary thought, that seemingly seeps from the behaviour of the majority of people, from a very large part of the press and publishing houses, from almost all television and radio programs, from the basis of our actions (even from certain so called Catholic entrepreneurs), all this thought is saturated with these three words. They are closely linked and take on the common significance that comes from the fact that they are the product of the attempt to abolish the existence of the living God. As modern mankind seems to understand their *raison d'être* and their existence based on their own strengths and purposes, denying or glossing over all other dimensions other than those that are immanent or “empirical”, the refusal of the concept of a saving God is almost expected and easily obtained.

The *first* consequence of this renunciation is the much generalized statement that life has no grand purpose and that truth does not exist: the most radical sceptical philosophers do not hesitate in stating this (*nihilism*). The *second* consequence is that everyone is able to, at will, attribute the small purpose that they wish, their “preferred” truth, and the goal that symbolizes them, if not to their whole life at least to a very fragmented and divided part of their life (*relativism*).

The *third* consequence implies firstly at least the *de facto* denial of God and leads us to conclude that, if doubts about transcendence persist, it must be strictly confined to the small or private sphere and can never be expressed on a public scale (*secularism*).

The basis of this concept that introduces a truly global dimension of existence – even if it is simplified, false and unreal – , a new sort of totalitarian religion in relation to the others, was systematized by a philosopher (not systemically, besides), Nietzsche, who also picked up the “concepts” of 19th Century Russian terrorism. Therefore, this philosophy, called nihilism, has spread and entered all the social strata, even those that ignore the definition (or even the simple label). Sustained by the success and the power of technoscience that it created in the last century, more progress than in the thousand years beforehand, this practical ideology (but not really rational as it is only *rationalistic* and destructive to all values), produced relativism. This allows the gratification of all personal opinion and, in the last forty years, of statist secularism as the last residue of the destructive absolutism of communism and Nazi fascism (the third consequence as presented above).

Small entrepreneurs – more than those in big business and their managers – are not deceived with regard to this all-around destructive sham ideology. From history (with its falsified historicisms) to values (which have become ludicrous), from institutions (for example the centrifugal family) to the person (reduced to a puppet in their more senile than infantile selfishness), “joyous nihilism”, as Theilard de Chardin²⁰ called it, continues its conquest of our actual contemporary history “without history”.

The small entrepreneur, of course, does not avoid the rolling of this steamroller that attempts to equalize from the bottom up all our historical culture and our very rich and stunning religious tradition. In fact, we all live immersed in what is not often enough called *unique thought*, the approved existential philosophy, outcome of its bellicose but “joyous” and superficially devastating actions.

We must have a spiritual, communal and especially cultural (true faith) solid resistance to really be on the offensive against this “modern communication” that has no real content but plenty of nihilistic *unique thought*.

²⁰ Pierre Theilard de Chardin (Orcines, France 1881 - † 1955, New York), French theologian, cited by Luigi Giussani (see Bibliography)

1.16 - The artisan and the entrepreneur, always faithful to themselves throughout history, as models of the personalization of work

There is a very happy specificity that focuses on and clearly explains the nature of the modern small entrepreneur: they are embodied by the figure of an artisan.

Moreover, sometimes, small artisans have come to head a business that has reproduced and multiplied their own duties: you can also find small artisanal businesses with several dozen employees. In these cases, the roles of artisans and small entrepreneurs overlap. Why do artisans and their small businesses so evidently showcase the characteristics intrinsic to small entrepreneurs?

The artisan, by nature, is a unique model that has been permanent and constant throughout history: we can find them in biblical times just as we can find them in our postmodern era. Their manual ability, their professional workmanship is linked to their personhood and is so intertwined that it always verges on the figure of a small or great artist.

In reality, the title “artist” is reasonably modern: they all used to be artisans. Each morning, they would get up to work on their endeavour that, naturally, could only ever become a unique piece. Amongst these, a masterpiece would appear. Most often in awed surprise the artisan themselves would recognize the divine intervention, which by definition surpasses their work.

Even the very modern Picasso, when he invited his guests in the garden of his Côte d’Azur mansion to join him in urinating on his bronze sculptures in order to “speed up the ageing process” always spoke of his daily work of several pieces – invariably artisanal – under “construction”: amongst these he would delight in, sometimes, finding a “truly valuable” masterpiece (implying that he considered the majority of his “creations” more or less as little works, as his work but not by any chance artisanal, even if they were a high quality). This is to say that the artisan, despite progress in their production method processes, is and will always be true to form. Del Debbio, a university professor from Milan, indeed states that “man is always conditioned by the way in which he comes into contact with others and with nature through work. It is work, we could say, that is the essence of man”²¹.

This type of very personal relationship has repercussions throughout almost the whole figure of the small entrepreneur. And as in addition they always “work”, they never feel out of balance in their activities. The mass worker, on the other hand, as Marx said, performs “external work [...] that is it does not belong to his intrinsic nature, that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but deny himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work and in his work he feels outside himself”²².

The artisan and the small entrepreneur are the opposite of this depersonalization of work. It is their personhood itself that is integrated in their work.

It is not, in other words, to create tension between the small business or the artisanal workshop and society filled with hundreds or thousands of employees. But to value small entrepreneurs, who are the champions of anthropomorphic work, as the ideal model for every inevitably alienated modern method of production as a result of the loss of personalization

The materialistic alienation at work or, on the other hand, the transcendent introjection of the whole person into all activities make up the applicable terms in the actual fight that is continually referred to a class war. But, however, it has nothing to do with social classes but “spirit classes” that define the concepts that are against knuckling down to work. “Its strength – wrote Vittadini, possibly the number one world expert on subsidiarity – is all in the centrality of the person and people, collaborators and business owners. In this sector, there are people who generate innovation and development with their creativity and hard work, as they are not reduced to a human resource, to a factor of production, but they are rather a resource in their entirety, in their creative and generative capacity”²³.

²¹ Paolo Del Debbio, *Dans les mains de l’artisan*, Guerini et Associés, Fondazione per la Sussidiarietà, Milan, 2007, p. 33.

²² Ibidem

²³ Giorgio Vittadini, *ibid.*, p.11

1.17 - Who was before the Big Bang? The Creation began before it and it will always continue

In my contribution to the necessary and increasingly non-deferrable apology of the small entrepreneur, seeing as we have often forgotten and recklessly slandered them over the centuries, we can even come to define them as a great heretical sinner, but almost never – as we have seen – as a nihilist. An antagonistic contradiction? Not really. Their factual dimension, which keeps them almost practically chained to the “do” and “produce” category on a daily basis, does not allow them to be transcendent. The common links of secularization, the daily clichés and the intellectual superficiality of mass culture that wants to dominate everything, suggests and allows them this contradiction. But it is their alacrity, their continuous creation of activity which is crucial to the productive life of their business to always put them back in step with – still – the vertical dimension of existence. We must not be surprised at the obvious paradox that is rightly the essence of practical work, of permanent and eternal work, that continually brings us to its inevitable vertical element. It is vulgar and ignorant, voluntarily ignorant, materialism that wants to separate reality from its intrinsically metaphysical dimension.

It is precisely for this reason that Bernanos, one of the greatest Catholics and an intellectual giant of 20th Century French culture, defined a priori intellectuals as “idiots”.

Except for, of course, if proved to the contrary (they would always rush to prove themselves).

This is the price that “men of letters and words”, those that “do not work” factually, that do not directly add value to the empirical creation, must pay to credit their “crazy”, dangerous and tenuous positioning, as exclusively a producer of ideas, of words²⁴. A business’ products are billed once they have been ordered. Ordered, invoiced and paid. This is the practical and material process on which an entrepreneur bases their actions. This effect which always results from demand (explicitly or implicitly formalized) reports fundamentally, in practise, back to the original source of all human desires: infiniteness of transcendence, where happiness lies. And it is the objectively and intrinsically metaphysical desire for happiness that generates a tangible commercial order right up to payment to the business (and to the entrepreneur).

And yet, this sequence, this aftermath which is almost unknown by scholars, still in no way reflects the reality. I remember an interview, as always lively and profound, from Giorgio Vittadini, the Italian President but with an international perspective of the Foundation for Subsidiarity. It was published in the *Traces* magazine, edited in over half a dozen languages, to comment on the release of the encyclical “*Caritas in veritate*”. On the subject of the production process and, in particular, development as a “vocation”, Vittadini commented thus: “But the best part is that the Pope also says it in terms of *me*, as well as works and globalization itself”. And, he continued: “The different G8 nations and the corresponding summits have become used to the fact that the world is developing thanks to these meetings with Heads of State. We are out of touch with subsidiarity.

The Pope, on the other hand, said that *world authorities must also conduct themselves in a manner coherent to the principles of subsidiarity and solidarity*. What would this mean, for example, for the European Union smothered by statism, by national interests, by bureaucracy...” For a contrast of position, let’s take a famous and symbolic example: the Big Bang. Countless scientists, whistle-blowers, journalists and teachers talk endlessly of this great event that describes the first nanoseconds of the creation of the world and life itself. Hundreds of articles and books, some bestsellers, relate the slightest details with an essential scientific aura: where the secrets of life are “penetrated” with the mastery of eternity, measured by the understanding of the “all-powerful intelligence” of so called self-sufficient humankind. Very good: science has a duty to discover, little by little, the reality of the universe and the substance at the heart of life (even biological)...Scientists have to work towards this. But they must remember two reasonably evident little things. This first is the fact that eternity did not just expand after but also before the Big Bang: they must always be ready to answer the child’s mischievous question: “But what was there an hour before the big Bang?” The second recalls the fact the Creation is continuous and regards our lives, the lives of each one of us: that which, even when it becomes the most creative, shows the smallness and limits of our creativity.

²⁴ The great French Catholic writers did not beat around the bush when it came to intellectuals. Paul Claudel, as an example from the 19th – 20th Century, came to say that their « class was dangerous », a class of « people who get rid of an instrument when it is no longer of use ».

1.18 - Avoiding bankruptcy and achieving coexistence between the diverging interests of a business

We have already begun to see that the search for wealth is not really high on the agenda for candidates who wish to become entrepreneurs. Yes, they may certainly dream about it but strict rationality limits them to not hope, simply, beyond the first preliminary success of their economic plan. In fact, all this energy, desire, ideas and planning go to such a point that their relationship with money always comes from a defensive position: will I manage to avoid bankruptcy? The fundamental principle, especially for small business, is to avoid failure for as long as possible: until they can strengthen themselves financially in order to be able to face all adversity.

Their only problem, which is naturally increasing, is primarily dodging bankruptcy. Their obligations can lead them to the point of taking serious and demanding risks.

Furthermore, their main tasks are never strictly economic based even if these often create and determine other tasks. But what are these other obligations that make up the most important parts of their business plan? There are four main principles: The entrepreneur is nailed, if it possible to say so, to a cross where the four parts make up the differing, and often opposing, interests that they must permanently deal with.

Firstly, they must always create a logical, technologically and economically sound business plan, in the deepest and most rigorous sense of the word: the product of the business' activity must be actually useful if not necessary or essential to potential customers: to their peers, or to target audiences other than themselves. Therefore it is necessary to put themselves out there in the arena of providing a service and building relationships with others. Their mission and also their work lie in their own business plan based, accordingly, on a competitive and free relationship with future clientele.

Secondly, they must gather the necessary capital. And considering that entrepreneurs are consistently poor in relation to their ambitions, it is inevitable that their future, their work, relationships, emotions and family ties must be side-lined with the intention of succeeding in this task of paramount importance. It is their duty to existentially dedicate themselves to this search in which all their life, magnified in its complexity, will approach and identify this as their ultimate goal.

Thirdly, they must assemble the adequate human resources necessary to achieve their goal that, by definition, will surpass them: it will always be beyond their human capability or they will quickly exceed it. Trust in others, in their business partners, their workers and their employees thus engage them in a relationship that must be based on sustainable and strategic reciprocal interests. Therefore, this work creates a small community which is, by its inevitable nature, global and not purely economic.

Fourthly, small businesses must conceive their business like a living and obsolete organism, like an autonomous town where at times they must act like the father and the mother, the mayor and the councillors. There must be a natural growth in technological and operational plans, as well as competitive geomarketing. To always preserve the usefulness that justifies their initial purpose but also to constantly evolve. Businesses are made – such as all living organisms – to continuously grow otherwise they will wither and die.

Economic success, inevitably presented by company statutes as the ultimate goal in the search for profit, is also overshadowed by these four duties that become completely “economic” themselves.

In the truest sense of the word. Crucified to these four permanent and unavoidable obligations, the entrepreneur must delimit all ambitious freedom in order to gain these inevitably diverging interests. Hence we understand that the rather negative (although vaguely admiring) current perceived image of the entrepreneur is simplistic, very restrictive and unfair. The small businessman is above all a social animal doomed to a projectuality that systematically surpasses them and that reminds them, for better or for worse, that they are just a small person. Obviously, in a standard, belonging to a paradigm which generally remains, unfortunately, unknown to the average Joe.

All the lack of existential verifiable culture in our western world depends on the ignorance of the level and the extent of the fate experienced, almost secretly, by each entrepreneur who tries to develop - or who leaves to develop independently - their business.

Here is the central object of communication which small business owners must talk about if they decide to open their mouths to their contemporaries.

1.19 - Not able to communicate, entrepreneurs must learn to speak in public (and intellectuals must learn to leave them room)

Despite small entrepreneurs being the backbone of the social fabric, that they silently embody the virtues of people's secularism and that they guarantee the essential, socio-economically speaking, of continuous reproduction and at least practical creation, they are rarely presentable.

Occupied and preoccupied with the development of their activities, stably involving personnel into the business, satisfying the invested venture capital, and chiefly, making their changeable, demanding and always flighty clients happy and faithful; engaged in satisfying the four diverging interests presented in the previous chapter and always searching for new clients and new market demands, the entrepreneur is rarely capable of becoming a social reference point. Often they do not even manage to explicitly defend their own interests against the inevitable malice of the world, that is to face those in society for whom they are, generally and despite everything, the hard and vital core.

In our era known as the communication era, entrepreneurs, especially in small businesses, hardly ever communicate.

They are often incapable of it. All the media, even those rare ones that are convinced of the objective charisma of entrepreneurs and their indispensable virtues, are hesitant in approaching them with a microphone. Or to put them in front of a camera.

With reason, moreover. It is rather exceptional to find a small entrepreneur who knows how to use the codes of modern communication to "efficiently" address a contemporary auditorium full of people who are very used to switching the channel after a few minutes (often even after only a few seconds) if a subject is not demonstrated in an excellent or fun way.

Exhausted by countless responsibilities, by weeks of working at least twice the number of tiring hours than intellectuals – civil servants, teachers, journalists and other researchers –, our small entrepreneurs have an almost complete lack of knowledge of the rhetoric, even classical, that has always allowed the academic classes to speak (and to no longer offer anyone else the chance to speak).

Thus we are in a so called communication society – generally without content or annihilated content – that peddles a type of very varied and joyful unique thought that is only satisfied by inevitably politically correct ideas. A society sadly forced to showcase itself as a spectacle. Small entrepreneurs who only make content, products and real services find themselves as mute spectators in the face of countless producers of containers, of attractive packaging often wrapping nihilistic junk.

These entrepreneurs do not think to complain of their pedagogical ignorance, of their deficiency in conceptual formulation or in the lack of attractive eloquence. Fascinated by the abundance of truly done things, our heroes are paradoxically stuck at the edge of their possible image.

They have also left the place of communication to the numerous and inevitable charlatans - the opposite is rather rare – which are quick to fill up all the spaces with their red noses and fun glitter.

Of course, happily there exists many honest intellectuals who honor the category of spirit, thought and reality. It is these that have priorly demonstrated to not have conceded to the foolishness of their caste. Typically, they also speak well of our heroes, to address them with praise, but almost never, even them, trust them with a microphone.

In truth, they are right: at least formally and aesthetically, modern communication cannot, almost never, get rid of its amusing and recreational "entertainment" side. Even Medieval rhetoric, moreover, always began with "captatio benevolentiae", seducing the auditorium: the habit today with the remote control does nothing but organize, expand and structure the inevitability of this tendency.

How can we do it, therefore?

In reality, first small entrepreneurs must wake up and not keep their language hidden. And then, intellectuals must fulfil their pedagogical mission by educating small entrepreneurs to speak in public by allowing them, respectfully, the space to do so.

Above all they must persuade themselves, meanwhile, they are in no way the custodians of truth. Far from it.

1.20 - The vocational and free nature of work in its always necessary creation of wealth

How did it come to be that we landed on the moon?

And why, after the destruction of the Tower of Babel for the complete conquest of the planet, did we invent the Internet and provide everyone with a cell phone in order to (re)connect with everyone?

In short, why does everyone think to produce and invent, even the idle (even if only to cleverly and illegitimately avoid real work)?

The beauty of the Creation and its perfection “in progress”, always developing, recalls the first truth that humankind is ontologically programmed to face their needs and their systematically infinite growth.

Pope Benedict XVI, in his encyclical *Caritas in veritate*²⁵ (and not only then), argues – as we have already seen – that work is free. Its origin, thus, does not even exclusively spring from the need to fulfil their own necessities. But, more from the limitless desire to create beauty, to find solutions and to make life, simply, if we can say, more fair, easy and pleasant.

Like Methuselah, who died after having become wealthy – relative to his time – off his herds, Sir Berners-Lee²⁶, universally renowned as the founding father of the web, continues to relentlessly and discreetly work on the next Semantic Web, just like a great researcher...

Mankind, as we have seen, has one economic vocation – in their consciousness – which is the production of wealth: It's as simple as that.

As all values in the category of exchanges, compensation is evidently exceeded by working for free and, by far, all other market considerations.

The fact that work must rightly be compensated depending on the talent, effort, the results obtained and the ensured responsibility does not change the immeasurable relationship with the free, gratuitous and even selfless principle of work. This, all work, no matter what the type, is an activity at the heart of all people that gives purpose and life to their divine being.

However small or important they may be, everyone's work is part of the sacred sphere, entirely immeasurable with immanent or calculable (nevertheless necessary) evaluations.

What salary should we give for a global vocation in which the whole personal destiny is involved?

This is how we can define the whole effort of an entrepreneur with their legitimate desire to earn money. While, as we have already seen, the relationship with their possible gains is always as an often final and not guaranteed consequence: tax burdens, risk, bankruptcy will always be symmetrical to their (never immediate) gains during all entrepreneurial activity.

You could also be lucky, or be blessed: why not? To be rewarded by their own (well honed) talents and by their stubborn exertions in the order of truth and justice.

Even the most modest worker as yet not made stupid or devastated by materialistic ideologies who wakes up everyday to go to work, dragged by the need to face their needs, and of course also the needs of their family, “honestly and instinctively know” that their activities have a divine and intangible value. The same value which gives life and dignity to the work of their boss, even if they inherited their wealth that, being wealthy, could well avoid all direct and personal work.

Unfortunately, the nihilistic ideology of our time has trapped work in a dimension of pure harmful necessity that must – by its own definition – be shamefully avoided at all costs.

The very essence of every human life, that is intrinsically work, is thus denied its roots. For this immanent and positivist concept, work is nothing but a source of alienation and harm: that is better to avoid and only approach to earn money.

It is not by chance that, after almost two generations, Western populations have consumed more than they have produced. Generally, they have the same false idea that the huge debts of Western State-nations do not concern them, as if they grew with no relation to their bulimic, illegitimate and completely guilty consumption!

²⁵ *Caritas in veritate*, op. cit, 34, 35, 36.

²⁶ Tim Berners-Lee was knighted by Elizabeth II, in 2004. Currently, he is a researcher in the next semantic Internet domain in Boston, where he lives with his family.

Section Two

The anti-entrepreneurial culture of our time

**The 20th Century was dominated
by materialistic ideologies
which increased the secularization
of our societies, leading them
towards statism and nihilism.
Entrepreneurs, potentially
renowned heroes, have not been able
to resist this monstrous
anti-human revolution.**

***“In a bureaucratic
system, useless work
drives out
useful work”***

Milton Friedman

Nobel Prize for economy 1976 – Chicago,
New York 1912 - †2006 San Francisco)

***A Christian’s work
is like the most concrete,
the most barren and concrete,
the most tiring and concrete,
aspect of their love for Christ”***

Mgr. Luigi Giussani

(Founder of Communion and Liberation
and Compagnia Delle Opere,
Desio, IT, 1922 - † 2005 Milan)

2.1 - European educational institutions at the antipode of entrepreneurial culture

It goes without saying the all adults in our Western societies are responsible for the flagrant lack or the endemic shortage of entrepreneurial culture. Especially entrepreneurs themselves.

Amongst the great profusion of the managerial culture - that is of so called business management -, that has overrun businesses over the past 50 years; the true know-how of business creators has been progressively reduced to a point where it is even rare.

But, how do businesses still manage to be created, even in very small numbers in relation to the economic necessity?

Statisticians, we must say, are quickly satisfied with the amount of business creations in relation to the percentage of disappearances...

Of course, the passion to become an entrepreneur continues to exist and, as long as there are people, will continue to exist. It is ineradicable and their unremitting character shows the profound and stubborn link between life and work. We have even begun to see how this link makes them overlap: life as work, in the broadest sense of the word, beyond and even independently of necessity.

But, as I will show in the next chapter, devastating concepts on a criminal and materialistic level seem to have led to results wanting to demonstrate the lack of basis or even the ridiculousness of this identifying link.

Therefore, not only entrepreneurial culture but even everything that is simply productive is attacked at the roots that attach it to life. We finish talking about businesses – even intently – when unemployment, the lack of livelihoods, comes into play. But the idea of entrepreneurship cannot be in this formulation that is not only simplistic but completely against the nature that generates the concept of business.

Which forces and pedagogical institutions at the fore are responsible for this so complete deterioration of the world view, even more than the concept of work and business?

After having referred to themselves, to their supposed responsibilities conceived in a culturally totalitarian way, the education of young people by the total school system bias (from kindergarten to university), the Nation-state introduced the secular of work into their teaching content, teaching it not as a duty of human salvation and a passion for excellence but as a stressful and alienating activity. Meanwhile, this same Nation-state has achieved the almost complete destruction and pillage of the institution of the family in the 20th Century. Thus young people, alone and crushed, find themselves almost powerless and attacked from all sides by an often absolutist and statolatric concept of life²⁷.

You can easily imagine the general idea that these young people have, who have been subjugated over the last 20 years to a daily bombardment of idiocies that almost all the reified and wicked teachers have taught them as notions of secular techno science. It is no coincidence that even the sociology professors in these universities have begun to speak of young graduates as "returning illiterates"!

Furthermore, how can all these teachers in these statist and totalitarian institutions broadcast this barely acceptable idea regarding entrepreneurs and small entrepreneurs?

Firstly, they know nothing about them: they live in a world (hugely privileged by their material and permanently ensured advantages) which is completely removed from the markets.

And then, these teachers, for the most part oblivious and, in addition, not always pedagogically well trained, have already accepted the anti-productivity ideology in these institutions that places them bureaucratically at the antipode of entrepreneurial culture.

Fortunately there are a considerable number of families and truly faithful and cultured (even, therefore, responsible) teachers in all European countries who are resisting and breathing life into the spirit of truth and freedom that continues to allow a certain entrepreneurial culture to survive. And, fortunately human intelligence and the thirst for freedom will never allow – Deo gratias – nihilism to completely impose itself.

²⁷ It was André Malraux, the French writer and Guallist minister in the 1960s who decided that, contrarily to Christianity, "States are born in the will to find totality without religion".

2.2 - The culture of subordinate work, in Europe, submitted to the principle of materialistic alienation

But where does this false and absurd culture of work as alienation come from?

Already in the “dialectic of the master and the slave” by the German philosopher Hegel²⁸, the balance of power and domination were established and hypostatized.

Karl Marx – just before the middle of the 19th Century – declared himself a disciple of Hegel with the only difference being, as he said various times, that he “simply reversed the philosophical principles” of his intellectual mentor. He founded, with his acolyte Engels, his proletarian theory on the subordination of the “revolutionary classes by itself” in all his books: his ultimate objective – through installing communism – was to have the proletariat become revolutionary “for themselves” rather than “against themselves”, that is aware and working to fight against their state of “slavery”²⁹.

We could say that the whole materialistic concept of work and its social relations is in this phrasing that is completely antagonistic to the Christian vision and the whole 2000 year old religious tradition.

For example, in a chapter of the gospel according to John³⁰, the famous one with the lavender at the Last Supper before the Passion, the extreme act of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples is described : “Now that I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you should also wash one another’s feet...” To serve the freedom of others, of everyone, corresponds with the fact of putting ourselves at their feet to serve and not dominate them. The Marxist revolutionary concept is the opposite: the idea of a class war to bring about the “dictatorship of the proletariat” is put thus forward. And work can only be considered as “the exploitation of one class by another” from a Marxist point of view...

It took – we can say, only – a little more than a century for this materialistic and utopian ideology to admit defeat after a long and painful meltdown even on an economic scale: in 1989, in Moscow, like in Berlin and everywhere else.

Outside of brotherly love, there is nothing but alienation: the Christian message can be summed up in this statement where work intrinsically shows humankind the stupid nonsense of all ideologies claiming to reduce life – and therefore life – to only its immanent and horizontal aspect.

The number one thing responsible for the apparent and progressive dumbing down of the mass population over the last two centuries is due to this materialistic ideology of which Marxism – with its central work, *Das Kapital*, and its four parts two of which were written posthumously by Engels and Kautsky – is the central theory.

All subordinate and paid work – of workers, employees and managerial staff – was affected, especially in Europe, by this materialistic and atheist ideology. The responsibility of men who give themselves over to it is historically documented. In fact, even the forced and murderous work in the Nazi extermination never succeeded in making work alienated in itself if the condemned, despite the extreme brutality that they were violently subjected to until they died, kept an intimate and final glimmer of freedom in their hearts.

It is enough to think of the symbolic experience of the Protestant theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the great critic with his books and active militancy against the so-called “positive Christianity” of Nazi ideology. He was hung in 1945, after two years in the *lager* as a true martyr.

The devastating consequences of this ideology, which became a historical movement still dominant in the 20th Century, remains still active on a cultural scale at the beginning of our 3rd millennia under the title of nihilism now rarely violent but still falsely joyous and entertaining.

Alienation is no longer just the fact that subordinate work separates mankind - as said in communist theory – from the “fruit of their activities” but it has spread, by osmosis, to all existential concepts of the modernist man. By paralyzing it like a brain tumor despite the individualistic, Stakhanovite and irreducible effects for the person.

Hence the continuous economic crises of our time.

²⁸ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, who lived between the 18th and 19th Century, and great author of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, had already set in his dialectic paradigm the idea of subordination between the “slave and master”

²⁹ Karl Marx built on this Hegelian analysis by defining this type of subordinate relationship as “alienation”.

³⁰ Gospel, John, 13, 1-20.

2.3 - The religious duty of work as a saving virtue and the Christian mission

The greatest teacher of the 20th Century, namely Luigi Giussani, the founder of the most important Catholic movement in the world in ecclesial terms – Communion and Liberation (CL) – now present in over 70 countries, responded with this to the question: “Why did your great movement decide not to move its headquarters to Rome?” The priest from Milan, with his rough voice and his usual readiness, replied a little like this: “The headquarters of CL will never be in Roma, the bureaucratic and political city with a refusal to work rather than Milan, the industrial metropolis amongst the most modern and active on the planet”. At the beginning of the 80s, when John Paul II expressly demanded Catholic movements across the world to move closer – even physically – to the Roman Holy See, in the interests of ecclesiological unity. And everyone knows that as far as active obedience to the Pope, the giant of the faith Don Giussani was ecclesiastically second to none. Just like his movement, moreover, which had always developed its reference to the Authority of Church as one of its main concerns. But the risk of distancing the center of the CL from its vital and cultural roots, those of the Italian work capital was considered even higher: the love and attachment to Papal authority as a sign of the unified construct of the *Ecclesia* would have been guaranteed and shown all the same! In fact, the paternal and fraternal relationship and the incomparable esteem of the last two Pontiffs with regard to this movement could not be more entrepreneurial³¹ and has done nothing but grow over the last two decades : the strength of the faith and rationality of the CL (and of his CDO) marry perfectly with the ecclesial policy of the last thirty years of Pope Wojtyła and Pope Ratzinger. From the encyclicals *Laborem exercens* and *Centesimus annus* to Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in veritate*, as well as the publication of the Compendium of the social doctrine of the Church, we have never before seen in the history of the Church such an intense magisterium of social and economic theology expressed at the highest levels.

One of the dominant ideas in the life of the Catholic Church after the Vatican II was and continues to be the huge correlation between faith and work: the social and economic doctrine is in the process of recuperating a certain apparent “cumulated” historical lateness regarding productivity and economic activity. For example, the very recent programmatic innovation of the last 30 years in the economic domain is what is known as “Subsidiarity”. An ancient idea from the great monastic movement of the Middle Ages: the idea that the State, at the time very limited, should never replace private and civil initiative. An idea now accepted, at least formally, also by the bodies of the European Union. This type of applied research, which currently is viewed as even winning on the political spectrum by replacing the unsustainable generalized and totalitarian statism, is doing justice to several clichés which were considered easily accepted in our culture. Such as, for example, the idea that we can consider established under which – according to Max Weber, especially in his *The Protestant Ethic* and *The Spirit of Capitalism* – the birth of entrepreneurial modernity has its origins in Lutheran reform. In this case we forget that all Christian tradition, before and corresponding to the advent of the Protestant split, had already created a massive movement of Catholic origin – fundamentally based in Tuscany – that exported and founded a little under 10,000 small businesses in Northern Europe: the Netherlands, what is now Belgium, France, Germany and the United Kingdom. Apart from the numerous research of the Italian historian Eugenio Garin, a book by the Antwerp author Anne-Marie Van Passen³² documents this extensively in around 500 pages.

Moreover, Leo XIII, the author of the first great economic and social encyclical *Rerum novarum* in 1891, had already named the principles of the dignity of the worker as a foundation of social progress in grave danger from the ideology on freedom borne of the violent French revolution. This, not only in its brutality and desecration, also in its content which arbitrarily simplifies reason, it posed the theoretical premises of Nazism and communism. Monseigneur Giussani himself, in his unflagging activity, for example with the founding of the CDO in the 80s, and in his dozens of catechesis books, always affirmed and examined the concept of work as the opposite of a “commodity”, and the materialistic culture it represents.

³¹ Communion and Libération gave birth to the Compagnia delle Opere which has rapidly spread in Italy to have more than 32,000 businesses as members!

³² Anne-Marie van Passen, wrote a book called *Le ore di ricreazione*, University of Leuven (Belgium) et Bulzoni Editore, Rome 1990, (IT).

2.4 - The nihilist intelligentsia, particularly European, and the majority of trade unions and the attitude of refusing to work

In the 80s, the constantly arrogant European intelligentsia (especially left-wing) defined, virtually unanimously, President Ronald Reagan as “the most stupid American” who, in turn, were almost all judged as very stupid, by the Vulgate of the pseudo-proletarian and elitist ideology of the Old World, which is still very widespread... And this whilst the President in question spoke of “deceptively” cutting down the “evil Empire” of Soviet communism for this intelligentsia.

To the great surprise of European politicians, who on the other hand deemed themselves very intelligent and cultured, like for example French President François Mitterrand (now already relegated to the pages of history), were astonished when faced with the colossal and self-destructive implosion of the evil Empire: scarcely a few years later, in 1989. The odious Berlin wall crumbled and the Russian President Yeltsin, lecturing on a tank in front of the Moscow Parliament using liberal discourse, took the countless intellectuals, basically “fools” which spoke Bernanos of fifty years earlier, completely by surprise.

The “sun of the Communist future” that terrorized (and fascinated) the intellectual suckers in classist Europe, but also others, over almost a century, over a large part of the planet was finished, completely finished.

With the burial of the most totalitarian and bloody ideology after Hitler's Nazism³³, all the tyrannical candidates and players developing or maintaining the famous class war virtually disappeared. Actually, it took another 20 years (up to today) for some workers' trade unions to begin to change, for example in Germany (notably at Volkswagen), in the United Kingdom (with the Blair era), in Italy (timidly with the CISL and UIL unions) and in the USA (with the car industry almost being driven into bankruptcy, but now reawakening), their mad class war ideology. In death, as we know, nails and hair continue to grow, even in the grave.

Will it therefore be the declaration of victory and glory for the Christian concept of work as a continuation of the divine creation? For this, we should also consider that Evil has disappeared into history... The devil, sadly, has already prepared his alternative tactics: nihilism proclaiming that life has no sense (as mankind has decided so) and, “of course” that there is no God, is already well established with the appearance of domination. From a work point of view, we are still far from the idea of Eugenio Dal Pane, in his extraordinary book “*L'impresa possibile*”³⁴ where he notes, for example, in his business, that “society brings the best out in everyone” in their production.

The ideology of business and entrepreneurship is thought to be seen, especially by union leaders, as a place of fatigue and perdition that requires everyone to not attend too much. Hence all these demands still often founded on decrease in working hours, permits paid for so-called training, “social” missions, for pseudo-paternity periods of playing the doting father, for sabbaticals or retirement or early retirement which is always getting earlier (and obviously contrasting with longevity and the consequent health conditions). Not to mention the trivialization of fake illnesses diagnosed by obliging and irresponsible doctors. The poison of antagonistic opposition, specific to the class war, has thus become – even diluted in bureaucratic and democratic practises – even more lethal. The constant fight that has ravaged and made more than a hundred years of industrial and economic life difficult has doubled, at least at an ideological level (but that is becoming inevitably operational) into a cancer that individually attacks each worker. To these strikes, these demonstrations, to these subtle and barely visible productive sabotages, the “death of the soul” can be added. Not only, the modern worker does not generally or no longer has a will to work, but their will to live itself is first and foremost affected. The evil is much more radical and is attacking the source of desire for all human activity. Instead of seizing this historic opportunity to all redesign ourselves together to produce and perpetuate the world's Creation, the class war continues all the same, despite the evidence, to make it unfounded and without reason.

³³ The publication in different languages of the “Red Book of Communism”, op. cit., after the even ritualized suicide in several country across the world, which had obviously believed for many decades in the idea of an atheist and absolute in itself humankind, dispute the number of victims which is approaching a hundred million. For each of the biggest murderers in history, Hitler and Stalin.

³⁴ Eugenio Dal Pane, *L'impresa possibile, L'ideale alla prova*, Itaca, Castel Bolognese, 2010 (IT).

2.5 - Entrepreneurs and organizations of employers degraded and subdued to modern union nihilism

Up until the 60s, the international trade union experience could be considered – largely – as reasonably positive, for workers as well as entrepreneurs.

Without fussing too much about the aspects of objectively revolutionary trade unionism as a "transmission belt" of left-wing parties devoted to the advent of the "proletarian dictatorship", we can all still state that two dominant ideas characterized the demands of more than a hundred years of trade union struggles: classism and economics.

The Communist ideology and its diluted socialist or social-democratic (still very widespread) version are typically based on the principle of a more or less antagonistic class war and the pursuit of economic conditions which are always "more interesting" for the "working masses", even independent of the financial and profitable results of their work.

Employer organizations are still able, sooner or later, to recognise that trade unionism has globally contributed – even beyond their intentions – to the modern organization of industry and international commerce. Hence the "reasonably positive" judgement limited to 50s and 60s.

What happened afterwards? The trade union achievements of more than 40 years after this pre-68 heyday were brought to their most exaggerated and paroxysmal hypertrophy. Swept along by the rebellious and pseudo-revolutionary demanding momentum of these years, the trade union achievements have multiplied and cumulated into creating, in the West, totally weakened and unbalanced markets which obviously favour the workers. Western businesses are progressively going down the path of declining competitiveness due to the scandalous concessions that trade unions have continued to demand over the decades. And, in saying that, I choose my words carefully.

We can begin to note the first disastrous consequences at the start of the 80s when – for example – Japanese cars began to take over the markets in the north-west: the world leader nowadays is, symbolically, Toyota while Detroit, the American car capital for a century, is falling into bankruptcy.

Whilst the bureaucratic and hyper-demanding achievements of trade unions never ceased multiplying with a masochistic irrationality (and with the growing statism of European countries), two situations came up again and again: the first, directly linked at the advantages unduly given to trade unions, is the tidal wave of bankruptcies in Western businesses: thrown out of the market by the exorbitant cost of their staff and by the absurd demands of personnel struggles, these businesses (especially European) have no other alternative but to close, even relocating.

The second phenomenon is the progressive and positive competitiveness of emerging countries which have become hugely competitive faced with negatively and economically burdened businesses, culturally degraded and discouraged in our West.

A sort of *nemesis*, with a conniving destiny, where all the rights and achievements become theoretical, because the businesses close and create unemployment. A sort of Pyrrhic victory.

The arrogance of lunar claims, outside of the markets, produces nothing. But the most extraordinary paradox is the fact that the only ideology, communism, remains still attached to the antagonistic class war (in fact more than – now - in theory), has continued its destructive and nihilistic course in the same period where the collectivist political systems have deservedly openly declared their failure and their bankruptcy. It took almost 20 years, from the crumbling of the Berlin wall in 1989, for trade unions to timidly begin – partly, especially following German trade unions – to review their suicidal and highly unpopular strategy founded on the nihilistic ideas inspired from economic demands: for salaries and standards that weakened and languishing businesses in the West can no longer pay.

Meanwhile, all productive Western culture has entered – could it do anything else? – an almost paralyzing depression. Although favorable reactions have begun to find their way in the decline of economic recessions, such as at Fiat in Turin (where a statutory worker referendum put a stop to the strikes galore) by following from afar, even American industries. And I am not talking here of the very serious lack of new investment crucial for innovation and expansion: technological and political re-engineering of commercial development.

2.6 - The tasteless salt: entrepreneurs subordinate to clerks and unions on a cultural and projectual scale

When salt becomes tasteless³⁵, how can we add flavour to food?

The “idiot” intellectuals (unless proved otherwise, of course), that is all kinds of clerks (including countless politicians “forced” to progress the demagogy in the degeneration of mass culture) that contaminate and corrupt the crucial thought of modern society with their more or less overt militant nihilism, starting each day with the iconic positivity of entrepreneurs. Even small entrepreneurs.

The work is, so to speak, completed by the countless social laws or “agreements” removed from the issue of multiple and prolonged strikes and union action: more or less “democratic”, of course.

These practices, for almost the past two generations, have become so widespread and “typical” that many young entrepreneurs have never seen anything else. And even go as far as considering them “normal”. In reality, it is a social abomination which has been unjustly obtained in a cumulative progression that has not been rationally and reasonably inflicted for quite some time due to new conditions and competition led by globalisation.

Very often, these anti-historical and reactionary forces, in which many trade unionists - now become bureaucrats and self-referential – still shamelessly revel in, end up preferring and provoking the failure or delocalization of businesses to theoretically defend the abominable and no longer sustainable gains. Even their outdated and classist ideology – which, incidentally, has not been taken seriously for more than 30 years, even officially – is openly contradictory by such economic and political options. These wicked strategies have already more or less characterized the first years of this third millennium.

But what is more serious is the fact that the traditional entrepreneurial salt has, meanwhile, become tasteless. Entrepreneurs, even small entrepreneurs, have subconsciously and superficially absorbed the principles and behaviours of the enemies of tradition at least founded on eternal common sense.

Many employer organisations in various important European countries are surprised – now – to note the usual clichés in display of the armament of militant nihilists amongst their ranks. In continuously trying to deal with the foolish and even abnormal claims of trade unionists, over many decades, the representatives of entrepreneurs have trouble distinguishing their typical grotesque and anti-economic discourse: which is accompanied by the lame, learning to limp.

Especially as the productivity and profitability of businesses – however big or small – have relatively and proportionally dropped separating, more and more, the claims of the possibilities allowed by the markets. Particularly at the expense of development.

The projectuality of creators and investors of entrepreneurs is made impossible by this pursuit of unsustainable demands. Especially with regards to international competition. Their culture founded on four contradictory interests – as we have seen – to which the business is nailed, is continually trampled on by their own words. The tasteless salt: the eclipse of reason and entrepreneurial transcendence. Another way of talking about the decline of the West.

For example, employer organisations in European countries are also surprised to see the numerous businesses – and, naturally, entrepreneurs – exit from their ranks and prepare to begin to set the record straight in businesses devastated by the ideology of irresponsibility and lack of productivity. An even slight refusal of market’s laws lead to nihilism.

For example, the administrative delegate of Fiat, the Italian-Canadian Marchionne³⁶, who, after having taken control of Chrysler, for a pittance, succeeded in creating new businesses controversially outside of the ranks of the Italian employers’ organisation (Confindustria) and also succeeding in isolating the anarchic trade unionists of the left: and he has begun to distribute Fiat profits amongst the workers.

And this to show that businesses do not, nowadays, need the so-called trade union struggle to help workers participate in the creation of wealth made in the international competition markets.

³⁵ Gospel, Matthew, 5, 13-16

³⁶ Sergio Marchionne : the majority of workers in Turin fought the classist and defeatist positions on the 16th January 2011, of the left-wing trade union CGIL with a company referendum.

2.7 - The shortage of bourgeois culture in Europe and the abundance of a subordinate petty-bourgeois

Entrepreneurs, especially in our time of consecutive and overshadowing crises, do not run the show. The famous Pareto universal rule³⁷, 80/20%, has roughly come into the recession radically reducing the percentage, in this case, of entrepreneurs in relation to generic workers (and subordinate with their salary). Is there an anthropological mutation in progress, for which the absolute number and the percentage of entrepreneurs would radically reduce?

Even if almost everything is done to make that happen and the growing number of apocalyptic, of course, the answer is no. But three factors, economic, social and cultural respectively, can negatively influence it with an unforeseen drop in entrepreneurial vocation.

Firstly, on an economic scale, the very high risk of creating a new business can put the brakes on entrepreneurs: between recessions, stagnation and slow development, the danger of not succeeding in entrepreneurial projects can be so high that people do not easily dare to do it.

Next, there are socio-economic advantages to remain in subordinate work obviously sheltered by statist laws, even preferring the “contract nation” and the protected “eternal civil servant status”.

And, finally, the traditionally anti-capitalist and at least a-entrepreneurial culture that surfaces to lead all nihilistic and irresponsible concepts.

These three factors at present make up the mix of fear that characterizes the decline of our sceptical and surrendered West. Here I will continue, of course, with the lax and very biased terminology of bourgeois and petty-bourgeois – often used in our world. The glorious bourgeois culture of productive and ruling responsibility tends to disappear behind the reckless rise of the fearful, grudging and sordid petty-bourgeois vision which makes up the breeding ground for all unfortunately vivid and obviously dominant mediocrity in our thus “officially” completely neglected universe.

The main characteristic of this culture is that it is globally subordinate and not autonomous: it is in this trait that it is – as we can say – obscenely petty-bourgeois, parasitic and incapable of planning.

Conformist nihilism specific to unique thought can thus develop and spread, in all its states, thanks to this fatalist passivity of people capable of becoming bourgeois but instead becoming or remaining small and historically insignificant. Mass culture, foolish and televisual, is a tragic and superficial reflection of this. It is no surprise if the most dubious anaemic and powerless ideas have become the most important points in this immense category which cultivates the common links of the most widespread “nice ideas” – which are generally false or degraded.

There are free people who are not subordinate to mass ideas of unique thought (or petty-bourgeois with a tendency for statolatry as a large, almost too large, part of it) that true modernity demands: to avoid joyous and articulate mass nihilism, we must have a faith and culture other than those that are quietly tyrannized by the society that passes everything through the ideological mill of the lower and middle classes. And who equalize everything relatively downwards.

But these free people are rather rare.

All societies, secularized and popularized by relative nihilism, have “educated” new generations for more than forty years, what we can culturally refer to as actual “zombies”: the great anti-sceptical scholars in our time have trouble still believing in the spiritual salvation of these multitudes of foolish, headless volunteers.

Thus the active and projectual so called bourgeois culture is forced to deny, keep quiet and hide by surrendering the characteristic and historic role of revitalizing and leading all society.

After the abdication of the aristocracy, even the bourgeois class appear to have forfeited.

However Bernard Scholz, president of the *Compania delle Opere*³⁸ is happy to note that “after years in which small and medium-sized business have been criticized as if they are an obstacle to growth and competitiveness, the European Union have recognised the essential value of SMEs for the economic and social future with their *Small Business Act*”.

³⁷ Wilfried Pareto, Italo-French-Swiss sociologist and economist (1848 – † 1923), is famous for his theory in which political economy is only a part of sociology...

³⁸ Manifesto CDO, *Faire entreprise*, Introduction, Milan, June 2010 (IT), www.cdo.org.

2.8 - The (infinite) course of impoverished and devout nihilism after the poor

There is a big residue amongst the waste of political ideologies and even the Church still move worthless ideas around in contemporary sub-culture.

It consists of a huge structurally infinite and insatiable race after the poor.

We must help them, we must save them, of course.

All of society, especially the statolatric in worshipping the intervention of the State, must take care of them.

On this point, certain tendencies of the peripheral Church as well as left-wing political ideologies converge: the State should have the unconditional help of the poor as the centre of its welfare activities.

Where do these ideas about helping the most disadvantaged, even from all over the world, come from?

The Gospel, of course. And, as a consequence, from communism as a project founded on the proletarian classes. We are not going to waste time analyzing the clearly unfounded and completely bankrupt idea of the myth of communism helping the poor. It has almost imploded everywhere in the whole world, with the exception of totalitarian and tyrannical North Korea that continues live in the mass structure shortage, specific to operational communism. It has even been proven, on a praxis level, as the most formidable producer of poverty which is intrinsically linked to its own immanent ideology.

On the other hand, it is interesting to consider the humanitarian and missionary idea of evangelical religions that never cease talking to the poor to teach what Jesus himself did at various times and occasions. Jesus spoke of the poor in his marvellous "sermon on the mountain"³⁹ especially regarding "poverty of spirit" which exclusively allowed access into the Kingdom of Heaven. Of course, he spoke time and time again of the disadvantaged poor to which human and transcendent charity should come to the rescue through solidarity towards our fellow human beings and to alleviate – as much as possible – social and life injustices.

Christianity is, above all, this: the constant encounter of human and concrete otherness can only reflect the ever vocationally divine nature of the person. Especially if they are poor.

The encyclical *Caritas in veritate* was promulgated by Pope Benedict XVI to reaffirm – if we dare say – the Christian truth of charity: it can only be practised in its fullness personally as a direct and merciful encounter with a poor or wretched neighbor.

An important part of Protestants, and even Catholics, on the other hand view the charitable relationship with the poor as exclusively or largely statist help. Their "generous" activity is more and more limited to administrating the distribution of grants awarded by bodies of the nation-state. But these very methods are equally applied in certain private charitable organizations.

These Christian operators, who have become more marketing than charity workers, are increasing in number as modestly or well-paid and advantaged militants, even end up completely and politically disassociating their relationships with the poor. Thus their bureaucratic efficiency is only contrasted by the scarcity of the poor beneficiaries themselves.

Our opulent societies have already greatly reduced the number of actual poor people whereas the parasites and candidates for the benefits galore have become huge. Hence the tendency of organizations to inevitably raising the cutoff standards which identify the poor...

The poor today in any western metropolis resemble only very slightly, in a structural way, the poor that Jesus spoke of. Nowadays they are often the product of an ideological pauperism which is embedded in certain political and religious spheres which have also become parasitic.

And often spiritually wretched.

Modern statism has seized the *res publica* and even the collectivist secularism has penetrated the ranks of Christians on the left as well as a certain hierarchy, fortunately a minority, in the Church. There are multiple and astonishing forms of modern nihilism.

Moreover, already one French Prime Minister from the Mitterrand era, the socialist and Prime Minister Rocard, has stigmatized the poor (regarding immigrants, almost the only real poor nowadays): "France - he said - cannot host all the world's poor".

Indeed, no country can: an indisputable reason of the good that religious missions throughout the world do.

³⁹ Gospel, Matthew, 5, 3 et Luke, 6, 20.

2.9 - Entrepreneurs who are not "bourgeois" complicit in the interventionism of the controlling "ethical state"

Herod, the King of the Jews at the time of the birth of Jesus, already was responsible for the extermination of the family of his wife (and he was certainly not the first in history to do so) and all young children in his kingdom, the "massacre of the innocents": in this case, in order to not miss the unknown baby, the new "King of the Jews", his possible competitor, as the Old Testament predicted and the wise men declared...

Likewise, all history of what we refer to as capitalism is marked - and continues to be characterized - by the numerous delusions, faults and departures which are contrary to its foundations.

This is well known: For example, Zingale and Rajan⁴⁰ already wrote in their book titled "Saving capitalism from the Capitalists" about this type of absurd economic heresy. The two authors from the University of Chicago have put forward that it is often businesspeople, entrepreneurs themselves that put the markets and their basic principles in peril with their abuse (like Herod in his kingdom). In this story, not only is the range of violent and delinquent aspects with regard to power questioned - therefore even regarding the power of the business - but also the degeneration which is connected to the statism of corruption.

Like everyone else, the entrepreneur is subject to the temptation of breaching and violating the moral rules of the free market and the sacrosanct competitiveness to succeed in illegally (or illicitly) beating their own competitors.

In this case, it is the wholesome liberal bourgeois, even whilst practicing the principles of subsidiarity, who risk not only becoming tasteless salt, but even a substance toxic to the freedom of competition that annihilates open competition. And even the idea of the market.

Statism is thus not exclusively provoked as the fruit of the parasitic benefit system of the subordinate masses that try (often successfully) to drown their possible dishonesty in the immense cauldron of the State. These fraudulent practices against the legitimacy of the business, structurally in a free competitive market, are even practiced by entrepreneurs legally denying their role, with the participation of vicious and treacherous civil servants against legitimate collectivity.

It is not unusual for entrepreneurs to take on these perverse and depraved behaviors by giving even pseudo-moral justifications of the situation belonging to the concept of the "ethical state" that always turn out to clearly be junk. As sometimes the rules of the free market result in unjust practices, they do not hesitate to cite statist corruption as the "ethical" solution.

Maybe these entrepreneurs do not see the fact that the markets will never be perfect: all economists repeat this and historical (and religious) experience attests to this. It is by educating the client and the consumer (by definition always tending towards laziness) that the markets can become more rational and just. Certainly not by pairing it with the statolatric theories of left-wing intellectuals (and even sometimes from the right) that, despite their historical debacles and their lack of a purposive basis, continue to proclaim it as the salvation of the planet and of history.

In reality, statism is the number one economic problem of the West of our era that has cumulatively become particularly more victim to over the last forty years. And, when entrepreneurs - especially in small businesses - hear talk of the "ethical State", inevitably totalitarian and economically all-consuming, they must be alert and aware regarding the interlocutor proposing all sorts of constantly pathetic and devastating statist interventions. It is not worth wasting time demonstrating a political theory that would claim to eliminate no less than the Evil of the World, laughably, via the immanent "legal rules". Rules, as we know, are never enough! The ethical State is always fatal for democratic freedoms. In evidence, a culture problem specific to the European bourgeois arises: it must be vaccinated against infection from all inevitably anti-democratic collectivism and intervention. The only legitimate State intervention in the market economy is this subsidiary defined as necessary due to the insufficiency evident in the actions of the private sector. In this case, the problem is always due to the difficulty in eliminating the same State after it...There is nothing more obstinate than the insertion, scarcely biodegradable, of the intervention of the State-nation in the free economy of a country.

⁴⁰ Luigi Zingales and Raghuram G. Rajan "Saving capitalism from the Capitalists", P.U.P, Chicago, 2004, (EU).

2.10 - The jealous hatred of the entrepreneur's money, often deemed to be stolen: competitiveness or jealousy?

It is known that an entrepreneur that goes bankrupt in the United States does not have the same reputation at all if this bankruptcy happened in Europe.

To the American guilt, Europe adds an almost indelible shame, as if bankruptcy does not even exist at the edge of the daily reality of every entrepreneur.

Of course, we are speaking here of straightforward bankruptcy and not fraudulent and organized as part of entrepreneurial delinquency.

Obviously, success always runs parallel to possible disaster as well as the risk of achieving profit but also equally losses...

Several unfortunate circumstances can come together to provoke a bankruptcy. Even if unlikely and rare, it is still possible.

But the question has a much more distant origin.

Not that Americans are superficial or undervalue bankruptcy by the fact that it is in the normal course of things that can happen. But, simply, they have - in their country between the two oceans - a framework of emulation and, generally, not of jealousy.

Another person's success is rather a reason to emulate them instead of rivalry.

The first part of the so-called "American Dream" is in fact contentment, the pleasure in seeing others succeeding: compassion (from cum passionem, the Latin "with passion") for someone else's victory who has triumphed in competing against the State...

Has emulation thus eliminated jealousy? That would be too good and unreal. But, in this culture, the first reaction is not often negative: the word hope underlines this vision. The opportunity, the luck, the possibility is also possible for me. I also can, like everyone else, realize my dream with committing to my work.

It is always feasible that my deepest desires can come true.

In this element of eventualities and projectualities, the virtual can become real.

Or fail. In this case, there is always a second chance. Another chance.

And it is for this reason that the paralytic free trap of the sentiment of rivalry is not automatically triggered in these Anglo-Saxon countries by opening the most absurd consuming door of useless jealousy. In addition, this trap brings along with it what we would consider all malicious motivations. The most unreal doubts are fed in our European countries as if we had opened Pandora's box and if we were exposed to all the most malignant and hostile presumptions: the self-justifying anxiety over their own laziness and to unduly excuse their own lack of talent leads to infer, even slanderously, the success of others.

This is the case of the entrepreneur and the small entrepreneur in their success which ignores all the years of risks, hard work, diligent applications and concealed sacrifices.

Instead of considering their success as a factor of pushing all society up, we often surround them with cold jealousy for their proud independence, their search for a legitimate reputation, as well as the prestige and the eventual economic success.

Sometimes, we even let evil tongues suggest that dubious, or illegal, methods are the origin of this success. Claiming, frequently, that an unidentified and legitimate human justice must intervene in order to level out the thus "abused and undeserved" destiny.

A sort of hate, or actually hate, can also add to this setting in which the entrepreneur must also flow their endless working days against problems to resolve.

Even members of their families can be affected by the torment of this truly slanderous solitude. When they are not the object of a subtle and substantial economic exploitation that destroys friendship and family ties, especially in the extended family, in their nearest and dearest.

The anti-entrepreneurial culture does not always achieve the perverse end, but - especially in Europe - this question is on the agenda all the same.

What is envied, instead of all this pathetic nihilism, is the very rare category of productive emulation, camaraderie and loyal competition.

2.11 - From Lacan's "desire" for sanctity to the inevitably anorexic gluttony: the "pleasure of the truth"

All those who are interested in the problems that are the basis of interpreting the reasons for the monstrous economic crisis of our era are surprised that even psychoanalysts are interested in it. There is a word which has become central in this debate and of which I have already spoken in previous chapters: it is the word, utterly Lacanian, "desire", already used in France since the 80s (at least in the discipline of psycholinguistics).

In Italy, this same word "desiderio" has been revived for the first time as central in economic analysis of Censis, the most important national official body for statistical evaluations and forecasts. The lack of desire in contemporary culture was indicated - at the end of 2010 - as the most important cause of the last recession.

Psychology to the aid of sociology and as motivation for the economic recession!

The movement already cited and founded by Don Giussani, Communion and Liberation, also took on the theme of this loss of desire, which has been spoken of for decades, as a central analysis of an anthropological and religious critique of nihilism.

There are plenty of articles have been published not only in the daily and online, obviously Catholic, press, where the most sophisticated developments have been discussed by the expert specialists and men of faith, as well as culture.

Desire, that is the source of the most profound construct of the person, has been described - once more by the CL Catholics and their entrepreneurial organization CDO (Compania Delle Opere) -, in their current degeneration, as a sort of unregulated drive for immediate hetero-led specific to the nihilistic individual: the victim of hyper-hedonism known as "derelict" and trivialized, their desire is reduced and identifies itself with whim without any link or obligation outside of themselves.

The imperative is in this case the direct appropriation and without the delay of gluttony of divided and distraught mini-desires. It is no longer global happiness that we continue to pursue, that link all existence to a superior order where the sense assumes all its density in a transcendent vocation.

On the other hand, this is an inevitably degraded desire on the verge of extinction, as it is linked to declining subjectivity: this anorexia is nothing but thoughtless gluttony...

We try to replace the desire for sanctity with this immediate drive which, like a small straw fire, quickly dies out. Thus we can state that the heart always has reasons that "reason" ignores: the claim to rationalize the faculty of desire, diminished by the "everything and now" ideology, shows its impotence by being deprived of dams and protective barriers.

Instead of becoming responsible for the desire which develops, we end up irresponsibly driving it into extinction.

The motivation for this mechanism is due to the fact that this action to directly and immediately take the world on, to the emergence of the small desire that has crucially become compelling, leads to the trivial undifferentiated lassitude typical to the very fatigue of leading a skeptical life.

By know that all modern marketing is founded on the proposal of goods and services, the role of the entrepreneur is double.

On one side, they must promote their truly useful necessary and high quality services and products.

On the other hand, they must work to the limit of their practical possibilities in order to advance their activity and that of their client.

And, of course, the entrepreneur must have competitive pricing: it is always by lowering the price of products and by increasing their quality that the value added to the Creation can come to fruition. Even without innovating, this is not always completely necessary or even essential.

In short, they must "convey the desire" of the wisdom inside sense. Furthermore, as entrepreneurs, no matter how small, we know that we must obey sense. In times of crisis, we must still cling even more onto the truth that is always contagious. If we recall the passage of St Augustine on beauty which highlights "the pleasure of the truth" (*gaudium de veritate*). Even big liars, whilst cheating others, do not like being cheated themselves⁴¹

We repeat it often, the beauty of truth will always have the skin of nihilism that nullifies desire.

⁴¹ St Augustine, Confessions, Book X, Chapter XXIII, Joy and True, Rizzoli Editore, Milan, 1958 (IT), p.282.

2.12 - Modern work is often perceived as slavery and the huge lesson from Christianity to set them free

Slavery was abolished everywhere a little less than two centuries ago, not without wars and extraordinary social violence. We spoke about it, not long ago, at the table - in the canteen of my business called *Bistrologos*, in my Brussels head office - with employees and young interns, in even a funny and humorous way. At one point, the discussion became somewhat serious when an English intern told the anecdote (part historical and part imaginary) of Britannicus, the slave translator and interpreter of Julius Caesar. The future Roman emperor that had conquered the current England wanted to compensate his slave called Britannicus, a cultured "Englishman" that he learned to appreciate as a true peer, by offering him the chance to become *libertus*, that is a freed slave and a free Roman citizen.

The slave translator responded - said this very young intern sure to be a future English translator - with a phrase that has become iconic nowadays: "No, thanks".

I also heard this short story at school in the 50s, told by my Latin professor, without ever having been able to verify it. The love for his work and the fact of working with the greatest "entrepreneur" of his time meant that Britannicus had no doubt about his decision to refuse the useless freedom offered to him by Caesar: his personal relationship with the great "condottiere" who even crossed the English Channel, was already completely free: the slave had quickly become an advisor and true intrapreneur in his daily crucial work as interpreting the local and practically conquered populations to Roman civilization... From this astonishing anecdote, the conversation turned to the reasonably generalized preference of the current European youth for "voluntary servitude": subordinate work has become defined as total slavery, overturned by Britannicus as alienated like all other slave work, but equal or comparable by the fact that we can choose - at least apparently - our own boss (slavery!)

How have we come to view work with such a sad and upsetting vision in relation to the Judeo-Christian vision of the last 3000 years? We have come to see how skeptical and agnostic nihilism has managed to empty all ideality and content from the fundamental activity of "eternal" current mankind, except for strictly economic activity. The young people that exit from 20 years of school are completely doomed to this shallow and sadly hopeless ideology.

They are almost "ready" to be reeducated all over again, beginning by removing from their heads all the stupid statements and untruths that all valueless teachers (but not only them) have instilled in them. We could even suggest that it is for this reason the youth unemployment, especially in Europe, is so high (over 30%): it is not new news that young people are often big and important consumers and feeble and reluctant producers. And, yet, they have never been so "cultured" and so potentially ready to produce goods for a new and more beautiful world.

The profoundly revolutionary from the gigantic monastic movement of the Middle Ages must once again reach the ears of our world dumbfounded by the ideology of empty enjoyment and by the compulsive and mass sound of nothingness. The grandeur of our Europe which managed to conquer the whole West (and planet) with its culture of sense that came from the "mad" idea of St Benedict that, with the wealth of Christian tradition, founded all human existence simply on prayer. In the "advertising" slogan of abbey, even Benedictine, rule *ora et labora*, work was understood as a continuation of prayer. It can only be in all spirits and all domains. Numerous monasteries have thus become the core not only able to save all human and written culture of antiquity, but to polarize and invent new production technologies in all sectors. The monks, who were the only or rare permanent travelers throughout the whole of Europe for several centuries up until the Renaissance, became the principal actors and vectors of economic development in the Old Continent.

The continuous relations between the different monastic orders and different abbeys were progressively "substantiated" by entrepreneurial initiatives and exchanges of innovations that were part of a unique eschatological search and a unique cultural and productive vision. Human accomplishment is equally well achieved by liturgy as it is by the creation of business (of course beginning with agriculture): the construction of Gothic cathedrals and Roman monasteries were parallel to the opening of new manufacturing businesses (for example the textile industry): throughout Europe and around monasteries. The defeatist and nihilistic ideology was unimaginable whilst Christian tradition continued to liberate work by making it sacred.

2.13 - The obsolescence of the innumeracy of conventional clerks and, equally, of economic entrepreneurs

Possibly the most significant symptom of the advanced level of the dissemination of unique thought, despicably simplistic and destructive, is the exclusively economic role that many entrepreneurs assign to their "trade": "we - they say - do not do politics..."

Similarly, some of them believe, and do not hesitate to always jabber on about it at every opportunity, that only they take care of the economy and they even boast about limiting their work to dedicate themselves to the exclusively economic activities in their business. Their self-reducing mindlessness leads them to think that their actions can only be effective if they limit themselves to taking care of their accounts, products and the strictly technical organization of their business.

These mindless people do not even notice to have thus entrusted their steering-wheel, brakes and the provision of petrol for their car to other "specialized" professionals in politics (the other politicians known as "administrators"). Or "specialized" in cultural techniques (the different corporations of intellectuals, artists or even "educators" such as so-called teachers).

These entrepreneurs, childlike and childish, do not notice the level of social desocialization in which our societies are in no longer guarantee them, for quite some time, this convenient and naive subdivision of social "tasks" (not really mad originally). This could have had a glimmer of sense if society, as a whole, and all the markets were centered on one ideal and centripetal polarity: since the birth of the always more powerful State of Hobbes, we have seen that social forces are programmed as "everyman for himself"⁴². They have even forgotten that their primary mission is not strictly economic, but at least social and cultural in the sense of builders of civilization (the four parts of the cross to which they nailed and which I mentioned in chapter 1.18).

They have also forgotten the eternal principle that the economic principle always depends on the political and cultural. It is not by chance if the AVSL, another missionary and charity movement of Communion and Liberation in the Third World, founds its action on education: school for children and young people. The intrinsic nature of these social forces should lead them to play a main role and not be subordinate to the "ruling classes" of clerks and politicians from which they are excluded, in addition, without an illusory and laughable pride.

This moment of abandonment, of so-called "specialist" marginalization (*every man to his own trade*, as they say...) is even the leader of this drift that is surging through our culture of work.

The spiritual and cultural universe that globalization is going to give us, in our era, is so complex that the category subdivisions, which I am about to speak of, are no longer suitable.

Since the Renaissance, to develop science and technology, we have had to, logically, specialize and fragment all the areas.

Now we must reconstruct, and - at least partially - become polyhedral, like an artist like Leonardo, who was at the time a great painter, architect, sculptor, builder engineer and naturalist.

In 1990, in France, a best-seller titled *Le Capital lettres*⁴³ has highlighted the following concept in which the modern economy (just before the Internet and mobile phone revolution) "especially needs - what a surprise! - authors and philosophers". On one condition: that they become "numerate", that is literate in scientific, technical and measurable disciplines.

The "specialists", the engineers confined to their hyper specialized sectors have, indeed, become incapable of taking on truly leading roles in our globalized world where they are required to integrate classical culture with techno-scientific culture.

Therefore, all clerks must stop wallowing in their classic uselessly limited affirmation

"Oh me, figures, they aren't my cup of tea...".

Entrepreneurs must also - as I have already said - become aware and active in their culture: their economic and technological "specialism", their so-called idiosyncrasy for global disciplines makes them obsolete and useless in the complex nature of our modernity.

⁴² If we remember the Hobbesian devise "homo homini lupus", man is a wolf to his fellow man, where the State - in its power - "assures" the permanent truce of belligerent but armed parties.

⁴³ Alain Etchegoyen, *Le Capital lettres*, Ed. Bourin, Paris, 1990.

2.14 - The quirks of the entrepreneur: to deny their social and political vocations. And to not succumb to their own hagiography

The entrepreneur, as a producer of wealth, founder of sociality and the tireless organizer of the resistance and fight against entropy (as a natural inescapable tendency to decline and to die), is by definition a first-class socio-political animal. How can we indeed think to reunite humankind, involve them with capital, coordinate them inside a technical and relational organization, lead them as one in entrepreneurial drives towards the numerous social and cultural consequences, how can we envisage doing business - simply, if we dare say so - without responding to an eminently cultural and social, therefore political, vocation? Foolish entrepreneurs that attempt to deny this end to their action do not know how to do their job properly (it's not unusual), or they deliberately assign the injustice of not recognizing and acknowledging their work to its main connotation. That of being a communal and social activity, productive to the highest degree of civil and political society: in the original sense of *polis*, of the city of men. In addition, the fools leave the field clear for all the more or less professional politicians to permit them to easily capture the role - very often in an undue way - of defenders of the very precious public thing.

Politics itself, in the eyes of these faded entrepreneurs, also becomes an exclusive business of parties and public and bureaucratic structures: politics would just become a "particratic" activity. This relative aberration to the simplifying of the word politics is already improper if stated by the average person, but it is unacceptable if it is even only thought by an entrepreneur. The mentality of social subordination, of welfare statism and of socio-economic parasitism comes from this petty vision in which many entrepreneurs are quietly proof: they even find reasons to boast about it.

Thus, the soft ideology of light nihilism can freely spread.

Managers doomed to the non-existent "political neutrality" are better not to talk about it. Politics, in fact, does not allow us to use empty or neutral niche markets: "if you don't bother with politics, politics will bother with you", as they said even before 1968. It is useless to rattle on about it.

On the other hand, it is more interesting to speak of "gilded mediocrity" of entrepreneurs, of small entrepreneurs. The gold-plated adjective had, in Roman times, a value that nowadays we risk losing: the *aurea mediocritas* is presented as centered, balanced, harmonious and, not by chance, gilded. Even in this obvious lack by deducting responsibility, we can find the typical trait of the entrepreneur's tolerant moderation.

A plea for the entrepreneur to not, in any case, slip into hagiography. Therefore, we must recall certain critiques that have been launched at entrepreneurs over at least four centuries.

Firstly, the accusation of being cowards. Our entrepreneurs, big or small, have never lost their heads in the storms of history. Neither in the metaphorical nor the real sense. Certain critics have often suggested that they never had a head, in the ethical and cultural sense.

Even their hearts are judged: it is often said, not without malice, that in their place our small entrepreneur has always had and supported a cash register, which are not sensitive to eschatological or even just ethical and cultural interrogations. Others remarks that their surprising silence throughout history is not voluntary but due to their "intellectual handicap". A fast action, much faster than even their...thoughts.

It must be said that entrepreneurs are always distrusting of often degraded abstracts created by philosophers. This, not only is divorced from the Logos incarnate, but, since the Renaissance, has even been radically separated from classic common sense. And often when they saw the distant "ethical" horizons, they did not realize they were wading through excrement.

It is true that these "idiot" intellectuals must be demystified, but small entrepreneurs must also come out of their cultivated ignorance and of their adequacy which directly leads them to the small and useless vanity of being pretentious and ignorant.

The manifesto of the Compagnia Delle Opere "*Faire entreprise*" already mentioned in chapter 2.7, continues the concepts of *Caritas in veritate* to showcase the social creation on business: "A business is not an *exclusive property*. It is a private subject but a public interest as it converges the expectations of workers, clients, reference communities, providers of goods, services and financial resources".

2.15 - The gospel condemns the mis-management of wealth and power. Not entrepreneurship and absolute ownership

A universe like ours, without an ideal or operational aristocracy, tends towards paralysis and self-centeredness. Our spectacle society that French "situationists" described at the beginning of the 60s in their paradoxical slogan "the spectacle of society, the society of spectacle" (those which are there under the gaze of everyone), do not have a reference aristocracy. From all sides, in an indiscriminate way, candidates and categories wanting to take the place of noblemen who have been denied as a general ruling class arise: it is true that the age of Enlightenment massively cut them down, not only in a metaphorical sense, heads often become completely useless.

Who are they, these candidates? Firstly they are great scientists that claim- very often justifiably - their discoveries as a fundamental reason for the development of our era. But do they know how to prudently frame and restrict themselves - even if maybe it was not their duty - all the negative effects of their incredible scientific progress? Then there are stars from the world of entertainment (including more or less nihilistic intellectuals) that no longer benefit from lasting myths. We end up measuring the ephemeral character of their success with a famous unit of Woody Allen: the fragile and fateful "15 minutes of fame". After, we find the sportspeople who have collected a big part of the consensus, passion and time of the multitudes who do not hesitate to alienate them without restraint.

Following the politicians who, sat on their economic and political laurels, state that the structural inconsistency and fragility of their power tested and plagued by all centrifugal forces and which only balk (sometimes rightly)... The Church itself is explicitly challenged. It, which for practically over a thousand years has been the Mater and Magistra, the sure and spiritual guide even of aristocrats, is no longer widely followed. It is rather reduced to the small and powerful yeast of society that even arrogantly want to secularly marginalize it. Especially the Catholic Church, who is, certainly, reduced to becoming something very different to the "sociological institution" that it has been since the 50s. It must conquer and reconquer its divine and spiritual prestige which has less direct and worldly power each day. In every area and even in their own faithful communities subjected to contamination by the world.

And the entrepreneurs? Everything should make them prime permanent candidates for the elite of prestige and the real international nobility. But, apart from the rare exceptions of managers (however due to sports sponsorships) or very rare small entrepreneurs (due to advertising and thanks, all the same, to the considerable scope of their dissemination), this economically first class corporation does not, usually include deserving candidates.

There are many reasons why. Entrepreneurs have to begin this race with a considerable handicap due to a lack of social consideration that dates back several centuries. Entrepreneurial activity, indeed, has always had to pay the price of a notorious reputation which has surrounded their passion and their exceptional activities: their relationship with the age-old "evil money" has made them systematically suspected of being in cohorts with the devil. The idol "Mammon", excrement of the devil, of sinful wealth, has stuck to the skin even with pseudo-evangelical justification. Small entrepreneurs, at least up to the last two centuries of big industry, have been mistakenly and fully assimilated into the sins that the general and ideological vulgate has associated with them: as the gospels have always treated "wealth" in a not very privileged way, this negative direction has perpetuated this induced error of judgment.

In reality, Jesus never condemned the entrepreneur as such. Furthermore, at the time, it was about rich farmers. On the contrary, he was at several times their... admirer, for their courage and responsibility. He always condemned their possible selfishness, their arbitrary acts, their blatant injustices: in short, all the wicked and immoral consequences of mis-using their wealth and power.

The wealth itself was never brought into question. Of course!

How could he attack the goods, abundance, fruit of human activity, the ease which potentially allows a spiritual dimension which is humanly more full and blessed?

The vocation of humankind, since the First Creation, is to continue to perfect it like Pope Paul VI also clearly affirmed it in his *Populorum progressio*⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ Paul VI, *Populorum progressio*, 1968 Encyclical: "Man is a creator...", 27.

2.16 - The fusion of the sin and the sinner. The opulence in the tertiary sector

For years, Benedict XVI has said over and over again that the evil is in the Church rather than outside it. To realize it, it is not necessary to examine all the tragic stains of pedophilia amongst the priesthood. It is sufficient to at times hear the homily of many priests when they speak of entrepreneurs, of bosses. In fusing together the sin and the sinner, they often stand up ferociously against entrepreneurs as never before heard of in ecclesial tradition.

Furthermore, these clergymen, instead of preaching gospel by treating the concern of treating the sick while attacking the sickness, devote themselves to political and sociological preaching where their most obvious purpose is that of rushing to the aid of those "poor and oppressed" by the supposed domination and "tyranny" of practically despot employers.

The Gospel, besides, would never dream of stigmatizing bosses and their wealth. It condemns, of course - as we have already seen - the abuse, flamboyance and injustice that, now, entrepreneurs sometimes commit like everyone else subject to Original Sin, but not entrepreneurs as a whole. Furthermore, the armament of protectionist laws, the whole plethora of rules, pressured trade union action prevent that minor abuse is committed with impunity - even if we wanted to.

The Gospel and the Church, in fact, condemns the thirst for possession, especially if it is driven and pathological, like in our societies of hyper consumption (even amongst the poorest). The wealth produced by honest and legitimate work can only be a blessing for its copious abundance: it is the purpose of human life to create wealth and add value to the Creation. Ease and even opulence are values that Christianity can only search for without any shame, and the fact of having to defend themselves for doing so is already a bizarre anomaly.

We have already seen that work is fundamentally free and that economic success is not automatically the goal of a business, even if it is very much wished and searched for. Protestants have made themselves a reputation by endorsing economic success as a veritable blessing from God.

The Catholic social doctrine has developed and followed the same path, affirming the priority of a business to serve customers: but to do this, there must be - it goes without saying - flourishing businesses. The general socio-economic trends of the last 50 years are not heading in this direction.

Our time no longer sees crowds rushing to liturgies underneath church steeples, we know. But to get there to hear themselves ranked amongst the cursed structures and, above all, to have to listen to rather exegetic and heretical explanations will certainly not encourage entrepreneurs to go to church. They prefer to keep quiet - once more - and to devote themselves to the factual sacrifices imposed by their social and financial conditions. Not without abnegation.

Furthermore, entrepreneurs even have an empirical method to evade abuse from consumerist nihilism of our time: by working hard - at least quantitatively - they avoid the mechanical adoption of commodification.

But it is not rare to find modest and frugal entrepreneurs. Satisfied and even surpassed by the multiple satisfactions of their work, they do not need to have to "compensate" with dubiously hedonistic activities specific to the superficial alienation that modernism never fails to suggest.

How do they find themselves, therefore, in a community where a neighborly embrace is pursued, even more if in the same faith, and where we find, at most, a cold, forced and limp handshake?

Here, we are far, very far, off from the recognition of an aristocracy worthy of its name and the acceptance of a vital reference model both for the person as well as all society. True brotherly feeling, the only one which truly opens doors to Christianity with its mercy is thus highly compromised.

We could even go on and on about the vaguely heretical definable practices which, without going to the so-called "theologies of liberation" so opposed by John Paul II, wade in a political ideology which is still socialist and theologically ignorant more than off-center. Here I limit myself in order to not exacerbate this controversy, but the keyword of this "proletarian and spiritualist" trend was already introduced several decades ago: "apostasy", as betrayal within the Church.

2.17 - "Collaborationist" and non-wealth producing spirituality. A 50% Christianity

There is a great trend expanding within the Catholic Church, maybe as a reaction to the massive and obviously victorious offense of postmodern materialism: Catholic spiritualism.

Many Christians, terrorized by the activity made by relativistic nihilism towards all visible reality in the modern world, tend to withdraw. They concentrate their efforts in their invisible niche, they conceal even hide themselves. They pray in silence and far from prying eyes: they become negative, they even fade into the background, they give up the fight. These Christians, stuck between belonging to this lowly world and that in heaven, live and choose to eliminate or decrease horizontality and deprive them the cross. Thus they choose to become faithful to the vertical, transcendent "post".

These Christians, aware of their incapability to face the powerful arguments powerfully asserted by the brutality of surging power, hide themselves far from any controversy and voluntarily further leave the field open to materialists and positivists.

From Christianity as the saving meeting of God with the lives of mankind, from Christianity as a blissful message of a new postmodern civilization, they are nothing but a Church without a mission and almost completely fallen from grace. Their visibility and presence in the world is left to the top of the Vatican, roughly speaking. This somewhat secretive idea is, moreover, symmetrical to the same secular wording that nihilists propose and "impose". The intrinsically intimate idea of spiritualism thus makes up that "collaborationist" practices of cowardly Christians due to the horrible secularization of our time.

Christianity, for these spiritualists, is nothing but the overwhelming and revolutionary stupor for the world of the event of Logos made flesh in the Passion of the Christ. It becomes a calm, peaceful and silent "sanctified" introspection with an intensity which has a tendency to be mystical.

This residual spiritualism reduces the universal message of the salvation of Christianity to a discrete, very discrete practice of individual or communities separated from human problems. Transcendence and praise become, at best, the only elements of these 50% Christians, if we can say so. Their models become truly mystical saints that the Church has continued through tradition. Without realizing that they are often in a deep communion with reality and even the actuality of the world from which they have been separated in their consecrated cells (in convents, of course).

These spiritualist Christians - who, actually, are not mystical or consecrated at all, and who calmly live in materialistic ease with all the trappings of the opulent society - have usually, beforehand, built their materialistic life in order to devote themselves to their intimate customs. Unwavering in their very solid - even if sometimes modest - economic situations, they are usually the greatest defenders - it goes without saying - of statism. Their professions, the subsidies which they enjoy, or their pensions, generally make them subordinate to the nation-state and put them in opposition or in a position very far away from the markets.

Like the majority of clerks, they are often on the State payrolls that are the true breeding grounds, not only for militant nihilists, for spiritualists in cultural and vital retirement (objectively the most honest). A specific sub-category of these spiritualists is made up of "clerical employees", another branch of pretty widespread Christians (provided we consider the small nothingness that it has reduced the visible people of God to).

This compensates their spiritualism of renunciation truncated by a sometimes militant activism to the clergy. Their loyalty to close Presbyterians is almost rock solid. They have not built a Church, but often they are Stakhanovites (on and off, all the same, with their broadly petty bourgeois habits) in the church around the corner...

On the topic on knowing if God, in his infinite goodness, loves these apparently handicapped Christians, no one can respond for sure. Myself, I will say no more about it (although I may have already said too much).

To speak to the truth, I spoke a little about it as it is them, these spiritualist Christians, who position themselves at the antipode of my truly active and wealth-producing entrepreneurs: instead of using them as models, they think of nothing but how to attack them and economically exploit as much as possible. And we can also not avoid the question of whether God, absurdly, loves a pale and bigoted spiritualist less than an entrepreneur who has even declared themselves atheist or skeptical but very economically active and, as we have seen, socially, in neighboring transcendence.

2.18 - Small entrepreneurs, simply, as producers of beauty: by definition a destroyer of nihilism

How can the work of small entrepreneurs win the war against the multiple devastating forces of nihilism? We begin from a small perfect phrase which I remember better than the author (I believe it is the theologian Cornelio Fabro): "Nihilism is what is left after having rejected God".

To fight the chaos, the true ugliness, the falsehood or myth of nihilism, it is necessary to tackle their common denominator, the untruth which generates it. The total weapon against all forms of nihilism is the truth, the absolute truth: which produces sense, order, harmony, reason. It's as simple as that.

The small entrepreneur, even when they propose to found their business providing to make them useful, or indispensable to their future clients, knows exactly what beauty means.

There is everything that surges from their future activities which, with their intrinsic truth and indispensability, becomes beautiful. The beauty of a product or service is not only aesthetic but, even more, ethical and global: the aesthetic side adds and integrates itself into the unavoidable ethical side. First of all a business must be at least useful. Of course, it may also already be or become necessary or indispensable.

And, in the interests of competitiveness, they could even come to put forward beautiful products or services: of high aesthetic quality, perfectly organized, ingeniously conceived. They could even achieve a very high standard of artist beauty. But, fundamentally, it is the truth that makes a business and an entrepreneur beautiful. It must be said that, moreover, that the category of Beauty is ontologically equal to that of Truth - Aristotle already said it before the Christians did - but in our relativist time, it is better to reestablish authenticity from truth...

It is obvious that an artisan, with their artisanal business, that produces small beautiful wooden sculptures, ends up tackling nihilism with a much higher apparent efficiency than a plumber that "limits" themselves to installing, with highly calculated connections, a working and balanced radiator.

And this, however technically perfectly conceived and carried out and beautiful the installation is in itself, includes its economic competitiveness.

I have resisted directly speaking of my business all in these thirty-eight chapters, but I will give a short example, even if in the interview in the third section, I will - maybe - have the possibility to go back to it. To face the problem of beauty in the activities of my group (currently twenty offices across four continents), I have firstly had to address the issue of truth: almost all my competitors on the global markets (more than 95%, but at the time even more) are monolocalized, that is that they have only one office, in one country, of course.

As we provide multilingual communication, our activities, in order to be of a high quality, can only be carried out in the country of the target languages. Therefore, the problem to resolve is that all the texts and designs must be validated by other copywriters, translators, terminographers and even graphic designers or webmasters. They must naturally work - also side by side - in these countries, that of their native language. If not, they certainly risk lexical, phraseological and conceptual faults. The consequence is that there must be as many offices as there are languages delivered. And if they are only in one country, they cannot ensure quality in these foreign languages: to do this, texts must be validated, which is only possible in the place and under the same brand (business). What does beauty consist of? In the fact of having as many offices as languages and geostyles promised. If they continue to be monolocalized, that is illiterate (or almost) in the foreign languages delivered to clients, they have not only an ugly but also a dishonest business!

I know a worker, who I met again recently, who became a small entrepreneur to make a type of miniaturized electrovalve (patented!) that he invented himself. To speak the truth, he reinvented it dozens of times over three decades. His small - very beautiful! - business has even become bigger after having conquered the markets from Sweden to Australia. And as a result of applications - which could not be more beautiful - which he could not even have imagined. The logical and technological truth of business, intrinsic to the qualitative relevance of its production, makes up the cornerstone of its ethical and aesthetic beauty. With a business which fools its clients on this central point and which tramples - for example - over the most basic translational principles (multilingual or technological services: valves), you can never combat nihilism. It is simply a banal subsequent expression.

2.19 - The sin judged as unforgivable in three gospels against the Holy Spirit and God's mercy for the entrepreneur

There is only one sin which "can never be forgiven": three out of four gospels (the synoptic gospel) speak of it in a very precise way⁴⁵. Divine mercy can forgive anything, but one evil cannot be forgiven: a sin "against the Holy Spirit". What does it have to do, especially, with the entrepreneur?

I have already attempted to show how the entrepreneur, by definition, is one of the most powerful producers of desire, objectively with their products as well as subjectively with their personal action. Don Julián Carrón, the Spanish worthy successor of Don Giussani as the head of Communion and Liberation, spoke of the "anthropological root of desire" in each person. The Holy Spirit constitutes the method, the form in which this root manifests itself and exposes itself as far as we can say considering the eternal mystery of the Trinity. From the three parts that make up, as we well know, it is said, even historically and factually, Christ. All the New Testament speaks of Him, of his life, of his death, of his resurrection. From the Holy Spirit and God we only have a more powerful and induced understanding of the heart, the heart of the Bible, in its notions of the wholeness of intelligence, of the total sense of life and of humanity. A sin against the Holy Spirit is, therefore, a sin against human destiny, against its ontological nature. Against the desire that leads it to continue and perfect God's Creation.

To be truthful all sins deny this destiny and this human reality. But those against the Holy Spirit unequivocally show the highest degree of arrogance of this programmatic enmity and, if we want to update it, we could say that it is *the* sin par excellence, the function specific to nihilism. Why, then, can this sin "not be forgiven"? Because it is the final capital and "deadly" sin. We are talking about the mother of all sins: the first and true crime against humanity. That which refuses the intelligence of life, that which intrinsically calls to action every person even independently of their apparent and economic need to achieve it. The real need, I have tried to show it, is in no way related, first and foremost, to consumption. Trying to not work, by using the countless tricks that mankind has continually made up since the existence of the parasitic culture, is not yet really a sin against the Holy Spirit. It is rather the ideology of nihilism, its explicit formulation and its totally assumed practice, that makes it become that. Raffaello Vignali, president in 2006 of the *Compania Delle Opere* of the C.L., is the author of a fundamental book on small businesses. On page 105, he mentions a very significant pre-Christian saying on the subject: "as Aristotle stated, a life unexamined is not worth living"⁴⁶. Here is the *ante litteram* sin of all others that Christianity, over three centuries later, proclaimed in three of the gospels.

Cyril Brun, a very young French theologian who remains faithful to the line of Benedict XVI and is certainly not classified amongst the spiritualists (*giving a spiritual dimension to the day to day world*), does not hesitate in recalling in his book *Pour une spiritualité chrétienne sociale*: "God is the Trinity. God is Love. [...]. God is the pure Spirit. ". And to continue "Human society is founded on the divine society of the Holy Trinity". Following this he cited Saint Theresa of Lisieux who said that the world could be saved "if you pick up a needle with and for love": a perfect idea of authentic Christian work⁴⁷. We can also ask ourselves, therefore, why a sin against the Holy Spirit cannot be forgiven. And which, even for the small entrepreneur, of course, objectively embodies the "loving" dimension for the intrinsically Trinitarian Spirit in their work: the sign of the cross when it is amputated, more rarely hurt in one of the parts, vertical as well as horizontal, is forever irremediably desecrated and devastated. The Holy Spirit also expresses the love of God that, as the Gospel said, is always in a loving relationship with each other. Don Giussani, the immense giant of faith and intelligence on contemporary human modernity, saw the articulation between the love of God and the true sense of work in a passage from the gospel according to John (5,17): "Jesus, in the gospel, gives this definition for God: *my Father is the eternal worker*. With this statement, He states work as an expression of the being"⁴⁸. Regarding whether a sin against the Holy Spirit can be forgiven, we equally remember the profound mercy with which the gospel recalls the divine difference between judging the sickness and the sick: infinite love for the person.

⁴⁵ Gospels according to: Matthew, 12, 31; Mark, 3, 29; Luke, 12, 10.

⁴⁶ Raffaello Vignali, *Eppur si muove*, Guerini & Associati, Milano, 2006.

⁴⁷ Cyril Brun, *Pour une spiritualité sociale chrétienne*, Tempora Publishers, Perpignan (FR), 2007, pp.113, 114, 199.

⁴⁸ Luigi Giussani, *L'io, il potere e le opere*, p.91. (See Bibliography).

2.20 - The unemployed person in the face of entrepreneurship: work is not a right, it's a duty

As far as I remember, Raymond Barre is the only European politician who, by reducing the State's intervention in the economy, lost the election.

Normally the majority of politicians, in fear of being unpopular, time and time again call upon statist Keynes policies to nationalize businesses or resort to mammoth and useless (especially strategically) subsidies for businesses. With the pretext of saving jobs, of course.

The French Prime Minister Barre, in 1979-1980 in fact became very unpopular by refusing to support the steel industry at the time, historically destined to fail, since it was irremediably obsolete even on a technological scale. Thus, in 1981, he lost the election to Mitterrand fundamentally as a result of the tens of thousands of job losses which he did not oppose with any unprofitable Keynesian state policy. On the other hand, the socialists, by following the tragic tradition that, only with the current crisis of 2008-2012 that we can judge as utterly devastating, have senselessly financed the deficit and reduced the retirement age (instead of raising it!).

But the ex-vice-President of the European Commission Barre, has still remained famous for having triggered a controversy that has been remembered for one small phrase: "Unemployed workers become entrepreneurs".

The complete, but perceived as provocative, simplicity of this phrase means that trade unionists and left-wing politicians (but even from the so-called Gaullist right) tear their hair out.

The Prime Minister dared to speak a basic truth: when you are without work in the modern era there is nothing to do but create one. What else? You cannot prefer, as the countless statists still repeat nowadays, the creation of useless so-called jobs paid for by the taxpayer, to maintain leeches that should be making themselves useful. Becoming truly useful to society, to the Creation, so that it becomes more beautiful and functional. And no longer wicked and tragically extravagant in their intrinsically parasitic culture. Today all these useless jobs invented by the State must be reduced and eradicated that, for decades, have suffocated our economies with not only superfluous and in the end also detrimental pseudo-activities: they create at least bureaucratic dysfunction. Not to mention on a cultural scale.

The real problem to resolve in this case is that of solidarity for the inevitable victims affected by this drama: the loss of a job always is. But we must distinguish between drama and tragedy. To lose a job in a modern organization is always only a drama to resolve (even with the necessary solidarity between society and communities) and is never a tragedy, which is by definition irremediable. At most they must create a new job, freely recognized by the markets that, by buying their products, perpetuate and develop their wealth. And also that of the ex-workers themselves, by becoming, in these cases, entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs. Otherwise perhaps there are other people in charge to create work? There are multitudes, in our time, to demand (even violently) the so-called right to have a job independent of its true usefulness and its free marketing: in the market, of course.

The State must ensure, and for a limited time only, that an unemployed person can find a new job. Nothing more.

The problem posed indirectly by Raymond Barre, poses a double question. Who should be an entrepreneur? Is it necessity that forces them towards this decision? The fact that the majority of workers in the world are contracted into "subordinate" work, in no way means that each worker must absorb the degrading ideology of classism obviously generated by such a partnership. It is possible that the condition of subordinate work can - for several reasons - end and it is still necessary and right that each employee retains their own irreducible and permanent freedom.

In fact each employee is above all focusing on their work activities as not only free, fundamentally, but also religious. And entrepreneurial: entrepreneurship, even in its initial intrapreneurial form, is a universal dimension specific to mankind.

It is their ontological characters that make them produce value, accumulate material, spiritual and cultural wealth. It is its simple duty.

Section Three

The creation of wealth:
the ultimate purpose in life?

**Here is an interview with the author
of this book, Franco Troiano,
founder and current CEO of the Eurologos Group
in Brussels, made up of three pilot businesses
and twenty offices localized over
four continents.**

**Here is a short personal history, of a
glocalized small business in
multilingual and graphics services
and - all the same - of
a very ordinary small businessman
in the face of globalization in our time.**

*"Nature did not tell me:
Do not be poor and,
even less, become rich.
Instead, it told me:
Be independent"*

Nicolas de Chamfort
(French poet and moralist,
1740 - 1794 Paris)

*"Freedom is a
system based on courage"*

Charles Péguy
(French poet and playwright,
Orleans 1873 - 1914 Villeroy)

An interview with the author Franco Troiano

**It is above all in the monasteries of the Middle Ages
when the great translation offices
were developed.
Our "congregation" of translators and DTP illuminators
are very proud to perpetuate the tradition from the eve of the third millennium.**



Eurologos Advertising 1990

3.1 - The 2nd November 2010, I began my 53rd year of work

Briefly tell our readers your entrepreneurial experience in the construction of your group of twenty offices over four continents.

By following my wife who won a competition to work in the old European Union Commission in 1976, I found myself unemployed in Brussels. As my wife was a freelance translator - waiting for her work at the European institution to begin -, I began to help her myself thanks to my skills: the texts were very technical and my professional experience coupled with my studies as a mechanical and metal technician fell into place. I already had experience as the boss of a construction machine repairing workshop in a business constructing highway tunnels. In Italy, since I was 14 years old, I worked for three years as an electro mechanics apprentice in a business repairing the trams in the outskirts of Milan.

Since you were 14 years old? And when did you pursue your studies?

I began working in this electro-mechanic business on the 2nd November 1959: this is the date that I celebrate each year. The only date that I personally celebrate, as I believe that a birthday should only be a day during which - apart from for children in order to socialize them and teach them about themselves - only your own mother should celebrate: in fact, it is she who should celebrate and not the person whose birthday it is (who are not anything special...). Except for the birthdays of old people (only if they will still remember it). As for my studies, I did them at night for 6 years: every evening from 6.30pm to 10.30pm and Saturday afternoons from 2pm to 7.45pm. There was nothing heroic about it: in Milan in the 60s, there were no less than 70,000 worker-students like myself. Now, I'm having a hard time to recount it.

3.2 - Holding university conferences without ever having attended one: I was self-taught, to avoid total ignorance

And university?

I have never been to one, or only to do the sadly famous occupations of 1968-1969 or to give conferences in translatology (in Europe, at the University of Antwerp, in the North Sea, up to the University of Trieste, in the Adriatic Sea) from the 90s: certain conference texts are published on the websites of my businesses (www.eurologos.com).

For several years now, it is the managers of the different Eurologos offices who hold conferences in the universities who invite me to speak...

When they call me, of course in Italy, "dottore" by doubly assuming this title that, all over the

world now, is used after more than 4 or 5 years of excellent and tough university study - to a PhD level, rightly - I must also specify that I am proud to not be one. Thus, I am confident to not incur the insult that sociologists, amongst others, direct towards many young graduates nowadays: "returning illiterates". The forced teaching of students? I, like many entrepreneurs, was always self-taught. Moreover, not only to university, but my working-class family could not even afford a degree in humanities. My father was a nurse in a psychiatric hospital, my mother was a housewife and neither my brother nor sister went to high school to finish their studies.

And how could you create and develop a cultural and worldwide business with a level of study limited to humanities and a rather practical, electro-mechanic, work experience?

Examples of this - as we know - are widespread throughout history, if we look at the generation born before the 1950s. Myself personally, I have always lived amongst books. Since I found myself - in Belgium - founding a multilingual and printing service business (the Internet did not yet exist), I devoured 800 books on translatology, editing and marketing, essential for finding my feet in my profession. As it was my new job, I considered it normal to read specialized books, journals, publications from different associations in the evenings and weekends...

3.3 - The foundation of the business and the decision to become an entrepreneur, thanks to... Gaddafi

How did you come to decide to create your business Eurologos?

At the time, I was working in a construction company near Brussels: the same work I had done in Italy, as a technician/foreman, but in Belgium, I could only apply for jobs as a laborer (I had yet to learn French to a high level). As Gaddafi - this was in 1977 - was in his most ideological phase with his *Green book*, a very revolutionary and Islamic text, he suddenly threw a tantrum and decided to terminate all contracts with Western businesses. I once again found myself, along with many North-African and black colleagues, unemployed. For this reason I founded Eurologos. Almost out of necessity.

You said almost?

Yes, things - especially at the beginning - are never clear. The idea of being an entrepreneur was not, for me at the time, very defined, but it was there: for example, the logo of Eurologos with the six ellipses, I had already drawn it at the beginning of the 70s, almost - I could say - as a premonition. Later, I found out that there was a word for it, "intrapreneur", I mentioned it in the book, to highlight this phrase in which someone is not an entrepreneur but thinks like one: they operationally prepare themselves for it, of sorts.

From a financial point of view, did you have any money to start the business?

No, at the time we didn't even have a Belgian franc: we got a loan of 200,000 francs (about 8000 - 10,000 euros in today's money) and for almost 10 years, we - my wife and I - did not go on holiday. Our lives revolved around our entrepreneurial project: the study and consolidation of the business! And the children, of course: in the meantime, Didier and Odile arrived. We didn't even buy our house until afterwards: before then, we rented. Everything happened as described in the book where I talk of "love money" that, in our case, was limited to us as a couple. Even our headquarters in Brussels (740 m2) could only be bought afterwards.

3.4 - The discovery that, to produce multilingual communication, you must have as many offices as languages offered

What led you to your current project that you call "glocal"?

You can see the advertisements of the time, from the end of the 80s, in which the internal Eurologos team had over 30 people. Our success led us to expand the business even more and condemned us to...a certain failure: we were in the process of constructing a multilingual office based on the model of a convent from the Middle Ages which - in the times before the Renaissance - was made up of "monk" translators, scribes, copywriters, philologists and illuminators (later, in DTP)... Therefore in monasteries, they were all consecrated men and women of faith. Put it all in one of the most expensive countries in the world: economically unsustainable. In addition, we were faced with two other strictly linguistic and professional

problems. The first was the number of languages (around 50!) to ensure to clients, adding at least two to five employees specialized in each language (from the translator and terminologist and even, later, a web developer). The second problem, strictly linguistic, was due to the fact that these people, living in a foreign country, inevitably committed what translatoologists describe as unavoidable lexical and phraseological faults due to interference from the lingua franca. In multilingual and modern communication, the operators - to perfect the production from a stylistic and geo-stylistic point of view - must be situated in the countries of their native languages...

So from there you came up with the idea of becoming international...

Exactly. From an economic point of view as well as from a strictly linguistic point of view (for geo-stylistic rigor: for example, we currently have three Portuguese offices, one for the Brazilian geo-style in São Paulo and two in Portugal, in Lisbon and Porto). We had to reduce the team in Brussels and create even now countless offices throughout the world.

And the word "glocalization"?

I first discovered in an abandoned women's magazine on the Thalys (the high speed train) between Brussels and Paris, where I was going to set up our first French office: this was in 1997. An article on the surreal debate going on in Europe at the time, between the localists and globalists, attracted me.

The Californians had already pragmatically created the neologism glocalization (the contraction of two words "globalization" and localization") simply proving the uselessness and lack of foundations of the European debate: you cannot be globalist if you are localized, that is situated...somewhere. In the age of the Internet, the definitive slogan of the 70s *Think global, act local* thus became "glocalization".

You can imagine the light bulb that this word turned on in my head.

3.5 - The word "glocalization" found after the application was invented

Your web site mentions your disappointment at not having invented this word.

It was - as any other small entrepreneur can testify - another disappointment for me: in the whole of the profession metalanguage, that is the language that we use to speak of language, I did not even invent one neologism; I only used all the linguistic definitions that translatoologists and modern marketers - principally university professors - had also created in the last 24 years.

So what was your and Eurologos' contribution to modern multilingual communication?

Nothing, if we are talking about basic research. There are always two types of research, roughly speaking, that each person - or business - can pursue: basic or applied research.

Pure researchers, in different areas, sometimes come to find, discover, or better, *un-cover* a fraction of reality: they are the most brilliant of circumstances. To work in basic research it is necessary to be very intelligent, cultured and obstinate: that was what Pope Benedict XVI talked about that I cited in chapter 1.7. Scientific research can only discover parts of reality (that they have not, moreover, created) when they are gradually allowed to! Often, they find things which they did not know or cannot imagine the future uses. I - as a small entrepreneur - who is always searching for solutions and who reads a lot (even women's magazines found on trains), I end up, me too, doing "applied research". In basic research, therefore, I am no good: I have never done it (it is very rare that a small entrepreneur can).

In applied research, on the other hand, I have been lucky (thanks to the transcendent and divine opportunity which has been given to me) to find, to *un-cover* several small things. I am happy all the same, even for Eurologos, my always solid and immanent small business which has allowed me to be useful.

On that note, could you tell us about your motivation to become an entrepreneur.

For me - as I said - it almost happened by chance. And then, I became an entrepreneur, a small entrepreneur, just like many of my competitors. Furthermore, I did not find a heap of literature on the subject. One of the few that I knew, that attempted to completely rationalize the principles of entrepreneurship, was the lifelong work of Monseigneur Giussani.

For example, in his book directly based on the subject, he said: "Rationality, reason, as we define it, is the awareness of reality following the totality of its factors. Anything less than the totality, we are not talking

about rationality"⁴⁹. Even if he did not talk about business in this passage, it is this relationship with reality which introduces the idea of becoming an entrepreneur. The real lack of this total relationship is directly related to the lack of entrepreneurship. To attempt an audacious shortcut, you become a sort of entrepreneur - it does not matter if before you were a laborer, teacher, lawyer, artist or student - to the extent where this relationship with the totality of reality develops within your very person.

3.6 - The aristocracy of the entrepreneur founded on irreducible and insubordinate freedom

Is there a precise ontological reason for "being an entrepreneur? "

For me, yes: when I have spoken in this book of an aristocratic spirit regarding entrepreneurs, I have just wanted to describe this intrinsic reason for the individual who is in a definite relationship with their total awareness of the dependence of mankind. Their sense of being creatures that, despite what is generally secularly believed, open and prepare the active creation of the person, to their "inevitable" entrepreneurship.

Reading your work, we could say that you are not very appreciative of paid work which you refer to as "subordinate".

I regret that, if it is like that. The concept of entrepreneurship for me is at the heart for work which cannot be "subordinate" to wicked collective and national contracts, organized by bureaucratic trade unions and structured by the inevitably totalitarian and absolutist Hobbesian State.

My first teacher who began to introduce me to the entrepreneurial element was a trade unionist and communist worker, very religious and very communist (in contradiction with the Third International that no longer exists today). It was him who showed me this total and totalizing horizon of work: he was called Zecchi, from the town of Saronno, near Milan, to whom I was entrusted as a 14 year old apprentice in the business of 300 workers where we worked (between 1959 and 1961).

Then, between 17 and 18 years old, in the commune of my suburban area of Milan, I met Don Giussani who spoke to us - without any clerical emphasis - of reality, of all reality. Of only that, this reality, or better the authentic relationship with it, he explained the history event (quickly, we could say) made up of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit.

But why do you call them "subordinate"?

It is the policy of different Western countries who define this relationship of "subordination". Myself, I would like "coordinated" contracts, which are besides much more realistic.

3.7 - Reification, devotion and freedom of the entrepreneur

How is it that entrepreneurs, obvious producers of reification, commercial "objectification", are judged in your book as amongst the most religious of our era?

Firstly, I tried to have an idea of devotion which was in no way clerical, vaguely pious or spiritualist. The paradox - in this case - is in the fact that it is especially those who are most exposed to the temptation of this "objectification", of this devotion to things, to the Latin *res*, who are the closest to the transcendent totality which we are speaking of. I was very happy to confirm this when I read the American Michael Novac, one of the greatest theologians of our time who was chosen as an expert in socio-economic issues by John Paul II. He wrote in one of his books that the statistics showed that relatively entrepreneurs are the most religious and that teachers and journalists were the least, even amongst the non-believers.

You speak of freedom as the first human value...

I finish my response to your question on the ontology of the entrepreneur: it is the relationship with freedom, of course. My incomparable spiritual father, as I said, Don Giussani, also placed freedom above everything else: there was all his profoundly religious thought, his charisma, if you will. There was no possibility of being religious without conducting this research, prior or at the time, of total freedom. How could you

⁴⁹ Luigi Giussani, *L'io, il potere, le opere*, Marietti Editore, Milan; 2000, p.111.

"religare", connect the whole of reality, from the horizontal dimension to the vertical one, if you are not in a constant relationship with freedom? Here is the real and first source of motivation that pushes people into becoming entrepreneurs. And here is also the reason for which entrepreneurs are statistically classed amongst the most religious people.

But then who are really entrepreneurs?

Legal, contractual and organization-specific "trade union" classifications in our lowly world can only influence, marginally or massively in the more or less subordinate professional definitions, that statutes of different corporations.

The typical entrepreneur is the worker who considers their work as intrinsically sacred and indispensable, immeasurable if not by the limits of their own talents and available effort.

As well as the laborer, the artist, architect and the least qualified employee can have, should have, an entrepreneurial spirit (that we could refer to as rationality).

Certainly, without entrepreneurs or small entrepreneurs and, especially, without their original culture very much present on the markets, there would not be freedom, prosperity or even wealth for anyone.

3.8 - The problems of big businesses

Another theme, that you seem to avoid and condemn, is that of big business. Why?

I nailed my colors to the mast at the beginning of my book: I based my essay on small entrepreneurs.

Obviously I cannot write about everything... In reality, I would not say that I have created an opposition, which is besides inexistent, between big and small businesses. Moreover, in Europe - maybe apart from Germany - there are not enough big businesses (they would have to merge and combine to face competition from other powers, improve their marketing and reduce their running costs...).

Therefore, I do not condemn the existence and the governance of big businesses. Quite the opposite. I only point out the cultural difficulty of putting, nowadays, the centrality of the person at the heart of these giants. The deficiency of managers and the detrimental anonymity of their management pose such problems that a revolution must first be produced. To follow, we hope.

You have been very severe with managers of big business...

I agree and confirm this. But it is the shortage of truly entrepreneurial culture that abnormally puts them in this rarely objective situation brought about by a vicious managerial oligopoly. It is the whole of the culture of economic governance that must change. Moreover, think of priorities in salaries: whilst managers are the first to be paid and reap the benefits independently of the success of the big business, small entrepreneurs are always the last to be paid with what is left. And how many times do we hear about entrepreneurs going unpaid in order to ensure the salaries of their workers and employees...

3.9 - My family: immigrated from the rustic and poor south, at the beginning of the 50s

You often speak of the culture of the family from the country of origin to place the entrepreneurial choice.

In my family of origin, there is no entrepreneurial experience. Except some in the town of my birth in Abruzzo (as important as Rome, but near the Adriatic coast), where there are experiences of small businesses that have been developed up to today. In any case, I benefited from an authentic culture of work throughout this family. It was, to set the scene, just after the second world war: after this war, everyone worked very hard to escape poverty.

For example, my father, as well his job as a nurse in an asylum, was a carpenter (off the books, of course) and also in the week evenings he played as a highly in-demand percussionist (timpani, drums, bass drums, bells, etc) in brass bands and symphonic orchestras. Even in Switzerland. He had three jobs at the same time, just like everyone else at the time. My grandfather had set up and managed several brass bands that - between the 30s and 50s - had a monopoly on all the great music (even Verdi, Wagner and Beethoven) in the South of Italy.

I'm finding it hard to say this nowadays where the commonplace political correctness guides public opinion: I began work as an apprentice, like my brother and my friends, at seven years old: first as a carpenter's

apprentice, then polishing furniture; when I was at primary school I worked in the morning while classes took place in the afternoon and vice versa. I earned 1200 -1500 lira a week and I was proud to do so. After the war, education was structured like that, on a rotational basis, in the same locations (by the same teachers who were never unemployed). I always have wonderful and happy memories of this time, even from an educational point of view, and I think I had a wonderful childhood. I can only smile at the vigor of certain very opulent and passionate for political correctness Western countries against child labor in the impoverished Third-world...

Indeed, what you are saying is very astonishing. Especially nowadays when people complain of a third of young people being unemployed in Europe. Now tell us about languages. With your multilingual services group, you must know many of them...

Not at all. I have always considered myself monolingual, even if I write my books in French. In fact, my native language is the dialect from Abruzzo, that I spoke daily until my parents brought me (1952) to the North of Italy. It was mainly there, at school, that I began to learn Italian. Then, always during my studies, I began to learn English and French: the latter, after thirty four years of daily use in Brussels, has become reasonably familiar. Without my inevitably monolingual linguistic culture - although I always see Italy as the opposite to Italians, legs in the air - nothing could have really changed: my children are naturally multilingual, as they have learned to speak four, five languages as they had to learn others apart from their "native" language, French, at 3 or 4 years old. Myself, I am in the same as one of the most "reputable" old American linguists of our time, Noam Chomsky (with whom I almost completely disagree with): he only spoke English and did not even know one word of French, to the point where he could not even - as he said himself - "order a coffee in Paris".

Indeed, it is not possible to change your linguistic history, even if, like me, you emigrate twice and end up founding and managing a group of small localized businesses over four continents. Especially when you are born poor in 1944 in an apartment without even a radio...

3.10 - Statist spiritualism: the opposite of religiosity

We could say that your modest origins have turned you against charity for the poor.

I admit that I have a rather controversial attitude towards what we call modern charity marketing. So-called charitable Christians, more spiritualists and parasites in their job of helping the dubious "poor" (sometimes almost voluntarily impoverished), are nothing like the Christians and the poor that I knew from my childhood and adolescence: I was one. The actual poor person tends to hide it, make sacrifices and work very hard to escape poverty: they are also generally very proud as they believe that, according to the epigraph from Cardinal Siri that I have chosen for this book, that poverty, destitution, is the image of death perceived as "nothingness".

Modern state welfare, founded on the "rights" of the eternal often fake and unquestionable "disadvantaged", always poses the problem for me of not knowing if we are buying into terrible situation which has nothing to do with the gospel. Except for the wretched, not only "poor", outside the truly impoverished community.

You must also realize that my wife and I have lived in Belgium for 35 years, a country where the unemployed are paid for life, without any limits: I personally know people, families, who have never worked, claiming unemployment benefits every month. Often, these people find it more economically interesting to remain unemployed than work!

I am afraid to admit this: I risk being mercilessly judged for it.

Spiritualist: what do you mean by this adjective?

In the Church of the North, this cultural tendency is very widespread, more than elsewhere. Christian individualism is such that religious devotion is, as we say, a "direct and very intimate" relationship with God, in an almost detached way from the visible horizontality of people's lives. This concept is very close to a type of Christianity which is rather a very private religious morality and not a living culture teeming with lively relationships and where the presence of Christ is determinant in the concrete and visible reality of things themselves. Christianity is thus reduced to a pious relationship with the practices of priests and much diluted liturgical displays. We therefore have an idea of religion living in a world separated from the everyday and fact: we abandon raising Christianity into a civilization and only perceive it as a residual and isolated ritual which is far removed from social life and relationships which can only happen by following the "democratic" rules dictated by the secular and even more secular Hobbesian concept. In other terms,

spiritualism corresponds to the idea that relativist nihilists have about those who believe in God and the Church.

But this concept of devotion is not exclusive to the Church of the north, it is becoming widespread everywhere...

Yes, even in Italy and Spain, in the South of Europe supposedly far from Protestant influences, you can find the same attitude amongst the rare Christians who continue to go to church despite less than 10% of the population going to church each week. Which is even less in the big cities.

The tendency towards spiritualism is popular: on one side an earthly and material life, on the other an intimate, religious life in decline, in a general renouncing of Christianity as a total and integral guide for life. Including social life and relationships. Here, in Belgium, a rich country with 10 million inhabitants (like my region of Italy, Lombardy), had, in 2010, over 18,000 official abortions: more than 50 a day. In silence!

What are, in your opinion, the symptoms, the main demonstrations of this "spiritualism"?

Firstly, a trend towards what is known as the first biblical sin: "Do not take the Lord's name in vain". These, very devout, Christians, failing to occupy themselves embodying their faith in their daily and social life, continue to reaffirm (for them) a supposed presence of God, at least nominalistically, in the most profane and even, sometimes, the most blasphemous ways: "the Lord, Christ, Jesus, has done well" they always say... A sort of refrain, a "divine" seal, rightfully attached on the outside, without any bearing on the real and aware substance of the Christian event. As God is denied in existence, he is nominally (and privately!) reintroduced in an objectively insolent and, above all, impertinent, way. The fact that the Trinity is a priori everywhere does not give the believer the right to inappropriately say and re-say it all the time in a detached way. And to justify themselves.

Another "heretical" trend of spiritualism, for me, is of thinking (and even naively saying) that "I am the Church" and "we are the Church".

The subjective individualism of their faith and their secular behavior go as far as doctrinal rules and the gospel model. Hence the lack of attention to what the Pope, the Vicar of Christ on earth, says and does. Hence, for example, the extreme and absurd request for resignation from the Belgian Archbishop, scarcely appointed by the pope, the promoter of an evidently non-conforming culture to the secular and parochial one of each of them! "We are the Church", in its unacceptably brazen smallness, is generally the idea of these so-called spiritualists but in reality in a rebellious and completely (I would say) un-Catholic (universal). They are so convinced of their "reasons" that, even on television, a lady leader of this "parish base", continued to repeat to the Archbishop that he "forced" her to think differently (about a problem). And this despite that the Pastor of the Church patiently and uselessly responded that he had never - and would never - "force" her to think anything...

3.11 - We border on transcendence by attending to border entrepreneurial areas

Let's go back to our entrepreneur that you present as very close to authentic devotion.

I do not think really "authentic" (that always implies a rigorous presence of ecclesial doctrine) but rather "natural". On this I want to be particularly clear. As a person, in love and burning with freedom and independence, the entrepreneur - especially as a small entrepreneur - cannot be far from devotion. They are naturally close to it, as they cannot help but visit border zones with transcendence. When we reach the limits of our own possibilities, our talents, we naturally border on the infinite and the divine. I could say the same thing of great sports people who (even naively) cross themselves despite their great performance capabilities. In other terms, it is the core of the Christian teaching of Don Giussani, his charisma: Christianity is the total and complete culmination of a human being. Meeting the living Christ, who arrives when we search for fullness in our lives or even when we follow the extreme implications of our hearts.

This is practically almost always the case for the entrepreneur. But equally everyone who is truly aware of their humanity. We could also say it of a great pianist, a science researcher, a worker who is passionate about his work...

But, then, what is specific about the entrepreneur?

Personally, I would say right away their sociability. A small entrepreneur, fundamentally, thinks of nothing else.

Only of the intelligent usefulness of their product, the advantages for their clients, the social organization of their business; of the professional talents that they must connect, to the wealth that they must distribute...

As no other status or job can immediately lead to another, the entrepreneur must face them even before starting. And it is this intrinsic otherness that calls them to become aristocrats.

3.12 - Adding value to God's Creation: it is not free

In comparing your current collaborators and those in the photo from the end of the 80s on the first page of this interview, we noticed that they are not there. What happened to them?

To begin, in the constitution of the first three pilot businesses - Eurologos, Littera Graphis and Telos, that is the multilingual services business, the graphic design business and the last for writing and advertising design - the collaborators remained together for over fifteen years. There were a dozen who were also associated on an economic and administrative level. The unity and force expressed by the professionally and organizationally close-knit managing group ended up being well known on the Belgian market and was one of the reasons for our first success. In ten or so years, our group became number two in the market. But, in 1995-1996, the time came to make the small multilingual communications business international: it was time to take a deep breath, take action, once again gather together all our energy, prepare ourselves for important investments and redeploy all our energy to come out of Brussels and the small Kingdom of Belgium. Over the years, we have cultivated this project together with a certainty of an inescapable thing: multilingual communication - we said - is not possible if we do not have as many offices and languages and geo-styles promised. At last the time had come. Everything was ready and the advent of the Internet of the time had subsequently validated our project.

And then?

I, of course, began to act. But in the face of this new page of our history, oh so radically important, personal wills began to wane regarding projects.

They always told me the same thing, a little something like this: "As always Franco, you're right, but..." and each person would add their personal reason: my wife is having an operation; the construction of my house has already begun; my fiancée wants to go to Germany; my two children need to go to school; I don't have the same force as before; the risks, this time, are too great; either I divorce my wife or I divorce the group... In short, I continued almost single-handedly whilst, one by one they left towards - if we can say - their destiny: I was 50 years old, I had to hurry myself. The method was very sad, but the project came to fruition and continued to develop. The globalization of the markets, despite everything, continued and the idea of glocalizing communication - which can only be multilingual - has confirmed itself after more than 15 years. "As always, Franco, you're right...", unfortunately. Could have I done, acted, organized it differently?

I never stop doubting it, but in the end I have no regrets.

The cultural proposition of your essay is that work is to add value to the Creation...

It is true. All human activity is to achieve this goal. To speak the truth, it is not only the goal but also and above all the source. The work generation can only come from the harmonious order of divine perfection. Each worker, each housewife and each entrepreneur knows that their day's work is classifiable, at least in part, in this celestial harmony. Each of them knows it by the infallible extent of their hearts.

The Creation always continues and every active person participates, with prestige or with modesty, to this work: all the Christian and saving concept of work is there.

What is your opinion on the small artisan business of St Joseph?

He was a joiner, carpenter and obviously he did not invent Microsoft: Human beings had not yet set foot on the Moon... Of course, of his artisan family business, we do not know anything, we could say as usual for small businesses. However, we can easily imagine how his activities were based on the service of his neighbors in the area, like many artisans today. Nothing to suggest anything particularly remarkable. The only note that we can make is the huge faith that he had to accept becoming to head of a family that, afterwards, became prototypically Christian and to accept the divine virginity of his wife, Mary. She also

became the number one woman and mother of all humanity, obedient, in freedom, to the greatest Mystery of all time.

In turn, St Joseph profited from the event - with his great submission - to become the number one reference for paternity, even if he was not, in the situation, the biological father of the Logos incarnate: which is almost the same, I could say, in the foundation of any business... Nothing happens by chance.

3.13 - The virtual end of the class war: a cultural revolution

There is a passage which we read in which you speak of the implosion of the communist system in 1989 after a long and hidden meltdown. And you state that there is no more place to speak of a class war.

After having confessed the failure of communism in China, after the death of Mao, as well as in Russia after the decline of Gorbachev, the only remaining ideology that wants to perpetuate a "class war" against what we call capitalism has virtually disappeared. Obviously until it dies completely, atheist communism will continue to survive in degenerated that will be hard pressed to totally disappear. The transformist conservers of all types of materialism do not miss the chance to perpetuate in the theoretical and political inertias. It is with much timidity that certain political parties and trade unions begin to change position in relation to a class war: in fact, the classic left is in complete conceptual crisis in almost all of Europe. And even the employer organizations discover that they must tend to the scars of collectivist epidemics that they have marginally picked up, have multiplied over several decades with materialistic organizations: the Empire of Evil of which Reagan spoke⁵⁰.

You spoke about it at one point. But what do you really think about the European SBA?

It is very late and timid. The Brussels *Small Business Act* was sent to the different member States as a recommendation, it goes without saying, being aware of having only spoken, exclusively and over a long period of time, with big business: the Eurocrats began to see "think first small", that is to first pay attention to small and medium-sized businesses, after a few years.

The colliding and constant economic crises since the 90s have opened their eyes to the strength and necessity of these businesses in the support structure of European economies. Finally!

Italy which is, as we know, the most SME populated country, was also even the first to change the law, called, "Statute for businesses", this SBA. Soon it will even be operational thanks to the action of the new MP Raffaello Vignali who was President of the Italian *Compania Delle Opere* until 2008.

He will, exceptionally, act on a bipartisan law on which this MP in question, who first signed the law, succeeded in gaining the unanimity of Parliament! This shows how the awareness of the historical lateness, even by centuries, of the cultural and economic importance of small businesses, begins to become active. In the European Parliament, they are in the process of improving the SBA by making it less timid.

At this point, we can measure the divide dug and with immense damage, by the protagonists of the proletarian ideology of a class war (from communist to socialist parties and to all trade unions with an infinite culture of claiming) in the real power of workers who are waking up from an ideological nightmare that has lasted over a century.

3.14 - Who can create jobs? No one

We were amazed that you spoke of work as a duty and not as a right in the Barre episode.

If we think about it, even for a few moments, a right is always sustained by someone who ensures its existence. A duty, on the other hand, is ontological, ingrained in a person, in their own principles. Adam had to work, and if he did not have an immediate need (in the Earthly Paradise), he still had to do it for his children as well as for the beauty of the Creation for which he ate, eagerly, the apple offered to him by Eve... Besides how can we talk about the duty to work? There are no people predestined to create jobs for other people. Why should they have the duty to ensure this so-called right to award the unemployed? In fact all employees - from the worker to the bosses themselves - should work to productively serve other people and to boost the beauty in the world. The small entrepreneur is by definition the prototype and evidence of this

⁵⁰ Ronald Reagan, *Écrits personnels*, Éditions du Rocher, Paris, 2002, pp.578.

simple truth. Employees and workers who on the other hand remain for months demonstrating (for example in tents outside their former places of work) to demand back their jobs, who are they speaking to? In reality, they have nothing to do but create a new business (individual, private or a cooperative) or to offer themselves to the markets and make themselves useful seeing as their former bosses have judged them useless in their business which has itself become useless and, therefore, necessarily closed. This is the sole duty of the unemployed.

Besides, this is what is silently done by countless unemployed people who return to the market to adapt themselves in an opportunistic way and to recycle themselves into productive, truly useful or necessary functions. By opening new businesses and offering themselves for new functions (even as subordinates)... Trade union leaders and journalists who do not help them in this sole and unique dramatic exit from unemployment, are parasites like the demonstrators in tents who are tragically cry-babies, or incapable and destructive.

Two small truths on this topic: bosses and managers are always miserable when they have to close a business or sack people; the begging unemployed demonstrators are always an extreme minority in relation to other colleagues who recycle themselves or who silently become entrepreneurs.

Raymond Barre was right all along.

3.15 - Property, possession, consumption: unjust and unfortunate gluttony

You have spoken of it, yes, but would you clear up some points in the chapters on justice and consumption.

It must be said that I could continue on and on to write other chapters for this book, to recount my life. I banned myself from doing so: I am no longer of the age, for some time now, where I naively want to write an autobiography. And anyway, I do not have time: entrepreneurs - especially in small businesses - need to work twice as hard, just to achieve a part and not all of their tasks. To answer you, I will begin with a short phrase which hit me, but I have forgotten the author: "Every time that someone invents a revenue that they did not produce, there is someone who produced a revenue that they did not invent". On an economic level, all problems with justice are there. And, careful, here we mean the production of revenue in a large and even indirect sense.

I will not go back over the discussion on the priority of freedom over justice that, even if it is very simple, is not at all understood and is at the heart of the contrast - also hateful - of our very secularized world. Even more interesting is the topic of consumption. How much should we consume? Recently, in the United States, a new movement called the "100 things" was born, which stated that we should not own more than that to be happy. The monks and ascetics have always shown - with many examples - that consumption is inversely proportional to vital and spiritual height...

What is then, for you, the rule of just consumption?

Firstly, you must consume less than you produce. This basic rule is even followed the other way round: the two generations after the 50s generally consumed more than they produced.

They will have their place in the history of disgrace after the massacre of 200 million people as a result of the secular ideologies of the past century.

Is there a golden rule for consumption?

In relation to our world founded on the pathological waste of consumption, we must put it in proportion to the level of actual production and the height of spirituality.

The degree of dumbing down of large parts of the population is due to - as we know - an endemic, compulsive overconsumption. Or should we rather say, overconsumption is due to a nihilistic dumbing down.

Do we have too much money to do it? We should say, on the other hand, that we badly and unjustly use all that there is: contemporary reification is due to the problem of an inevitably gluttonous possessive appropriation. Property which is captured, usurped and even stolen. We forget death and the cemetery where obviously possessions are useless. Even from a relationship standpoint with people and sexes.

And yet by seeing the social wars in the West, we could say that the classes are still there.

Who could foresee and measure the length of the hair and nails of the buried, when they continue, up to a point, to grow? The ideas and behavior of mankind are an inertia which does not testify to the honor of humanity. Here, like elsewhere, we appeal to evolutions and changes which we should not be astonished at, if not by their slowness. We think to the horror of the laborer's slogan of the 60s and 70s "a salary separated from production". Currently, the trend - of course - is to reconnect salaries to productivity, otherwise workers also become mindless civil servants... Civil servants must also find ways of measuring their performance to exit themselves from the class war.

3.16 - Professional associations: corporatist or fraternal?

As editor, I was very interested by the chapter on corporatism. But we were left a little unsatisfied: I would like to know more, seeing as the argument is very current in every sector and in every country.

You are right: I should have treated it better and more exhaustively. Like other arguments, furthermore. But, in my defense in this case, I did not want to go too much into details as I would have inevitably fallen into self-glorification.

In fact, it is me personally and my business with its managers who were at the head of this reaction against obscurantist corporatism which not only wants to eliminate any competing business in favor of independent translators but which aims - *de facto* - to hinder any progress in the innovation of multilingual communication.

These corporatists are terrified themselves of the inevitable globalization which is not only on the horizon, but which speeds up every day: they were at the dawn of the Internet, in 1989-1992.

Entrepreneurs also had to situate themselves between the globalists and the localists. Many independent translators, despite their multilingual profession, wished to declare themselves as localists (not anymore). The fear of the markets and of changes sometimes terrified them. I was already a glocalist ante litteram with my associates from the first moment, we did not leave it to be done for us by these "fools", as dangerous as they are naive, who wanted to eliminate freedom, nothing less than the freedom of businesses in Europe!

But how did you face political action, if I am not mistaken, for the first time.

When we found ourselves there for the first time, we did not forget the problem: after the quick foundation of Federlingua and after having overcome the corporatist attempt of the International Federation of Translators (to eliminate all competing businesses), we founded the BQTA (Belgium Quality Translation Association) affiliated with the EUATC (European Union of Associations of Translation Companies) which regrouped the countless monolocalized businesses as well as the rare multinational businesses (and glocalized like my business, Eurologos). This mixture was irrevocably denounced in 2010, amongst others, in my book published online on our website (www.eurologos.com) with the title and subtitle *Multilingual services betrayed by monocalism. The language industry's honor saved by "glocalism"*, in three languages: English, French and Italian (other languages will be added).

I have dedicated a lot of my energy and the economic resources of my business to association activities, now for over 20 years. But every entrepreneur should plan it: this plays an integral part of their own work. Moreover, the defense of the professional ethic is even configurable in the active marketing positioning of a business.

But, then, how many associations have you been part of?

As a Catholic entrepreneur, I have participated in the CDO (Compania Delle Opere) which is an international association of businesses as it is run by the management of Communion and Liberation (present in over 70 countries).

From a professional association point of view, my business and I are currently in a position of waiting and preparing. We have handed in our resignation from the BQTA association that we founded almost 20 years ago. The book written and published online in 2010 explains, in over 70 chapters, the reasons for the scandal of being a member in an association that cannot structurally guarantee what it announces in its title: multilingual quality. The countless "mailboxes" - that is how we refer to them in the profession - cannot guarantee the quality of a foreign language given that they are monolocalized businesses in one country.

In fact, we cannot guarantee the quality of a language or geo-style if we do not have as many operational offices, under one brand, in the country of the target languages. It's as simple as that. We are working towards the creation of a new worldwide association exclusively made up of multinational and glocalized businesses. Other than the FIT of independent translators and the EUATC of monolocalized mailboxes, there should be a third association of protagonists of the service of multilingual communication: a worldwide association of glocal businesses (that does not yet exist). And this without trying to eliminate the other with odious and intolerable corporatist, illiberal and anti-freedom practices. We could, we should, even establish fraternal relationships, once all the identities have been well established.

But how can we recognize a corporatist association seeing as all the professional associations are conceived to defend the interests of associates?

Here we get to the central problem of the economy and the fraternal (or charitable) concept of associations. There are two extreme political positions that sit symmetrically on a cultural level, including in this word the solutions of freedom and justice.

The first position exclusively pursues the interests of the individual or of their part, of their sector.

The second position, on the other hand, favors the interests of others in even personal self-denial.

We could say that whilst the first position is always unacceptable as it is not socially practical, selfish and inevitably aggressive and violent, the second can only - in reality - be visualized in an altruistic and personal effort towards holiness....

In fact, the Church, in all its social doctrine, suggests the famous "common good", in which the interests of the person (therefore even their sector) is balanced with the interests of others.

An association which does not act in the common good will inevitably become corporatist.

In the case presented, the attitude was also aggressive and violent against competitors...

Furthermore, time has shown - with the globalization of the markets - not only the need for monolocalized businesses but also, and especially, multinational (and glocalized) businesses.

Besides, corporatism is always regressive and even against innovation.

3.17 - The altruism of immense fortunes and the charity of each of them

What is your true judgment on altruism regarding charity?

I have spoken about it in the book and I believe that the American altruism cannot but leave a deep impression: when you see that the richest people in the world, from Bill Gates to Berlusconi, create foundations to pledge over 90% of their wealth to helping the world's poorest people, everyone has to re-examine their prejudices. I personally, last summer whilst helping at the Meeting in Rimini, of Communion and Liberation (and the *Compania Delle Opere*)⁵¹ I was struck by the declaration of someone at the conference, the manager of a charitable organization, that went a little like this: "We must finish the idea of Christian charity, as a rather Anglo-Saxon and Protestant philanthropy, should remain anonymous to avoid the boasting of public generosity. Even charity, which is founded on truth and sharing with the assistance of the very saving grace, should publicly advertise - humbly and without ostentation, of course - the nature of its practice which is always ecclesiastic and missionary". From this I began to say - as a witness - that my personal family helps six children from the AVSI (a missionary association of the CL), two in Burundi, in Africa, two in Brazil and two in Burma, in Asia: the famous "support from afar" until they become of age. On this point, there must be a great cultural revolution of Western practices on this matter.

Still on the subject of charity, could you be more precise on your thoughts regarding social justice problems.

To speak the truth, the social doctrine of the Church, still very much unknown, is already very clear and "my thoughts" are nothing but in line with this. Certainly, we must listen carefully to and put into practice the Magisterium of Pope Ratzinger who has - as always - copiously and unambiguously expressed himself on

⁵¹ The Meeting in Rimini (Italy) is the most important Catholic display in the world that takes place each year, in the last week of August, with over 700,000 participants and hundreds of meetings/conferences with the greatest leaders in education, political economy, culture, theology, musicology, social and welfare issues and all other disciplines.

the subject. The Church's tradition, from Pope Paul VI, has declared that "that highest form of charity is politics". And this is not to further encourage the craze for professional parasites like the countless candidates welcomed (at least double the number needed, in almost all countries) into this very privileged "public career" from an economic and normative point of view.

The articulation on a social and political level of a truly charitable act is made up of, firstly, an untouchable - non-negotiable - priority that must always be attributed to freedom rather than justice.

There is nothing to do but apply - if we dare say - this simple principle, we can thus have a central operational value for charity and politics.

3.18 - Beauty will triumph over nihilism. But with work

We should return to your concept of the beauty of work even presented as an absolute weapon against nihilism.

No, it is not "my" idea of the beauty of work: it is sufficient to hear the countless testimonies - not only from small entrepreneurs - who speak of their activities by saying "I work all the time and I do not think so". You must first like your work. To begin, I would not enjoy this activity that seems absurd to me: it seems to be omniscient and founded on the "perfection" of quick personal writing... And then, I begin to invert this idea, and then I understand what I have to do: use Translation Memories (which were launched on the markets 20 years ago), thus I have resolved the problem of my omniscient claim; regarding the immediate perfection of personal writing to which of course nobody can claim, the solution is in revision teams and, especially, in glocalism. To fully understand and organize it, it took years. That was when my work became beautiful. There are several analytical and descriptive books, in several languages, on the websites of my businesses that you can consult for free...

Yes, ok, but how can this beauty combat nihilism?

It is not by magic, of course. It is work. Always work. Beauty affirms itself, it is true. But very often nihilism even obscures true beauty, it captures it, deforms it, mystifies it. We must work to show true beauty.

At the beginning of the 70s, I read a double booklet called "Savoir voir": it simply showed paintings, sculptures, architecture from every period in all their beauty. A sort of secular grammar book on the basis of beauty. For now, my big problem is communicating the beauty that my group of businesses have managed to produce with and in their services. It is my work. It is for this reason that small entrepreneurs who hide themselves, betray themselves.

We can read in your quarterly magazines in 6 languages, called Glocal, and online on your website for the past 9 years, that your worldwide group is in the process of sponsoring the creation of a CD for a new recording of Beethoven's 32 sonatas. Why?

Circumstance had that - but spiritualists would rightly add that "God wanted it..." - that in Brussels I met my Argentinian cousin - whom I had never met before - the son of my uncle who emigrated to the old Eldorado in South America, where millions of Italians and Europeans went at the beginning of the 20th Century. In a very lively and ingrained family tradition in music, this cousin who is called Delle Vigne, the name of my mother, had already performed a piano concert at 8 years of age in the Colon, the greatest and most renowned theater in Buenos Aires. Afterwards, he had teachers like Arrau and Tchiffra, two of the greatest pianists of the past century and he became a great concert-pianist across the world

(www.aquilesdellevigne.net). In 2008-2009, he began to record Beethoven's greatest work, the 32 sonatas: my Eurologos group thus is sponsoring the whole project which will take several years. We will distribute the CDs amongst our clients and stakeholder (we are currently on the 4th) to show two things: firstly, to promote a great cultural and quality initiative; and then to associate the intrinsically international production of Eurologos with the excellence and universality of the most beautiful music ever composed: like our activities, if we can say.

The most prestigious of advertisements is rightly the sponsoring of artistic production: beauty married with entrepreneurial work. In other terms, two businesses of excellence reunited under one goal.

To fight nihilism with beauty...

3.19 - Universality, globalization throughout the world, the destruction of the Tower of Babel and God's intelligent design

One thing fascinates in your story: the fact that a small entrepreneur could put himself at the head of a group of businesses of multinational cultural services - glocalized, as you say - over four continents and, especially, without having ever gone to university.

We should also thank the much decried economic globalization. Each of my franchisees in the world could tell a story, their own, which is even more interesting.

As for "a title of university study", a great day in modern civilization will be when they abolish that. It is not good for anything and is only very damaging. What is very fascinating, rather, is the story of humanity which had achieved, in this small example of glocalization, an immense cycle of their global being. In fact, after the destruction of the Tower of Babel to its incestuous trends on a cultural and linguistic level, God is today in the process of showing mankind the huge intelligence of his plan. Understanding and "subjecting" all the regions of the world to the consequent diaspora of the demolition of their Tower (as big in its arrogant boastfulness as it was small in its plan of only speaking one language and only having one miserable culture) mankind began in order to meet, speak, to exchange their work... God, with his "repressive" gesture, made humankind exit the insignificant sloth of their Tower to diversify them in an abundance of wealth in cultural and material expressions which are apparently considered as the worldwide problem of our era. My small glocal business, Eurologos, is nothing but a minuscule example of this.

But, still, it was God who committed this act of violent destruction!

Only sordid so-called politically correct points of view, if you will excuse me, can judge it as such. We know that the whole history of culture, of the spirit, is paved by violent acts that are rather the moderate reaction, as moderate as possible, to the violence of humans who struggle against their ontological destiny. As usual, humankind has a tendency to replace, in their judgments, effects with causes. And, then, culture - as we know - is always the fruit of the repression of nature which is, as the great Italian poet Leopardi said, sometimes or often "the sponsor".

Explain, as quickly as you can, what you call franchising.

To speak the truth, the Americans have been speaking about it since 1848, the year of Karl Marx's Communist Party Manifesto: its success of opinion was lessened regarding the act of the theoretical foundation of communism, but it survived. In fact, franchising is now the most widespread commercial form in the world.

It is ideal for allowing small businesses to face the globalization of the markets. And, above all, it is a form of societal operation that permits every entrepreneur to completely remain at the head and in ownership of their own business (small or even big). In addition, franchising also allows an education in entrepreneurship: an intrapreneur, that is an apprentice entrepreneur, can begin a career in their small business being guided by the franchiser. For all the technical and constituent aspects of the franchise, you can, for example, consult the website of my group...

3.20 - Saving virtue or factual perfection

Your judgments on spiritualists, on certain priests who use their sermons to pursue the poor and the slating of entrepreneurs will make you enemies...

Concerning spiritualists, I take practically nothing back. As for priests, I admit that I have a great soft spot for them. It does not matter if they are left-wing and if they interpret the Gospel as a substitute for the Communist Party Manifesto. You must know that, when I was 7, 8 years old, my aunt and my mother would sometimes take me to the church of St Francis, in Lanciano - my birth town - where there had been a "Eucharistic miracle". Around the year 700, a monk doubted, during the Mass, whether the host was "flesh" and whether the wine was "real blood": the liturgical mystery of transubstantiation.

Instantly, the host transformed itself into real flesh and the cup of wine into actual blood: on each visit to the church in the middle of town, I was very affected by this and even now I am very moved when the priest proceeds to this essential passage of the liturgy.

Only he, totally blessed, can do it.

One last question, that I have wanted to ask you from the beginning. Do you not think that the effort that you put in, to become an excellent entrepreneur and, both a good Christian, could hinder the complete success of your life?

Firstly, I think I am hardly cultured and, assuredly, in a very insufficient way. From the "excellent entrepreneur" point of view, you could say that I am just a small modern entrepreneur. And a relatively "good Christian", as you say, I must admit that I am trying to become one by attending the sacraments and by following the teachings of the Church (insufficiently, but reasonably frequently): I know that, like everyone else (and even more), I am a sinner: I am part of the Mystery of original sin.

But the question that you have asked should be turned around: it is in the goal of becoming a good Christian, that I have presently become an entrepreneur and a free and thus sufficiently cultured man. Just to defend myself from the countless daily attacks from nihilism.

But, everything comes from the word freedom.

"This is the most sacred word - Don Giussani often repeated - that the Church and Christian education has accustomed us to consider and admire. It is the word that comes immediately after the word God"⁵².

If I were to think for an instant that Christianity could, as you say "hinder the complete success of my life", I would decide to not be a Christian.

Moreover, Christianity is not perfection or what you would call the "success" of our world.

Likewise, we could speak of this book that could be improved, perfected, cleaned up, structured, contextualized, referenced, in short re-written like a professor who must correctly publish in order to have an academic career. Myself, I do not have the time to do so, I am an entrepreneur, thankfully.

⁵² Luigi Giussani, *L'io, il potere, le opere*, Marietti Editore, Milan (IT), 2000, p.100.

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