FOR A SOCIOLOGY OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

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SUMMARY

The great metamorphosis of the main sociological factors challenges us to abandon the presumption of colonization and the paradigm of the clash of civilizations and invites us to become aware of the changing demographic, political, economic, and cultural reality, and commits us to adopt a new analytical paradigm to understand and manage the transformation. The article proposes a synthetic analysis of this change, starting with statistical data on the migration of populations from the poorest countries on Earth to the richest ones. The analysis focuses on what is happening in the vast area of the Mediterranean. The history of the Mediterranean, this is the hypothesis put forward in the article, could help us to reflect innovatively on the demographic and cultural dynamics that are taking place in a particularly significant way. The reason for which it is hypothesized that the Mediterranean could be the privileged social place where we can reflect on the metamorphosis we are experiencing lies in the long tradition of welcoming diversity and in the capacity for the coexistence of religions, cultures, and civilizations that, over the centuries, have been the force thanks to which the whole world has been dominated, despite the clashes that historiography has unquestionably shown us. The article shows the important commitment of the leaders of the different world religions in generating spaces for encounters and dialogue between cultural diversities that cannot be analyzed within the paradigm of confrontation but require to be understood within the paradigm of confrontation and responsible coexistence. The work done so far clearly shows the possibility of dialogue between diversities, as well as pointing the way forward to socialize all different cultures to be together, without clashing for dominance; in this task, the reflections of Pope Francis and Edgar Morin on the concepts of brotherhood and fraternity appear particularly useful.

INTRODUCTION

To reflect on the sociology of the Mediterranean means, first of all, to recognize the particular centrality of this sociocultural space, in which some of the most important visions of the world and of life, to which we still owe much, have been sedimented; it also means to recognize the efforts made by the Mediterranean peoples who, despite differences and inevitable clashes, have made possible the coexistence of multiple value constellations and made the best use of the advantages generated by ethnic and cultural *blending*. The Mediterranean is a historic space where different cultures were born and different civilizations took root: think at least of Phoenician, Egyptian, Cretan, Mycenaean, Roman, Carthaginian, and Arab. Along the way, a special role was played by religions: from the original polytheistic (in particular, Greek and Romans) to the later monotheistic (Jewish, Christian, and Islamic). On this sea in the middle of the lands (etymological meaning of Mediterranean) there have been clashes and encounters, which have left traces that are still alive.

The invitation to reflect on the Mediterranean as a complex social space is justified by the recent displacements of people seeking a decent life outside the borders of their home countries and hoping to find/build it in one of the richest areas on Earth. Without knowing the magnitude of the displacements, their internal composition, and the real aspiration of those emigrating, this phenomenon is perceived as an invasion aimed if not in intention, at challenging, undermining, and defeating the Judeo-Christian civilization to which the wealthier countries refer.

The Catholic Church – and the other religions based in Mediterranean Europe – concerned with the phenomenon are urging, first and foremost their faithful believers, to clean up the widespread and dangerous cognitive vision, which leads to confusing reality and truth with counterfactual narratives and perceptions falsified by unjustified fears. But it has long been known that «A great deal of intelligence can be invested in ignorance when the need for illusion is deep» (Bellow, 1976, 127).

For some years now, sociology has been reflecting on social change in terms of metamorphosis (Beck, 2016, 32). In this new perspective, the processes of globalization can no longer be understood in terms of colonization, but must be understood in terms of cooperation and collaboration between diversities that are already inevitably in contact. If in the colonization phase, movements started from the richest and most technologically advanced countries and headed toward the poorest and least technologically developed ones, the reverse is happening in recent decades. This time the wealth moving is not that of capital and goods, but it is that of human capital and people (who demand respect and recognition and who cannot be stopped either by armies or defensive laws).

Pope Francis has shown that he has understood this metamorphosis very well, to the point of sub-linearizing, on more than one occasion, that we are living in an age of transformation and not in times of change (Pope, 2019b). Within this conviction, he wrote *Laudato si'* (May 24, 2015) and *Fratelli tutti* (October 3, 2020), addressing, in the first, the urgent transformation of lifestyles that are destroying creation and exploiting the poorest people on earth, and asking, in the second, that we all feel like brothers and sisters, beyond geographical boundaries and social differences (origin, nationality, colour and religion). If one were to read the two Encyclicals from a

sociological perspective, one could say that Pope Francis calls for a revision of the dominant *weltanschauung* and a restructuring of behaviour toward the environment, toward communities, toward people, and even toward oneself. To see oneself differently means to understand transformation and to place oneself in the condition to change. In this sense, change does not mean renouncing the cultural heritage to which one has been socialized (the set of processes of personal and social identity formation); it means, conversely, changing the contents of the socialization processes themselves (e.g., no longer the right to exploit creation for the exclusive economic interest; no more competing to excel over others; no more individualism and supremacism; no more growing social inequality; no more legitimization of mechanisms of class closure and social exclusion; no more the logic of money and profit). As we shall see later, it is a matter of changing in terms of civilization (the competitive and destructive content) while preserving the best of collective cultural values (the collaborative and innovative content).

SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHYC REALITY

A first important factor for reflection concerns demography: in this field, numbers give a first measure of reality. According to the statistical data made available by the various UN reports, the world is experiencing a decisive demographic change. The populations of the richest countries on the planet have decreasing birth rates, while those of the poorest countries (Africa, especially) and non-Western countries (Asia, specifically) have increasing birth rates. The result of this dynamic is well represented by the data in Table 1.

Table 1
Population trends, by Continents; UN source (values expressed in millions and percentages)

Regions	1800	1900	2000	2023	2050
Europe	203	408	729	750	628
	20.8	*24.7*	*12.2*	*9.6*	*7.0*
Nord–America	7	82	307	370	398
	0.7	*5.0*	*5.1*	*4.7*	*4.4*
Latin–America	24	74	511	650	809
	2.5	*4.5*	*8.5*	*8.3*	*9.1*
Asia	635	947	3.634	4.700	5.268
	64.9	*57.4*	*60.8*	*60.1*	*59.1*
Africa	107	133	767	1.300	1.766
	10.9	*8.1*	*12.8*	*16.6*	*19.8*
Oceania	2	6	30	43	46
	0.3	*0.4*	*0.5*	*0.5*	*0.5*

Source: https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/population/publications/pdf/popfacts/PopFacts_2011-2.pdf

DATA SOURCES AND USED METHODS

The data in the Table allow us to make some observations:

1. to date, the Asian population accounts for 60 percent of the world's population and the African population for about 17 percent; by 2050, together they will come to account for 80 percent of the total, when Europe and North America will account for only 11.4%;

2. in 1900, the century in which the welfare society was structured, albeit majority Asian population lived in widespread poverty (in the period 1982-2012, the poverty rate in India fell from 60% to 22%, and in China it fell from 84% to 13%);

3. in less than a quarter of a century, from 2000 to 2023, Africa's population increased from 767 million to 1.3 billion, and is projected to reach 1.766 billion by 2050;

4. in the same time frame, the European population has grown by only 20 million and, nevertheless, will fall to 628 million.

To enrich the demographic picture it may be useful to keep in mind that the average age of the European population is 43 years (the highest in the world), while in African countries it is 20 years (the lowest in the world); in North American countries the average age is 39 years and in Central and South American countries it is 31 years; in Asian countries the average age is 32 years. In other words, our Continent and the West have an old population.

One has to wonder whether such a demographic dynamic-which makes one imagine the shifting of the axis of influence from old Europe to a world for too long kept on the margins of economic, political, cultural and religious interests can be overlooked in the analysis of factual reality and whether it should not, instead, prompt reflection on how to stand together and how to find collaborative, cooperative and innovative solutions, if only to reduce the destructiveness of the inevitable environmental impact of such socio-demographic growth.

Therefore, one must ask oneself:

a. will it ever be possible to stop/change this situation democratically;

b. if the population of the poorest countries grows at these rates, who and how will be able to meet the connected demand for essential goods;

c. if contact between different cultures and value constellations occurs at such a high rate, what-if any outcome can be imagined in the absence of dialogue.

Another factor challenging resistance to metamorphosis concerns trends in wealth production and distribution (GDP). After a very long European and North American dominance (the U.S. economy has excelled since 1871), the area of greatest wealth produced is becoming Asia: China, already the second economic power, despite the difficulties due to law enforcement policy adopted against the covid-19 pandemic, will become the first economy in the world between 2030 and 2036; in that same period, India will become the third largest economy in the world, overtaking first Germany and then Japan. Africa continues to present itself as the poorest area on Earth, and future forecasts are not optimistic. Yet, the world's wealth, which rose from 1.38 trillion in 1960 to 33.85 trillion in 2000 and 101.00 trillion in 2022, will come to double in 2037, touching 206 trillion (see: WorldBank, 2023; Cebr, 2023). Thus, the world is not getting poorer, so any argument aimed at justifying the need to keep out, from the distribution of global wealth, the last people at the table of wealth, lest the richest people be forced to reduce their portions. In sociology, this strategy of giving even more to those who already have much and taking away, even what little they have, from those who already have very little is referred to as the *St. Matthew effect* (Merton, 1968).

Using common-sense language, it is possible to distribute in a less unequal manner the wealth that has already been produced and, at least, that which is expected to be produced in the coming years. After the long feudal and quasi-feudal period of the monarchies (where privilege was justified by an alleged will of God and a not always realized good of the people), the inequality of the industrial age has been justified by the individualistic property principle and, more recently, by the exclusionary property principle of knowledge (with patents and licenses, which keep out the population poorer). For religions, as we read in the documents they are endorsing in these last decades, such inequality is no longer sustainable (moreover, the *St. Matthew effect* would give no hope). Less still is the mechanism of the zero-sum society sustainable (Thurow, 1980), in which the costs have been passed on to the poorest and least autonomous countries in political choices, coercing

populations living in poverty either to emigrate (these are the economic emigrants) or to live in permanent hardship (these are the ones who adapt to an indecent society)[1].

A further factor in the metamorphosis pertains to digitization and the spread of the world wide web, which have made the entire world a kind of "global village" (to use a well-known expression of sociologist Marshall McLuhan), within which cultural diversities-although geographically distant-come into contact, recognize each other, and demand respect. In 2022, 67.1 percent of the world's population (5.34 billion people) owned a smartphone and 62.5 percent (just under 5 billion) had a connection to access the web; 58.4 percent (4.62 billion) were active social media players[2]. The digitization of production processes and computer-mediated communication make possible the virtuous collaboration of distant economic systems and the ideational and pragmatic sharing between unrelated people and social groups (I refer to the functional mechanisms of communities of practice and networks of loose social

ties). The sense of belonging that is generated within the new digitized contexts has little to do with traditional mechanisms, which essentially required direct contacts and synchronic spatial practices.

This means that one can belong to the Mediterranean context without living there in the geographic space that defines it. It also means that it is easier to educate oneself to hear the demands for recognition from the distant, acting in a shared context culturally and, for believers, religiously.

Here, too, systemic inequality shows its effects: one-third of the world's population (2.7 billion people) still does not have access to the Web; while in high-income countries 92 percent of the population is connected, in low-income countries is only 26 percent; the highest percentage is in Europe (with 89 percent) and the lowest is in Africa (with 40 percent), as shown the ITU (2022a; 2022b). The causes of the digital divide lie in the economic unaffordability of infrastructure costs, network access, and the acquisition of the necessary devices.

THE MEDITERRANEAN CIVILISATION

Having reasoned in terms of a clash of civilizations (Huntington, 1993; Huntington, 1996) has channeled thinking along a substantially sterile path, because it has facilitated the spread of a tunnel vision (think of the rhetoric of invasion, politically exploited to legitimize measures of refoulement and to justify inevitable failures) that has prevented consideration of such determinant variables as: (1) de-natality and aging in Western countries; (2) territorial contiguity, which makes border closures impossible; (3) globalization of markets, which necessitates the free movement of men and women as well; and (4) the failure of attempts to export democracy, without caring about the inevitable and significant revision of different cultural heritages and a substantial rethinking of wealth distribution mechanisms.

Delegitimizing differences has facilitated deafness toward new demands for recognition and has found in the storytelling of invasion and clash of civilizations an effective strategy for thinking in defensive terms, on the one hand, and in self-accusatory mode, on the other hand. To think that European civilization must be defended at all costs, without admitting revisions of its modernized and technologized lifestyles, generates a climate of continuous confrontation; on the other

hand, to think that that same civilization has been guilty of all the nefarious deeds in human history, produces a generalized weakening of the cornerstones of the great culture sedimented over the centuries and a renunciatory attitude toward the great technological advances generated by scientific knowledge in the last Western centuries. Another strategy needs to be pursued, characterized by critical reflection and not by the renunciation tout court of the West (after all, in the Mediterranean those who move do so to become Western or, at least, to enjoy the advantages of being Western).

As historical research has abundantly shown, the Mediterranean is the sea where cultures and civilizations have hybridized and enriched each other to the point of producing great and lasting fruits. The Mediterranean system has generated high cultural elaborations and valuable deposits of scientific knowledge, both of which are the fruit of the peaceful encounters between native intelligence and intelligence from other countries and cultures (see Braudel, 1949; Braudel & Duby, 1999; Abulafia, 2012); it is decidedly reductive and ungenerous to speak only of the damage caused and, consequently, to legitimize the alleged collapse of Mediterranean and Western civilization in general. It would be more just and credible to reflect on the historical capacity to be together

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[1] An indecent society humiliates the people who live in it, portraying them as not even worthy of basic human rights and freedom of movement (for a proper analysis, I refer to Margalit, 1996).

[2] It is useful to know that the annual growth rate of smartphone owners is 1.8% (95 million), that of connections is 4,0% (192 million) and that of social media users is 10.1 per cent (424 million new social players); source: https://wearesocial.com/it/blog/2023/01/digital-2023-i-dati-globali/

with others, the ability to exchange the best The current situation, to which Pope Francis invites us to look, cannot be understood by re-manifesting within the rhetoric of confrontation and invasion, but must be framed within a much more challenging relational perspective, aimed at the meeting of differences and mutual recognition, with the awareness of having to "square the circle" (as it has been written: spes contra spem)[3].

Squaring the circle means the task of drawing, with ruler and compasses, a square that has the same area as a circle; metaphorically, it is the attempt to hold differences together. Ralf Dahrendorf (1996) wrote a valuable essay on the task of squaring the circle, wanting to show the difficulties in holding together economic growth, social cohesion, and freedom. For the German scholar, the task of squaring the circle falls to the Western world and, first and foremost, to Europe. The solution requires the adoption of creative strategies and the commitment of all territorial intelligences (especially, but not only, those of goodwill). European politics bears the greatest responsibility in the search for the solution: it must assume responsibility for devising and sustaining a welcoming institutional framework that is at the same time respectful of the Westernized context in which the Mediterranean is the undisputed protagonist.

To remain engaged in devising measures to counter migratory flows is too small thing[4].

For all that, the Catholic Church and Pope Francis invite to reflect also theologically on the context of the Mediterranean certainly not to throw overboard the great theology produced within it, but to open it up and compare it with other theologies and seek what unites and not what divides. To succeed in this would be a great squaring of the circle.

MIGRATIONS OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE

To articulate meaningful reflections, it may be helpful to know that 15 of the world's 20 richest countries are European and that the 15 poorest countries are African (and largely belong to West Africa). The Eleventh Report of the International Organization for Migration states that «the number of international migrants has grown from 84 million globally in 1970 to 281 million in 2020, although when global population growth is taken into account, the proportion of international migrants has only increased from 2.3 percent to 3.6 percent of the world's population». This indicates that almost all the world's population (96.4 percent) reside permanently in the country where they were born and from which they leave for temporary, longer, or shorter trips, for tourism, study or work[5].

It is also interesting to know that the global volume of migrants' remittances has risen from 126 trillion in 2000 to $702 trillion in 2020 (despite the covid-19 crisis, which caused the value to drop by 2.4 percent). This indicates that migrants are working and producing for the countries of migration and, with remittances, helping their families and the economies of their countries of origin. Perhaps the latter dynamic could easily be seen as the most effective strategy referred to as "helping them at home".

As a result of certain journalistic information and biased political misinformation, there is a tendency to think that there is only one way of entry into Europe and that Italy is the country most affected by the phenomenon; in reality, as official ministerial documents inform, there are different routes followed by migrants and our country is not the only port of call. The routes are (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, 2022):

1. the central Mediterranean, with arrivals by sea to Italy and the island of Malta; this route is traveled by people mostly from sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, transited via Tunisia and Libya (since 2020, the number of people using this route has grown significantly);

2. the Eastern Mediterranean, with arrivals in Greece, Cyprus and Bulgaria; traveled largely by migrants from Syria (since 2016 these flows have significantly reduced, following EU-Turkey cooperation agreements);

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[3] «The Mediterranean is precisely the sea of meticciato [cross-breeding] – if we do not understand cross-breeding, we will never understand the Mediterranean –, a sea that is geographically closed with respect to the oceans, but culturally always open to encounter, dialogue and mutual enculturation. Nevertheless, there is a need for renewed and shared narratives that – starting from listening to the roots and the present – speak to people's hearts, narratives in which it is possible to recognise oneself in a constructive, peaceful and hope-generating manner» (Pope Francis (2019a); see also: Bongiovanni, Tanzarella (eds.) (2019).

[4] As a result, the Mediterranean has become the largest mass grave on planet Earth: 26,000 migrants have died in the last 10 years, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Report, data as of 2022. For evidence of Europe's commitment to countering the flows, see the institutional page: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/it/policies/eu-migration-policy/central-mediterranean-route/#action

[5] Source: https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/

3. the Western Mediterranean, with irregular arrivals in Spain, both by sea and land, from the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla (North Africa); travelling by this route by migrants proving mainly from Algeria and Morocco, but also from sub-Saharan Africa;

4. West Africa, with irregular arrivals in the Canary Islands and transits through Morocco, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Senegal, and Gambia (in recent years, it is the route with increasing flows);

5. the flow of refugees from Ukraine, because of the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, must be considered a special and hopefully temporary ca-so.

According to the data provided by the XXXI Immigration Report 2022, edited by Caritas and Migrantes, most foreign citizens residing in Italy are people of the Christian religion (2.8 million, 53.0 percent of the total); those of the Islamic religion are 1.5 million (29.5 percent of the total); those of the Catholic religion are 892,000 (17.2 percent). These are values and percentages that represent well the multi-religious composition of the broad Mediterranean context, so the rhetoric of ethnic and religious invasion appears exaggerated.

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN PROMOTING PEACE

For several decades (from 27th October 1986), top representatives of the world's major religions have been meeting to reflect and pray for peace, taking responsibility to stand together and dialogize. One is convinced that dialogue among religions can help build the space needed to generate mutual recognition and find behaviours to hold differences together. One is also aware that dialogue is the only tool – a real strategy – to rebuild the multifaceted identity in which the Mediterranean has lived since the first moments of its rich history (the first meeting "Mediterranean, frontier of peace", desired by Pope Francis, was held in the city of Bari, between 18 and 23 February 2020, attended by the patriarchs and heads of the Churches of the Middle East and the bishops overlooking the Mediterranean).

In truth, these meetings have a history that goes back to the period 1952-1956, when the mayor of Florence, Giorgio La Pira, conceived and organized five "International Conferences for Peace and Christian Civilization", to reaffirm that the sole and most powerful foundation of the values of peace and social justice was to be sought in the spirit of fraternity, to the strengthening of which the link between the three great religions of the Book should contribute so much. Already in the 1950s, in a particularly conflict-ridden and dangerous historical moment for world peace, La Pira said he was convinced of the specific importance of the Mediterranean context:

«The historical conjuncture we are experiencing, the clash of interests and ideologies that shake humanity in the grip of an incredible infantilism return to the Mediterranean a capital responsibility [...] for the simultaneous realization of a world made on a human scale by men made on a world scale [...] We think that the Mediterranean remains what it was: an inexhaustible source of creativity, a living and universal hearth where men can receive the lights of knowledge, the grace of beauty and the warmth of fraternity» (in Bizzeti, 2020).

The Bari meeting (19-23 February 2020) is part of the vein opened by Giorgio La Pira, who placed great hope in the peoples of the Mediterranean, and must be read within the commitment, repeatedly proposed by Pope Francis, to find a shared strategy aimed at «guarding one another in the one human family».

The commitment of religious leaders and the invitation to the faithful of religions born in the Mediterranean context (it is clear that the delimitation is only due to the theme of this article) can be read, sociologically, as anchoring some of the historical characteristics of the Mediterranean context: its ontological internal differentiation, the long coexistence of polytheistic systems, the habit of seeing the entry of so many and diverse foreigners, the journeys to new and unknown territories, the birth of the society of law; but also the many artistic, philosophical, and cultural elaborations that have placed the other than oneself at the centre of the search for similarities but also for innovative differences. Yet, despite this chaotic movement – not always peaceful, as noted above – from which multiple identities have sprung, the Mediterranean has included, preserved, and innovated diversity, finding in one way or another the square.

A new social actor is emerging in the ongoing reflection on peaceful coexistence in the Mediterranean: women. One is convinced that the characteristics peculiar to the 'feminine' are more appropriate to generate new spaces for dialogue. The incidence of women within family dynamics, their role in socializing religious values, their general propensity for cohesion and care, and their ability to hold together differences and otherness do not escape. Clearly, to have the full contribution of the 'feminine', a strategy of strengthening her presence in religious, political, and social decisions becomes indispensable. Otherwise, it will remain within the space of good intentions and inconclusiveness.

Before closing these few pages, it seems appropriate to clarify two concepts, both related to the goal of peace in the Mediterranean context: brotherhood and fraternity.

There is a conception of peace as an existential condition, understood as a persona-le and intimate experience (being at peace with oneself) and a conception of peace as

a systemic condition, indicating a situation of agreement with others around us and with the entire external environment (deep longing of all human beings of all times). The former is the result of working on oneself, on one's needs, on one's aspirations, on one's discouraging defeats and exhilarating achievements, on one's conscience and existential values; the latter is the result of a shared vision, of a politics of encounter, of revising the mechanisms of social inequality and creating a climate of fraternity. Fraternity is what this world needs. Universal fraternity is practically unattainable and sociologically dangerous-because it excludes all those who are not brothers or who are not recognized as such.

Fraternity is a concept that transcends actual blood ties and includes the unacquainted, the distant, everyone else who is different from us. The concept of brotherhood is small scale (close ties, between family-relatives and sodalists), while that of fraternity is larger scale (includes loose ties, between distant and different). Although in the religions of the Book brotherhood is a uniting sentiment (the condition of all being children of Abraham and worshippers of the one creator God) it has not prevented betrayal, strife, deception, and killing. Being brothers is not a guarantee of harmony, sharing, solidarity, or even recognition (there is no need to recall the various biblical stories, which support what is being asserted). Perhaps because of the awareness of these evidence, in recent years a reflection has been developing aimed at clarifying the distinction between brotherhood and brotherhood (Courban et. al., 2021).

Sociologically, fraternity is an original relationship: we all share the same origin and environment (think of the world system and social ecology), we can only be together if we are able to build collaborative (tight and loose) social ties. Brotherhood tends not to overstep the boundaries of sibling bonds between brothers, while fraternity facilitates outreach to others, even if not brothers, recognizing them as fraternal.

Already in the title of the Encyclical "Fratelli tutti" (2020), Pope Francis adds «on fraternity and social friendship» hoping for the creation of a fraternal and friendly society, Pope Francis induces us to think, sociologically, of the need for a society where interpersonal and globalized relationships are generative of a climate of «open fraternity»[6].

Recently, french sociologist Edgard Morin (2019) published an interesting reflection on the importance of fraternity, believing it to be the fundamental resource for emerging from the condition of social deafness that is characterizing globalized human societies. Morin recalls that the current Western and Mediterranean world was generated by two great revolutions: the American and French revolutions. The first posited happiness as an innate and inalienable right, making it clear that property is the sine qua non of happiness, so those who are incapable of ownership have no right to happiness. The second revolution found in the vindication of freedom, equality, and fraternity its strong and distinctive point; in the later "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" fraternity finds no place, leaving it to the ethics of reciprocity, which sociology and anthropology point to as the golden rule present in all human societies.

For Morin it is precisely the third term of the revolutionary triad that must be placed at the centre of social reflexion. Morin also thinks of fraternity as a biological state (being brothers), but he makes it clear that it is more an anthropological, philosophical, ethical-social, and political awareness. He sees its absence in social dynamics as the victory of individualism and the exploitation of creation for purely speculative purposes. The long underestimation of fraternal dynamics, the derision to which they have been subjected by those who said they were convinced of the supposedly iron Darwinian law of the competitive market, have been used to hide the true human nature: cooperation and collaboration, altruism, and generosity (Tomasello, 2009; Godelier, 2007; Godelier 2021). The French sociologist sees the urgency of building a new societal paradigm in which the awareness that we are all bound to one destiny generates a fraternal society. A society where we are not all in the same boat, but we all sail on the same sea, sharing the same condition of castaways in peril. The perduring denial of such an obvious common condition can only hope for a miraculous solution to reality[7].

To better clarify what the condition of fraternity is, it helps to refer to the concept of empathy (Stein, 1917). Psychologist Martin Hoffman (2000) defines it as an «affective response [fraternal affectivity, to reprise the distinction proposed in this article] more appropriate to another person's situation than to one's own», and places it at the basis of any moral behaviour. It is not to be taken as an ironic note to recall that Adam Smith, before he was convinced of the alleged law of individual butcher's utility, had already written similar words (between 1752 and 1759) when he was professor of moral philosophy in Glasgow[8].

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[6]   Point 5 of the Encyclical reads the tribute to Grand Imam Ahmad Al-Tayyeb, with whom the pope had met in Abu Dhabi (4th February 2019), to sign the Document on Human Brotherhood for World Peace and Common Coexistence and to recall that «God has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and has called them to live together as brothers and sisters».

[7]   «Only a God can now help us find a way out», as Heidegger stated in a famous interview at Spiegel magazine, September 23, 1966.

[8]   «How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility [...] Pity and compassion are words appropriated to signify our fellow-feeling with the sorrow of others.» (Smith, 1759, Part I, Section I, Chapter I).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The Mediterranean context must make itself aware of its past, take responsibility for the power it is given, and reinforce respectful behaviours toward diversity and weaknesses, which in recent decades are advancing demands for recognition and challenging the maintenance of the latent sociocultural pattern. In sociology, this process is referred to as crossing the latent threshold.

The function of maintaining the latent sociocultural model (the set of values and behavioural norms that social institutions, through socialization processes, preserve and transmit to new generations and outsiders entering the system) is important for two related reasons: for the maintenance/preservation of the integration of the system of reference and for the management of change/ mutation of the system itself. Any attempt to cross/ raise the latency threshold generates both on a regional and global scale-inevitable social conflicts, which if not resolved, but only repressed will make all forms of dialogue between the parties impossible.

Social systems that do not want to become aware of the highly transformative situation that is being experienced and do not engage in managing this kind of challenge because they believe they can keep the latency threshold under control are normally doomed to succumb. Conversely, systems that see the situation and commit themselves to identifying measures for the interpenetration of cultures and civilizations transform, but do not succumb.

Intelligent cultures, religions, and political systems analyse factual reality and reflect it together on the way (Morin would say) to go, to get out of the sterile opposition between different social instances and the destructive madness in which global society stubbornly remains.

The generation/management of a society of differences and different identities (Castells, 1997) is the task of the social actors present in the Mediterranean context if they are still interested in remaining/fulfilling the role of competent global actors[9]

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[9] The sociologist Richard Sennett (2003) calls «character» the relational capacity of the personality; on a social scale, the character of Mediterranean men and women, if we remain convinced of the specificity of the Mediterranean context, is the ability to connect with the outside world, treating «with respect the perceived need in others when acting together»; it is the art of treating others with «social honour».

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