

Antonio Capaldo

The Wolves



and little wolves



story of an adoption

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Antonio Capaldo was born at Campo di Giove (AQ) on 14thJuly 1948. Authentic mountaineer, he spent his adolescence in close contact with nature in a mainly agricultural and pastoral farming environment at the foot of the Majella massif.

After high school he passed the admission course and joined the Air Force Academy, then he obtained the license as military pilot at USAF Air Force School in the US.

He served as an Air Force Pilot on C-130 aircraft at Pisa Air Base for 19 years. He had the opportunity to travel around the world and carry out several humanitarian missions. Then he was transferred to Latina Flight School where he worked as an instructor and flight examiner where he held the position of Group commander.

After a 2-year service for the Stato Maggiore Aeronautica (Italian Air Force) he went on leave.

A man of few words, the Commander Antonio Capaldo is currently a pilot of the Canadair Fire Fighting Aircraft for the Civil Defence, fighting battles against fires every year

INTRODUCTION

By Daniela Angioletti and Luciano Capaldo

Direct and vivid in its telling of the details of the adoption of a 7-year old boy from Romania after the collapse of Communism, the novel manages ultimately to deliver much more.

Through reminiscence of his happy childhood, his family ties, his values, his father figure, the environment he grew up in, Antonio Capaldo portraits the widening gap between that real world and the current virtual one:

"In the village everybody knew one another, as kids we had the feeling we were doing what we wanted, but, the truth is we were closely watched. Anyone, uncle, aunt, friend was of course entitled to reproach us, threatening us to inform our parents. It was a kind of extended family that seemed to work fine".

Difficulties inevitably connected with the adoption bring the writer to explore the darkest places of human nature: schizophrenia, mental disorders, drugs and homosexuality.

In the everlasting clash between *Law and Faith, Rules and Revealed Truth, Relativism and Absolutism*, the only Law we can hold on to is the Law of Nature, the natural order of things:

"If you get rid of the absolute (principles) you'll find out a world surprisingly made of balance, serenity and tolerance [...] you feel master of yourself, [...] fear of death vanishes and death reveals itself as an act of life".

If we rise above the myth of the *Revealed Truth*, we'll be able to finally set some *Shared Rules* which do not claim to have any divine link:

"[...] even if we are labelled as Christian and Muslim we belong to the same rich yet diverse

pack. [...] Everybody will enjoy – in their differences – the purpose of unity”.

Thus many current subjects such as politics, information, justice, war, death, euthanasia, religion, fundamentalism can be seen from a much more balanced, yet trenchant viewpoint.

Antonio Capaldo

WOLVES AND LITTLE WOLVES

story of an adoption

Dedicated to my son and my wife who still share this adventure with me.

Special thanks to my parents who taught me to appreciate, respect and love nature even in its most violent manifestations, and that the truth has never hurt anyone.

And finally, thanks to a Fate that enabled me to live my childhood in a wonderful location at the foot of the Majella range ... Campo di Giove.

I am also indebted to Daniela Angioletti for the translation of this book, and to my cousin Luciano Capaldo for proofreading it.

Their dedication and professionalism is here to be touchedand appreciated...!

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CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

December 1991, morning, the sky is clear with a freezing wind coming from the North, with my mind I am already at Campo di Giove on the ski slopes.

We are almost ready, from the tenth floor of the block of flats where we live, I can spot the Pontine Islands, Palmarola, Ponza and Zannone lying peacefully waiting for my summer raids.

Maria! The phone!

"Yes, I!"

I shut my eyes and find myself at *Punta della Guardia*, the water is crystal clear, I am over a landslide of huge boulders and down twenty meters below me a grouper, as straight as a candle, is watching me. My pulse is racing, I get ready and start plunging, I get closer and closer (I am almost within at spear gun range)...

"Tito! Tito!"

What?

I have got news: international social services in Rome told me that there is a child going through the process of adoption and he is Romanian. "

Adrenalin, induced by the grouper is rocketing up. At last after two years of tests and interviews with the assistants of the court of minors in order to be considered suitable, we got the news we have been waiting for. I was told his name is Marco. He is six and a half.

" Isn't he too big?"

Actually I agree with you.

Hurry. Let's go ... otherwise we'll be late, we will have time to think about it at Campo di Giove during the Christmas holidays.

After loading the luggage into the car we took the 148 to Rome.

"Where are you going? Aren't you heading for Venafro-Roccaraso?"

No I am not. We'll take the motorway, the *Guado della Forchetta* may be closed because of the snow falls, so we'll go to Rome, Avezzano, Sulmona, Campo di Giove.

I turned the radio on to unwind a bit, expecting the reaction....

"Don't tune to *Radio Radical* I'll get out of the car.....!"

No, no, God forbid just tune to what you want.

We were absorbed in our own thoughts until we got to the Ring Road.

The boy is six and a half! My friend Professor Menichella, an outstanding paediatrician, warned off adopting a child older than 2 or 3. I talked to him about my plan and we went to meet him in Rome at his place. When he saw me, as friendly as usual, he greeted me and said: "Tito, do you remember the trip in the Majella range? You gave me one of the most beautiful days of my life!

I was almost embarrassed in front of this big man with grey hair and goatee, as I was also aware he was a relative of the Governor of the Bank of Italy, the one who had his signature on the ten thousand lire note, the former big and red bank notes.

The professor was often at Campo di Giove. He got there in a Sixties van, he had 7-8 children, two were

adopted. He stayed at my uncle's guesthouse, where I met him.

Since I was an expert skier I taught his children how to ski and I often saw them in the guesthouse common room, where the professor put me and my cousins play chess.

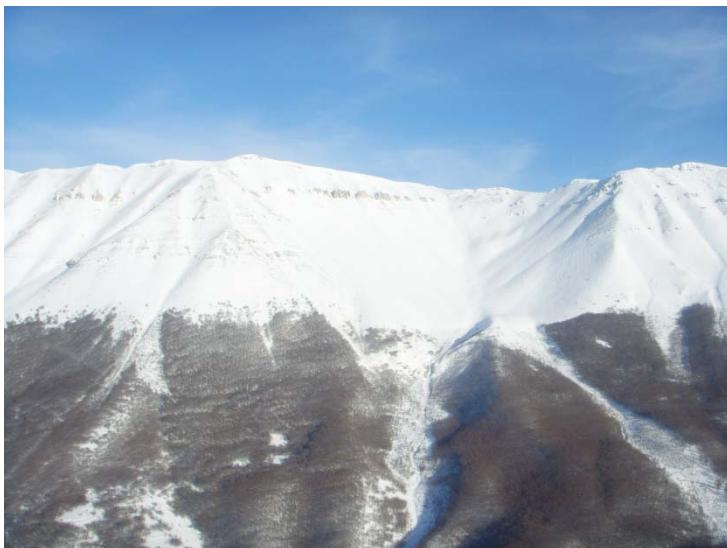
We haven't seen each other for some years since I joined the Air Force Academy. Once we met again at Campo di Giove and he told me he really wanted to go on ski trip on the Majella massif.

I hesitated at first, but then the next day in my car we took the country road which leads to the woods up to Macchia di Secina where the snow began.

With our skis on we set off along the path leading to the valley and then to the top. It was really hard, but behind me the professor, at his venerable age, kept the pace up. I do not know what he was looking for or what made him do that.

I walked, and I was on the outlook searching through the beeches and I thought to myself: I am reckless. If we come across a pack of wolves we are dead!

Finally we left the woods and we found ourselves facing Fondo Majella: it was a huge immaculate, clean amphitheatre without rows of seats, spread with shiny diamonds sparkling in the sun. Three hours later we were almost on the top. We sat down tired and after a hot drink the professor exclaimed: "I believe I'll never see such a view in my life again!"



I never suspected that a mountain I saw every day from the village could give me that emotion being on its top. I thought of that lovely Abruzzese song "*So' sajito a ju Gran Sasso so remastu ammutulitu ... mi pare ache passu passu se sajesse a j'infinitu.*" (I climbed up Gran Sasso and I found myself speechless, it seemed to me that step by step I could climb up endlessly) It took my breath away.

It was my wife who brought me back to reality.

"Do you know, Tito I was thinking of Professor Menichella"

As a matter of fact me too.

"He said that a 6-7 year-old child has already a formed character, and that, being in an orphanage he has certainly gone through heavy traumas and negative experiences, on top of everything he is in a Romanian orphanage with the current situation with Ceausescu."

Well the Professor also said that it would be difficult to deal with such a child and it would require a great deal of patience and strength of mind; but at the end of the day he is just a kid! I always think positive and I am an optimist.

"That may be true, I am happy but at the same I am a little bit afraid."

In fact, I soon forgot the wise Professor's rational analysis and I made up my mind.

In Avezzano we saw the snow, I could fully see the Majella range in the distance. I carelessly started humming a verse of the Grand Sassu song, that bit referring to the Majella massif: "how beautiful.....how beautiful it seems made for....love".

The reaction was a sudden and obvious one: "Make sure you won't miss your chance to sing and get drunk with that gang of desperate friends of yours. Bear in mind Tito that I am going back to Latina.

Do not worry, wife, do come as well....a couple of drinks will do you good. Then it is so cold that you will not even feel drunk!

Meanwhile, in my mind scenes followed one another just like in a movie, I see myself on the ski slopes with Marco while I am teaching him the snowplough position, after a little I find myself in our rubber dinghy, going at breakneck speed along the coast of Latina, and he just loves it, then we reach a sand bank I know of and I am putting on the wetsuit, grabbing the spear gun and we are diving in. it is still early, he is little but I am sure he will become a perfect scuba diver

We left the motorway and we went through Sulmona, in the main square there is the statue of Ovid, absorbed in deep thought, I used to see it every morning when I went to school. Perhaps it is a sign of destiny but he also lived in Romania, "Sulmo mihi patria est" is written on the pedestal, but I also remember the other famous statement "Cogito ergo sum" I think therefore I am. It seems like a meaningless sentence but if I turn it into a negative one "I do not think, therefore I am not" it becomes a very serious issue: an individual with flat electroencephalogram in irreversible coma, kept alive by a machine.... is he a person or is he not?

At that point the road got steep, I know every bend to the point that I could drive keeping my eyes shut. After the Pacentro junction we got to the valley. On the left mountain ridge I could still see that path my mother and all the other villagers used to take with their mules to reach Sulmona to buy something; different paces in the old days! I had the pleasant sensation I was going back to my den. A little further up there's the cottage of my shepherd friend and not far from that spot years ago my father captured a wild boar. Everything was becoming familiar. I did not say that to my wife but this is my territory, therefore she is safe. One more road curve and I see a signpost: Campo di Giove 1064 m..

My wife bothered by the winding road said as usual: "go on say it say it" ...

And I replied: and here it is, the charming little village!



Campo di Giove is perched on a hill with the entire Majella range lying in front of it. On the right there is a small plateau bounded on the West by rail road flanked by a beautiful pine wood. Unlike now when I was a boy the fields were all farmed. In July the wheat fields waved in the wind simulating the waves of the sea, which I first saw, as many of my peers did, when I was 16!

When I think of it I believe I was very lucky to spend the first years of my life there. We enjoyed virtually unlimited freedom. There were two or three cars, several mules, donkeys, sheep and cows. There were no hazards and we ran anywhere we liked satisfying our curiosity and inventiveness.

We had an updated map of all the nests of the pine wood and we knew all kinds of birds and animals present in the area. Skilled builders of huts and bows

we compensated for the lack of toys by manufacturing them with iron wire. Whoever had two ball bearings could consider himself extremely lucky because he could build a scooter with them. We were able to survive two or three days by eating herbs, berries and tubers we knew, and one of my favourite amusements was to steal cherries, plums and hazelnuts from the wide courtyard that belonged to the person who was once considered the "village squire". Everything was clean, even the dump yard because people did not waste much; you could perhaps find a shoe or an old umbrella, but there was mainly organic waste. In fact, there wasn't a proper landfill, there were small places just outside the village where people threw their waste. In the spring time I often went there because peach trees, plum trees and cherry trees sprang up.

I was fascinated by the fact that fruit trees and fruits I really liked could grow out of a dry seed.

In the village everybody knew one another, as kids we had the feeling we were doing what we wanted, but, the truth is we were closely watched. Anyone, uncle, aunt, friend was of course entitled to reproach us, threatening us to inform our parents. It was a kind of extended family that seemed to work fine.

When the weather was nice old people gathered in the square along a low wall to warm up in the sun. They talked with kids like me bestowing wisdom, but they spoke very little with one another. They just looked around and sometimes someone exclaimed: "Eh Yes! A second one replied" Who knows!" "And a third one replied back" Oh well!"

After many years I realised that those three lapidary expressions held the speech of a lifetime, a lethal synthesis of "certainty", "doubts" and "interaction". It

was like drawing conclusions, and judging by their faces, the result was, nevertheless, positive.

LOCAL POLITICS AND PARK

"Here we are at last! Here it is freezing cold and I am telling you right now that next year we are going to spend Christmas in Latina".

Yes Ma'm! As I was formerly in the army I knew extremely well that my wife was the captain. We could hardly find a spot to park the car in the Town Hall square, my parents' house is about 50 m. from the square, we got up the stairs, I opened the door and I was welcome by a nice warmth and a familiar smell of cooking.

"Ohhere you are at last" My father came to say hi and then went back to sit near the kitchen range.
"Are you coming from Sulmona?"

Yes I am.

"Well done because at Valico della Forchetta it is snowing and there may be avalanches. I cannot stand the snow any longer, I would not even put it in my pipe. "

I went to the kitchen and greeted my mother with a kiss on the cheek.

Mom what are we eating?

"I mad some ravioli, then sausages with gravy" and "*u turcineie*" Elio brought me some ricotta cheese, it is very good."

We have special ravioli here: homemade pasta filled with ricotta cheese and each raviolo weighs about 40 grams. "*U turcineie*" is a kind of sausage made of lamb liver wrapped in lamb casings, I just love it!. Whenever I go back to Campo di Giove my mother – if lamb meat is available - always prepares it, and my sister, with a touch of envy comments: "the lost son is back, today we have food!"

In the meantime my father was sitting at the table and he was watching the news, I could see he is shaking his head and the expression on his face changed: in fact they were reporting news about the Pope, and with an ironic grin on his face he talked to my mother: "eh your friend is on the every single day".

"How nasty of you, but what has that poor thing done to you....he is not even well"

"I know what he has done to me".

As an old comrade he could not stand priests, considering them able to bewitch bigots who voted the crusader shield¹ This matter started a long time ago. In 1942, when he was twenty, he joined the Carabinieri and at first he worked as a guard at the residential palace of King Peppetto Vittorio Emanuele III. Then he was sent as military police to the Greek-Albanian front

He wasn't particularly keen on talking about that experience, but sometimes with a few extra glasses of wine he let himself go. He must have seen atrocities and executions to the point that on 8th September, when the army withdrew astray and without a guide, he joined the other side: Tito's partisans. Once he told me that one evening, during a reprisal, a boy was hanged because he was the partisans' despatch rider, and on the road edge my father killed a dozen of Germans. I find it difficult to imagine that, a man as good and gentle as my father could – out of necessity or beliefs – do such a thing.

It is not like in a movie; when you are aware that the scene is real, things change, and at that point, I understood his reticence, his silence and his anger.

¹ Christian Democrats logo

At the end of the war he walked back to Italy on his own and returned to his unit, but it did not last long.

In that environment there was still the atmosphere of the Twenties, when in the village he was a young fascists' leader. His previous experience violently clashed with the new situation, especially for him who had worn the red star hat for over one year. He smiled when he heard that someone received the partisans' legion of merit for hiding a British soldier for one night. He who had been a true partisan did not have and could not receive any award, it reminded me of that movie scene in which Totò says: "let's count each other, we are seven but it is not that later....!"

Immediately after the end of the war the situation was dramatic. To avoid starvation people made ends meet by farming land and raising cattle. Boiling stones to make lime could also provide an extra income. Later the railway reconstruction works to connect Sulmona to Naples began. It was a chance for all the surrounding villages. The constructor exploited the manpower - in an indecent way even for those years – forcing desperate people to accept twelve-hour working shifts for little money. My father tried to organize a strike with a few friends, but people were blocked by the fear of losing even that little money they could make.

At that time it was easy to find weapons, therefore he together with a few close friends decided to compel people to strike. Hiding in the woods they shot on the railway tracks, forcing the workers to leave the site. It was not very democratic, but within a few weeks, things slightly changed.

We finished eating and I was looking forward to going out, my father – after all that chatting – dozed off, I, gazing at my wife, put the jacket on and left. The main square was not far and going down there I walked by a man's house, he passed away but I still remember him well because he used to wear plus fours trousers and impressed me with a sentence "e uaiò sempre a fatià....pure ...a cacà ce vò la forza," as say, dear boy we must always work hard, even to defecate... you need strength.

In the square there were a few people, certainly everybody was at the bar, I looked through the window and in fact many of my friends were there. As soon as I stepped in the owner greeted me, "Hello Wreck (they teased me because I was a pilot) at last you show up here" Handshakes in rapid succession, and after that I found myself with a glass of beer in my hand.

During the holidays there was a bit of a problem there, anyone you met offered you a drink and it was hard to say no. In the lounge bar they are all set. "Tito, Tito! Come over here, we need a forth player for a Tressette²".

I was sitting in front of one of my cousins who gave me an ambiguous smile and said: "I need to talk to you later."

What about?

"After the game we let's go for a walk."

I almost lost all cards games and I was heavily reproached, but I made up for it when I played Passatella³.

² Card game

³ Card game

As we left the bar outside it began to snow, the trees and the streets were all lit, only Santa Claus on his sleigh was missing. We were walking towards San Rocco square.

Well, what do you have to say?

"In April the Council elections are taking place you have to run for mayor for the right-centre winged party."

But are you crazy? I live in Latina! Should I take a leave from work? On which ground? With a mayor's salary of 800,000 lire⁴ per month?

Well this is odd, in Italy there are about 8,000 municipalities, most of them are small and with limited resources, the Government spends billions for unnecessary institutions, there is no way they pass a bill to raise mayors' salary. Then they complain if mayors do business or make others do business!

"No you should not take a leave, but you can commit yourself 2 or 3 days a week."

Anyway you know how I feel right wing, left wing D.C., MSI, P.C., P.S.I, with all the other versions there are about twenty, what have they go to do with the Council administration?

"Eh They have something to do with it because then at provincial and regional level there's nobody to rely on".

You are wrong, look at the current situation if the Left party runs the Council, there is the centre-right party at the Province and the centre-wing party at the Region, they all fight with each other. It is a system that sucks, tailored made to create problems rather than solving them.

⁴ 400 euro

I already picture the scene: as mayor I have to solve a problem,— as I am slow – it takes me a month to prepare the papers concerning this matter, but at the Province they bounce it back because I am a Leftist. The papers get back, I prepare them again, the Province gives the green light, but at the Region they reject it because the right-centre party is in charge. Roughly I have to wait the astral combination in which the council, province and region are all right-winged or left-winged. Local municipalities have to administer applying existing rules and regulations which are approved by the parties in Parliament. Right, left, centre ...

We have to deal with the ski basin and the park issues! Instead of sorting out the problems we have with these environment extreme conservatives we are at dagger drawn with comrades, crusader shield and others, and meanwhile the village goes to rack and ruin.

We have given 94% of the Council territory to the Majella park, to obtain what? Only kicks in the faceand some seats in the Park Administration Board. They complain that young people leave the village, that the village is being depopulated and aging but they cannot explain why. It almost seems an inevitable, natural process. Not long ago this village was teeming with life, people could make a living out of farming land, raising sheep, goats and cows, sometimes it was tough, but people were here because there was work to do.

It is true, now times have changed! The village economy is no longer based on agriculture and livestock, but mainly on tourism, and it is here where the problems begin.

They claim to develop tourism without adequate infrastructures, with a policy of total immobility imposed by the park managers who seized everything: the village, agricultural land, stables and even the ski basin.

If by chance I had in mind to come back here to work as a farmer or raise cows as I did when I was a child I couldn't have the opportunity to fence my land, to sow what I consider more appropriate, I am talking about my piece of land the one my father, grandparents and great-grandparents have had and made a living out of, for centuries.

I couldn't build a stable.....at Campo di Giove only three shepherds are left, we should build a monument for them, facilitate them in all possible ways but instead my friend Falaschino is not allowed to build a stable and he is forced to leave the sheep in inadequate and ugly structures with enormous difficulties during the winter.

Yet I cannot fully grasp which natural disasters could be caused by the construction of a farm.

To add insult to injury these gentlemen tell us to encourage and promote local production; their common sense is truly impressive: who should be able to produce cheese, mozzarella, lambs – which are really special around here – if whoever makes at attempt is hampered in any way?

They do not care about our problems, they are just bureaucrats whose only purpose is to keep the "*park caravan*". Their ability to balance environment conservation needs and local development is exceptional.

In fact, after they realized that the village future lies in tourism, they turned the ski basin in a highly

protected area of the park; nothing can be touched.....but the ski lift is fifty years old!

Who cares, tourists go to Campo di Giove not to ski but to admire the local colubro snake. Its protection prevented the construction of a bike lane, because it could harm the little snake habitat..

To get an idea of the analysis skills and knowledge of the territory shown by these gentlemen it is necessary to point out the following: colubro snakes' habitat, among others, is made of stone heaps scattered here and there, but just hark....breaking up these stone piles could threaten the survival of the little snake in question! Therefore no more bike lanes, even if they wanted them. I have to assume that if they mull over these kind of matters, they have very little to do and they do not know how to keep themselves busy, that is why we have been waiting for the infamous park plan for five years

After years of struggle and bureaucratic quibbles we manage to receive the project approval related to the modernisation of facilities. The park director didn't notice that the project included the construction of a shelter at high altitudes and then here we start all over again with appeals to the Regional Administrative Court.

The Right or the Left have nothing to do with it, the only sensible thing we can do is to send them home, starting by removing them from the most beautiful building they occupy in the village for three and a half million lire a month.

They don't realise it but they are damaging us. The situation is the following: you cannot be a shepherd or a farmer or invest in tourism. You are only allowed to stay still like a statue . In other words you are the rare "*homo majellae*"perhaps you did not notice but you are considered local fauna.

At this point they should be consistent as park authority and they should give an income support to each family for the survival of the species, and we would be happy with that!

My dear we need civic lists, in the true meaning of the word civic, with capable people of any political colour, but if it depended on me I would ban parties from administrative elections so we would end the old story that occurs when one party or another calls for government resignation, only because it obtained 0.5% more in the local elections.

"Yeah but if these people do not see the hammer and sickle or the crusader shield⁵ they do not want to vote!"

And then you see they do not really care of managing politics and sort out problems. The only priority they have is to reconfirm the membership of their **pack** or flock: the DC pack, the PCI pack, the PSI⁶ pack.....

But have you heard them! I have been a Communist for 40 years, I have been a Christian Democrat since 325 a.C. Well done moron! "How can it be? Since 325 a.C.?

Well it can be as the first Christian Democrat was Constantine. In 325 a.C. the Nicaea Ecumenical Council took place, and before that Constantine was struck by the appearance of the cross. To tell you the truth Constantine had not much enthusiasm for the Christians, because he believed in the Sun God, his choice was triggered by political convenience.

He accepted to be crowned Emperor with the back up of the Church, becoming the Christians' sponsor. He

⁵ Chistian Democrats logo

⁶ DC: Christian Democrats, PCI: Italian Communists, PSI
Italian Socialists

could not imagine to put Italy into troubles for eighteen centuries.

Mr Andreotti must certainly be Constantine's distant relative, as he was also struck by the vision of the cross "

"In hoc signo vinces" (in this sign you shall have victory) , and ... what did he do? He immediately put the cross on the crusader shield

THE IRREGULARS OF ITALIAN POLITICS

Italians have such a low opinion of themselves that identify themselves with political parties. To change party means to deny themselves, leave their **pack**; what a nonsense! In our Constitution political parties are only quoted once, they are private associations, just like bowling associations and we turned them into temples.

These cheating bureaucrats know it well, they sleep peacefully, they receive their lifetime annuity, but I can guarantee you that if they knew that Italians are ready and swift in changing vote that would scare their pants off.

"You are right, but here things work this way: you can present the best programme in the world but you will not get a single vote from the two political blocks; then there are hundreds of undecided individuals left that you have to mark closely".

No, no I do not think this is the case, take into account that they are aware that I am a Radical Party supporter and you know what 97% of Italians think of the Radical Party, and of Mr Pannella....they are all faggots, drug addicts and whores.

"This is a bit of an exaggeration my dear cousin, but actually... Cicciolina⁷ in Parliament!"

Is it funny? Well have a laugh then... I'll explain it to you....why Cicciolina ended up there.

Well Cicciolina is a porn star, she is a member of the Radical Party and she asked to run for a constituency in Rome. The Radical Party by-laws does not discriminate anyone; you can either be a former mafia leader like Andraus or a porn star. The party gives neither moral judgement nor licence to be a

⁷ Porn star

democratic, sensible person. The Radical Party does not have arbitrators.

"Who are the Arbitrators?

The Arbitrator is a very serious person, repository of morality, he is always extremely upset because he has to supervise the members' professional conduct, during congress he is always on stage, he never laughs and you have to be careful about what you say because you could be expelled from the party. As he never lets himself go at night he secretly goes kerb-crawling.

Going back to the party by-laws in the Radical Party congress you vote a motion you want to put forward giving 5 or 10 points to it. They refer to little things such as divorce, abortion, judges' civil liability, the right to vote for eighteen year old people, the single-candidate system, political parties public financing and so on things that do not regard or affect the Italians' life. If you agree to pursue those objectives, you become a party member for one year and not to life as you do with the Trade Union and fight your own battles.

These radical idiots have another flaw, they say that you have to finance politics, in fact, poor jerks they have returned public money to the people in the street. The problem of the people you vote instead is whether they have to be between the Centre or the Centre-Left or between the Centre or the Centre-left middle. Eventually nobody knows what they do there.

Cicciolina as member of the Radical Party was inserted in a list in Rome at no. 27 or 28 I do not remember

It didn't seem real to that smart guy called Eugenio Scalfari, director of "La Repubblica": it was the right occasion to defame the Radicals and he didn't miss

the chance to write lots of articles about Cicciolina. What happened? The standard careless Roman - like you or I, doesn't understand much about politics because they do not want us to understand – voted for Cicciolina, you know that old saying... the power of sex overcomes all other.

She got more votes than the first on the list and she was elected.

Scalfari, being a very stern man, with high moral values and a vague resemblance to a slimmer version of Marx, didn't obviously want Cicciolina in Parliament, but in fact he sent her there. Ironic isn't it.....!.

However, if you want to know who will win the elections, to line up with the winners, just bear in mind who supports Scalfari and do the opposite and you'll surely win. I don't know he must bring bad luck!

These Radicals are also stubborn, when they set rules they surprisingly comply to them, they perceive the party as a tool to sort out problems rather than a temple.

"Yes but they are not many and a vote given to them is a wasted vote."

Then I cannot understand how they managed with only 3% of votes to carry out the only reforms approved in Italy... You can be sure that your vote representing 3,00001% can change things.

Alternatively – instead of supporting substantial proposals you can carry on voting the large political groups i.e. the Right the Left, the Centre, the Independent Leftist and Rightist... and at the end of the day they are the ones who depend on everybody. To do what? Nobody knows.

Have you noticed how they piled up one on top of the other for the political parties public funding, they are

really a bundle as Pannella says "a bundle of parties leading to the unbundling of the system."

"But how can he come up with these definitions?"

He's known them for forty years, he pictures them just like a Van Gogh painting, and probably in forty years he will be defined as the true Van Gogh of the Italian politics.

"It's getting late and it is also cold, let's go back to the bar, can you hear they are all singing?they are all ready! I'd better clear my throat, I am a bass and they need me "la Muntanara" song is waiting for me and – as a matter of fact my wife's sermon as well.

BISHOPS, MULLAH, RABBI AND SORCERERS

Holidays are over and a bit melancholic we are on the way back to Latina. After wild binge my cholesterol level must have rocketed up; next month I need to do my six-month check up and if I don't go on a diet the Institute of legal medicine people will not allow me to fly and there's nothing worse for a pilot than to be 100% stuck on earth.

Anyway it was worth it. I went through the full mountain songs repertoire. At the village during holidays there is no need for an auditorium, you just need to go to a bar or to someone's basement. There you can see the wildest comrade singing along with the most inveterate Christian democrat only bound by the fact that both served as Alpine Corps in the army. I could not help but thinking of organising mixed choirs of Israelis and Palestinians, perhaps they would realise they belong to the same **pack**: the human species.

Well, I don't think it would work out: they are too absorbed by Yahweh and Allah respectively. Probably they ignore it is just the same thing, namely the need to justify our existence to a higher Divine Being. If this is the reason they are in good company with many others: the Olympus, Jupiter, the Parmenidean One, the Pythagoras number, the Aristotle Prime Mover etc

As far as I know nobody has scientifically proved their existence. If it is about a trivial and down-to-earth issue, namely the division of some land, those people are really silly not to reach an agreement. What a slaughter, what an insult to life is to see twenty year-old kids blow themselves up killing other

kids, other people in the name of we hardly know who. Influenced and enslaved by the so called spiritual leaders who elected themselves God's representatives on earth. How dare they? They do create problems to Islam, they benefit from privileges, they are served and considered sacred people, shown in procession like icons to worship. But if you scratch under the surface of things you find out there are always the same things lying underneath: money and power. They care very little about spiritual matters. They are theoreticians of the government of God on earth, theocrats whose sole purpose is to preserved the privileges acquired selling them off as God laws. The Western world is a real threat not to Islam but to the men-dominated world which holds women and not only women in slavery conditions. I think that the word Islam means "resignation, submissiveness".

A submissive person is supposed to be very tolerant and in fact the vast majority of Islamic people are tolerant, and in fact you just have to observe women's condition and behaviour. The problem is that some spiritual leaders of that world have pushed this concept to the extreme, convincing few groups of people to bend to total resignation and sacrifice their own life. The spiritual leaders' true enemy is information, internet, as for the first time they perceive that it will be impossible to keep their own people ignorant and segregated.

America and the Western world are only an excuse and it is just a matter of time. The Muslim people will find the ancient sense of tolerance again. They will conquer freedom and the right to govern independently of religions and other orientations, just like the first Greek philosophers in regards to the Olympus.

Out of all the government types developed by man the Theocratic one is the worst as it combines highest discrimination among human beings with arrogance of claiming to do things in God's name.

"Bishops, mullahs, rabbis, sorcerers" they are not righteous if they consider themselves God's representatives governing earthly matters. They merely have to give us a hand to interpret sacred writings leaving the government power to ordinary people.

As a mirror image on the other hand there is the people elected by God: Israel. I understand their vicissitudes, the horrendous crimes they have suffered but they should also meditate on some issues.

God – who is immensely righteous, and immensely fair - handed over the stone tablets to Moses. Did He do that because the Jews were the chosen people? If this story is true, I believe that God did not chose anyone, He simply gave His laws to men.

Apart from Mount Sinai setting, I believe that the Jewish people considers itself as "the chosen one" for some historical circumstances.

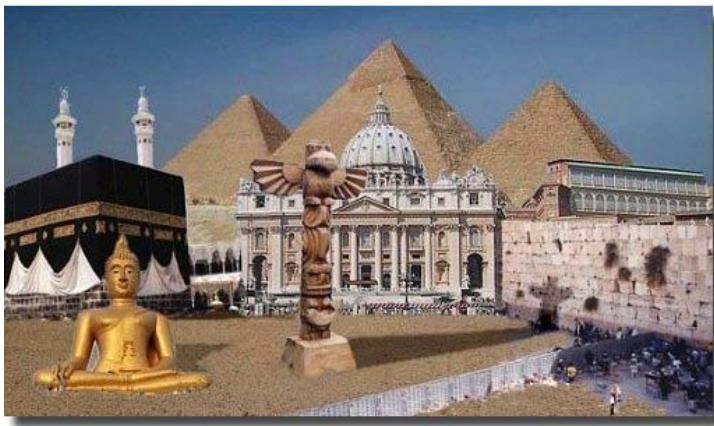
The pride for considering themselves the chosen people is the primary cause of their troubles. I have the feeling that they deliberately searched for solitude and isolation somehow as a consequence of being persecuted. They gathered in a **pack** and they are also characterised by their outward appearance. The most orthodox ones wear black garments with long beards and hair or braids, others wear a hat, a *kippah* to remind everyone that they are Jews, the chosen people. They almost wear military uniform and before being men or ordinary people they are Jews.

Frankly this aspect, this sort of pride sin makes them unpleasant and it comes to no surprise that in history someone reminded them – with violent and ruthless means that they are men and women just like any other. Moreover someone pushed things even further grossly stating that the chosen and pure race was the Aryan people.

When you claim to govern in the name of God that's where the troubles begin. Any law which is sold off as being Divine consequently rules out all the others. The issue is that there are Abraham, Christ, Mohammed, Buddha, Manitou etc.

Who is the one embodying the supreme divine law? We will never find out because if we did we would get so close to God as to become God ourselves. It is wise that God is left in the background and that nobody dares to elect himself as his representative on earth.

People erected wonderful monuments to their God: the Vatican, Mecca, the Temple of Solomon, the Mosques, the Pyramids are all sacred places and in some cases they are the subject of controversy as the city of Jerusalem



"This is my God's wall! No, it belongs to my God and therefore I am the only one who can pray here.

As a sign of submissiveness some of them move their heads back and forth when they read the sacred writings, others whip themselves in procession to mortify their flesh.

My favourite prayer is the Indian prayer for Manitou; they dance with their back straight and the prairie is their temple. I doubt that God wants us as slaves, He wants us to be thankful to Him

When I go to St. Peter's I am amazed by the majesty of that place, I feel very tiny and everything there reminds me that if I am not obedient to God Laws I will be doomed.

But is the worship place so important place? Well ...

....

My Temple is on the shore in Latina: the sun is setting and I am sitting on sand dunes on the Sabaudia coast, a light breeze is blowing and the sea is as smooth as oil. I perceive its apparent motion, it is disclosed to me filtered through the atmosphere as

to remind me that I am not allowed to see it fully in its magnificence.

A mullet is splashing out of the water, it must be chased by an amberjack or a bluefish; I am waiting a bit concerned, I cannot spot the bluefish reaching the surface again, I like to think that it could make it, but who knows?

Around me there are many cyclamens, a solitary one is between my legs, I am looking at him and I realise it is greater than St. Peter's, the Mecca, and the Temple of Solomon altogether.

Maybe I'm praying, the pleasant breeze makes me realise that He is a friend and that the only law that I am allowed to know is that the 'Natural Order of things."

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a direct consequence of this life conception and of the earthly matter Government which is not legitimized by law but by God himself through the "Koran" on the one hand and the "Torah" on the other.

In this respect some Muslims crossed the line conceiving the "Party of God," as if God could be a party, no one could insult him more!

On the other hand a democracy strongly influenced by religion exists, it is a fundamentalist one in regards to race and it loves to show signs of distinction to remind it to everybody

In this conflict the true liable people are the Mullah and Ulema on one hand and Rabbis on the other. They can be identified and recognized through the image of the Western Wall.

The third party plays the auditor in Rome; a millennium ago it was in full action, with the same logic there in those places. Today it merely issues

expected appeals about peace and brotherhood among peoples (not among the Christian God, Allah and Yahweh because for the auditor in Rome the only God is the Christian one) aware or not to be the indirect responsible party for these conflicts.

At present this war is one of the most loathsome things existing on earth, because it does not even have the dignity of a standard "war". In the past two armies faced one another. You looked at your enemy in the eyes then there was the looting and pillaging..... but those were another matter.

Today wars are asymmetrical as they say, people deliberately hide in their homes and schools, while children and civilians are used as a shield. Missiles are launched at random and then the counter part reaction is expected to acknowledge the massacre of children.

The reporters' ingenuity in these theatres of war is amazing, full page headlines report: Massacre of 70 children! But how bad are these people who enjoy killing innocents!

Neither a word, nor a comment about terrorists used by the counterpart as a shield.

It seems that they do not realise they are in a war zone.

If I am a father with 10 children, my country is at war with anybody and I consent to regular forces or terrorists to position a flak over my house I am evidently aware I can become a potential target and I cannot surely complain or be a moralist if the counter part shoots me, my wife of my 10 children, because deliberately or cowardly I have decided to sacrifice them. This is the war logic, whether you like it or not, it has always existed and it will exist in the future, perhaps under different forms.

PULCHER EST QUOD VISUM PLACET

My thoughts kept roaming, it must have been the mountain clean air I was not used anymore. I did not talk for quite a while, then my wife asks me a question no husband would like to answer: "what are you thinking of?" At first I wanted to say: a beautiful girl, I couldn't possibly reply Aristotle's Prime Mover, she might have said: "do you know what you and your Prime Mover should do?"

I was thinking we have to contact Rome Social Services to prepare the adoption papers as soon as possible.

"Now that I think of it my friend Angela has a lawyer brother and if I am not mistaken he previously handled an adoption case, right there in Romania".

Wife, you're a genius, tomorrow we can go to his office so we can have clear ideas on what to expect.

The lawyer was a nice guy and he often took care of non EU citizens issues pro bono.

We got into his office and he kindly invited us to take a chair.

"Well you would like to adopt a child in Romania wouldn't you?

We are trying but we have only bumped into difficulties so far. "I know, it is quite a long procedure and we still have half the work to do. The first thing to do is have all the documentation translated into Romanian and then have it officially signed it at the Embassy. When everything is ready I would suggest you to go directly to Romania and contact a local lawyer to handle your case"

How much will the whole thing cost?

"Do not worry, the cost of living there is 1/10th of the Italian one. And as far as I am concerned next summer I need to go there to sort out some issues and I am glad to accompany you.

Thank you we are very grateful but we will take care of travel expenses and your stay there, it is the least we can do.

"All right we will meet again when the documentation is ready so we can set a departure date."

The social worker called us for a meeting at the International Service Office in Vittorio Veneto Street. After some introductory information she gave us the data we needed.

"Marco is six and a half years old, he has been in the orphanage since he was a few months old, he has a mother but he has never met his father."

Do you have some pictures of him?

"No, we don't, we only have the essential data. At present contacts are very limited, Ceausescu was killed a short time ago and offices are being reorganised. The orphanage is Bretea Streioulu, a little village within Deva municipality, in Transylvania."

Well that means that we'll pay a visit to Dracula!

"Please excuse him, he is always in the mood to joke." It is not easy to get there, as it is about 500 km from Bucharest, but it could be the right chance to visit some interesting places in Romania. If it is ok with you I am going to contact the Court of Minors in Bucharest to arrange a first visit in July.

Excellent! A lawyer with previous experience in adoption in Romania will come with us.

"Very well, then you already know everything regarding the papers."

We look forward to the departure date.

We went down the stairs and walk down in Veneto Street.

"Are we getting a cup of coffee?" Ok a cup of coffee in the legendary Veneto Street, but it does not look like the famous artists and actors' meeting place it was in the Sixties.

"It is true, it also seems a little 'shabby'.

However not even a picture, I wonder how Marco looks like

"You always said that we did not do it because we needed a child, but because we wanted to help someone, especially now that we can afford it economically, and... you worry about his look.

Well I am curious if he was a cute boy, I would be happier, well I think that this 'blind date' is a bit risky, but as you know danger is my job.

"I heard other couples say that they were not interested in the child's appearance, but I am sure that deep down they were lying. I would be happy if he had good manners, then if he is good looking it is so much better".

I was wondering what beauty is....; maybe it is the feeling I had when I first saw you. You were dressed in red, tight trousers revealing breathtaking curves...you were as my romagnolo colleague says a gorgeous gal.

"If it is a compliment I'll take it, thank you, if it is not... and what do you mean by *you were*?.....Look who's talking! Have you looked at yourself in the mirror? When I first met you I said to my girl friend: he is not a real cutie but he has a nice body...it's a pity otherwise it would have been nice..."

When you really like someone you tend to disguise your feelings, yours were just words my dear. In fact, two days later you called me; come on tell me the

truth, if you think back did you capture my messages, the instinctive ones left unsaid? I am referring to the chemical ones linked to smell, because they are not there anymore, but you certainly perceived my desire to be with you.

"You are so formal, go on confess you just couldn't wait to I must admit there are few things that women like: to be desired with grace and not brutally. Despite everything.... I liked you, and to me beauty is in the eye of the beholder".

To me it is not enough, it equals to say that beauty is beauty. I don't remember when I heard this definition of beauty "*pulcher est quod visum placet*" where visum is cognitum, so "beautiful is what we like, once we get to know it."

"Listen to the Abruzzi mountaineer... Latin quotes!" Unlike you I studied Latin because it was mandatory when I attended middle school.

"Thus everything is beautiful as long as you profoundly know it, isn't it?"

It would seem so, something with harmonic forms is beautiful on the outside, but it becomes extremely beautiful if you get to know it. Otherwise you would not explain why gorgeous women date ugly looking men and vice versa.

"Yes my dear but this is just theory, in fact the first thing you are attracted to is someone's looking and it is often what keeps two people together. In twenty years' time when you are all aches and pains who will stand you? You are already a pain now, let alone in fifty or sixty years".

The same thing applies to you as well. Anyway I believe things change at that age. Passion and love give way to a feeling of deep friendship.

"Do you mean that at that age love isn't there any more and we can only be friends? Are you preparing

the ground to say.....we are friends, then everyone can do what they want".

No it is not what I mean! Love and passion are stuff for people in their twenties. Love in a young couple is a strong almost violent feeling, often implying the idea of possession, it is exclusive and it does not allow intruders. It is also a very fragile feeling, it makes feel joy and sorrow. Then years go by and passion fades away giving way to thinking and knowledge, thus love slowly turns into a profound feeling of friendship. Well nature is amazing. Body deteriorates over time but mind strengthens. Balance must always be there, whoever does not bend to Nature's will goes off balance along the path.

"Funny, then in twenty years' time I cannot have my breast done?"

Well I would not say that.... A little improvement that implies minor changes is all right, but as far as I am concerned nothing extraneous, such as silicon. I would have the feeling of touching an alien.

"Women find it difficult to accept the ageing process, if I could I would have plastic surgery makeover, can you imagine being 60 with a 30 year-old body?"

I wouldn't mind that to be honest, but you could have had some identity problems. A 30 year-old body with a 60 year-old mind.....it would not work, and then it would be only a temporary solution, then when the collapse comes it will be dramatic.

"What a nonsense, are you afraid I'll run away with a 30 year-old handsome man and leave you alone?"

No I am not! How come? Nature gradually sets you free from body slavery and you would be so ungrateful as to wish to rejuvenate, look for an improbable love during a season you no longer belong to? A young couple love is functional to reproduction and conservation of the species, love is

an irrational and instinctive feeling, why look for that kind of love again if you are not able to accomplish that task?

"Are you saying that as you get older you are not able to love?"

Well no I am not saying that, in my opinion you love even more. You make love to your partner drawn by a deep feeling of friendship where every loving gesture, every caress has a meaning, there is no compulsion, no idea of possession, but gratitude, you share understanding with your partner and this feeling of having so much in common is also sealed by a physical unity.

"You've almost persuaded me, so from now on I'll call you friend. By the way... friend... I am starving, will you please come down to earth, so we can find a restaurant?"

I would eat a plate of pasta, or actually two plates as I like it so much. Sometimes I think I would give anything for a plate of spaghetti.

"Well my dear, I already knew that"

INFORMATION AND TELEVISION

It's July and everything is ready for our departure.

"Shall we take the doggie with us?" Perhaps it is a good idea, he could help with the first contact, kids like pets.

"Dear Max we are in your hands...I mean paws"

Max is a Yorkshire dog who basically lives in symbiosis with my wife, he is stuck like glue to her, constantly with her, he is well trained, perhaps he surrendered to my wife's strict discipline and to this respect she is more strict than a German; the doggie patiently puts up with her, or I may say we both do that.

At Fiumicino airport we boarded a Yliuscin aircraft, it does not look very nice, both the lawyer and my wife are a bit worried.

"Will it make it to Bucharest?"

Do not worry, it will, don't let the aircraft appearance trick you, here in Italy aircrafts have to meet specific requirements in order to operate, they are checked by a specific commission.

To tell you the truth, given the situation in Romania, I also had doubts.

Two hours later we landed at Bucharest airport and after exhausting checks, which could have been faster offering a few dollars, we finally got out.

The lawyer had two friends waiting for us: a girl and a guy.

"Hello Dana how are you? Fine, thank you." I'd like you to meet my friends Antonio and Maria."

Dana was a very pretty girl and I was surprised as she spoke Italian very well, we got into the car and headed for central Bucharest.

Ah by the way I am Antonio, Tito is my nickname.

At the airport I had the feeling of being watched, I perceived a sort of suspicious atmosphere through their thorough checks, through the agents' glances, probably a legacy of Ceausescu's former communist regime.

"This is the main square, a few months ago here people were shooting in full revolution, the hotel is in front of us, it is not a four star hotel, but it is a good place."

As soon as we got out of the car we were surrounded by a gang of kids, all stretching out their hands.

"Italian"? 10 Lèi 10 Lèi"

They spot us everywhere!

Dana had to sort things out. I do not know what she said to them in Romanian but they stopped asking.

"They are mostly Rohm children, there are also kids who ran away from home or have been abandoned. Many of them are homeless and to keep themselves warm in winter they shelter in Bucharest sewers".

Dana thank you so much, we'll see you tomorrow to hand over the documents to the Court of Minors.

What shall we do lawyer?

"I would suggest to rest a little, then we can meet for dinner at the hotel."

I expected ten days without spaghetti and I realized that as soon as we sat down at the restaurant.

What is *ciòrba*?

"It is a very good soup."

Then I'll have *ciòrba* and steak so at least I know I'll eat the meat.

"Lawyer, my husband is a squeamish and on top of everything he is lost without pasta."

Well I also want to taste some goulash.

It is the first time that I visit an East European country, I mean a Communist country, and it seems things are not easy herebut you are Communist?

"No I am not, when I was a lad I used to like that party. You know, in the 70s I had the feeling that they were those who wanted equality, social justice and I was led by a feeling of revenge against the people with power than by a belief. Businessmen were not employers but they were depicted as criminals, masters in the worst sense of the term, exploiting the working class. And to a young idealist what is more appealing than the idea of fighting against the bad guys? So I joined the **pack**, followed the trend, the wealthier my friends were, the more *comrades* they became. Then there was the positive side, the political vote at school. We needed to be equal at all costs even in our heads. Collective farms multiplied because property was defined as a theft." I have to admit that intentions were good but if the outcome is what we see now here in Bucharest, there is a glitch in the system.

Talking about the famous slogan "property is theft" it seems it belonged to Proudhon French philosopher and sociologist, and not to Marx. They hated one another, because Proudhon had dismantled the "Capital" even before Marx completed it. I understand that Marx could not bear Proudhon, listen to what the latter said about Communism, I wrote it down on a piece of paper because it is terribly harsh. As far as man is concerned:

"Communism originated from the idea that man is a fundamentally bad being, homo homini lupus, he does not have any right to exercise or any duty to fulfil toward his fellows, only society makes him and dignifies him and turns him into a moral being. This

is nothing more than human failure made it as a principle, it is repugnant to the definition of the human being and it implies a contradiction".

As far as society is concerned:

"In Communism society, state is outside and above the individual. Hence, the former is the only one which can undertake an action. Nobody else has liberty of action. The power is centred on an anonymous autocratic, unquestionable authority whose benevolent or vengeful providence distributes punishments and rewards from above. It is not a society, it is a **pack** led by a hierarch who – by virtue of law – owns right, freedom, human dignity. My goodness what a nonsense! Marx was right to be upset.

Furthermore history proves that the progress of justice is proportional to the development of liberty. It is the opposite of what happens to Communism, religion and to every formal organisation which tends to absorb personality into society or state.

What is certain is that people have aversion to forms of association used and needed by animals, such as pure communism. Man, free being *par excellence*, cannot accept society unless he can enjoy a particular condition in. This particular condition is different from sociability and superior to it: it is defined as Justice."

"In fact, Communism is also driven by a sense of equality and social justice, but those conditions are so far-fetched and grossly established that it seems to me they are exclusively limited to wealth division and distribution of goods".

This low level form of justice made sense at the beginning of the century, but now it has certainly

fulfilled its task. I feel like laughing when I hear Mr Cossutta saying he is a communist.

Either he does not know what Communism is, or he is just fooling himself. To me he looks a right-wing social democrat

"Well, there is also Mr Bertinotti that aims to *re-communism*. I did not understand whether Lenin's Communism or another social organization system.

If that were the case he should invent a new word, as Communism is a very specific thing, otherwise nobody understands anything. "

Dear lawyer, this is another Italian flaw, we like – as I say – fishing in muddy waters, we like unclear things, approximation. By nature we are very tolerant even when we shouldn't be so.

In regards to language for example: one can present himself at the election as Communist Party without having any feature of real communism and the odd thing is that he gets a lot of votes.

A Greek philosopher of which I cannot recall the name, did not speak with people because he was convinced that it was impossible to communicate with words. I am not saying to reach those extremes, but at least if I say "table", I hope that whoever is listening to me understands that I'm talking of a flat top supported by one or more legs. Every word holds a precise meaning otherwise it is a total chaos.

"I never thought about this aspect."

In fact it does not take much to deceive people: an adjective placed in the right position and bingo.... Take for example the CD acronym, which stands for Christian Democracy, where I come from we use Christian referred to a person, meaning poor Christian, poor thing.

The message my mother gets is that CD is only Andreotti's Christian Democracy, the others instead are beastly democracies.

It is odd but all the parties which name themselves with the term democracy are often the ones that hardly put it in practice. I believe it is peacefully accepted that we have chosen the democratic system with all that it implies referring to political and economic liberty. I think that Democracy is neither Left nor Right nor Centre, Christian, Muslim, beastly. It is simply a form of government choice for our society.

Parties - as the term itself implies, mean parts only playing a role within the Democratic system. The sheer fact that they name themselves with the term Christian Democrats or Left Democrats necessarily implies that they deny the Democratic system.

To avoid any misinterpretation – for example to confuse Christian Democracy or others for the Democratic System - it would be advisable to remove the term Democracy from party acronyms.

"Lawyer please do not give him encourage him to carry on, otherwise we'll still be here at midnight and tomorrow we have to get up early to go to Court".

"I must say that it was a pleasant evening. When we are stuck in a set routine we never deal with these subjects. Both politician and media, except for a few cases, do everything to draw away people's attention from politics. The greatest majority does not care, they have the impression that all politicians are all the same, that all is based on give and take of personal favours".

And then we are all fooled and we don't even realise it. They managed to persuade us that our vote is worthless, it does not matter who you vote, nothing

changes. This is the result of the proportional electoral law, basically these savants say: you little thing you cannot grasp anything about politics, just vote for my little *parish* and I'll take care of the rest. After the elections occur – in which everybody obviously won – consultations begin, and they go on for months. Regardless what you told them to do they negotiate with others and find alliances to decide what to do and how. A year later they argue, just like children throwing tantrums and they start all over again.

The funny things is that in forty years they oiled the political machine so well, that through the type of information we receive, it is impossible to understand whose fault it is.

"Although there is a wide choice of newspapers to choose from no-one clearly and simply explains how things are; then they complain that people do not buy and read newspapers"

Wife, if you think that you can be informed by reading newspapers, you are really naïve, they often tell the opposite of what happened. I had the chance to verify it by listening to Radical Radio Live from the House of Parliament, where you can listen to all the sides of the story, and I can assure that it is better than going to the theatre. There is no Santoro calling Ruotolo? Ruotolo? just to interrupt a politician as soon as he tries to hold a sensible speech. So the best you can do is to begin a sentence uttering *subject, verb* but you are not allowed to mumble the *object*. If Santoro does not like you utter a *verb*, an incoming call interrupts you. Listening to *Parliament Live* is sure fun, and in addition to that you realise what kind of people you sent to the House. You can get the satisfaction to

verify how big politicians are glaringly criticised by fighting minorities, but the next day there is no hint at that in the press. To keep people in the dark you do not necessarily have to lie, you just have to carefully omit some parts to overturn the situation. This is the method carried out by almost all national newspapers.

As for TV programmes it is even more fun. Years ago they showed electoral programming where at least you could roughly grasp a party government programme. Then they realised there was virtually no audience and without investigating the reason for it, they stop broadcasting them.

Electoral programming were replaced by debates where there are no rules, everybody speaks simultaneously, interrupting others and often the situation degenerates in a total chaos and it is impossible to understand anything. To complicate things they invented "*par condicio*" (equal conditions) which is the tool to legally discriminate a political force and deprive TV presenters' responsibility. Before listening to debates I would like to know how every single political force is planning to govern and deal with certain issues such as drug, artificial insemination, labour, employment, euthanasia etc. Instead we are compelled to watch a total bedlam, a nonsense where politician have nothing to say or suggest

Lawyer do you pay RAI tax?

"Yes I do, but to be honest for the kind of service they supply it would be better to throw TVs away."

What makes my blood boil is that time dedicated to political information is normally very limited, even during electoral campaign. In this period debate standard time is the following: a 30-minute political programming with minimum of five guests, often at

midnight because before they broadcast some silly cows show or 'unresolved mysteries' or something similar and the usual question is this: MP we have two minutes, please tell us how you would like to govern Italy and how you think of solve issues of employment, justice, drug, scientific research, artificial insemination, abortion, unfair competition, the de facto couples, industry, the greenhouse effect, waste disposal emergency, immigration, etc etc. .. the poor thing inevitably utter meaningless things, and three minutes later we are all pleased and happy to cry together with Raffaella Carrà show because uncle Peppino could hug his daughter he had not seen for forty years.

As a nice guy from my village says: "why is that?" We have three Rai channels which are almost the same thing, we pay Rai tax, they also make money out of advertising, why one of the three channels cannot allocate time for political programming? Would you like to sort out the *par condicio* (equal conditions) issue in Italy? Well let's suppose that in Italy there are 15 parties in the elections. Two months can be allocated for the electoral campaign

Every night at 8.30, primetime hours, each political party has 2 hours to explain to the Italians how they would like to govern ITALY. The daily schedule is extracted at random and reversed in the second, third and fourth round of programme.

Each political party would have a total of 8 hours to manage as they please: they could set up employment agencies, distribute pasta, and given the significant presence of altar boys in Parliament, they could celebrate a Mess, or talk about politics and problem solving.

"How come....! Would you allocate the same time for everyone? I mean for parties with 2 or 3% of votes and with 18%, 20% or 25% of votes? "

This is another joke with curious implications and it does not only apply to Italy, for example: a party - with 25% of votes that previously caused troubles in the management of public affairs – is given 25% of TV time for the political campaign to carry on damaging Italy and deceiving voters.

According to their logic, logical thinking is based on what the majority of people say:

Thus if 99 morons state that something is right and one only states that it is wrong, democratically and pseudo logically the 99 morons are right.

This theory humorous feature - namely to allocate TV time on the basis of the previous elections – has the following result: Prodi, Berlusconi, Fassino, Fini need to have 8 hours to explain how they would like to govern Italy, whilst Di Pietro, Rotondi, Craxi, Emma Bonino can do it in two minutes.

It equals to say those are fast and smart guys, unfortunately we are a bit slow and thick, please give us some extra hours on TV, please be good!

They insult themselves, calling themselves thick.

Alas we are the real thick ones allowing this pseudo democratic practice. If I am not mistaken in a sport or electoral competition they all start at the same starting blocks, with the same rules. If a political party is admitted in the election in compliance with the in-force law, it has to have the same TV time as the party which reported the highest consensus in the previous consultation. Theoretically every political party has to have the possibility of getting 51% of votes.

"Dear husband, I do not think that Italians would be willing to bear such political *sermons* every evening for two months, the audience would plunge immediately."

I would not say so, I am actually surprised RAI and Mediaset big brains have not taken it into account. Could you imagine Mostella - who after exhausting his exorcisms and invectives against the Radical devil and after sanctifying embryo and spermatozoon powerful life along with Pera, - forced to talk about plans and real issues?

That would be fun to see him on TV live, to watch him together with Archbishop Milingo and exorcise Capezzone swearing he has never used a condom in his life and he is not a murderer! The fact is that the vast majority of these gentlemen has hardly something to say, they are third rate professionals able to only argue against someone. They are frightened to have 8 hours available for them to hold a speech to the Italians, because after promising a few assessors' seats, distributing some pounds of pasta they would conclude with pride declaring to own 3-4-18% of Italians' votes;.....the famous hard shell or structural consensus almost all parties have. In a mature democracy the hard shell is non existent, it is actually the denial of democracy itself. Whenever we understand that a political party with 3% of votes could reach 51% of consents in a legislature term we will be citizens and not subjects at last.

We – poor Italians – are so thick that the more these gentlemen fool us the more we vote for them. For example in a referendum we expressed 84% of votes against political party public financing. What did these three-card players do? In Parliament instead of obeying to the sovereign people they doubled the amount allocated for party financing, giving a clear

example of democracy and rule compliance. What would a standard person expect?

Wellat least not to find a shadow of these people at the next elections, but they are still there. They learnt this game extremely well.

Italians are not citizens, but in the best assumption they are soccer supporters, there's no difference between a Milan's supporter and a political party's supporter: they are both dominated by the need to belong to the **pack**, which by nature is not led by reason and it confuses its wishes with facts. Unconsciously you identify yourself with the Christian Democracy or Communist Party's pack....and so on. If the pack fails it feels like a personal defeat.

In the worst case Italians are part of a business or ethnical clan

Italian parties' Massari (no offence for the true Massari) are fiercely opposed to referenda especially if it concerns the electoral law, because it can jeopardise their survival.

"It's a disaster! A national catastrophe! But how can it be possible, how can the sovereign people's opinion be a disaster for democracy? Basically Massari are saying: you sovereign people don't have a clue about politics, don't bother us, we are in charge and we have to operate otherwise you won't be able to secure a position at a the Post Office for your son. On the other hand, there won't be political parties which organise peace parades against the American devil.

Italian Massari are so persuaded to be in a true democracy. Firstly they don't have any trust in the sovereign people. When the people has the chance to rule on something, Massari do the opposite. Secondly they don't even have the dimmest idea that with 2% of votes they could reach 51%. They know they are

not in a democracy but in a partitocracy (party-controlled system). Their idea of democracy is the one of a business or ethnic clan. As a consequence they fiercely support the proportional system and consider your vote something they own.

The opinion vote in Italy is not considered and I wonder – in principle - what is the difference between these Massari and the Taliban clan leaders in Afghanistan

Poor naive Italian! He would like an electoral law to approve a single-candidate system, the British way, with two or three parties. He also voted for that in a referendum, but eventually nothing changed... You wish! Things could really start working in Italy, the government could last for a full term, there would not be a Massaro causing the government fall. Moreover the following clans would disappear:

- Christian democrat centre (CCD)
- Christian democrat united (CDU)
- Centre European Democrats
- Christian Democracy
- European Democracy
- The Democrats
- Democrat Union for Europe (UDEUR)
- Christian Democrat and Centre Union (UDC)
- National Alliance (A.N)
- Left Democrats (D S)
- Federation of Liberals
- Environmentalist Federation
- Forza Italia
- Forza Nuova
- Democratic Party Network
- Northern League
- Di Pietro's List – Italian Values

- The olive tree
- Daisy flower
- Social movement three colour flame
- Party of Italian Communists
- Communist Party of Rifondazione
- Christian Democrat Party
- Liberal Party
- Italian Marxist-Leninist Party
- Italian People's Party
- Italian Republican Party
- Italian Socialist Democrat Party
- New Socialist Party PSI
- Humanist Party
- Retired people's Party

we got to 31, there are more, but perhaps it is better to stop here.

Are you skipping the list? Instead I believe you need to look at it carefully, to understand the huge differences among the parties in terms of programmes, proposals and battles, especially in the first eight parties. You will find out that it is all about exchange of favours and preferential treatment, nepotism, ethnic spasms, white and red parochial environments.

ORPHANAGE

The next morning, at eight o'clock, Dana arrived at the hotel to take us to Court.

The more I looked at her the more I realised how pretty she was.

If they are all so pretty I begin to understand why many Italians go to Romania with the excuse of business or holidays to catch two birds with a stone.

The Court, like all Courts was an austere building, just the sight of it was frightening, I cannot imagine going there as a defendant. A usher led us down to a long messy corridor, files were stacked everywhere, many of those documents were referred to dissidents who had been summarily tried by the regime. At the end of the corridor there was a hearing room with a group of people in.

I stopped for a moment and peeped in, a bit surprised I saw two handcuffed suspects wearing prisoners' standard uniform, the one with vertical stripes and the registration number of the chest.

They didn't seem to have many scruples there and, despite the change, the former regime atmosphere was still there.

Given such a situation I got worried and expected to wait for days to get the documentation to go to the orphanage. My expectations were glaringly wrong, as we got the orphanage papers we needed in about an hour.

We got closer to the day of the meeting, at night I could not sleep.

I had a pocket-sized dictionary and I tried to learn a sentence in Romanian, but words sounded all taken for granted, eventually I gave up, relying on Max's help, my doggie, who was the only one trained to non-verbal communication.

"Have you got all the documents?" Yes I have "I would not like to drive for 500 km for nothing".

We were ready in the hotel hall, waiting for Dana to arrive. It was early and there were not many people around, the main square was almost deserted, and it was easy to spot the grey Fiat 131 that was approaching.

"Good morning! Are we ready to leave?"

Yes we are!.

"My cousin is joining us, so she can get the chance to visit North-East Romania."

Dana, I'll drive you can give me directions.

We left Bucharest and took the road to Pitesti, where we had to stop at a gas station.

"A very good friend of mine Joannina lives in Pitesti. We attended the same university and often we studied together at my tiny apartment in the new area of Bucharest. She is a good girl and she is married to a tall and skinny guy, Ovid. Her dream is to move to Germany and find a good job there, but at present she cannot get a visa to see how things are there. When we return from the orphanage I'll introduce you to her, and given the fact that you'll be coming here again, she can accompany you in case I am not here in Romania".

I am glad to notice that Ovid, who is basically a fellow from my region, left his mark here. Ovid is a very common first name around here.

We passed by Pitesti and took the river Strejulu valley, we were surrounded by a beautiful green landscape. On the way we came across some nomads camps.

I wonder how they can survive here where people are not willing to spare anything for charity.

We travelled for two hours, my wife and Dana's cousin took a nap.

Dana according to the map we should be about 20 km from Deva and we should see the junction for Bretea where the orphanage is.

"It's my first time here as well, so we just have to rely on the road signs".

Wake up.... girls! The sun is up and the temperature is mild, in about twenty minutes we will be there.

"Why didn't you wake me up earlier, let's stop for a moment because Max has to do a pee, poor little thing, he is so well trained that he would rather burst than pee in the car or at home."

There is the road for Breteain 15 km we will get there.

The road was deserted, there were no houses, suddenly an old coal-powered factory appeared, it was all blackened and rusty, with two smoking chimneys.

It seemed like a wound on the surrounding nature teeming with greenery and wildlife. It was such a dramatic contrast that I thought to myself: if hell exists it must be something like this.

Black has always made me feel uneasy, probably due to my childhood reminiscence. When I attended catechism, nuns described the devil as a black, ugly being with horns, I must have taken the matter very seriously.

I remember something funny happened with my father. Despite the tears and my being averse, he used to take me to work in the field with him



That day he was cutting the grass with a scythe, and I followed him mimicking his movements. Sometimes he stopped to wipe the sweat off his forehead, and took the rock kept on the horn tied onto his belt, to sharpen the scythe blade. He was a giant to my eyes. A few hours later we sat down and he cleaned the scythe. I still remember his big shoes with large nails on the soles, twinkling in the sun (the famous Popoli shoes which basically had to last for a lifetime). Scampering about the field I started screaming at some point: father father I've seen the devil.

My father sprang up on the spot and came towards me, thinking of some little snake, then I showed him the place and he burst out laughing. The devil was a big black beetle with horns. I felt bad because to me it was a very serious matter, but then I started laughing too. I believed that in the moment my little myth of heaven and hell cracked. Needless to say that if I had had to chose between a nun and my father I would have chosen my father.

We were all quiet. Turning round I cast a glance at my wife and looked at her in the eyes, she was a bit tense and she tried to console herself with Max....the clock was ticking and we were about to reach the orphanage!

We arrived at the village, we stopped and ask for directions to a passer-by. A man stopped, he was battered, with plastic slipper and black feet. He must have worked at the factory we saw before. He also looked drunk, but Dana managed to get the information we wanted.

The orphanage was a cottage in the countryside surrounded by a big courtyard, we could hear children voices and shouts, as we approached.

We got off the car and spotted a man at the gate, he was the director. We introduced ourselves and we followed him to his office. There were about eighty girls and boys, all colourfully dressed with clothes that often were not their size, they all had short hair and boys and girls looked the same. They looked at us with curiosity and they surely wondered who were. We must have looked odd to them. We got into a very modest room that was the director's office. Dana handed over the papers, the director accurately

went through them and asked for some explanations while taking Marco's folder.

While he talked, Dana translated, whispering.

"Marco is a good boy, a bit exuberant, physically is in good health, here at the orphanage he attended the second grade at primary school. He was previously adopted by a Canadian family, but it did not work out".

He explained Marco's medical record, specifying he never had serious conditions and he asked his assistant to call the boy.

Marco came into the office, he was a bit embarrassed as if he were before the Court, but he looked rather self confident and he could hide his emotions very well.

"How cute whispered Dana..... and then speaking in Romanian Marco these people are your new parents Antonio and Maria, are you happy?"

He did not know what to do and looking at the director, he smiled faintly

My wife with tears in her eyes got close to him giving him a kiss, while I played down the situation running my fingers through his hair, winking at him....as to say...we are men and only girls get emotional in such situations

Nobody knew what went through my mind. I made a tremendous effort not to cry. I had just met my son and I could not talk to him, we kept gazing upon each other, making eye contact, with a feeling of benevolent challenge.

I just wanted to understand....he did not look down. I had the feeling he was tough, I had just met him and I was already proud to be his father.

How odd, "normal" people usually have children, instead I had just met and I felt his father 200%. The

fact that I was not the biological father was completely irrelevant.

For a moment I had the feeling I was fooling myself, but I was not. I thought about it over and over again, even later on and without realising it I had overcome what is defined as tie of blood

A profound feeling of solidarity prevailed in me a special bond felt through the consciousness of being part of the same species, therefore another person is seen as part of yourself. Otherwise you would not explain the discomfort and annoyance you feel when another human being does something bad or make a fool of himself.

To churn out children or beastly procreate is not a good thing, those kids were a sad and apparent example of it: they were born and abandoned.

A tough life without affection, nobody to rely on expected many of them. They would have roamed with only one goal on their mind: surviving.

Conceive with love and do not procreate beastly. Nowadays it should be something taken for granted, but it is not. It is not for us desperate, destitute and ignorant people, with lots of financial problems, tormented by our male uterine spasms unable to control sexual impulses that mother nature gave us, therefore the more drunk we get,, the more we feel the need to reproduce ourselves. I think the same applies to scholars, spiritual fathers, and all kinds of Churches.

The Church true to its dogmas, conceives sex only if it is aimed at procreating, at conceiving a new life. Catholic moral teaching on sexuality (i.e. "every thought, word, desire or sexual activity outside marriage is defined as mortal sin and within marriage every sexual act which is not aimed at procreating is

a mortal sin") is clearly based on false anthropology and it does not convey a credible idea referred to the relationship between a man and a woman.

Over the centuries the Church has inculcated the idea that sex is sin and that we need to practice abstinence. All his ministers take the vow of celibacy because they free themselves from their body slavery and they can get closer to God. Many of them succeed in this practice, but some do not! And as usual, when you go against the law of nature you commit the most brutal crimes transferring your own sexual impulses on the most vulnerable ones.

A study commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Bishops to NY JJ College study centre reports as follows: 4,392 priests were accused of abuse in the US between 1950 and 2002. The figure is around 4% of the 109,694 priests who served during the years in question.

People who experienced sexual harassment were 10,667. The victims age was: 5.8% of victims were under 7 years old, 16% of victims were between 8-10 years old 50.9% of victims were between 11-14 years old, 27.3% of victims were between 15-17 years old

Abuse went on for a year for 38.4% of victims, it lasted 2 to 4 years for 28% of victims and abuse went on for over 4 years for 11.8% of victims

Sexual abuse was caused by victim's relative: 55.7% of relatives abused one person, 26.9% of relatives abused 2-3 three people, 13.9% of relatives abused 4-9 people.

The places of sexual abuse were: 40.9% priests' residence, 16.3% the Church, 42.8% elsewhere.

Strange way to praise God by denying the physical nature and body functions that He has given us. If I

am not mistaken He said grow and multiply, and what are they doing? They are not growing and multiplying. Well, they can object: you poor mortals can accomplish this task, we bishops, priests, ministers of religion, God's delegates on earth cannot contaminate ourselves with these earthly practice!

I think that one of the main functions of celibacy is precisely to pretend to have a highly dubious moral superiority that is often completely non existing.

The corollary of the Church attitude referred to sex is as follows: every blow a notch!

Frankly I am surprised that the CEI (Italian Conference of Bishops) considers the option of persuading 7 billion people to practice abstinence a realistic opportunity.

They have always been far too busy taking care of earthly matters than spiritual ones.

They are politicians, capable of sophisticated timely and accurate analyses. How can't they see that the biggest problem with whom mankind has to deal is the demographic issue i.e. the world population geometrical growth.

Well the answer is simple: they cannot see beyond the dogma which bans birth control and the use of condoms. History repeats itself, just like at Galileo time, they were convinced that the earth was rotating around the sun, but they could not say it just to avoid the full collapse of theories built throughout centuries of reflections.

For professional reasons I often fly over Italy and other countries and it is impressive to see how available space have shrunk to the minimum. All you can see is a large quantity of houses and concrete, only the Alps and the Apennines are left.

Italy has zero population growth...! bishops and Buttiglione cry out!

You need to have more children, possibly Christians!
The Northern League shouts back....no...We have to double Padania (the Po Valley area) population to stop the Muslims' invasion!

In Parliament zealous and obsequious altar boys (it is not funny... we did elect them) get ready to discuss and approve a bill which grants 1000 € incentive for the first child. Craziness! Instead of lighting a candle to St Antonio because we have zero population growth and suggest a birth control policy for underdeveloped countries they only focus on their own little yard.

How pathetic! If birth control policies are not carried out in the short term our children and grandchildren will not have any space left and the struggle for food resources and energy sources will be terrible and without truce. If you think that our needs are different from a pack of wolves' in my Majella you are wrong. Wolves are lucky as nature guarantees their balance. Is there a severe winter or food scarcity or an epidemic? Two wolf cubbies out of four do not survive...it is a grim and necessary law, but He wanted it. We are smarter, we invented all sort of things, antibiotics, drugs etc . We intervened at the bottom of the reproductive system so heavily as to reduce children's mortality to zero.

We are all happy about it. We claim to have the right to maintain a sustainable balance for our species replacing nature. I believe it is inevitable at this point to intervene at conceiving stage with a responsible birth plan and birth control policy. Whether you like it or not this is the situation. Either the Church modifies

its attitude towards birth control problems or it issues a Papal Bull banning the use of drugs invented by men giving control back to nature

Likewise politicians are terrified by the figure zero.

GDP is at zero growth! We are ruined! If GDP does not reach a 4% growth rate p.a. we have to face starvation and recession. GDP is expected to register a never ending growth. Therefore with this trend we will reach a GDP that is 5 times as much as the present one, to what purpose?

You could thinkperhaps we could have three extra meals a day, or 3 cars per capita instead of one, or we could buy a pound of ham in a Valentino designed package. No...well GDP has to register an endless growth, because human beings have decided to grow ad infinitum. It does not matter if animals go extinct, forests disappear and so do energy resources, whilst dump yards increase; the fundamental thing - ethically and morally - is that condoms are not used for birth control.

Let's foster the power of sperm's life and condemn millions of people to death.

Nowadays it is clear that with technology improvement, few individuals are able to produce resources to sustain many others. Despite what we do this is an ongoing process and it is particularly manifest in government offices where many jobs are merely fictitious.

We could have, with appropriate adjustment more spare time to devote to our business, to thinking, but I have the impression that nobody cares about *gross domestic knowledge!*

The only consolation is that Nature with its laws will admonish the evil, rearrange and re-adjust the balance. Unfortunately for us and especially for our

children and grandchildren, the price to pay will be extremely high.

We were out in the courtyard. Marco was holding Max and it seemed that they understood each other perfectly. Dana was arranging things with the director. My wife was meticulously surveying Marco tucking the shirt under the sweater.

"Tito look at this! His upper teeth are protruding forward, as soon as he comes to Italy he'll have to put a brace to straighten them."

You're right, but I can not explain the reason for it. Pointing to my teeth and then to his I was trying to ask for an explanation. He immediately understood and smiling put his thumb in his mouth. The thumb shape corresponded exactly to the teeth deformation. With his eyes closed he showed me that he slept in that position.

How come you are six years old and you still suck your thumb?

He looked at me a bit surprised, thinking of being reproached.

Poor child! Who knows how many times he must have cried himself to sleep looking for something familiar and not finding anyone, he sucked his thumb thinking it was his mother's nipple.

I can not imagine what a little kid can feel being abandoned, without his mom at that crucial stage of his life.

He certainly knew it and maybe one day I'll ask him, but that day I hoped it was a good day for him.

"Maria the director said we can all go out together, get to Deva and tonight we are his guests at his house".

Dana, we don't want to impose, it is really kind of him!

"No imposition at all, he insisted as in Deva is not easy to find an accommodation."

In the meantime a group of kids gathered around Marco and they were talking, the shortest, stocky reddish haired kid kept repeating *gum gum*, and Marco *da da*.

Only when we returned there I understood what they were arranging. Basically they ordered things, asking Marco what to buy.

For a number of them this was something previously experienced and perhaps they were wondering why Marco and not them.

Marco moved with ease and had the classic attitude of a leader of a kids' gang, approving and denying claims in a very firm and harsh way.

Are we going? It is almost lunch time.

"Yes let's go, look at him he is so exciting he cannot wait to get to Deva."

I bet it must be ages since he last left the orphanage! Though... it is a torture to just talk to him through gestures, well, dear wife we need to study Romanian.

"Tito I do not think it is necessary, because sometimes I do not even understand him and I am Romanian, as he speaks a kind of local dialect but I do not think he will have great difficulties in learning Italian."

Well actually many words are similar to Italian, to me it even sounds like a Pescara dialect with lots of words ending in u'.

We arrived in Deva.

Look there is a castle just like Dracula's movies, do we need any garlic and crucifix?

"You are just impossible!"

Dana, pleaseyou tell me what do, he never takes things seriously and he is more stubborn than a mule from Abruzzo.

"Not because he is here, but he looks nice and kind to me and he inspires confidence."

Thank you Dana, what are you doing tonight?

"You seehe is even presumptuous and his head is always up in the clouds, do not be fooled by appearances is as subtle as a snake. He never says no, he says he does not need to and he is persuasive, but it is impossible to change his mind, you can endlessly try..."

Walking along the main road, I stopped in front of a toy store, I wanted to buy a toy but Marco shook his head and started talking with Dana.

What is he saying?

"He does not want toys but a comb, soap bars, shampoo and lots of chewing gums."

Well I have a great kid, he is already a little buddy and does not beat about the bush.

Marco, it's lunch time, how about finding a place to eat?

Crossing the square, I spotted a restaurant under the arcades, we went there with no hesitation...God help us

We spent a lovely afternoon, taking pictures and starting to communicate with him. He did not seem very emotional he behaved like an adult with many issues to sort out.

When we went back to the orphanage he diligently distributed the chewing gums that he had bought, taming little Jonica's attacks as he wanted more gums.

I was surrounded by little kids, and some of them came close, like little puppies as to say: "Why don't you take me as well? I am good and I also know the alphabet!" and a kid started to recite the ABC.

According to his stringent logic he was offering me everything he had, to get some love and protection in return.

I was not prepared for such a situation, I was broken hearted, how can you explain to a kid that it was impossible! I could do nothing else but shrug my shoulders and crack a smile and caress him.

He went back to talk to the other kids and perhaps thinking how odd these grown-ups are."

With an excuse I left, I had a lump in the throat and was about to cry and I was really mad. I cursed his parents, they must have been indigent people, forced by circumstances to live into a physically and morally degraded state I could not understand.

"Tito, come here that Marco would like to show you the bedrooms and one of the operators".

A slightly chubby girl showed us the dorms explaining that Marco was in charge of one of the dorms. Probably because the age criterion was applied and Marco had been there since birth.

The day was drawing to a close, we said goodbye to Marco and the other kids, we were tired but relieved by the fact that the meeting was – after all - ok.

The director took us to his house where his wife was waiting for us. I was a little embarrassed as they were such keen and hospitable people, considering

that they had very modest means, but with great dignity they were trying to make us feel comfortable. The ladies slept in a big bedroom, I slept on the couch in the living room. There was no water in the house, but outside they had a nice well with an old valuable winch. Even the toilet was outside in the back yard, where there was a kind of Roman well with a board of wood to sit on, with a canopy on top. It was surrounded by a high hedge which ensured privacy.

Have you ever tried an outdoor toilet? If you haven't I would recommend it....it isdifferent!

The hostess prepared pasta, it was a bit overcooked but nevertheless very welcome.

I slept all night, even if I was very uncomfortable and Count Dracula did not pay a visit.

DEPARTURE FROM BUCHAREST

Six months elapsed and the adoption procedure was finalised, it was time to go and take Marco home.

It was a coincidence but we left the same day as the previous journey, it was very cold and the weather forecast promised nothing good, in fact after an hour flight the captain announced that Bucharest airport was closed due to snowfalls, the plane was to go to land in Istanbul where we had to spend the night and leave again the next day.

"This is bad luck that is snowing today!"

Come on, cheer up, it is the chance to see Istanbul, even if we'll arrive at night. As soon as we land we have to inform Dana that we'll take the first plane tomorrow morning.

"I'm sorry we are giving Dana so much trouble and then we have the doggie, I hope that they won't mind at the hotel."

We stayed in a lovely hotel in the new area of Istanbul, beside the hotel there was also a casino, I was really tempted to go there and play, not because I am an inveterate gambler but because in Italy there are only a few barely tolerated casinos, as if they were banned by the law only allowing the existing ones to work.

If you want something to be attractive, desirable and almost irresistible, instead of regulating it and placing on the market, you just have to ban it and it automatically becomes valuable and acquires a particular charm.

The following day we met Joannina at the airport. She accompanied us to complete the last details of the adoption procedure.

"Tito, as you are staying here about a week, I found an accommodation for you. It is a house which is not far from where my father lives."

Dana, it is all right for us, we'll obviously we pay what is due.

"Yes, but it will be much cheaper than staying in a hotel. I explained to the house owner why you are here in Bucharest and he also offered to drive you to Bretea when you have to pick up Marco. You know... for him it is a chance to make some money. "

There was so much snow and it was freezing cold.

What's the temperature?

"It is -7°C."

Please don't say that to my wife otherwise she'll feel even colder. By the way, is there a heating system in the house we are staying at?

"Yes there is, in the living room there is a big efficient earthenware kitchen range that heats the whole house."

The house owner Nellu was waiting for us at the door and he was busy cleaning and shovelling the snow. We went in and we were introduced to his wife and daughter, a beautiful blond girl who did not look very happy as she had to sleep in the loft because we slept in her bedroom.

We set our things and after half and hour we walked to Dana's house where we met her parents.

Her father was a mining engineer, he retired but he was working as a publisher. He was very proud of his daughter who was about to graduate and he also showed us photo book, suggesting that she also had good chances to work in the show business.

He appreciated what we were doing and he said he was available to help in case we had any problems. The truth is that I'll always be thankful to Dana who

patiently helped us throughout that adventure without asking for anything in return.

It was 3.30 am and Joannina already arrived at home, we were getting ready and Nellu was checking the FIAT 131 before departure. A tough day was expecting us. We had to go to Bretea and take Marco home

As soon as we left Bucharest towards Pitesti it got pitch dark. It was -10°C with snow at the edge of the road, and no light as far as the eye could see.

It is a strong feeling for us that we are used to travelling at night with always a point of reference, aware that even in the most isolated places, around the bend there is always a light, a house. There apparently there was nothing, but suddenly Nellu swerved and jammed on the brakes and we found a horse-drawn carriage full of hay. The coachman was a man wrapped up in a heavy white sheepskin coat. He was wearing an odd cone-shaped hat and he seemed like a fairy tale character and I doubted he was not real but he was just my imagination.

He did not move a bit, whilst Nellu swore something in Romanian Joannina did not translate;

it was a close shave! We passed by it was the crack of dawn and the light on the horizon was very reassuring, I could recognize the surroundings that were familiar to me, I did not realise it but

I must have dozed off. When I woke up I had the feeling I never slept.

I hardly remember my dreams, I just found myself in a car whilst a few moments earlier I was in a bedroom which looked like mine, it had a very high ceiling, I felt so light that I could float in the air, I

could move effortless and with incredible ease. My wife noticed the slightly strange and absent look on my face.

"What's the matter? Did you have a bad dream? No I didn't, I had a very beautiful dream. I did not tell her the truth, as she keeps saying that my head is always up in the clouds, I could not tell her that I dreamed of levitating. I dreamed of being on the South coast of Tavolara island in Sardinia, the water was so clear that it seemed to me there was no water at all. I was surrounded by a shoal of greater yellowtail fish, two kilos each....what a heavenly view! "Listen Tito you are worrying me, you are crazy about fishing, you'll end up like your fisherman friend, who is also my cousin. He became addicted to fishing, he told me he had a dream: he was diving and exploring fish hiding places, but instead of fish he found a monkey which took his spear gun and pointed it at him."

This is odd! What does it mean?

"It is simple, it means you have to take it easy! Ah here we are at last!"

In the courtyard there were a few kids, as soon as we arrived they came close to us smiling.

This time I already know what they wanted and I got a big supply of chewing gums. The first one to arrive was Jonica, his cheeks were all red because it was cold, he was bursting with joy. Joannina gave him his share of gums and asked him where Marco was. He replied he was in the backyard where walnuts trees were.

"Go and ask him to come, tell him his parents are here". He darted to call Marco and ten minutes later Marco arrived, he had a light sweater and a scarf which did not cover part of his neck, he was panting and with a husky voice he greeted us.

"But look at this wild boy running around half naked in such a cold weather, listen to his husky voice! He certainly got bronchitis! Please get a high neck sweater in the car".

My thoughtful wife bought a set of brand new clothes and she was very worried. Unlike her I saw the whole thing differently and I kind of liked his crazy kamikaze attitude without fear for the environment and people...after all he looked like me.

In the meantime an assistant arrived and told us that the director was out and he could be back in an half and hour. We went into the orphanage and used the time we had to change Marco's clothes from top to toes. He was visibly happy and he could not believe had had brand new boots.

We finalised the adoption procedure with the director and without waiting any further we got into the car and faced the return journey, also because both my wife and myself felt feverish.

For Marco everything was normal, he said goodbye to his friends, to his favourite assistant without tears and sad scenes. Blissful unconsciousness....!

He did not have any regrets, only at that age it is possible to do that.

Only two days later at the airport he was nearly moved to tears when he said goodbye to Dana and a few moments of hesitation as he realised he was leaving his world to go into a completely unknown one.

ARRIVAL IN ITALY

I was driving in my car at high speed on SS 148 to Latina. Almost two years before, I was driving down the same road, on the opposite direction fantasising about a boy to adopt, of whom I could not even picture the face and at that point I realised that my dream had come true.

Even Max, my doggie, was eager to get home, restless as he recognised the familiar environment. In fact as soon as he got out of the car he rocketed to mark the trees which delimited his territory. When we opened the door we had a pleasant surprise.

I was not aware but my wife called her cousin who decorated the house with coloured balloons. Marco was overjoyed and he went straight to the Christmas tree. He was very interested in chocolates nougats and sweets, rather than the Christmas decorations. Marco, we can make an exception and eat one. Come on I'll show you your room.

With gestures and speaking Romanian he asked me if the bedroom was just for him, being used to share a dorm with twenty kids, he could not believe he had a bedroom all for him

Dear cousin, you are great! We could not think of a better welcome!.

"Well it was the least I could do!"

That evening we had dinner together joking about puns and blunders and misunderstandings about talking two different languages and we started to teach him Italian.

The next day we were busy preparing the documentation for his admission at school. Together with the social worker we decided to send him to the

first grade even if he was two years older than his class mates, also because the school year began in September.

We were told that he attended the second grade at primary school, however, we soon realised that was not true because he did not even know the alphabet. He was a smart kid though and we were confident that he could make up for it.

It was almost Christmas and the right occasion to introduce Marco to my family.

In addition to that I could have taught him how to ski and I could have skied as well.

I hardly ski due to my work and other various commitments. My wife is very reluctant to go with me as she cannot stand cold weather.

Even if I have turned into a fisherman, I am still strongly drawn to the mountains. Until I was 19 years old I basically lived up on the snowy mountains. I was also rather good at skiing, I practised three ski disciplines: cross-country, alpine ski and ski jumping. The village Ski Club supplied skis and – given those years – I consider myself lucky. At home I had cross-country, alpine skis, and ski for ski jumping. In exchanged I competed in three national FISI finals category 'squirrels' and 'deer', it was the first ski cup.

When we got to Campo di Giove, the view was as fascinating as usual: Christmas-lit streets and soft noises. I was a bit tense, because at home everyone was waiting for us, including my sister and my nephews. At home I was considered the good guy who joined the Air Force Academy, independent at 20 years old. On the other hand I was far from the standards and traditions expected in a little mountain village. In fact I only had a civil wedding with my

partner who already had a previous relationship that did not have a happy ending. We had two old fellows and colleagues as best man and bridesmaid. We considered the ceremony such a mere formality in fact that important morning we were woken up by the florist. We rushed towards the Town Hall where the best man and the bridesmaid and a nice alderman with the Italian flag sash on his shoulders were waiting for us. The alderman - who was in a bit of a hurry - read aloud the various Civil Code articles. After the ceremony we had a drink and made a toast in a very nice bar and from there I phoned the restaurant to reserve a table for the wedding lunch. A very polite man replied, he had a moment hesitation when I told him we were just four people. I only informed my parents two days later, justifying myself saying that it would have been too complicated to organise a complete ceremony. The truth was that I did not want to embarrass them as I only had a civil wedding, without a church ceremony, which is a bit unusual around here.

Personally I felt that I did not need the priest approval. My parents did not object, but they simply put it "if is all right for you, it is all right for us too". I only regret it for my mother, she surely imagined a grand and impressive ceremony for me, with all our relatives, and perhaps she pictured me in my Air Force pilot uniform. My father did not say much, actually I think he would have done the same thing. In addition to that I was going there with an adopted child, and I realise now that I have asked for too much and I am very grateful to them. Anyway the meeting went very well and it even turned out funny when Marco called my father 'uncle'. He was a bit puzzled but after he showed the best of himself.

The first years at primary school were fine after all, even if we had problems at the very beginning. For me it was really nice, it wasn't entirely positive for my wife, because more than me she had to deal with negative aspects of the situation.

As only children can do, Marco enjoyed laughing, I had never seen someone laughing with such delight. With witty eyes he watched a Bud Spencer's movie, he laughed until he had tears in his eyes, giving vent to his feelings in a blatant and striking way. I had the feeling that one could not be happier. His genuine ability to enjoy himself with trivial things reminded me of the joy I felt one morning a long time ago.

I was about eight years old and in my village it was the feast of the patron, I was peacefully sleeping, when the band playing in the streets woke me up. I thought of what expected me: the parade, fireworks, merry-go-rounds and then I knew my grandpa would give me twenty Lire to buy a couple of ice creams at a cart that came from Sulmona in that occasion. I never felt that perfect bliss again, and since then I have been very fond of bands.

At my age when I see a band I almost cry, everything becomes simple and natural. In little villages bands are not perfect, sometimes they play out of tune, but the idea that their music is addressed to simple people makes it heavenly music to my ears.

Thinking of the past it is very common to apply that saying "*it was better when it was worse*" that means that in the past when we did not have all the comforts we have now, things were better.

What seems to be rather detrimental nowadays it to loose connections and a sense of proportion.

Once upon a time the world was too real, today in my opinion it is too virtual. There is a widening gap between what is natural and what is an emergency, to the point that a normal snowfall in the month of January is considered a natural disaster. The media are also to blame, because they cannot or they do not want to talk about real and urgent problems. They consider a standard snowfall in Milan as breaking news. If I am not mistaken it normally snows in winter, it's been like that for millions of years!

At Campo di Giove I spent winters with 3.5 m. of snow. It wasn't a disaster, actually we, kids, were very happy, the school was closed for over twenty days, both the railway and the road were blocked. Most of the families were self sufficient and the people were farmers or shepherds. Each family had at least a pig which supplied food for the winter. In that period the slaughter ritual began. In the village there were four or five experts called for that occasion. They did not receive any compensation, they were simply gratified by the fact that they were respected for their skills and grade of expertise. They had proper tools, a range of knives, each for a specific purpose. There were knives to skin, other to work the meat, then there was a long and narrow slaughter room and a hook to hold the pig's head. While women heated big pots of water the '*seat*' was prepared.

The pig was almost pampered and drawn towards a corn bowl, near the '*seat*'. With enviable speed and synchronism the master hooked the pig under the snout and four men overturned it on the '*seat*', holding it still for a few seconds, while stabbing it straight into the heart and uttering 'cheers'! The whole thing took less than a minute. As kids we were

very interested and our task was to hold the tail. We felt important and almost essential for the success of the operation. The adults played along and often they said: "if Eustachio hadn't held the tail, the pig would have run away!" I just realise now that I gained more self esteem in that occasion rather than in the years that followed. There was a party atmosphere, we did not feel it was a violent act but only the law of Nature, even Death was considered something friendly, useful and necessary.

The master, after cleaning the pig, estimated its weight with masterly attitude, and then he said to his son: "Eustachio... the number seven!" He was referring to the beech wood plank that was suitable for that pig to be carried and hooked up into a room inside the house

Phase one of the process began: bowels were removed, the thick layer of fat was deeply cut to make ham, chuck and some back fat was used for cooking and flavouring, and it was the stock to last the whole winter.

The following day – with an organization and task assignment - that could compete with the most modern factories, the pig magically turned into: hams, salami, sausages, pork cheek (guanciale), bacon and cured back fat (lardo). Nothing was discarded, only the pig's hairs were left. At night the party was shared with relatives and some neighbours. The dinner menu generally was: large white bean soup with tomato sauce and polenta which occupied the whole table, with pork chops and sausages on top.

Only now I realise that for several years I only had home made food and it was healthy and organic. I perfectly knew where my grandma's home made pasta came from. I am afraid that if you ask a kid

where pork chops come from, he may reply that they grow at the supermarket, just like a 100% town colleague of mine who thought that potatoes grow on trees

EARLY PROBLEMS

I came back from my working shift in Palermo, my wife was very upset for Marco's behaviour.

"Listen Tito I am really stressed out, I cannot bear weekly complaints made by the kids' parents at school, how can't they possibly control Marco. We explained it to the teachers that sometimes it is necessary to be very hard and strict."

I have the impression that the present teachers are too permissive and you know how children are like....they tend to take advantage. The consequence is that children have very little respect for authorities and rules, and also they get their parents' back up. Unfortunately if a teacher dares to raise her voice she may get a formal complaint by these hyper protective parents, who do not realise that they'll soon be in the same conditions as the teachers.

"It is easy for you as you are hardly here, the truth is that I am left alone to fight against Marco and the school. They said he harassed girls at school in the girls' toilet. One parent severely threatened him, but he did not even look scared, as if it was none of his concern."

Where is he now?

"He is in his room, pretending to study."

Marco!

"Yes dad"

Could you come here for a moment please, you have to explain to me why do not calm downhow come you always put yourself into troubles at school?

"Dad I did not do anything. They are provoking me. A girl, who is at school with me even wrote a letter to me, I do not know what that means and what I have to do".

Let me see it please.

"I am going to get it.... here it is
"Dear Marco, I am and first of all I am writing to apologise to you and for something else you already know of, but I'd like to clarify. That day that I phoned and I told you I loved you, I meant it, but then the next day, at school, I could not talk to you, and then it seems that everybody knew about us.
I am writing this letter because I still love you, and I would like to kiss you a lot, but I see you I am ashamed and afraid and I cannot do anything. Also I did not say anything to you the other day, because everybody said that you said that I called you and then I could not say the truth.
If you still want me I want this engagement to be serious and you do not have to tell anyone, so I can give you anything you want. I already have a plan: in the morning if we have time, and during mid morning break, we can both go to the girls' toilet, (you make sure nobody sees you) then we can kiss as much as we want.
If you talk about us and if you do not take our relationship seriously I'll leave you. I love you!"

And we trusted the girls! For once he is right. We have to do something...we could ask for a meeting with the parents, or write to explain who Marco is and why he behaved this way.
"Yes we could but when! You are never here!"
Don't say never, unfortunately my job forces me to be away 3 or 4 days a week, it is not my fault. I often work at Ciampino airport though, so I am not very far. I am aware you are doing the main part of the work, Marco is in the 5th grade at primary school, he decently learned how to speak and write in Italian and I'll give you most of the credit for it. With

regards to his behavioural problems the psychologist said it will take longer. Next month schools will be closed and we'll all go on a nice holiday in Greece
"Without rubber dinghy!"

No please, going to Greece without a rubber dinghy is a torture for me.

"Ok I'll accept, upon the condition you won't go scuba diving for more than 2 hours per day. I'll accept because I also enjoy beautiful beaches you can only reach by rubber dinghy".

Deal, I think we both need a break. The phone is ringing, can you please get it?

"Hey it is your Radical party girlfriend".

With a sharp laser-like glance my wife gave me the phone and went back to the kitchen.

"They are asking for money again, aren't they?"

My friend Marco Pannella (I do not know him personally but, being a Radical party member since the 70s I believe I am his friend) always says that "if you believe in something you may be willing to give a penny for it".

"Instead of thinking of us, you think of the Radical Party, your head is always up in the clouds. I understand that with your job you literally go up in the clouds We have just finished talking about the problems we have... I am sick and tired, I feel like a slave, I set the table, clear the table, wash the dishes and go to sleep".

My wife hates politics, the truth is that she is jealous because I get passionate for Radical party battles. At the end of the day if we are a couple we have to thank the Radicals' perseverance, great fellows, the only ones who actively work in politics and through the achievement of divorce allowed us to restart. I can still remember the first time I held a sign at via

del Corso in front of the Socialist party headquarters. I wanted to tell Craxi – when he was still powerful – that he was wrong. We were a group of 100 people, I had never seen them before, anyhow I felt there was a subtle bond that linked us: the pride to peacefully protest and to defend an idea, a principle and almost the arrogance and presumption to embody the truth, the one which imposes itself, despite anybody and anything.

The “Casarini style group” was miles away and however it was a **pack** with no rules. It was disrespectful to the dignity of the **pack** of wolves living in my Majella where the “rules” are leaders

I quietly attended several Radical party conferences, as a mountaineer from Abruzzo I felt inadequate to take the floor in what I considered the temple of democracy. I could not understand why we were destined to be illegal. On the other hand, I considered myself lucky thinkingthey do not have a clue about what they are missing! I am very grateful to these fellows. If back in the 70s I had not found Radical radio, I do not know where I could end up. Perhaps I would have joined “Working class Power” perhaps next to Sergio D'Elia. Sometimes when I hear that Marco Pannella is a bit down and he is about to throw in the towel and become part of the average 2000 members of the Radical party, I feel like saying something to him – even if it is a little thing – at least he saved one, and I am truly grateful to him.

My wife cannot understand why I am a Radical party member, there is no way to make her understand that I am not financing a party, but my ideas and the type of government and life that I would like for me and my son.

"How much did you give them?" I added 50 euros and I also subscribed to the International Radical Party

"Now they have also made this up... you are crazy!" We have to finance the referendum campaign for these stubborn Italians. The subjects are: magistrates civil liability, Trade Union regular deduction

"Who cares about magistrates civil liabilities!"

How can you say that? When I was in the Air Force if I destroyed an aircraft by intentional wrongdoing or gross negligence I could either end up in jail or I had to pay for it up to the third or fourth generation. These gentlemen bear no liability. If one of them send an innocent man to prison either by wrongful intent or gross negligence, the worst that one can expect is to be relocated or promoted to another assignment. And then allow me, they are misery guts. We all know that there are Brigate Rosse and Mafia and that being a magistrate is a dangerous position... ...but please...even in my own small way I served my Country. We were 64 to complete the course at the Air Force Academy. In 10-15 years 12 died doing their job, they were 25, 28, 30 years old. We silently cried for them, with composure and control. They were aware their job was dangerous and they also accepted the extreme consequences for it. Honour to Borsellino and Falcone and the other magistrates who died carrying out their duties. I cannot stand the jackals and vultures who speculate and hover over the magistrates' memories. If they do not want to do that job, they can change, nobody forces them to be there against their will.

"When you talk about politics you become unpleasant and bad."

The odd thing is that magistrates as well as holding their positions, do not want to be held responsible. Let's take the case of criminal action being mandatory: an Italian style nonsense.

Is there anyone who doubts that criminal action is mandatory? Only in the Italian judicial system we feel the need of a written document stating that crimes require a mandatory prosecution. This is the essence of criminal justice itself. It is equal to say that it is mandatory to apply the law. I am not mistaken it is already clearly stated in the Italian Constitution.

"I see, but I don't quite understand where the problem is, if it written it is much better, I think".

Oh now my dear, the matter is rather subtle. If a prosecutor has ten cases or enquiries to work on, he should be responsible to prioritise his tasks on the basis of the degree of social danger and safety for the community

"Yes, sure, I think this is what they normally do."

This true but only to a certain extent, but they have a very powerful weapon which allows them to do what they want without bearing the consequences, they are not controlled by anyone apart from the self-ruling institution, which is a controller, but is controlled at the same time.

Its disciplinary measures are very rare, and then when they are taken they are often a promotion to a higher assignment as in the case of the public prosecutor who destroyed Enzo Tortora.

Let's suppose that a public prosecutor has 10 cases to work on. One of them is referred to the Prime Minister. Accidentally-on-purpose the public prosecutor completes the work on that case exactly the evening before the International Crime Conference takes place. The Conference is chaired by the individual in question Mr Berlusconi. At this point

the public prosecutor is 'forced' to send a notification to Mr Berlusconi for being subject to legal enquiries. The notification is sent because criminal action is mandatory, poor thing the magistrate would not like that, but crimes require a mandatory prosecution! The next day the whole world knows about the Italian Prime Minister is the chairman of the International Conference of Crime and he is also the object of such Conference.

The dauntless public prosecutor, in the Brigate Rosse and Mafia's line of fire, responsibly takes this decision, which could also be taken by a computer, and he peacefully goes to bed, having fooled the Prime Minister and over 50% of Italians who voted for him. The prosecutor made an unexceptionable decision nobody could ever reproached him for, because criminal actions are mandatory.

There's an exception to the rule though: it has been publicly stated and reiterated that Constitutional Court is the "mafia's hiding place of partitocracy" (the term implies the concentration of power in the hands of political parties to the detriment of parliamentary democracy). I am saying the Constitutional Court. We are not referring to Caltanissetta public prosecutor's office, but the highest degree of the judicial system. Has any court or prosecutor noticed that? It appears that, they turned the deaf ear on the ground that criminal action is mandatory, because perhaps something could have come out during the trial. In the US public prosecutors are elected, just like majors and if they show signs of misconduct they are sent home.

"Yes, but this system implies that the judicial power is dependent on the political one".

In fact in the US public prosecutors depend so much on the political power as to charge several

presidents, with a slight difference though: the prosecutors take the responsibility for their actions without hiding behind the principle that criminal actions are mandatory

Talking about independence, Italian magistrates deeply care about the judicial power independence from the political power, but within their organisation independent status is a marginal and negligible issue. In fact, public prosecutors and judges have the same career, share the same offices, eat together, and often exchange roles. What kind of independence can be guaranteed in such a situation?

In the UK if a public prosecutor takes the lift with a judge is a national scandal.

"Well sorry but I am not with you anymore, I have the feeling that the situation becomes complicated."

Well I am not an expert either, but roughly things work as follows: to get justice you need a trial.

"This is reinventing the wheel, trial occurs every day, there is a public prosecutor, a defence lawyer and a judge who rules applying the law".

It seems perfect, but there is a tiny detail to consider: in Italy legal proceedings go on for years. In theory it could happen that a magistrate is a judge in a trial in which he was a public prosecutor 10 years earlier. What kind of ruling do you think he'll make? I cannot understand why they don't separate professional paths between public prosecutors and judges. They only grant function separation which in theory already exists. By granting function division they imply that it is not widely applied in practice.

In principle and function-wise I cannot imagine why they do not keep a split profession. If you are not in good faith the issue appears to be rather trivial i.e. money and political favouritism, something which looks inconsistent with their boasted independence.

Did you know that magistrates are automatically promoted on the basis of their professional seniority? "No I didn't and I am not very interested".

They all become presidents of a division of the Supreme Court of Cassation even if there are no vacancies for that position.

The same thing happened when I was in the Air Force. As there is no separation between administrative careers and executive careers in a flight group we were all lieutenant colonels. You could barely find a fresh lieutenant therefore even if I was the group commander, almost two third of my subordinates were my peers, even if I was functionally the oldest and you can imagine how different is to give orders to your peers or to a newly arrived lieutenant. The reason for this was not to economically penalised the personnel being the salary linked to the rank, therefore everybody had to be promoted....all colonels! All presidents of the Supreme High Court divisions! All magistrates, both public prosecutors and judges. In practice public prosecutors and lawyers do the same job and then ...why aren't lawyers magistrates? In the US promotions are given according to merits and objective skills, separating administrative careers from executive careers. I could see it with my own eyes when I was there for the pilot course, the young and skilled lieutenant colonel, who was the group chief, earned a lower salary compared to his subordinate Major who was professionally 20 years older than him.

In ancient Roman Law there was a senior magistrate called *tribuni plebis* (tribune of the plebs or lower classes) an officer who protected the people's rights, the poor people's lawyer. His person was legally inviolable and sacrosanct. The current poor tribunes,

I mean lawyers (I say poor but they are well paid) are mistreated by magistrates and by the current practice of legal proceedings

Someone should explain to me why public prosecutors are called 'magistrates' being, just like defence lawyers, part of a legal proceeding. The only real '*magister*' is the judge. This is also demonstrated by current facts where judges are rarely influenced by public prosecutors.

Italian hypocrisy assumes magistrates have nothing to do with politics. It may be true for judges, but not for public prosecutors. Whoever is a part (party) necessarily is engaged in politics in the strict or broad sense of the term and whoever is engaged with politics can only be controlled by the people through elections. The proof that this category of magistrates are in politics is that voluntarily or at the end of their mandate, most of them end up in Parliament elected in their reference party or they create one on their own. This public prosecutors ambiguous situation causes huge disasters in the administration of justice. In Italy there are three sets of proceedings (trial, appeal and Highest Court of Cassation) which may be five in case the Highest Court of Cassation invalidates a legal proceeding for defects of form and the proceeding starts again from the second grade. Magistrates trust one another so much that they need 5 sets of proceedings. Through a stringent and accurate application of the Code of Criminal Procedure we are almost certain to achieve the truth, even if it takes a decade! I would not be surprised at this point, if a further and final appeal were introduced ...the Pope's appellate jurisdiction as the Pope is known for being infallible.

Miles away from these Anglo-Saxon barbarians where trials take 2 or 6 months or even 1 year! They are

cursory and not accurate...and they even elect public prosecutors who answer for their conduct to the people and not to those individuals of the Superior Council of Magistracy.

Here legal proceedings take 10 to 15 years, we pursue the right procedure and a diligent public prosecutor has to appeal and go to the Highest Court of Cassation...also because he does not pay for it, we do.

Therefore in Italy trial itself is a conviction for defendants charged with serious crimes, even before the judge's verdict. How dares any lawyer doubt the seriousness and truthfulness of a public prosecutor-magistrate's legal enquiries? He is just a tribune of the plebs, downgraded to lawyer, he has to deal with the client before he decides to appeal also because the client bears legal fees and trial costs.

In Italy as far as the judicial system is concerned we lack for nothing: we have a Democratic judicial system, and Independent judicial system and other school of thoughts I cannot recall. Why have we got a Democratic judicial system? Perhaps because defence is admitted during the trial? Why have we got an Independent judicial system? Is it because it does not depend on any law? I think that the only thing we haven't got is a judicial system.

"Please...as they say in Naples my head cannot take it anymore, it is pointless that you wind up, people have more serious things to take care of and I do not think they have any interest whatsoever in magistrates' split professions".

Unfortunately, these are very serious issues, and it is a pity they are neglected, despite someone is raising hell just to remind us who is the ruling people.

VACATION IN GREECE

Our holiday in Greece went very well. We went to Zakynthos, and then to Eli harbour with Rino and Giovanni. The journey was hard as usual, we took the ferryboat in Brindisi (we bought a deck fare because it is cheaper) and we got to Patras in the afternoon the following day. Then we drove from Patras to Kyllini, we took another ferryboat and after a couple of hours we got to Zakynthos. Our final destination was Keri, a small village on the West coast of Zakynthos.

Rino carefully selected the place which was perfect for our diving. The village was on the hillside at 200 m. above sea level and about 3-4 km from a small harbour. Outside the village on a plain there was a restaurant and a B&B ran by Kostaky, (Constantine), who became Rino's friend. An olive tree was at the B&b entrance, its trunk was so large that Rino and I could not fully hug, although Rino was huge and fit. We called him 'big Jim', he was tall and slim, 1.88 m. of trained and slender muscles

That night for dinner I had my first musaka with a Greek salad accompanied with a lot of Rezina, the typical white wine which seems to be produced in a carpenter's workshop, rather than in a cellar. I was told that resins are added to it, to store it properly, so it does not turn sour. It is very aromatic, but it tastes more like a newly cut pine wood.

I think I over drank, in fact the next day my head felt heavy and I could barely get ready to go diving.

We went down to the harbour, a small bay is sheltered from the North West wind, and Turtle island

faces the harbour, half a mile from the shore. It has very fine sand beaches where turtles lay eggs. We took the rubber dinghy into the water, got to the island and placed the parasols for our ladies. Despite the place was truly spectacular, with our mind we were already under water. First we swam a little, just to make our ladies happy, then half an hour later, without any delays, we went diving.

Zakynthos has breathtaking scenery: dramatic cliffs higher than 100 m. and small pebble bays are interspersed along the West coastline, there are hills and plains along the North coast towards the seashore, where a shipwreck was stranded in the sand.

As divers we were spoilt for choice. We anchored the rubber dinghy near big rocks where typically there is a very interesting sea bottom, with lots of caves and dens.

Getting ready and wearing the gear was a very peculiar moment, it was not easy to wear wetsuits, because they are generally very tight and while the equipment was prepared everybody went quiet.

Everybody was concentrated.

It seemed to go back in time, as a renewal of conflict between preys and predators. The latter can become preys in a hostile environment in which mistakes cannot be forgiven. The predator has a spear gun, but he also knows that his time is limited and if he makes a mistakes he cannot stop to think. Nobody is there to help, he has to be fast and do the right thing. Preys are in their environment, they can trick predators until they have no more time to act, just like red snappers which stop out of the spear gun hunting range, then they stare at predators, watching every movement, they get a little closer,

but still out of the spear gun shooting range, it is a nerve-racking battle. Sometimes a prey dares approaching a little closer and then it is captured, but often divers leave the sea bed otherwise they would faint and slip upwards to the water surface that seems so far.

After we got ready we dived in, the seascape was amazing: blue damsel fish, picarels and tiny fish, shoal of curious garfish swam just under the water surface, they got close to us up to half a metre. whirling and ready to dart about in case of any sudden movement.

Giovanni went South.

He has a long experience as free diver and he can also interpret little signs which can appear insignificant to others, but they can tell him things about the preys he wants to catch.

Rino and I went North, I followed him even if I knew his performance was much better than mine. The sea bottom was 15 m. deep, and after a brief ventilation we started descending to warm up. Rino removed the snorkel to avoid the bubbling noise that could alarm the fish and, just like in slow fluid motion, he slipped below, towards the sea bottom, carefully inspecting caves within the rocks. After one minute he went up again, he almost looked like a fish, completely at ease, I could not see any bubbles coming from his mask. He explained to me that he pumped air into the mask to balance the pressure increase, then he used the air left in the mask as a reserve to reach back the water surface, without letting air bubbles out of the mask as they could alarm the fish. The sea bottom was far too deep for me, Rino found a big slab at about 20 m. with spottail sea breams, corvina fish and groupers. While he was getting ready to catch some fish I fluttered upwards, along the

coastline to capture some sharp snout sea bream. One hour later, I waited in ambush but I missed my chances, but eventually I captured two sharp snout sea breams . I was looking at them with a great deal of satisfaction when something big caught my attention. It was something that swam almost touching the rocks on the bottom. I could not believe it, it was a turtle, its shell was over 1 m in diameter, I did not let it get out of sight, I was nervous and thrilled, after a brief ventilation I descended hoping not to frighten it. I fluttered along, being almost 3 m from the turtle, it looked at me and peacefully it continued along her route. We swam together for about 20 m and then it slipped up towards the water surface and let me touch it. I was tired after the chase and I slowly swam towards the rubber dinghy enjoying the thought of lying down in the sun, waiting for Rino and Giovanni to come back. I almost dozed off when I spotted the two signalling buoys approaching the rubber dinghy.

How was it?

"Fairly well"

Rino handed over his spear gun and the fish bag lead line. I starting pulling the fish bag, there were about 10 good sized spottail sea breams and corvina fish.

"As I told you there were also two young groupers in the den, but we just let them grow bigger for next year".

Tonight we are going to eat.... And there will be also some fish left for tomorrow! It may be too much.

"Don't worry, nothing will be wasted, we have a tacit agreement with Kostaky: we bring some fish and we get to eat free of charge".

Giovanni arrived a bit later, he generally never let us down and in fact when we pulled up the fish bag a big brown snout with yellow spots appeared. It was a

15 kilo grouper. He got on the rubber dinghy and said with a smile: "we'll put this one in the '*refrigtor*' to rest and macerate as a reserve for a few days.

Good idea, also because in the next few days there won't be any fish around, and do you know why?

"Because there may be a *perturbation*...!"

It was an expression we often used recalling some nice anecdotes occurred when we went fishing to Gaeta. The prison overlooking the rocky coast on the upper part of the town – was closed down and the area below became accessible for fishing. When we could we left on Saturday morning from Latina and we took the rubber dinghy to the Gaeta Port. Near the boat slide, we met a nice lively old man who welcomed us and gave advice on fishing and the weather.

What's up Pasquale? What's the weather like?

"Captain today you will not see much fish, a *perturbation* is on the way and it is going to be very windy.

Anyway if you get to see mullets or some little octopus, just catch them, don't do like last time, I can put two or three or four in the *refrigtor*."

After rinsing our wetsuits (for those who do not do any diving I have to say that water pressure stimulates the bladder to the point that even people with prostate bladder urinate a lot losing about 2 l of fluids in three or four hours diving, you can only image the smell of our wetsuits, but it is all right..... it is natural) we slowly walked to the beach.

When we arrived our wives were not particularly thrilled, they gazed upon our fish without much enthusiasm. They think we are free diving addicted, they are used to seeing fish....oh please do not

misunderstand, I hope they'll only see our fish⁸ but in life...you never know.

Actually they were right not to be thrilled, we often left them on deserted beaches, which could only be reached by boat. They were lovely places, but we left our ladies there to bake in the sun for three or four hours, waiting for us to return.

Unfortunately only free diving enthusiasts can understand me when I am diving I can only spot sea bass, red snapper and groupers as straight as candles gazing at me from the sea bottom, even if Monica Bellucci passed by I would not notice her!

Kostaky was instead happy to see all that fish and asked his wife and daughter to arrange things for dinners.

In Greece, at least on the islands, there is still the figure of the head of the family who arrange things.

Kostaky (Constantine) was a very nice and calm man, he gave the impression of a very hard working man. In the morning he calmly got a wheel barrow and filled up with wood, then he possibly went to the food store, but the hard work was carried out by his wife and daughter, despite he often repeated "I am very tired".

Sometimes I thought of moving to Greece as, by comparison, where I come from relationships are completely reversed. For older people, (including myself) there are not many problems, because somehow, in a subtle way, we still enjoy the fact that anthropologically males are the leaders. However in the last decades changes have caused distress in couple relationships and therefore leadership granted by the law of nature has to be conquered.

⁸ In colloquial Italian fish means also penis

Hard times for the disoriented young boys of the new generations, they instinctively feel to be the boss, but they are challenged every day. Couples' relationships are changing, leadership is held alternately, objectively, on a case by case basis, and charisma is not an emanation from above, but the result of two people who confront with each other with equal dignity. In every day life there's often a swing, the leadership is held either by one or the other, and this reversal of roles becomes even pleasant, as it happens naturally, without constraints.

A dictator of any kind can win but he cannot persuade, being his victory only a Pyrrhic victory. In fact totalitarian regimes systematically collapse. Only churches of any kind and orientation, heavily homocentric can last for centuries, because their leaders' charisma is divine and inscrutable, cardinals or mullah do not have peers but only followers and believers. What surprises is that women, in particular in the Western world, conquered equality rights, taming boys, yet they are the most regular church goers, even if priests and preachers heavily discriminate them, only relegating them to marginal and secondary roles. In other words they are willing to be faithful (in the sense of authority acceptance) to cardinals, but not to their partner or husband. I would like to see Mrs Bonetti dressed as a cardinal in a conclave about to elect a lady Pope, but I fear I will not live long enough to see this dream come true.

With the sounds of cicadas I was sitting under the branches of the several-century old olive tree, which was probably surprised of my random thoughts. The olive tree, being 500 years old must have been witnessed all sorts of things probably it looked down

on me tenderly. Its sturdy well rooted and knotty trunk with irregular fibres all spiralled upwards, suggested me that the truth has a winding path, with lots of difficulties. The tree knew that nature does not proceed in a hurry, but it is slow and inexorable, like a wise old man it advised me not to be rash and impulsive but rely on perseverance and on being consistent , only that last through time.

The table was already set for dinner, my friends were joking with Kostaky. That night we drank *resina* and clumsily danced *sirtaky*, and the corvine fish I hate acquired a peculiar taste: life is birth and death and an idea may be worth a life.

INTEGRATION DIFFICULTIES AND THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

The thought of the holiday in Greece was fading away. Some years went by, but the problems with Marco were getting worse. We managed to calm down parents' anger, explaining who Marco was, but the relationship with us and especially with him mother was becoming very difficult, irreconcilable and almost impossible to resolve. Marco was adopted at the age of 8 in Romania. Before then he lived in poor conditions in an orphanage. We were told he attended the second grade at primary school, but the truth was that he did not attend school at all. He didn't know the letters of the alphabet, he could not name and match colours and he did not have the concept of space and time. Present only existed for him. He was a single mother's second son. Later she got married and she had three more children. Marco's older brother left the orphanage and he seemed to have vanished without a trace. His family was very poor and Marco could not make out why his mother kept the three younger children with her, but could not keep him. He went to see her a couple of times and he told us that she had a glazed cupboard with glasses and she even had eggs (basically for him she had everything) but she said she could not manage to keep him at home and it was better for him to be in the orphanage. In such a situation he had a natural attitude, instead of feeling low he developed a very strong negative temper. He did not have anything to lose and, feeling unwanted, he did not trust adults. As a result he refused the concept of authority and cohabitation rules.

As-a-matter-of-fact the first cohabitation rule was violated: a mother refused her son because of the

poor economic situation. In fact Marco was – now he has improved – a conceited, arrogant presumptuous, proud, instinctive, reckless and impulsive boy. He reacted first, then he thought it over, he did not have any sense of proportion and he did not take things seriously. This was his way to react to difficulties, he built up his own thick shield, but deep down he was very naïve. On the other hand he was able to show off deep and striking displays of affection. When someone did something wrong to him or punished him, he immediately got upset and became even more withdrawn, but after a few days he was able to forget the whole thing and did not bear any grudges. One of his main problems was the fact that he did not trust anyone, including his parents. He probably kept to himself negative experience and traumas suffered at the orphanage, according to his logic they were either too personal or too painful to share them with someone.

He felt harassed and tormented by constantly being reproached and punished, but he did not realise that he was responsible for that and it is a vicious circle. To this respect he was arrogant and conceited, he took things for granted giving nothing in return. He had the attitude of someone who already lost everything and he had nothing to lose. He seemed not to be afraid of anybody and he faced adults feeling equal to them, appearing arrogant, unpleasant and rude. If he thought he was right, he was not willing to negotiate being totally inflexible. With regards to ordinary things (i.e. two-day suspension from school), even if he was upset he never cried. He only cried if I beat him up or if he is emotionally hurt i.e. when his mother does not talk to him for a few days.

In these past years, given the starting point at school and in regards to his behaviour, he made sufficient progress and he worked really hard. If we turned a blind eye on his grades, we realised that his behavioural problems were the main issue both for him and his teachers. It was not easy to deal with him in the classroom, both for his temper and his poor attention span. He did not have the same vocabulary as the other kids of the same age born in Italy, therefore many terms well known to others, were new to him. Subsequently since he did not understand very well he was very likely to distract himself and then he tended to bother his schoolmates. We realised that it took a great deal of patience and the teachers had already done their very best. We thought that the key to the problems was patience rather than trying to remove the causes of his behaviour. Relationships with classmates and kids of the same age was always difficult, but we believed that this could be considered normal.

Some parents complained about Marco reporting to the teachers that he harassed and touched girls in his classroom, implying some kind of sexual disorders. They did not explicitly say it, but they surely thought of it.

We had to take into account that Marco had previously lived in an environment with girls and boys.

When we met him at the orphanage we could not distinguish boys from girls, because they were all dressed the same way, their heads were all shaved. Therefore he did not have any inhibition in regards to girls. Marco tended to joke a lot using gestures to communicate. His displays of affections or anger could be misunderstood, also given the fact that he is

a big lad. In a normal context among boys, if he pushed someone, kids could be report him to parents for aggressive behaviour. In all this there was absolutely nothing ambiguous, and to clear every doubts or perplexities I would like to describe what happened in the 5th grade, relying on your common sense and your confidentiality

A girl in his classroom (exemplary student) gave him a letter in which she masterly invited him to show some affection to her. His behaviour was to bring the letter home and show it to his mother asking her what to he should do.

As you can see in this case, the alleged victim has become the executioner.

My wife and I were very uncompromising with Marco, when necessary we treated him with great harshness imposing punishments that to any adolescent of his age would have caused traumas for months.

Slaps and physical threats had absolutely no effect on him. He never cried unless he was hurt in his pride or feelings.

When he did something wrong he needed to be vigorously reproached, but he cannot stand to be punished for something he did not do at all, or he thought he did not do or he did with others, but he was the only one punished

Therefore we asked his teachers to carefully check and verify if he was to blame, we did realise that this was an additional workload.

An unjust punishment wiped off the work carried out in the previous weeks. We also suggested parents not to literally believe every word their children say, as in the case of the "letter" could have unpleasant surprises. What Marco needed was to trust someone, and as he did not rely on anybody he reacted

negatively to any disagreements, in some cases even denying the obvious.

Unfortunately all our efforts were rather useless. We claimed or hoped to make up for the years Marco was abandoned, but whatever we did was to no avail.

Marco was facilitated in every way, regardless his grades in two years he completed the three years of middle school, widening the gap between him and his schoolmates. We justified that with the fact that we wanted him to start his school with students of the same age, being Marco three years behind. The truth was that Marco was a bit of a hot potato and headmasters could not wait to get rid of him. With the wisdom of the hindsight I must admit it was a mistake. When he started high school he clashed with the reality of that world. I can imagine how frustrated and mortified he must have felt when he realised the gap between himself and his schoolmates in terms of grades. It was a lost battle at the start, and he reacted removing everything. The relationship with us got remarkably worse, to the point that he asked to leave our house.

One evening, after a terrible row – he unjustifiably wanted to go out at 11.30 pm – I was forced to call the police, I did not want to lay a hand on him and then be accused of child abuse.

He had some meeting with a social worker, and as he was still determined to leave our house, we decided to send him to a therapeutic community. There were no facilities available in the area, so he was sent to the community at Tuscania. Admission in the community implied two-month internship in the facility at Civitavecchia, then he could be transferred to Tuscania. The impact with the new environment

was rather heavy, he thought he got rid of constraints, but he found himself in an environment with very strict operators, where rule compliance was the first commandment. Although our door was open, he did not come back. He did not know how to solve his problems and he even started to hurt himself to draw attention i.e. he hit his head on the wall until he got big bruises, but despite his being stubborn, thanks to the skilled operators, he accepted to carry on with the programme.

The community was about five km from Tuscania: it was an old church with accommodations and necessary facilities for thirty young people. It was surrounded by green areas and it housed boys and girls who previously had drug related problems. Marco was the youngest and he was the only one with behavioural problems. The settling-in phase was ok, he was accepted fairly well because there was a lot of solidarity. He was a bit of a mascot for the group and a beautiful blond girl called him "beautiful hair". Twice a month they met with the families, following a specific schedule: first there was a meeting with parents and children, then before lunch there was a general meeting with comments and proposals. It was not nice to question yourself at 50 years old, thinking of having done your best to assure your children a normal and peaceful life and find yourself at the defendants bar as defendants guilty of not being able to transfer values and point of reference to your children so as they could have a normal life.

Everyone told his story and generally the first stumbling block was to accept the situation. One tended to hide the problems to neighbours and acquaintances and soon it becomes apparent that the

only viable solution is to bring it to light with determination and without subterfuge.

I saw crying and powerless parents blaming themselves for something that they did not do. In good faith they believed they did everything they could, but inexplicably they had a drug addicted child in return.

Many young people fall into this trap either because they are naïve, curious or for the taste of doing something forbidden, for transgression. They are also helped by the fact the in-force legislation encourages illegal markets and mafia drug promoters. Unfortunately these substances create physical addiction, which cannot be rationally controlled and often they lead to a vicious spiral that brings to destruction. Other people take drugs doing so by rational choice. They are deluded ones, seeking ecstasy with *ecstasy*. Paradoxically they search for a condition of wellbeing, strong and seemingly pleasant sensations, but eventually they ruin themselves. They do exactly the opposite of what they should do, and I mean being rational to be able to fully enjoy a state of mind a brilliant intuition or the sight of a beautiful woman.

When I went to visit the community I surprisingly thought to myself: how can it be possible? I am among drug addicts, scum of the society, but I had the feeling I was in a clean place in which there were solidarity, rules compliance and job sharing even in regards to the most humble jobs such as cleaning the toilets.

It was a microcosm where people learned how to live and reflect on themselves, it was generally managed and run by a priest, as the Government considers

itself morally inadequate to resolve these problems and delegates everything to religious organisations. Moreover who has always taken care of the desperate people and of the ones who lost their "way" but the Church?

In official festivities politicians do their very best to attend parties and thank these exceptional people (I am very much convinced about that) and they do not realise that they imply the total failure of the Government to resolve drug related problems. Unfortunately these people's efficiency, good will and dedication is totally vanished by their own attitude in regards to this issue.

"Drugs are immoral and a sin, therefore they have to be prohibited." They act well and achieve good results at the bottom of the problem, but they do not realise to be one of the causes of the drug phenomenon. They are paradoxically functional to some organisations which illegally promote drugs, doing excellent business, as drugs illegal and not regulated. They protect a very questionable moral principle and they are willing to be involuntary allies of various crime organisations involved in drug dealing and selling. The contradiction is even more striking if it is referred to persons. In theory all prohibitionists, whether politicians or prelates, are among the strongest advocates of the inviolability of persons. They strongly believe in the possibility of redemption and repentance of drug addicts because they are capable of thinking, reasoning and overcome the difficulties they have. Potential drug addicts (standard people like everyone of us) are not able to discern what is good and what is evil. This is a prerogative of the State and Church, who decide what we eat and drink

Their loving care go so far as to consider us fools as normal individuals, whilst we are rational and discerning people as drug addicts.

You exemplary father, why are you worried?

Your son is safe, because drugs are banned! When he has problems or he goes through difficult times he will not find drugs in communities or organized facilities bearing the responsibility of a potential use, he will find it outside school, in night clubs, or couriers and specialised agents will deliver it to him.

You can peacefully sleep as the Government achieve different important results through this situation:

- swelling the various mafias coffers;
- tempting your child with the charm of the forbidden;
- depriving generations of responsibilities;
- draining your bank account to buy drugs;
- cramming prisons with desperate harmless people to attend the crime university.

In return you will satisfactorily comply with a holy moral and ethical principle: "drugs are immoral and a sin, so they must be banned."

Prohibitionists consider themselves and others unable of discerning what is good and what is evil. They seem to be very self confident, but they do not trust anyone and – the truth is – they are even afraid of their shadow.

DRUGS

It was winter and I was on duty at Treviso Canadair Base. We were operating on a large fire about 15 miles West of S. Croce Lake. The area was rather difficult to reach, but with an extra aircraft from Ciampino things seemed to be under control, in fact that morning we did not alert us.

"Hi Tito, how is the situation?"

It seems ok now, as you can see the wind has calmed down and today we are likely to rest.

"That would be great, we worked on extinguishing the fire, flying for 6 hours a day for the past 3 days. How come...! You...former soldier of the Air Force Academy are unable to keep pace?

"What are you saying, are you teasing me? However, this is a peculiar job, you can spend 20 days relaxing and waiting and then in a week it is payback time.

By the way, how is your son? "

Unfortunately, he is not well He is in a therapeutic community in Tuscania.

"Don't tell me that he is a drug addict....!"

No he doesn't take drugs, he has behavioural problems Given that he decided to leave home, we decided to send him to a therapeutic community, in accordance with the social worker. He ended up in Tuscania as in Latina there was not availability.

"These shitty drug addicts....! I would chuck them all in jail ... total war to them, pushers, producers, the mafiaforget about free drug as your Radical friends say!"

Again...you don't get it do you?my Radical friends, as you put it, say something else: "legalisation and regulation."

How come in twenty years in Italy we have not been able to grasp this simple concept!

There is a huge difference between the two things, how can you with your reporter friends, with Giovanardi, Gasbarri, Muccioli, Cardinals keep saying "drug free, liberalisation" carefully avoiding the comparison with "legalisation and regulation?

"But there is no difference between the two!"

Well if you say so, I am supposed to be an immoral individual, an unfit father who does not care about his children, about old ladies pickpocketed in the street because I want drug liberalisation, unlike you supporting drug prohibition, you are supposed to be an honest, rational, sensible man, you care about old ladies and you send drug addicts to jail, you fight mafia, drug dealers and multinational drug companies.

It is far too easy and cheap to have a peaceful good conscience by simply banning drugs. You know better than I do that drugs have never been so free just because they are prohibited.

Moreover this condition means neglecting responsibility, as if drugs were legal everyone would publicly and consciously bear the responsibility for any potential use and consumption.

In any case, since today we are not flying and we have time, let's play a game.

Do you remember when we were lieutenant colonels and we attended the Air War College in Florence?

"Of course I remember! Nine months spent on studying logical thinking, reasoning errors, how to write a letter, a note, a technical memorandum, an operating memorandum, how boring!"

I see you remember more than I do, therefore you are not totally oblivious to those things. What I did not understand is why they call it Air War College, in fact it was a good school for Executives where you study problem solving. Ok then let's assume we have

to organise a war against drugs and our leader has called us to identify possible solutions and prepare possible actions (the so called PA), basically we have to prepare an operating memorandum. The objective is the following: defeat all the drug relating crime organisations drug dealers and consumers, destruction of all production centres and places where drugs are grown or cultivated.

"The objective sounds perfect. Let's start by expressing the artefact (the background situation) the assignment and the purpose."

It is not a piece of cake....I can't think of anything, it is always hard to start.

"..... artefact... the background situation!"

Ok then:

Following high consumption of drugs, pickpocketing, robberies, drug dealing and selling, and consequently crime organisations' rising profits, the Government and the Parliament instructed the Police Force and if necessary the Army to carry out the operating plan in order to heavily reduce the phenomenon, severely damaging mafia organisations, isolating and punishing the culprits in accordance to the law

"Now, let's set constraints and limitations."

Constraints:

- Italian law on drugs;
- International law, sovereignty of States;

Limitations:

- Law enforcement forces availability and quality.

"OK we can start with brainstorming, basically we have to say everything that comes to mind without constraints, and then set the relationships and interdependencies among things, you can start first please"

- drugs and their consumption are immoral and the Government is doing the right thing to prohibit them;
- drugs are agricultural product, just like potatoes, therefore eating potatoes is also immoral
- potatoes are good and drugs are bad
- even cannabis regulates eye pressure and its by-products are used as medicines in pain therapy in terminally ill people
- drugs are evil because they are good and bad
- if I drink two litres of wine a day I fell sick and become an alcoholic, why isn't wine banned?
- Drug addicts are scum of society, depraved people, with no principles
- People take drugs because they are dissatisfied have nothing to do
- Others take drugs as they are drawn by the charm of the forbidden, perhaps if they had drugs at home, just like whiskey they would not care.
- People take drugs because their parents are divorced, or for financial difficulties, unemployment, and inability to deal and resolve problems.
- If I do not bother anyone, the Government cannot prevent me from eating and drinking what I want

- If you are sick and need treatment the Government must pay hospital fees

Ok now browse in internet and find some data:

- World opium production in 2002: 4500 tonnes broken down by Afghanistan 76%, Burma 18%, Laos 2%, Colombia 1%
- World cocaine production: about 800 tonnes broken down by: Colombia 72%, Peru 20% and Bolivia 8%;
- Cannabis production: no adequate detection systems are present, but the rising of seizures of cannabis are an indirect indicator;
- synthetic drugs are annually produced 500 tonnes of amphetamine-type stimulants STA (400 amphetamines, 100 ecstasy); they can be produced everywhere, as they are not affected by climate. Their production is soaring, only in the US 8,000 labs were identified in 2001;
- World drug traffic continues to grow with amazing turnovers for crime organisations;
- The world drug report estimates that 200 million people take drugs: 163 million people take cannabis, 34 million people take amphetamines, 15 million people take opiates of which 10 million take heroin, 14 million people take cocaine, 8 million people ecstasy;
- Opiates consumption has remained stable in North America, with a slight upturn in South America, unlike in Western Europe and in Russia where opiates consumption is growing.

- the majority of UN countries reports ecstasy consumption increase by 50%;
- drug abuse is no longer a rich countries' phenomenon, but it is also spread to lower classes;
- Drugs can travel by cars, planes, ships, trains, motorboat, boats, dinghies, people, donkeys, mules, camels and many more.

We are 7 billion people (considering a conservative estimate) and theoretically we are supposed to check: 1 billion cars, 10-15,000 planes, 700-800,000 ships and boats etc..., 200 million drug addicts, mafia criminals

- In 2005 in Italy 25,541 drug addicts went to jail, they represented 30% of the total no. of convicts;
- In the years 2001-2005 the use of stimulants and hallucinogens tripled;
- Cannabis consumers range from 6.2% to 11%, cocaine users range from 1.2% to 2.2%;
- On average in Italy cocaine costs 90 euros per gram, heroin around € 60 per gram;
- The war on drugs is an asymmetrical war as the enemy is invisible, you need to search for it;
- Asymmetrical wars require more men than standard wars;
- To sum up 300 million potential couriers, users and dealers have to be monitored night and day, then cultivation places need to be identified and destroyed;
- Drugs are more expensive than gold;

- Drugs – being banned – are a mafia monopoly; huge turnovers are connected to their trade;
- At the source 1 kg of opium poppies is as cheap as 1 kg of potatoes, then drugs acquire a higher value because they are illicit, so mafia business risk must be taken into account, drugs supply is enough but prices are so high as if drugs were as rare as diamonds.

We could go on and on but I think that on the basis of these data we already have a clear picture.

Current national and international drug-related legislation greatly influence possible action plans.

In a context of prohibition we are necessarily forced to act suppressing the drug phenomenon, employing adequate forces to be efficient.

Production countries intervention has to be envisaged even if they are not able/do not want to fight the phenomenon.

Therefore possible action Plan 1 (P.A.P. 1) should foresee the following:

- identification of drug cultivation places using all possible means, scouting, satellite intelligence;
- UN/Nato Napalm bombing in Afghanistan, Burma, Laos, Columbia, Peru and Bolivia;
- Constant monitoring of ships, planes, motorboats traffic, checking at least one out of five;
- Constant monitoring of population (one person out of five) excluding people under 10 years of age as the 200 million drug users are unknown. There are about 1 million potential

drug dealers/couriers/users to keep under control;

Consequently to achieve efficient results the following would be necessary:

- Double staff within the Police forces at an international level, to assign them to this specific task only;
- Double staff at Courts and Judicial Offices (in Italy quadrupled personnel given the ongoing trials and our judicial system efficiency)
- Double the number of jails

Many drug-related problems and causes would disappear in a drug liberalisation and regulation scenario. Crime organisations would not have any interest in promoting and selling drugs because they would get back to the value it has in nature i.e. one kg of opium poppies would be equal to one kg of potatoes.

Currently – I do not know if you noticed – there are various mafia promoters who sell drugs in night clubs, in the streets, schools... the litmus test is that drugs can be found anywhere because they are prohibited. Moreover, if your son has any problem i.e. he splits up with his girlfriend and he is heartbroken he has more chance to bump into drugs because drug dealers have interest in selling them.

The greatest mafia's ad is promoted by the Government free of charge: "drug is banned because is immoral and a sin, if you want it turn to mafia".

Afghan and Colombian farmers would not have any interest in growing drugs and perhaps they would convert them into other crops. Legalisation and regulation does not mean that you can buy any drug at a convenient store, but it means that the

Government as well as holding tobacco monopoly would also have the production and distribution monopoly of substances that have important social implications.

Possible action plan no. 2 (P.A.P. 2)

- Drug legalisation and regulation through Government control;
- Set up of new structures for the controlled distribution and administration of drugs both for those who stumbled in drugs (drug users) and for those who for other reasons, or inability to sort out their problems, turn to drugs;
- Allow residents only to use these facilities;
- Improvement of therapeutic communities and similar structures.. etc.

This solution would represent a severe damage to crime organisations and they would be forced to focus their attention on other sectors as their illicit profits would plummet. This plan does not require more resources available, but only their reorganisation, giving priority to social assistance and the improvement of therapeutic facilities.

It can also be applied individually by each Government with the measure that the use of the facilities is only permitted to residents avoiding the drug addicts tourism.

Possible action plan no. 3 (P.A.P. 3)

This is the existing scheme, it is basically equal to no. 1 action plan, but it is carried out without

determination, with limited law enforcement forces. This scheme does not solve the problem, it makes it worse. In fact data show the following:

- The illicit drug production is on the rise;
- The number of users and drug addicts have increased;
- 30% of inmates are drug addicts;
- Crime organisation are thriving as well as their trade and profits.

We can now set the criteria and then assess the possible solutions.

Schemes should require the following mandatory criteria:

- Cut down on illicit production;
- Reduction on the no. of drug addicts;
- Cut down or reduce to zero crime organisations' profits
- Reduction of drug-related crime

Highly advisable non-mandatory criteria:

- Rationalise financial resources;
- Improvement of drug addicts' conditions and their families';
- Social approval in line of commonly accepted morals;

Now on the basis of the above criteria we can compare different solutions and single out the best one.

MANDATORY CRITERIA	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS		
	P.A.P. 1	P.A.P. 2	P.A.P. 3
1.Cut down on illicit production	Yes	No	No
2.Reduction of no. of drug addicts	Yes	Yes	No
3.Cut down or reduce to zero crime organisations' profits	No	Yes	No
4.National & international law compliance			
5. Decrease of drug-related crime			

HIGHLY ADVISABLE NON-MANDATORY CRITERIA	POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS		
	P.A.P. 1	P.A.P. 2	P.A.P. 3
1.Rationalise financial resources	No	Yes	No
2.Improvement of drug addicts' conditions and their families'	No	Yes	No
3. Social approval in line of commonly accepted morals			

Scheme 1 offers a temporary solution to the problem but it does not involve a war on drug producing countries, it is rather costly and does not improve drug addicts' conditions and their families.

Scheme 2 is the most adequate one and it also meets non mandatory criteria

Scheme 3

It is the current one and it is literally preposterous, it does not resolve the problem, but drug money is a source of mafia financing. The only criterion apparently met is that it is in line with commonly accepted morals. There would be so much to comment about the latter criterion.

Please note that we skipped a step: we did not indicate the enemy, the obstacle assuming it was glaringly obvious i.e. "all mafia and crime related organisations and all those drug-addicts, perverts and people with no moral principles.

However, as my colleague from Naples puts it: mafia and camorra honestly do their job if they are given the chance to do it.

If scheme 2 is the most suitable one – and I think it is obvious – the true enemy is the moral prejudice in regards to the drug issue. I am referring to the so called respectable and sensible God-fearing people. In order to have a peaceful conscience they choose the cheap way and they deny the evidence, except when they surprisingly find out that their son takes drugs. They are forced to sell their house and go back and forth between jail because their son was caught with an illicit dose.

"Approximately 80% of MP are prohibitionists therefore they are also the enemy. In my opinion you and your friends are presumptuous, you always want to be right. If the Church is prohibitionist, most of MP are prohibitionists, those responsible for the therapeutic communities are prohibitionists, it means something doesn't it. Of course! Therapeutic communities' attitude contribute to create 100 drug-addicts, treating 80 and saving 20 of them. As you can see it is a positive balance.

If I am not mistaken we also had a referendum on the subject and the 50% of Italians voted for it. Why don't MP realise that the current situation is a nonsense?

Are they all insane? I don't think so. The fact is that these people know perfectly well that the solution to the problem is drug liberalisation, but they also know it is not a very popular solution.

It would be enough to set up a Commission in Parliament and they would draw the same conclusion we did. Unfortunately their criteria are not in line with common sense. They are able to solve problems perfectly well, but any solution they may find has to meet one essential criterion: "how many votes it can get for me and my party?

You know what it is like...they have a family to support! They are not really concerned about the best solution, they have to bend their already twisted neck to the most vulgar populism to save their job (their seat in Parliament), being perfectly aware that they are our employees (as Grillo says) we do not realise of being their employers. You can carry on voting them, but if by any unlucky chance some of your dear ones take drugs do not come to me and complain, because I will not listen.

"How come you turn so sour, almost bad...people do not want to have problems, they do not want to leave their pack how come you manage to make yourself so many enemies?"

Well I do not have any drug-related problems, I was offered a joints a couple of times, it was a pleasant feeling, but I can get the same effect with a few glasses of Primitivo di Manduria wine, only spending 20 cents, therefore I am not interested.

What makes my blood boil is that many people suffer and ruin their lives, financing mafia organisations, because of some stupid moral prejudice.

You see...it was just an exercise, but in one afternoon we found a solution to this problem. Put the scheme in practice only depends on me, you and many others out there. MP, cardinals, Muccioli, drug-addicts have little to do.

If you have to get mad at someone, just get angry with yourself for relying on these people whose sole purpose is their survival

POPES AND THE VATICAN

Life in the therapeutic community carried on as normal. The boys were engaged in different activities and projects, among which, a pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela (the way of St James).

In that period a religious holiday occurred, and they took the chance to "train" for the pilgrimage travelling a stretch of the route Francigena up to North of Bolsena. They strictly travelled on foot, stopping in some places along the way and they slept in tents. It took a week, then all the pilgrims gathered at the Vatican, the final destination. Marco told us we and the other parents had to meet him in Rome, where they arrived.

"Tito please call Ciampino and ask them to change your working shift next Sunday, you are supposed to be on duty if I am not mistaken".

Do we really need to go?

"I really think so, we have to speak with the people in charge of the Community, he has been there for over 1 and a half year now. He has calmed down now and they think they have accomplished the task. In our previous meeting they mentioned the need to start an "easy return programme" so once a month he could spend about a week at home, going back and forth between the Community.

It is a coincidence, a month ago I was in Santiago de Compostela because of the fire that broke out in Galicia, and I found out that people have been travelled this pilgrimage route for over a millennium in Spain.

"Talking about Santiago I am still upset because you spent 10 days there and did not ask me to join you".

As you know in case of emergency with Canadair aircraft, especially abroad, the duration of our stay is

never certain, depending on the evolving of the situation. You could have gone to Santiago, but the next day I might have returned to Italy.

When we got there Santiago was covered by a cloud of smoke, the enormous cathedral looked more gloomy than usual. It represented the atmosphere in which it was built, around the year 1000, when the end of the world was expected.

"How come the end of the world?"

My dear, when I was there I learned something I did not know, people believed that in the year 1000 the world was coming to an end.

It was a turbulent period with excesses of all kinds, ranging from brutal and criminal behaviour to non-violent attitudes through a state of ecstasy.

Hermits and were very popular, and Satan believes were widespread.

Speaking with the local people, I learned that many rich lords left their estate into the custody of the Church for the time they travelled down the way of St James or to the Holy Land and thus expiate their sins, waiting for the world end.

The journeys were long and dangerous, there was a high rate of pilgrims who never returned, they were often killed along the way by villains, and as-a-matter-of-fact the Church had to keep their estates.

"You have become worse than your father with that your attitude towards the Church, there is no evidence of this approaching end of the world".

Oh ... I haven't made it up, I was told that! However I believe that the Church was not a great example of virtue in that period.

"Well .. if you want to have an idea of that, just go on the web and type the word Popes."

Here they are, they are listed from St Peter up to the current Pope. Let's focus on the period 900-1300

This is what we can find:

- Christopher (903-904) usurped the papacy to Leo V, but six months later he was dethroned by Sergius III;
- Sergius III (903-904) had a concubine named Marozia and a son who became 'John XI';
- Anastasius III (911-913);
- Landon (913 - 914) became Pope and died six months later;
- John-X (915-928);
- Leo VI (928-929) short pontificate his death was not due to natural causes;
- Stephen VII-(929-931) died probably killed by the opposite party;
- John XI (931-936) son of Marozia and Pope Sergio III;
- Leo VII (936-939) declared itself opposed to the marriage of priests;
- Stephen VIII (939-942);
- Martin III (943 - 946);
- Agapetus-II (946-956);
- John XII (956-964) elected pope at 18 years old, he died or he was murdered; antipope Leo VIII;
- Benedict V (964-965) Antipope Leo;
- John XIII (965-972);
- Benedict VI (972-973) shortly after his election he was imprisoned by the antipope Boniface VII;
- Dono II (973-974) he held a three-month papacy;
- Benedict VII (975-984);
- John XIV (984-985) shortly after his election he was imprisoned by the antipope Boniface VII;
- John XV (986-996);
- Gregory V (996-999) elected pope at 24 years old, Antipope John XVI;

- Sylvester II (999-1003);
- Benedict VIII (1012-1024) Antipope Gregory;
- John XIX (1024-1033) brother of Benedict VIII;
- Benedict IX (1033-1044) elected pope at about 10 years old, ousted by the Romans for his vices and crimes and replaced with Antipope Sylvester II, who retired a few months later. The pope sold the Tiara to his stepfather Gregory VI;
- Gregory VI (1044-1046) got money for the sale of the papacy;
- Clement II (1046-1047) was poisoned, antipopes Benedict IX Sylvester III;
- Damasus II held a 23-day papacy, probably poisoned in Palestrina;
- Leo IX (1049-1054) decreed that women who were priests' prostitutes had to be used as slaves by the Lateran;
- Victor II (1055-1057);
- Stephen IX (1057-1058) Antipope Benedict X;
- Nicholas II (1059-1061) Antipope Benedict X;
- Alexander II (1061-1073) Antipope Honorius II;
- Gregory VII (1073-1085) Antipope Gilberto;
- Victor III (1086-1087) Antipope Gilberto;
- Paschal II (1099-1118) Antipope Gregory VIII;
- Gelasius II (1118-1119) Antipope Gregory VIII;
- Callistus II (1119-1124) deposed the antipope Gregory VIII;
- Honorius II (1124-1130) Antipope Celestine II;
- Innocent II (1130-1143) Antipopes Victor IV and Anacletus II
- Celestine II (1143-1144);
- Lucius II (1144-1145);
- Eugene III (1145-1153);
- Anastasius IV (1153-1154);
- Adrian IV (1154-1159) condemned Arnaldo da Brescia to death;

- Alexander III (1150-1181) Antipopes, Victor IV, Pasquale III Calixtus III;
- Lucius III (1181-1185) laid the foundations for the Inquisition;
- Urban III (1185-1187);
- Gregory VIII (1187) held a two-month pontificate;
- Clement III (1187-1191);
- Celestine III (1191-1198);
- Innocent III (1198-1216) appointed himself Prefect of Rome;
- Honorius III (1216-1227);
- Gregory IX (1227-1241);
- Celestine IV (1241) died after 20 days, suspected poisoned by a cardinal competitor;
- Innocent IV (1243-1254) elected after a long period of vacant papacy;
- Urban IV (1261-1264) elected by nine cardinals;
- Clement IV (1263-1269);
- Gregory X (1271-1276) elected after three years of vacant papacy;
- Innocent V (1276) elected on 21st February, he died on 22nd June;
- Adrian V (1276) elected on 11th July, he died on 16th August;
- John XXI (1276-1277) elected after the cardinals were locked up and forced to remain in the conclave;
- Nicholas III (1277-1280) cancelled the right to elect a civil governor or senator for the Romans;
- Honorius IV (1285-1287);
- Nicholas IV (1288-1292) elected after a long period of vacantia;
- Celestine V (1294), refused the Papacy;
- Boniface VIII (1294-1303) he locked up Celestine V in Fumona and had him murdered. Shortly

after Celestine V was sanctified by Boniface VIII himself.

There are 20 Antipopes out of 71 Popes and they seem rather busy doing things that have nothing to do with spirituality and religion.

I am surprised to come across this information now, nobody ever told me at school, nor have I read it in books. These facts were removed because we need to have an idyllic vision of history, some things are negligible ... insignificant compared to the Church magnitude and to many Popes' integrity and so close to holiness!

If we flick through these Popes' biography, we can note a common feature i.e. the attempt to affirm the supremacy of the Church above everything and everyone in the name of the revealed truth.

Whoever holds the government of ideas can rule the world and behave accordingly.

For example take a noble member of the current Church, Cardinal Ruini, he is reluctant but he has to take care of earthly matters, even if he would only want to watch, without intervene. For example when the poor ignorant Italians request a referendum on DICO, which is explicitly opposed to his ideal country's ethical and moral principles (the Vatican) he is required to intervene. The problem is that he does not intervene as an Italian citizen, but as Cardinal Ruini, citizen of the Vatican, or even as secretary of the Vatican state. It would be the same if Condoleezza Rice officially came to Italy. He is one of the few lucky people (they are about 900) with dual citizenship, the Vatican one and the Italian one. If I

wanted to apply for the Vatican citizenship I should become a resident cardinal, or I can be offered a citizenship by the Pope at his own discretion. The Vatican is an absolute ruler in which the Pope holds all the powers.

"It seems odd to compare the Pope to a monarch or to a dictator, but according to the Canon Law he is just the same thing.

But how? We all abhor monarchies, totalitarian regimes, dictators, theocracies and do we allow to have one within our own country?

"Yes but the Vatican is not involved in any war, it does not torture people, it only does good deeds and it always supports peace, just like Mr Bertinotti, unless we are referring to Crusades for the Vatican and to the Bolshevik revolution for Mr Bertinotti. Technically it is an absolute monarchy, yet it does not appear that way, but if we raise our eyes for a moment we realise that it is a monarchy '*par excellence*', it is the absolute ruler of ideas and knowledge allegedly granted by God through divine consent.

I say allegedly because observing some Popes' deeds I doubt that God has something to do with them.

"Are you done? Do you still need to give vent to something else?

Mind you that next Sunday we have to go to the Vatican, if they knew your views on the matter, they would not let you in".

I think that they know it well, they have a very efficient information network, it works even better than the Police's. In the remotest village there is always a church and a priest, who knows everything about every body. Anyway it could work both ways, if it depended on me I would send the Vatican citizens, who come to Italy every day, through passport

control (non Schengen area), just to point out – for the avoidance of any doubt – that there are two independent countries: Italy and the Vatican.

HOMOSEXUALITY

Marco started his return home programme about three months ago, and things seemed to be all right, even if he did not get along well with his mother. Sometimes we went and pick him up in Tuscania, otherwise he came home on his own by train from Civitavecchia.

On the train he met some boys who commute from Latina to Rome to go to university. I think this is something positive, because being away from home for two years he lost his contacts from school and when he is at home he does not have much to do.

We realised that Marco's readjustment could have been a problem.

The best thing for him was to attend a training course, so he could start working after two or three years, but he insisted on going back to High School. Not aware of his condition he did not understand how things are, he had his own ideas about school, he thought he just needed to attend.

I tried to explain in every possible way that school was not what he thought that he needed to study with perseverance and he had to make sacrifices, but he does not seem to listen.

My wife and I often argued on this topic, she accused me of being too permissive and tolerant, that I was being fooled, and then we were at daggers drawn. She was probably right as she knows him better than me. I cannot see any other way rather than being indulgent and give in, just to keep him busy and have the chance to make friends at school. The alternative would have been a direct confrontation, which we previously experienced and he ended up in the therapeutic community.

Another week was left to complete the programme and then he could be definitely at home. One evening at dinner he revealed something shocking to us.

We had just finished dinner and I noticed a sort of restlessness in his behaviour.

Marco what's the matter?

"Please do not get mad, I have something to say: I am gay".

Suddenly we went all quiet. My wife was washing the pot and dropped it in the sink. I was petrified and it took me a few seconds to grasp what he said.

Are you sure? When did you find out?

"I already had a feeling I was gay, and the friends I met on the train confirmed it, and they suggested me to tell you, they are also gay.

Marco you are going through a very peculiar period, you can be easily influenced. You probably convinced yourself you are gay, just to please them and be their friends.

I think that being gay is not something you acquire by birth, but it is a mental attitude, and I also believe that being gay is a conscious or unconscious choice and not a DNA factor.

"Well right now this is the way I feel, I have nothing against women, but I am not particularly attracted to them."

Anyway you should know that most of the people around you will give you a hard time, and you will have more problems than the ones you already have. Think it over now that you are going back to the therapeutic community, and perhaps deep down inside yourself and you may change idea. In any case given the fact that you insist on going back to school, despite your conditions and your mom's disagreement I am trying to find a small apartment in Latina. The area where we live is not well served

and I cannot take you to school every morning because I am often away for work.

I tried to change the subject waiting for him to go out with his new friends, and discuss the situation at a later stage.

Instinctively I did not want him to see them, I felt the urge to forbid him to go out, quickly I realised it would have been pointless.

"That is all we need right now, I always told you that he does whatever he wants, without even thinking of the consequences of his behaviour".

I am sorry... I am so mad that I would like him to get out of this house, so he would be left alone to himself.

"Don't overreact, there are many gay people around, it was ok for you before, now that we are affected personally the situation changes, especially for you that are a man".

You know me I am not embarrassed by the fact that sooner or later I'll have to tell my colleagues or friends, but by the fact it literally makes me sick to imagine any type of intimate relationship between me and another man. Off the records... they don't know what them miss.

I see, but you cannot expect other people to have the same sexual attitudes as you have".

Well it seems something unnatural, at the end of the day the purpose of sex is to procreate, if it also a source of pleasure it is a separate subject.

"Why are you so bothered by that?"

I am embarrassed and nervous, oddly enough it feels like a threat. In fact if I think about it, it is like a personal threat, an instinctive, anthropological matter. In the worst case scenario if 90% of the population became gay or lesbian it would be likely to lead to the destruction of our species.

"What a nonsense, what kind of example is that?
How absurd!"

It is absurd but it is not a nonsense. If the example of 90% of gay people was real, it would be a logical and not far-fetched consequence.

If I think that homosexuals, gay organisations underestimated this instinctive and anthropological feature. From their point of view they cannot understand why people are opposed to them and cannot bear them.

People consciously or unconsciously feel this as a threat to their survival. I am aware it sounds surreal but this is the way I see it.

To make things worse they often speak about gay/lesbian marriage. I have nothing against a union between two men or two women. It is a choice I respect and I understand the need of legally regulating these unions, but when they speak of marriage I cannot understand.

Some years ago on TV I saw two representatives of the gay community. They spoke about marriage and suggested the indissolubility of gay marriage. It is the usual trick of distorted and inappropriate use of terms: "marriage" unequivocally identifies the union of a man and a woman.

I do not understand why these people want to fool themselves denying the evidence.

It is much simpler to make up another word i.e. "*homounion*". I think that very few people – a part from Taliban of morals and ethics – would be opposed to gay marriage legal recognition which would have administrative effects but this type of union would have nothing to do with marriage.

I do not mean to rub salt in the wound, but whoever refers to gay pride should also abhor gay marriage in favour of this new type of *homounion*. These people

should find marriage repulsive as much as I find *homounion* repulsive

"I see, but many of them feel like women in many, respect. They have plastic surgery, they are castrated to create an opening, said bluntly something that could act like the female organ.

You said it right, they feel like women, but – the harsh truth is – they are not!

I can also feel immortal but it is as sure as the sun rises I am not immortal. I repeat myself I cannot make out why they are fooling themselves in such a blatant way. Anyway if they are happy believing that I am glad for them. Unfortunately for us we are not like groupers that are born female and then turn into males.

Hats off to those who for personal reasons or believes have the courage to challenge millions of years of human species evolution, experimenting forms of unions which – whether we like it or not are "*unnatural*".

It is true that homosexuality has always existed, but it has never been a material part of human nature. In the past it was perhaps more widespread than now, it was almost considered something normal.

Many illustrious men had a wife, mistresses, sons and various "*eromenos*", but to my knowledge they never theorised marriage between two persons of the same sex. I fully understand that if there is a deep relationship between two persons of the same sex it could also lead to a physical union which has anyway nothing to do with marriage. Personally, and I am not ironic I am very grateful to them for their contribution to birth control, given the irresponsibility and the short-sighting of the vast majority of the world's political and spiritual leaders towards this issue.

We have to thank fundamentalist gays who consciously or unconsciously are serving Nature to contain demographic growth.

"Now you are crossing the line! You are assuming that the growing number of gay unions could be a mechanism put in place by Nature to control births".

To tell you the truth I never thought of that, I simply noticed a practical consequence referred to this type of unions in relation to a problem, it would be useful to take a deeper insight at these interconnections and interdependencies.

"I see you've calmed down."

Yes I have. I realise that the unknown is what we fear and worry about, especially if the unknown is classified as sin by common morals.

In my own way, even if superficially I began to examine the issue and I just needed a bit of understanding in order to dispel fear.

I only hope Marco will not become a fundamentalist gay and he will be able to get back to heterosexual condition, then if he wants to have homosexual relationships.... He may like that, I will not, but at the end of the day, that is his life.

JUSTICE AND CRIMINAL PROCEDURE CODE VOL II

The solution we thought about, I mean. the apartment in Latina seemed to be working and Marco went back to school, he could come home with his friends when he wanted, and normally he did that once a week.

This meant extra costs for me, but fortunately I could afford it. I was worried if at the time his horizon was limited to the gay universe. He was always distracted, disorganised, with no sense of proportion, he constantly justified himself saying...I did not do it on purpose and that made my wife go mad.

She never missed the chance to remind me that my good-natured and tolerant behaviour towards him made things worse.

We often had arguments on this matter and he seemed to have a particular ability to trigger those rows.

One night his motorcycle was stolen, it was parked out of the house.

He is careless but he is also unlucky. I had never had anything stolen.

I tend to trust people and I took my time before I bought a safety chain.

I felt very bad and I found out things about myself I could never imagined.

If I could have caught the thief I would have beaten him up and I started to appreciate some Islamic countries customs to sort out this problem.

Is it your first theft? Good, if you are caught you repair the damage...I'll chop your hand off and after

hospitalisation and loving cares paid by the Government, you are free again.

It is unlikely the thief does it a third time, in that case I'll cut the other hand off, so the problem is sorted out for him and the community.

"I am surprised! You non-violent and radical, you always say it is much better to persuade than to impose, you would like to introduce the old law Eye for an eye, Tooth for a Tooth?".

The temptation is great, perhaps I am so upset, but this is a serious issue. Don't steal is even one of the ten commandments, but since I was born I have never heard a Pope's *Angelus* mentioning a word on the subject.

The worst that can happen to a thief is that he can spend two months in jail, after he can quietly start again.

"I know that punishments for this type of crime are derisory, I am sure that if a thief knew that he could end up in jail for 5 years, he could think it over before doing anything. The problem is that jails could get overcrowded, and new jails would be needed. Hand cutting is more effective and would not increase costs charged to the community".

Well...if such concept were approved in Italy we would be considered the butchers' of the West. Hand cutting is a sure and efficient punishment. On the other hand the deterrent not to commit crimes is directly proportional to the certainty and immediacy of punishment, regardless the type of punishment whether it is a physical one or the deprivation of liberty.

Given the fact that we are Westerners and we abhor the law of Talion, we should pay a little bit more attention to the codes of criminal procedure. Have

you ever wondered for instance what are general or specific mitigating or extenuating factors?

Should justice be consistent to the crime or circumstances in which it was committed? A friend of mine robs an apartment because he has no money to buy food, whilst I rob an apartment because I enjoy doing it or because I am a kleptomaniac. We both steal to satisfy our needs, in a potential trial we were both entitled to general or specific mitigating factors or to plea bargain with suspended sentence.

Plea bargain? Please tell me if this has something to do with justice.

As a simple citizen I never had to deal with Courtrooms. I thought of justice as the blindfolded goddess who is impartial because she cannot see anyone. Instead I find out that justice negotiates, just like at the market "we know you stole something and there are some ongoing investigations, don't make us waste time and money, confess your crime and we can come to an agreement.

Well...let's see art 2651 bis par. A) II sub paragraph of part 2, Code of criminal procedure vol. II states that in case of theft is punishable with one year in jail, but given the fact that you ask for a plea bargain, the punishment is reduced to 6 months and then as it is our first theft in this case you are entitled to general mitigating factors, so the punishment is reduced to 3 months and obviously we apply a suspended sentence for one year, therefore you must be very careful not to re-offend within one year, because in that case the penalty is implemented and you'll go to jail for 3 months. When one year has elapsed you can smoothly start stealing again. The only disadvantage is that you are reported into a criminal record and when the police stop you they'll find out that you were convicted for felony and

that you have a criminal record. If by any chance you would like to become an honest citizen and look for a job, rest reassured that any employer can find out about your criminal record and therefore you will not be hired. Obviously any job in the public sector is out of the question.

In short I do not know if it is clear for you, you were convicted for theft, you did not go to jail, but your true punishment is the fact that you have no other option but carry on stealing.

In this an other similar cases the Court becomes a *crime factory*, the machine is so perfectly oiled that crime production outnumbers the completion of ongoing proceedings. There is a constant need of personnel, high demand and high salaries.

Often people get upset when MP vote for their own salary raise, but few people are aware that MP salaries are linked to magistrates salaries, therefore for once they are not guilty.

"You really make me laugh when you belch out like this but the art. of vol. II is a clear example of how twisted and burdensome is justice. It lost its true essence.

Thank you for telling me that I am belching out, but frankly I do not know who is belching forth more, they are concentrated on the motivations and circumstances in which an offence is caused to the point that crime itself (the most important fact i.e. the act of stealing) is considered something secondary.

There can be thousands of motivations and circumstances, and they may be even catalogued so, perhaps we can expect Vol. III and IV will be compiled.

It is far too easy to have an article of law stating that the act of stealing is punishable by law with one year

imprisonment - upon the condition that the stolen goods are returned to their lawful owner - whether a car or a million euro are stolen.

Extenuating, mitigating factors, plea bargain would not exist, if you want to bargain you can go to the vegetable market. If you steal again the punishment gets worse, if you steal for the second time the punishment is 2-year imprisonment, if you steal for the third time the punishment is four years in jail, if you steal for the fourth time The sentence is eight years.

Even if you are smart and behave in an exemplary manner in jail you will not be released before the time is due and you will serve your sentence until the last second.

Once you have served your sentence, in the eye of the law your criminal record is clean, you can apply for a job in the public sector and, if you have the skills you can even become the President of the Republic.

The only record you are registered in is the one kept by the Court simply because you were previously convicted, and it has to be known in case you do it again.

"Dream on! Such an article in the Code would almost serve as deterrent as hand cutting and within two three years thefts would be likely to drop by 50% and then they could become sporadic.

Furthermore you did not consider the fact that if lawyers and prosecutors did not have the construct of plea bargain and extenuating factors to bring at hearings what could they argue about? Verdicts could be reached in a day and not in six months, one year or five years!

They would do their job, lawyers trying to prove the defendant's innocence, prosecutors proving the opposite and the Court would issue rulings.

Another thing I do not understand for instance, and I am referring to more serious offences is that whoever murders two or three people before committing the crime is a normal person, but suddenly during the legal proceedings he becomes affected by mental incapacity. Any respectable defence lawyer promptly asks for a psychiatric expert because he knows there are extenuating factors involved.

What does mental incapacity mean? Does it perhaps mean that an individual is not able to reason and resolve problems? It seems that more or less that applies to all of us.

What is disconcerting is the disability of mind, being unable to act on your own will, on this ground how are you supposed to take action? You should vegetate for 30-40 years, motionless, waiting to die.

Even an insane person, in his own logic, is capable of acting on his own will, being driven by reason or instinct.

Therefore, going back to legal proceedings, to avoid being fooled by the usual smart individuals.... "excuse me you murdered someone and the psychiatric assessment report shows that you are mentally disable, your punishment is 25-year imprisonment, given the circumstances you cannot serve the sentence in prison, but in a Judicial Psychiatric Hospital (formerly criminal mental asylum) and however the punishment is still 25 years.

I am sure that after half an hour everybody would turn sane and after some time even psychiatric expert assessment requests would plunge... or at

least they would be strictly limited to true insanity cases.

After all a criminal with mental disorders does not see much difference between Judicial Psychiatric Hospital and another similar facility if he suffers from disability of mind.

For a madman everything will do and perhaps he would prefer to be in prison for 30 years or for good, so he would not cause anymore troubles. Then if during his stay in a J.P.H. skilful doctors and treatment allow him to get back to a normal condition there's no better chance to show this person that if you murder someone you have to be punished for that offence. It seems obvious that a sane person should serve his sentence in a standard prison. If a State cannot ensure the certainty and immediacy of the punishment I believe that is morally and ethically much better to apply the law of Talion.

THE SITUATION GOT OUT OF CONTROL

For over one and a half year the situation with Marco was all right. He seemed to be more independent, nevertheless he was still linked to his new friends, his school difficulties persisted, but that did not worry me much, because going to school for Marco was a way to socialise and regain some balance, rather than to get good grades.

What was getting worse was my relationship with my wife. We were both very much involved in the situation, but since I was often away from home for professional reasons she had to bear most of the physical and psychological burden.

A love-hate relationship developed between the two of them and it often led to an almost complete inability to communicate. After trying so hard for years and years she was almost about to throw in the towel. On the other hand he carried on undaunted, making the same mistakes, showing an attitude as everything was due to him.

The gap between my behaviour and hers towards him kept widening, we were unable to find a satisfying and convincing compromise for both. We often had discussions which ended into arguments with mutual accusations of being insensitive on one hand and being too permissive on the other.

One day in November we had a surprise and a partial answer to our doubts and misunderstandings. It was about 6 am, it was drizzling and it was still dark, we were sleeping when the barking dogs and someone knocking at the door woke me up. I did not have the dimmest idea of who it might be, and still sleepy I went into the living room, opened the door and found Marco right there before me.

He had a sweater and pyjamas trousers, he was bare foot and soaking wet
Marco what happened?

With a weak voice he said: "I cut my wrists."

Then he stopped answering my questions, his gaze empty, he was shivering as he was cold, he had walked bare foot in the rain for over 8 km.

I almost carried him to the bathroom, the sweater sleeves were dirty with blood but luckily the wounds were not very deep. I wrapped his wrists with bandages and covered him with a blanket.

My wife was very upset, I told her to stay in bed, I did not want her to see him like that. I changed his clothes and took him to the emergency unit at the hospital.

On the way there he said he always saw a light that told him to cut his veins, oddly he was angry with Berlusconi, probably because on TV he was criticised at that time.

At the emergency room, after I filled out the admission forms he was hospitalised. I was told to come back to the mental hygiene department later that morning.

I was shocked and confused, and the first thing that crossed my mind was to go to his small apartment and see what happened.

When I got there, going up the stairs I noticed consisting blood trails. The door was open and obviously the doggie that lived with Marco was not there.

I went down to the courtyard and I found the doggie scampering off aimlessly. Going back upstairs I bumped into a lady, who politely asked what had happened, she was not too inquisitive though and

told me not to worry that she would have taken care of cleaning up.

Going back home I had the clear impression that a very hard time was going to begin for me: an unknown environment was ahead of me and it made me feel anxious and frightened at the same time.

"So, what did they say at the hospital?"

Nothing specific, and they hospitalised Marco and told me to go back later in the morning.

"I have always told you that there was something that was not right in his irrational behaviour, but you always underestimated that, he'll change, he'll understand you said! And here we are now.

Well I think positive by nature and you always see negative, we clashed on this point before and yet we haven't changed our views. However if it is a mental health problem our viewpoints are irrelevant at this stage, as we are both unable and unequipped to resolve it.

"Let's not think of it right now, I am going to prepare a bag for the hospital, go to bed and rest a bit, you look exhausted and stop smoking, you lit up five cigarettes in twenty minutes.

I don't think I'll be able to sleep, but I'll try.

At 12 noon we were at the hospital, we went to the mental hygiene department and a nurse took us to the doctor. We briefly told him about Marco, expressing both our viewpoints. The doctor thoroughly took notes and, after he had a word with his assistant, he told us that on the basis of a first assessment the situation was rather serious: paranoid schizophrenia with borderline behaviour symptoms were present.

He was room 9, we were told he was sedated and tied to his bed. In any case the wounds on the wrists were not deep and they could heal in a week.

I was a bit afraid when I stepped into his room. His eyes were half-closed, as soon as he saw me he sprang up on the bed, but he could not move, so he asked me to unfasten him and take him away from the hospital. When I told him it was impossible and he had to be treated he began to cry intensively. His eyes conveyed mixed feelings of hatred and supplication, and feeling lost he started to scream, his adult voice turned to a high-pitched tone, to the point that it impressively sounded like a two or three-year old child's voice, as if he wanted to turn back time and start all over again.

I felt powerless, inadequate and swept off my feet also because of the man lying in the bed in front of us. He was also tied up and, with his indifferent and careless attitude, kept asking for a cigarette.

Eventually a nurse arrived and gave him an injection and after five minutes he calmed down and fell into a deep sleep.

My visits in hospital became more and more frequent. I was there so often that I almost know all patients. To tell you the truth when I saw them they ask me who I was, as they saw me for the first time and they were mainly interested in cigarettes.

Marco was slowly getting better, with ups and downs, anyhow he was unpredictable, he even managed to run away from the hospital climbing over the wire net surrounding the court yard they people go smoking.

I found him at his friends' house, I do not know what he was looking for and what he was planning to do.

I persuaded him to go back, threatening him to call the police and I promised him he could leave the hospital as soon as possible.

The doctors of the dept. were quite concerned and they ask me to wait and discuss Marco's issues.

I was tired and demoralised and I sat in the patients' common room, where I saw a man who did not speak with anyone, I had seen him before, during my previous visits.

His neck muscles were abnormally developed, he kept moving his head 24/7, staring into the void, and day after day he marked the time like the hands of a clock ticking. He was not aware of his life. I was almost ashamed, I couldn't help but thinking that the subject was before me was not a man, but a machine. I profoundly felt pity for him, but I could not tell him to comfort him. I could peep through the door left ajar and I saw doctors and nurses in white uniform and I thought of more serious situations and wondered if they were this man's saviours or his torturers.

To what extent are we allowed to interfere with natural processes? To my eyes those innocent doctors were arrogantly challenging austere and inexorable Death, the one who comes with a scythe. When someone has no longer conscience, brain and I would dare soul, let's this shiny lady come to relieve unimaginable suffering and restore dignity to someone who might have been a triumph of life once.

If you go to these places you are almost compelled to think about life and death and you realise that death is an integral part of life. Suddenly anguish and distress fade away almost naturally and you wonder whether it is right to welcome death either with pain and sorrow or with glee. Your approach and perspective unexpectedly change.

These people who, in an obtuse and violent way defend life which is not life anymore, up to extreme consequences, to the point of mortifying any idea of

human dignity, they are the same people who refuse to use stem cell to save a conscious, thinking, desperate life that feels torments of unimaginable pain on its flesh every day. In addition to that life is denied the hope of healing. I am thinking of Luca Coscioni, an example of mind, soul with no body.

Someone with a flat electroencephalogram is compelled to live whilst someone else who is alive with lots of projects and hopes is sentenced to death. We could not imagine a more subtle and wicked culture of death.

It is the people who rage singing hymns to cells' and embryos' life. It seems to me that cells and embryos are a life project. The best thing to do is to use them to give life to an already existing life and allowing them to live as well.

In the name of life, death lovers prefer to literally throw down the drain extra embryos used in artificial insemination, rather than let scientific research use them and give hope to millions of people to heal or get relief from pain and suffering.

To strict moralists (political arbitrators' style) Opus Dei members Supernumeraries and Numeraries, embryos and zygotes are considered people, with the same rights of a living and thinking person. Thus to interrupt a pregnancy at this stage or manipulates embryos equals to commit a murder.

In fact strict moralists talk about murder and eugenics (meant as breed selection in case someone decides to interrupt a pregnancy if the embryo is manifestly ill).

They consider, consistently with the mortification of flesh and cilice culture, the birth of a 100% disable child a God's blessing. This is an unexpected opportunity to redeem themselves and to gain eternal life, provided that it is not their child.

In fact strict moralists do not marry, do not have children but they are always ready to console and comfort, at least once a year.

They do not even slightly think that this child's parents will be compelled to live a life that is not life, for forty or fifty years, day after day, hour after hour, which is like a torture removing any human dignity. Nature kills if it is necessary whether you like it or not and natural selection has always existed before and after birth. You can call it positive eugenics if you like it.

It is anyhow decent selection to apply the same framework for birth and death. Only humans are capable of forcing to life what it is not life.

Unfortunately for them God created man and God is infallible, He cannot make mistakes. According to the law of nature and therefore according to God's law over 30% of embryos are discarded, selected or (as they say) murdered, without any human intervention whatsoever.

How can it be possible that God is so distracted to the point of creating a mechanism, which foresees applying His law, embryos' murder?

Then in their opinion God is pro abortion and a murderer. As a layman I believed I learned the difference among animals, stones, trees and myself: I am capable of "thinking" whilst they are not.

I think, thus I am....a man; I do not think, thus I am....a cell and molecular aggregation which only aesthetically differs from my dog.

A thinking mind is the difference, the discriminating factor between human and animal life.

We kill and even eat animals without any moral or ethical scruples. I realise it is not easy to accept, but

we are simply organic matter before being thinking individuals.

God did not foresee embryos' life. Human life either is in that instant or it is not. His natural law discards ill or unsuitable embryos without arising moral or ethical prejudice.

We are bothered to acknowledge that we are just animals, minerals, plants and humans, but I am afraid this is the way it is.

This homocentric culture is arrogant and selfish, it lacks attention to non humans and it claims to replace Nature in its purpose to keep global balance, thus causing huge disasters.

The fact that we do not accept "others" will lead to an unconscious and instinctive destruction of animals, forests, environment and eventually to our destruction.

Three months passed by and a mental health professional was assigned to Marco, the doctors fulfilled their task and he was soon released. His conditions were not ideal, but it was pointless to keep him in hospital. We had to find an adequate facility for him, it took take time and the outcome was unpredictable

We were told that there were no facilities available in the surroundings and in the meantime Marco has to stay at home because he could not look after himself. This option was bringing further tension between us and the idea that Marco had to return home has already caused distress to my wife. She was already heavily tested up to the deepest depression.

She was literally frightened to be alone with him and given my type of work, it could often happen.

Despite our research we could not find an adequate facility for him. There was in Turin, in which they specifically deal with borderline disorders but it was private and rather costly, I could not afford it and in addition to that it was far away.

Finally it was the day of Marco's discharge from hospital, we did not find an acceptable solution, as objectively, there were too many irreconcilable factors. We had to split up, we decided that without anger, overwhelmed by a situation we could not deal with. I hope it will only be temporary. Alternatively my wife is likely to end up in hospital.

In fact Marco was still the same. As soon as he was told that he had to be treated in a Mental Health Centre (formerly a Mental Asylum) he severed all ties with his mental health professional, stubbornly demanding to return home without going the Mental Health Centre, ignoring his condition.

My wife was looking for an accommodation, and in the meantime, I moved into Marco's apartment. I realise I was alone there with him to fight against his condition.

I do not blame social facilities, they do what they can with the means they have available and anyway there's nothing certain and taken for granted in this field.

Being as stubbornly optimistic as a mule from Abruzzi, I wondered if what Marco wanted was, after all and despite all risks involved, the best solution. I was obviously fooling myself, but eventually there was some truth in that.

If I put myself in his shoes with the possibility of ending up in a Mental Health Centre, I would prefer to live a kind of pretend normal life among "so-called normal people.

How can you treat someone with a mental disorder placing him in a centre with people with the same problem?

Which kind of example could one possibly have in order to heal and change? If someone is not socially dangerous wouldn't it be better to let him among people or lock him up in an adequate facility? These doubts were haunting me, obviously it would be easier to consider the problem sorted out, but I cannot, as I am convinced that living in a Mental Health Centre could be safer but there are far more benefits if Marco could have a seemingly normal life. Therefore being almost reckless I decided to have him with me, I am aware I cannot control him all the time as I have to be away for work for two or three days, but at present I have no other option.

A few days later I moved into Marco's apartment with him, as my wife was still waiting to find a place on her own.

Marco's attitude was to refuse any relationship. I could only give him advice and comply with his decisions. One day, despite my disagreement, he decided to visit the therapeutic community in Civitavecchia, perhaps hoping to see his former friends and assistants

In his own confused way he was looking for a family, stubbornly he just did not see he already had one.

At the Community he thought he could be welcome with open arms, but he did not realise that it was impossible.

At midnight I got a phone call from the Police station at Tuscania because they found Marco in the street. In two hours' drive I reached Tuscania.

I could imagine how he felt in his own logic: nobody wants me, not even my former friends. In fact he felt

down and very confused. In addition to that he had to bear *my sermon*, to use an understatement.

Those days were far from easy for me, I was torn as I was compelled to choose between two important people I love whose relationship appeared to be irreconcilable. My wife was exhausted, she tried to raise Marco and build a normal relationship with him for yeas, but she did not succeed and gave up hope. At that point she could not even bear his presence.

She was totally right because Marco could get on your nerves even if you had the patience of a saint. He was arrogant and ungrateful and he never put himself in other's people shoes, trying to understand their reasons and had not got the minimum reverential fear and respect that was due to a parent. On the other hand can you respect your parent if they abandoned you?

I was coming back from work and I was very worried because Marco did not answer the phone. When I arrived home he was soundly asleep. I checked the drugs he had to take in case he got a higher dosage, but everything was all right.

When he woke up his gaze was empty and he hardly moved his head as if he was in plaster It must have been the drugs side effects, but I could not stand that sight. With a weak voice he asked me: "dad can I come home? I cannot make it on my own"

But you are not alone, I am with you!

I was grasping at straws saying that at present our only concern was to think about healing, then this problem could be faced. I was shamelessly lying.

I could not say to him: your mother cannot stand you anymore, she does not want to see you and she is terrified by the fact that you could come home, you

are punishing your foster mother for the errors that your mother made, the one who abandoned you.

You hate and love your mother because you have the desperate need to feel and say: this is my mother.

You don't have the slightest idea of what she had to bear for you. When you arrived in Italy you were a little puppy, you did not know the alphabet, he could not name and match colours, she taught you how to write and how to talk. Day after day at school she fought for you when bigoted mothers accused you of harassing their daughters, then we understood they provoked you, because you were and still are a good looking boy.

Obviously the fact the you were first refused and abandoned does not allow you to understand what your mother has done for you.

Marco and I moved into my house and in the meantime we began looking for an adequate facility for him.

I asked to work at Ciampino Airport so I could be at home every night, and I was whole-heartedly granted this possibility.

I can also rely on my neighbour's help and I feel all right, even if my mind keeps picturing preposterous situations.

I told him to keep the home key in the lock all the time because I am afraid he can be locked out. He is distracted and absent-minded, he may go out in the yard leaving the door open, so the dogs could get in the house making a mess.

I could not blame him much, now he simply did not care about this. I think he was just trying to rearrange the first bricks of his life and he stubbornly did it without my help. We often take for granted the foundations on which we built our life.

It may happen that, someone being without foundations, has to find the spot where to lay the first brick.

The other night I went back home, it was dinner time and I asked him to heat up ready made fettuccine with porcini mushrooms. I was watching him eating slowly with his eyes half-closed, he is not even a shadow of his arrogant and rude former self.

He hardly swallowed one fettuccine after the other, it was an agonising view and he is my son. I wish it was me going through that, so he could have a little peacefulness and balance. I should rationally and whole-heartedly leave him alone, but I cannot. I always have a mental picture of my father who was ruthless and violent with powerful people, but he was as meek as a lamb with the dispossessed. Any of the latter could have taken off his clothes, shoes, even underpants and he would not have blinked.

It runs in the family, I cannot help it.

When Marco left the therapeutic community I gave him a little sailing ship, and underneath it was written "when you are in trouble and you feel down, think of me and I'll always be with you." I will keep that promise .

No condition of indigence or poverty justifies the abandonment of a child. As far as my own experience is concerned I am sure that a child would rather die of starvation or get to know that his parents are in prison, but they did not abandoned him.

If genocide is a crime against humanity, the abandonment of a child is much more, it calls into question the first ethical principle for our survival: a mother who abandons a child. Animals do not do

that, or do so only if the little ones are naturally self-sufficient by birth.

It is an everlasting torture and I am sure that my son is wondering – in his own confusion – why he did not get what many people were granted.

Fortunately the days went by rather smoothly. His behaviour did not really changed much, but one night something unexpected occurred. While I was cooking, he came close to me and hugged me crying, calling me dad. He was desperate and looking for help, perhaps he was beginning to trust me.

I kissed on the forehead and I said to him: son listen to me: you and I can get out of this difficult situation and then we'll do great things.

I hardly held back my tears. After dinner he spontaneously washed the dishes despite he was shaking because of the drugs and because he was very emotional.

I felt a deep tenderness and with the excuse that the dog was barking I went out in the garden and I cried, with composure, it seemed so natural and liberating, watching the starry sky. Maybe something is changing, but I have no illusions.

Yet this was enough to give me a spark of hope to exorcise the present I let myself dream of a life we do not have now but it can still be possible.

In my mind the dreams I had, when I was driving to Campo di Giove at the beginning of this story, came true.

Marco is an adult with good chances of finding a job and we are surfing on our rubber dinghy towards Ponza island, the sea is wavy and we are wearing our

wet suit, we are both standing, to control the waves movements, but I am feeling safe because he is with me. I am sure I was a good master and when we'll start diving he will perform better than me and catch more fish than me. Then on our way back we might tease each other aware that I have to deal with my wife's reproaches and he has to face his girlfriend's. She does not understand why Marco prefers to spend his Sundays with an old man like me instead of being with a young and beautiful girl like her.

I went back into the house, Marco had finished doing the washing up and had taken his pills, for the first time in a month he wished me good night and went to sleep.

PEACE MOVEMENT

Eleven years elapsed since Marco arrived in Italy. Now he is in the therapeutic community. My wife and I are trying to build an acceptable relationship. We have our ups and downs, but we have managed to have more or less a normal life. It was hard to fight in that situation, but life has to go on. We need to accept reality the way it is.

Heraclitus's theory of the unity of opposites comforts me: peace and war, healthy and sick, good and bad. They are opposites on the surface but there is harmony deep down. I have the illusion that in every situation, even the worst one, there is something positive. If we did not have the concept of war, how could we appreciate peace. The same applies to health and sickness. I think of peace marches, and I wonder if those people ever ask themselves what war is.

The standard definition of war that comes to my mind is: "war is the solution of national and international conflicts by force", I cannot think of any other definition.

Conflicts can be of various kinds, they can be triggered by economic reasons, power, religion. They turn into a war if they are resolved by force. There are conflicts among countries, regions, groups of people, individuals, therefore even a conflict between two people, which is sorted out by force, is a war.

When it is permissible to use force? If it is never permissible (as peace supporters think) why do Police use force to stop or neutralise or – if unavoidable – kill a criminal?

Do fair or unfair wars exist? Is a war always unjust?

Hitler's war, like that of Mussolini's, or the Partisan's war or Saddam's war, or the war against Mafia are they just or unjust wars?

I imagine a friend of mind, a peace supporter while he is at home with his lovely girlfriend.

Out of every window they have a rainbow flag, they are both wrapped up in their rainbow- coloured warm bed sheets and they are enjoying watching a beautiful TV show by Dario Fo and Franca Rame, on the wall there is a poster of Gino Strada with a watchful and fearful gaze.

Unfortunately for them it was not the right night! A criminal found them in bed and after having beaten and tied up the unfortunate man, raped the girl. A neighbour, who is himself a pacifist, was alarmed by the hustle, went into their bedroom with the peace flag and invited the criminal to stop. The criminal struck back punching the pacifist neighbour, who fell on the floor. In that traumatic moment he had a heavenly vision: Diliberto and Pecoraro Scanio wrapped in a rainbow flag. Pecoraro Scanio was also holding an original set of Police handcuffs while Diliberto was wearing a Lenin's icon around his neck. The pacifist neighbour was torn by a terrible doubt "should I or should I not call the Police?"

"If I call them they may use force! They have guns and a police baton, and the poor criminal could be hit to death.

I am against all war and the war between the Police and a criminal is a war anyway. I am sorry for my friend but it was fate's will.

I do not want to end up like Bush who used force against a criminal who gassed twenty thousand Kurds, his attack was not justified, because Kurds – it

is true - were killed with chemical weapons, but their warehouses were never found.

Basically my friend is in the same condition as the Kurds gassed by Saddam. They were both attacked by two offenders, but if one cannot intervene by force against Saddam, one cannot intervene by force against the criminal who raped my friend's girl.

I am a plain pacifist and I really care about my peace, the fact that my behaviour leads to my friend's and some Kurds' death is completely irrelevant.

Left-wing Radicals are peace supporter, also my favourite leader Fausto is a pacifist and he was in such a pain because he could not present at the demonstration in Vicenza.

"left-wing Radicals"! Who are they?

Here I need to write a note regarding the use of language and words.

The Radical party has been a political group since the Fifties in Italy, it was the only one that never changed his name, and this appear to be unknown to the majority of press journalists and TV reporters who introduced the word left-wing Radical. The term radical is not obviously exclusively used by the Radical party, but for those in politics it has a very precise meaning. Thus reporters either abuse the term to confuse ideas or they are totally unable to communicate and inform. A colleague of mine (not my mother who is 82 years old and lives in a small village in Abruzzo) asked me: "what is that! Are you Radicals – as well as being faggots, drug addicts and hookers – forming a party with Rifondazione Comunista, Correntone, Environmentalist party, Italian communist and Fourth international"

Therefore dear journalists, political scientists, do us a favour: use words properly, if I were Diliberto I

would sue you for defamation as Communists are as far away from the Radicals as altar boys from their opposites.

Nowadays we all know that traditional wars (i.e. conquest of territories, economic and religious reasons) are no longer viable. Nobody would ever think of attacking Slovenia to get back the Istrian peninsula, but anyhow this does not rule out the absolute use of force to resolve disputes.

"Modern armies are increasingly becoming an international Police body, the UN, a supranational authority, empowers them to intervene in the name of the universally accepted "Fundamental Human Right Declaration"

When Saddam or Polpot massacred their people denying them the fundamental rights, they were not at war with another planet's people, but they declared war to me and to you. Once all diplomatic efforts and reasonableness in the conflict resolution are tried out, military intervention is not just a necessity it is a must.

Prevailing peace movement – i.e. the one shown in street parades – is basically an invitation to do nothing and hide our heads in the sand in the name of an abstract idea of peace.

It's their problem! We are fine in our little yard. Instead of supporting military intervention to stop Saddam, Hamas etc, let's give them schools, hospitals, let's finance them so they can carry on slaughtering their people to fight against the American, Israeli and Italian devils. We are non violent people.

Have you ever seen a pacifist do the hunger or thirst strike for 40 days or intentionally break a law which

is deemed unjust and report himself for this as real non violent people do?

I have only seen street parades where shop windows are smashed, the Police are attacked and flags are burnt. Mr Agnoletto's poor, immaculate and defenceless lambs who join the parade inspired by deep respect for democracy and the rules of the game. They unconsciously march with others who have iron stick and their face covered, they do not realise that if they throw a fire extinguisher on a police car it is as if they throw it on theirs. They have a very odd concept of non violence, it is not Ghandi's concept who did non parade for peace or protest against someone. Ghandi marched with a specific purpose i.e. salt which was the British Empire monopoly. He intentionally violated the law and demanded to be arrested and prosecuted. He did not burn the British flag, but demanded to be arrested and prosecuted. He did not burn the British flag, but claimed that His Majesty complied with the law. While my mind was wandering on these topics, someone rang the doorbell, it was my wife who came back from the food shopping. I immediately went out to avoid her rebukes, but it was useless.

"Don't hurry, take it easy, do not give me a hand, unless I asked for it!"

Now I am kind of used to it: my wife expects me to be a mind reader and in addition to that she is also convinced that I have special powers. In fact she cannot make out why whenever she comes homes I am not already on the doorstep to wait for her.

"I spoke with Luisa and she invited me to Egypt during Easter holiday. A lawyer friend of hers is in love with Egypt – he already went there about ten times – and he is arranging everything. It is not the

usual holiday, a visit to two oases with two nights in the desert are included".

Well, I would not mind the idea, even if I preferred a holiday on the Red sea anyway also the desert and pyramids are charming and I think it is an interesting experience.

"There is no much time available we are supposed to leave in a week, so please organise yourself with your work otherwise I may go alone".

Alone? Would you be able to tackle the desert and Muslims without my reassuring presence?

Just kidding I believe there should not be any problems at work because there are not fires at this time of the year, and air force firemen are out of work.

"Luisa is going to send me a detailed plan tomorrow but she already told me that it includes Cairo, Farafra oasis, oasis, Aswan, Luxor and Cairo again. It will take about ten days."

I am curious to find out where are these places, while you put away the food shopping I'll surf in internet in Google Earth hoping to locate the two oases. We know where Luxor and Aswan are but the oases location is a question mark. Did she tell you how are we going to travel?

"Yes she did, we'll travel to the towns by bus or train and then two guides will take us to the desert by jeep".

Come and see! Basically Farafra oasis is about 250 km West from Cairo, whilst the other is at 300 km in the South. The desert lies between them.

"I have the feeling that this holiday will be very tiring, but it is worth it I guess. We have already seen the Pyramids and the Kings' valley, but the rest is unknown to us. I am eager to see how people live

there and see if the idea we, Westerners have about them is the real one!

VACATION IN EGYPT

I understood by the noise of the plane engines that we were about to descend. I took a look at my watch, yes.... we were about to land in Cairo. We were still up high but I could already see Giza plateau with the great pyramid overlooking a vast stretch of houses to the West.

Wife...! Wake up we are about to land in 20 minutes.
"It is the first time I could sleep on the plane and I liked that. We only have hand luggage, so if we are lucky we can quickly fill out entry visa forms".

Unfortunately at the exit there were so many people we looked around and patiently waited in line.

I felt like a fish out of water surrounded by people with different styles of turbans with long airy and comfortable-looking garments.

The man who was standing in front of me nonchalantly lit up a cigarette and began to smoke. It looked so odd, so speaking in English I asked him if smoking was allowed and he nodded as if it was obvious.

You cannot imagine how thrilled I was to lit up a cigarette despite what prohibitionists say! I was doing the check out and I was smoking, how nice! A tiny satisfaction which makes you understand how strong the appeal of the forbidden is.

Outside the airport there was the usual chaos of cars and taxis, we joined a group of four people in a van going to the town centre. High quality government buildings were predominantly present along the large road connecting the airport and the city centre. As we got closer to the centre the traffic became increasingly chaotic, I saw a lot of Fiat 1100 cars produced many years ago. The air was almost hard to breathe.

At last we arrived at the hotel, two attendants promptly took our backpack, despite the traffic noise. We could distinctly hear the Muezzin's voice calling to prayers from a nearby Mosque.

"Listen dear, our friends are coming from Milan and they'll be here late, I would like to unpack and go out for a walk to the Kasbah".

I fully agree, also because I would like to buy an Egyptian dress to feel more comfortable, you should also buy a blouse with long sleeves, I don't know if you noticed you are the only one with a T-shirt.

Following directions they gave us at the hotel, we began walking towards the Kasbah. The road was crowded and we could hardly walk. A boy stopped us speaking Italian, it must stick out a mile that we are Italian.

He suggested a lots of things to do and he even offered to take us to the Kasbah to have a look and buy an Egyptian dress. We walked down the narrow lanes crammed with odds and ends, and while we were passing by the smiley shop owners gaze upon us, offering their goods.

It was getting dark and we began to worry, we kept walking for fifteen minutes but we had no clue of where we were going so I asked the boy to go back. He replied that we were almost there we did not have to worry and, on the other hand we did not have any other option. We realised we could disappear without a trace. I bought an original Egyptian dress, I began to haggle over the price, but I took a look at my wife and paid on the spot, we both realised in a flash that we had to leave that place as soon as possible and get back to the main road leading to the hotel.

In the morning we met our travel mates. We hugged and kissed Luisa, an old friend, married to a colleague of mine, who is not among us anymore, he

was like a brother to me and I shared with him my aviation experience.

The lawyer, who was with his brother and his sister in-law, was the journey planner and master mind of the whole group. He had the "lost explorer's look" and he was absent-minded and unable to assess any risk, being only interested in the local customs.

He felt like an Egyptian, and I imagined him with a kaftans and a turban on his head or with an African helmet and with a camouflage suit, and instead he looked as if he just got out of the office: light chequered shirt, cream trousers, elegant shoes and we were about to venture in the desert!

As usual appearances are deceptive, in fact the van arrived at the hotel on time, we loaded our luggage and headed for Farafra oasis, the first leg of our journey.

We left the outskirts of Cairo, suddenly there were no houses around, only a long line, which was stretching to the horizon, was irregularly flanked by a railroad, but there was no train running on it.

We decided to collect some money to make a common fund and appoint the lawyer as official cashier and paymaster.

After about one and a half hour's driving we spotted a blue building on the right hand side on the road. The driver slowed down and told us we could stop, it was the only gas station, but with no gas pumps.

We went in, hoping to find a coffee machine, but the only pleasant thing was the cool temperature. On a masonry counter there were dented aluminium containers, and a row of glasses which had not seen *Pril lemon spark* for ages. Various hookah were placed near the table

"Guys come on ... you looked a bit puzzled. What did you expect...a restaurant? It's time we got some antibodies, I'll have some tea and then I'll smoke".

The lawyer was so glad about that situation, and he felt so comfortable as if he knew the place. We had some tea and then the owner slowly prepared hookah. We started smoking with a smile.

It is completely different from smoking a cigarette, tobacco is flavoured and it gives you a cool feeling. Unfortunately inveterate smokers like myself do not realise that the main damage caused by cigarettes (apart from nicotine and tar) is high temperature reached by smoke.

Hookah is a clever invention because it is not pocket size, like a packet of cigarettes and when you smoke that 'tool' in public you feel so important, as Decrescenzo would say 'you strike a pose'. In fact I sat down and looked at the ladies in front of me thinking: ladies take a look at a real man smoking, keep your voice down or you'll have to deal with me.

The first impact with the desert is disarming: a vast expanse of dunes interspersed with rocks. Simplification is complete, the sand and the blue sky are the only two dominating elements, absolute silence allows you to hear the noise of your body.

I gazed upon the dunes, one after the other until they disappeared on the horizon and I had a perception of infinity, which conveyed both fear and awe. My mind travelled at the speed of light, up to the top limit, then inexplicably was reflected back, invading the body, imposing me to look inside myself into the darkest and brightest corners of my soul and I felt tiny, naked and wobbly, but at the centre of the universe.

While I was meditating on this, I went behind a dune and I heard my wife calling me to carry on with the journey, just like a Muezzin.

All you see when you reach an oasis is some bushes and palm trees, whilst houses and huts are camouflaged with the desert, we could only spot the hotel where we were staying. It was very simple but pristine with nice bedrooms and a wide courtyard where a small pool of sulphurous water at a temperature of 60° C was present.

In the hotel room I put my Egyptian dress on and looking at myself in the mirror I realised that I was not so bad. My face features are a mixed of Western, Indian and Arab. As I left the room, a boy smiled at me and asked: "Egyptian?" With a touch of coquetry I replied yes... and I entered the banquet hall with the gait of a young Lawrence d 'Arabia, while my amused travel mates were watching me

In the morning we met the guide with his assistant. We had two big jeep cars equipped with racks accurately loaded with rugs, wood and everything we needed to survive for two days and two nights in the desert. Amin was a slim, middle aged man with a white and grey chequered head scarf which plastically covered his neck slipping on the right shoulder. He had well-trimmed moustaches and a look on his face that showed his pride of being a Muslim. At the same time he was tolerant and respectful towards foreigners who look like fish out of water there, with different customs and culture. We visited two tombstones which are supposed to be the most ancient ones in Egypt and then we made for the desert.

We drove through the black desert – which is composed of black gravel - for about 30 km, then suddenly our guide left the road and a little later we

found ourselves on a vast plateau stretch, as flattened and levelled as a football pitch.

We were driving at a great speed and I was surprised that the sandy ground was so compact as to barely leave trails, soon cancelled by the wind.

Ten minutes later, carrying on at high speed, we slalomed among sand dunes. Our guides knew the area very well, they managed to identify where the sandy ground turned hard and compact, following certain paths which appeared totally irrational to us.

We could move as we pleased and that gave me a feeling of freedom. There were no streets or traffic lights to pay attention to, so there was nothing certain or sure and, in fact, we had a puncture.

Amin – a bit annoyed – started to repair the tyre, together with his assistant. He advised us not to go far and always keep an eye on the cars, because it is very easy to get lost in the desert. Two months before, one of his colleagues had lost a Japanese tourist who wandered one week in the desert. Luckily they found him, he was exhausted and in shock, while he attempted to eat the desert sand.

We took pictures and at last we had a taste of the real desert. We looked around at 360° and we could only see sand, the blue sky, everything was clean and despite the scorching sun you did not sweat, because there was very low humidity, it was very unusual for me as I leave in the Pontine marsh. Later that afternoon we got to the place where we spent the night. Amin parked the cars as to form an L shape and fixed two poles at 1 metre from them. Then he arranged two thick coloured blankets on the poles, while my friends scattered around – you can imagine why – and ten minutes later they returned lighter and gathered around a big sand dune, rolling on the sand just like a bunch of kids. I stayed with

Amin, as I was the eldest of the group he always talked to me, we were on the same wavelength and he gladly accepted my help to arrange the camp.

The shelter for the night was ready, in a corner there were two blankets to protect from the wind, rugs on the ground and a gas cooker for our dinner. We gladly sat down to smoke a cigarette and eventually Amin took a rug and said to me "I am going to pray my God.... Come along!"

Actually I would not know how to do it. I am afraid I cannot do it properly I do not know your prayers...your gestures .

"Don't you worry, you pray your God and I pray mine".

I also grabbed a rug and we walked towards East, the Sun was behind us, we were heading towards the silence. The farther we got from the cars the more serious Amin's look became, there was a solemn atmosphere, I felt like Frederick II and he looked like Malik al-Kamil, there was no cathedral or a mosque ahead of us, there was only the desert, but I had the feeling I was in a holy place.

We got on our knees together, I was staring at the horizon, while Amin was repetitively bending forward, almost touching the rug as if he was browsing a book.

It was a feeling of wellbeing and peace. I realised I could have projected the pictures in my mind and actually see them on the sand dunes

We were praying together, I prayed an indefinite and yet-to-discover God, whilst Amin seemed to have very clear ideas.

I was in tuned with him and I wondered if Amin is Muslim, I am also Muslim, but unfortunately there are cardinals and mullah between us and God.

The sun set and after dinner we arranged our sleeping bags for the night, the wind started blowing and only a few minutes later it turned into a wind storm. Visibility was reduced to two metres, sand flew everywhere, through the nose, ears and eyes.

We zipped up the sleeping bags trying to sleep, but despite Amin's reassuring words I was rather worried. There are moments in which negative thoughts conjure up in your mind, because you are in an unknown and unpredictable environment.

I could not sleep and tried to distract myself thinking on what we could do the following day.

Fortunately the wind calmed down and then dropped after a couple of hours. My friends were asleep and I was wide awake, probably because of the adrenaline I had in those two hours. I lit up a cigarette and, wrapped up in a blanket, I made for the dune in front of us. I was sitting on the sand and after watching the starry night I spotted the Ursa minor and at the end of the dipper handle I spotted the North Star! I wish it was so simple for our mind to find a point of reference, the right track!

Imagination, dreams and thoughts do not have boundaries and restraints, except the ones we set. They flow at 360° and we are often lazy or afraid so we delegate a few people to indicate the right way.

As in a flock of sheep we just follow our daily routine and we do not realise that a small group of men i.e. cardinals, mullah, rabbis, sorcerers, politicians manage to rule the world, placing people against one another in the name of improbable Gods who tend to look like Mars, Apollo, Volcano, whilst Athena is light years away.

I was perfectly fine with Amin, our problem was not oil or his three wives, poverty or wealth, cultures or different customs. Our problem are religions and

their rules which are supposed to be divine and they are necessarily and inexorably irreconcilable. How can it be possible that in a millennium starting from the Crusades up to the twin towers attack we have been slaughtering one another in the name of Christ and Mahomet?

For a few powerful people both politician or clergymen alike, is just a matter of power but the majority of human beings it is a dramatically real, almost a life-and-death conflict.

The issue lies in the dual meaning of terms to believe or to have faith. To believe is rational and to have faith is irrational.

Personally I would delete the word faith from dictionaries as it does not make sense and it is a deceiving version of the term to believe, and it is demonstrated by the fact that in the name of faith the worst crimes were and will be committed. Faith is irrational and it is often an encouraged and authorised form of insanity. It is functional to all dictators, prevaricators and Pied Piper of Hamelin kind of people. The people who have faith cannot be held responsible for any actions or even crimes committed and they are promised a reward in this life or in a life after death.

I have the feeling or perhaps I hope that the future Church will only be a universal one. It will be necessarily be One in the Christian, Muslim, Buddhist rites and procedures developed through the years to express the same thing: our gratefulness to God who can only be One.

Go-betweens will gradually disappear, their bureaucracies and "share rules" will be made by ordinary people.

To this respect we have a lot to learn from the Muslims. They already have their natural mosques: the desert temple, a street corner, a corner in their house and the time of prayers is scheduled by the sun. In towns the only unpleasant thing are loudspeakers used by irritant and obsessive muezzins to remind everybody that a Mullah is there to watch and judge if you are a good Muslim.

Over an hour passed, it got really cold and the desert was my friend again. The thought that two great men of the past Frederick II and Al-Malik Al-Kamil had such a fruitful meeting, gave me hope and pleased me.

At last I slipped into my sleeping bag and fell fast asleep.

THOUGHTS AT DAWN

It was six o' clock in the morning, the sun was rising. Looking out of the window I could see the whole coast from Suvero to Capo Rizzuto and down, right below my window I could see Vibo Marina with its port, slowly waking up.

Ironically today is April Fools' Day, but as far as I am concerned there is nothing funny: a few days ago Marco trying to cut his veins again and he was hospitalised at the Mental Hygiene Hospital in Latina. Nothing to worry about, he did it to draw attention to himself, he could not stand living in the therapeutic community anymore. According to his logic he wanted to come home, but he was not ready yet. Following his suicidal attempt, health professionals did not think it was appropriate to let him into the therapeutic community again as he may have cause problems to other residents.

This had to be the final step after roaming from one centre to the other and eventually he had to be re-introduced into society through foster care (which are not available because the NHS has not got any money), he is also supposed to have a secure employment.

With his impatience and haste he was able to upset all plans.

In a couple of days as soon as I am in Latina I'll have to see the people in charge at the therapeutic community but I have the feeling they do not know what to do. For the first time after 15 years of fighting with a paranoid-schizophrenic I feel how helpless I and public and private facilities can be dealing with mental disorders (to use an understatement).

My optimism is running out, looking back the balance is more negative than positive.

I took care of Marco, providing the basic, but I almost lost my wife and I am back to square one.

On the other hand he had his reasons: fate, circumstances, that initial wound caused by being abandoned left a permanent scar and cracked the foundations of his life, pushing his mind into a vicious spiral.

He was a handsome and fit boy who dreamed about working in the advertising field and then he ended up in therapeutic communities. He put on over 66 pounds also because of the drugs he had to take . At night, after dinner he usually takes five or six pills with two or three pages of side effects each. If you read them.... Personally I would not take those pills even if I were under torture. Then he goes straight to be as if the purpose of his life was to sleep. Well... people with his condition can only find peace when they sleep.

Years ago, one night after his first deep crisis hit, he said to me: "dad I want to die". I felt a I felt like a deep stab in my heart, I tried to comfort him, giving him a hug, I could not understand how a sixteen year-old boy could ever say that. Today I understand him!

An insane person, despite crises and relapse situations probably thinks he leads a normal life (in his own logic) but for someone with borderline disorders it is like to live on a razor edge on the border between sanity and insanity and life must be a real hell.

The longer I am into this adventure the more I am persuaded that Darwin was right: if we hamper the natural course of events with palliatives, surely set with all good intentions, eventually we cause more damage than benefits.

When I went back to the mental hygiene unit of the hospital, to visit Marco I noticed that half of the patients were the same ones present three or four years before. They simply go in and out of the hospital. Mental asylums no longer exist, but they have never been replaced by adequate alternative facilities, therefore families and hospitals, which turned into part time mental asylums, have to bear the burden.

If you want to get an idea of what is not human life just visit a Mental Hygiene division of a hospital, with patients with chronic mental illnesses. You can find people you'll never expect to see, individuals suspended in a sort of limbo between human beings and animals, they have neither the animals' instinct to survive and to be self sufficient, nor a mind to be a human being as they lost both rationality and survival impulse. You can see the most unbearable suffering with your own eyes and hear deafening screaming and crying of someone tied up to a bed, someone who fights daily with against an invisible and undetectable enemy which is the worst of all. If you put yourselves in their shoes as soon as you leave the hospital you'll go straight to the solicitor and draw up your biological will, begging in case you ever find yourself in that situation to be helped to live and then die in a dignified way.

What cheap moralists consider murdering (euthanasia) is truly (consciously and applying strict procedures) one the greatest hymns to human life people could ever imagine. If one consciously respects life it becomes unbearable to accept the deepest physical and mental degradation of life itself. Nature, being more benevolent and wise, if not manipulated it does not allow human beings to reach

extremes, but it resolves the issue at the source through natural selection... horrible terms but ...it is up to you to choose between a dignified death or a life with torture and untold and terrible suffering.

What I cannot stand about these gentlemen is the fact that they deny self-determination in the name of an abstract idea of life, of a Papal Bull or a Papal dogma.

They are very worried about sperms' life but they are oblivious and careless of already existing life. When I see cardinals and some important reporters pay a daily visit to Mental Hygiene Units to comfort and have some meaningless conversation with those desperate people in a surreal atmosphere (but they have to do it every morning for 30 years) then I'll persuade myself that they are right.

At present nobody has the right to tell me how to live and therefore how to die as in compliance with the "shared rules".

The horizon was turning red as the sun was rising behind the hills near the hotel. It was almost rush hour when many robot-like men get into their metal boxes to face an hour traffic, they run towards factories, offices with one and only purpose: produce more and more... have more children, increase the GDP, fill up dump yards, occupy woods and every tiny inch of left over forest.

The Pope and the Rabbis said that they have to practice abstinence. Heaven forbids the use of condoms or any birth control methods.

If you cannot do that....then have sex as much as you wantwhat do you care? The population is rising by 80 million people...the trend is too low.

In an impressive race the Western world competes with the Islamic world to increase their packs to assert the "Christian roots".

Christian roots... how silly ...what does it mean?

Common roots can only be the roots of the Law and shared rules, as in an oak tree Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist traditions originate from a common trunk. Those traditions have been differently shaped for the same purpose.

It is high time we acknowledged we are all in the same boat, and we ended this preposterous competition, with a responsible procreation.

As far as I am concerned Nature and God did not allow me to procreate, and I almost have to thank them because they let me be father by choice and not out of necessity.

My child is a child of this culture, with the dogmas and myths functional to a few powerful people. It is an environment with lack of information and responsibility, with people who churn out children and do not conceive with love.

He was punished, not by his mother who was also a victim, but by the people who promote the culture of abandoning a baby at one year old. I feel I own something to him but I am inadequate as I cannot change the situation.

It is a tragedy we live day by day, whilst the spiritual guides of our country are seriously concerned about the irreparable trauma caused by divorce, therefore marriage must be indissoluble. On the other hand a mother can abandon a child without causing an anathema. They see the speck in their brother's eye, but fail to see the beam of wood in their own.

The dawn was so quiet I shut my eyes I could hear the clip-clop sound of the mules jot-trotting on the ground, opposite the bedroom where I slept when I was a kid. It was still dark and men were going to work in the fields, the sun was about to rise and greet good morning to Guado di Coccia. While they moved at a jog-trot, some flies began to bother the mules, and every now and then one of them kicked so the owner rebuked it pulling it back.

I was already awake and excited because I was about to go the fields with my father, then at midday my mum would come with a big basket carried on her head, so we could eat in a corner of the field, in the shade of the pear tree. In the afternoon my friends would wait for me to play hide and seek, then I would be late as usual and my granny would come to look for me with a stick in her hand because I was not at home by the evening Vespers.

I opened my eyes.... And thinking of my son I am almost ashamed I had a happy childhood and a happy youth.

"RULES" AND REVEALED TRUTH

(how can you sacrifice yourself in the name of a myth!)

Fortunately or not men, as rational beings, have always been concerned about regulating the relationship with one another and everything that surround themselves. This does not happen in the plant, animal and mineral kingdoms, where rules are precisely established. Things have repeated themselves for millions of years. There is no need or responsibility to make new rules.

We have the burden and the honour to be rule makers in a situation of mutual distrust.

Survival was the first need and that was linked to strength. Instinctively men do not accept their own kind superiority therefore they are not willing to accept any rules made by someone else, but their own.

In other words, we are willing to accept rules only if we have the feeling or we think we participated in making those rules, and we make them our own, and thus they do we become our own extension, a part of ourselves.

This long and difficult process is still going on and it requires good communication skills and being able to confront with one another. In ancient times the predominant rule was physical strength

In a prehistoric cave the strongest man was in charge and defended the group. As the group became more and more complex the strongest man's rule was not enough. Someone had to establish what people could or could not do or what was best for the group's survival and the wellbeing

For thousands of years people have been fighting and they will carry on doing so as they are unable to establish common and accepted rules. As many things and phenomena were inexplicable to people they worked out the idea of the existence of a higher Being, someone who did not belong to the human species and could be feared with inexplicable works. Therefore anyone could feel powerless and compelled to accept his authority and rules. Anyone who could cunningly or slyly show to have a special relationship with this higher Being, would gain unimaginable power and authority and become a rule maker without being questioned

Five thousand years ago sorcerers and wizards used to do that, acting as magicians telling the future. Later on prophets followed suit, falsely claim improbable divine revelations.

Currently, all the churches do the same thing, applying more sophisticated methods, holding the monopoly of knowledge.

It sounds a paradox but in theory there is no difference between sorcerers and shamans who lived five thousand years ago and current bishops. They both pretend to have a special relationship with God, allowing them to decide what is right or what is wrong.

In good faith all the churches are absolute rulers aiming at mind control and therefore people's essence. Their government is composed of alleged better people and they replaced the category or social class of philosophers in Plato's Republic with the clergymen.

The trick generated more evil than good. It did allow some form of government and coexistence among

people, but it also triggered the past religion wars and the ongoing ones.

A war between human beings is a joke if compared to a war among Gods. Unfortunately we do not realise that the mocked and insulted Olympus is actually reproduced with Yahweh, Allah, Christ, Buddha, Manitou every day etc.. etc..

Once it was an Hellenic issue, every important town had its own God, today the matter has turned into a global one.

Broadly speaking each continent has developed its idea of God, on a macro and global scale and we are in the same condition as Athens was two thousand five hundred years ago with the aggravating circumstance that there is no major God.

I am puzzled when I hear that the Pope encourages dialogue among different religions, as this implies the existence of more Gods, acknowledging other Gods' authority. The Pope availability is completely fake... He cannot change anything – being the divine law not amendable; the same applies to the Mullah and the Rabbis.

If the Holy Inquisition Court was still in-force the Pope could be accused of polytheism and immediately burnt alive.

In this respect Islamic fundamentalists are much more consistent and they make it clear that they would like to destroy the infidel Christians. I fully understand the Church position in this case, on the other hands peers have to understand one another: dear Rabbis, Mullahs there is not point in fighting as long as these poor ignorant desperate people allow it, we can hold on tight to our privileges.

As learned men we are aware we do not have the slightest idea about God. Everybody made up a charming and attractive about him. We know that

God is One and only, and He can be either called Yahweh, Christ, Allah but He is One.

We only have to hope that they do not realise it, and when they do, they will be grateful as we served them a table lavishly set with a slap-up meal, so they don't have to think or be held responsible for their existence. The functions of all religions have always been to establish the game's rules as we are unable to do that for many reasons: ignorance, communication difficulties, laziness, mutual mistrust.

The temptation to get in charge becomes enticing when people get to accept rules for fears, faith, plagiarism or any other reason. This is what all religious leaders have regularly done, departing from spiritual things, to focus more and more on material things i.e. to our private things, to our business, to what we can or cannot eat. Yes because you have to rejoice, but most of all you have to suffer and expiate your sins to gain eternal life, which is something that remains unknown to all religious leaders. If you obey to God's law, which is the Pope's and Bishops' law, you'll end up in heaven, otherwise you'll go to hell.

On the other hand Muslims find themselves in the same conditions as the Catholic church was at the time of the Holy Inquisition.

Likewise God's law is the Koran's law that is the Ulema's Council, for those who disobey or for some reason they want to change their beliefs are sentenced to death on earth and to damnation in hell in the other world, exactly what the Church did, torturing and burning witches and heretical people.

Nowadays Catholics, who are troubled by the clash of civilisation, are often oblivious that they set a master example on this procedure. If this is true current religions appear like a virtual world holding an uncertain and approximate idea based on the magic

word faith. On the whole we are told: you will never be able to know what God is, but we are very close to Him indeed, therefore you have to trust us, you need to have faith. In fact to be faithful or rather to have faith is exclusively used as referred to God. You have no faith! Anyone who is asked this question assumes that the subject is God and not his wife! Your soul, (I mean your mind) has to struggle between the Pope and the Devil, obviously for your own good, but another possibility exists, you can keep your soul for yourself, in spite of the Pope and the Devil and perhaps to obey something that is more down to earth: "the Rule".

The shared rule does not have any divine link, and with no arrogance it acknowledges its limitations its and nature. It is necessary to comply or rather to have faith in the Rule as long as it is in-force. In the ancient time a very well known person drank hemlock-based liquid and preferred to die to be faithful to "the Rule" even if he did not agree with it....but it was "the Rule".

This rule is not an absolute one, if it was it could be claimed as God's rule, God only can be absolute and final we can only be relative to something. Nowadays there are a lot of discussions about relativism, which is our natural condition, even if we are often unaware of it.

The term relativism evokes sin, licentiousness, lack of principles. The Pope, the Italian Conference of Bishops and Mr Pera criticise relativists on a daily basis, and they do not realise that relativism is an act of modesty, of being aware we cannot fully grasp God's supreme law.

Secular religion is sometimes seen with a negative connotation as opposed to Catholic religion, exclusive repository of true morals and ethics. Laymen are

sometimes seen as disbelievers with no God and principles; people who make their own rules at their own convenience.

I am a layman and I believe in God and my idea about the Lord does not coincide with Pope Ratzinger's. My frame of reference is the Natural Order of things from which I infer my morals (the relationship with myself and my body) and my ethics (the relationship with other people).

If this is secular religion I am glad to be a layman and I rejoice to see that the only possible and intelligible truth revealed to us is Nature with its laws understood in a dynamic and not a static sense. I cannot stand all terms ending in "ism": fundamentalism, communism and so, but if the Church is so determined to speak about secularism and relativism, sooner or later we'll have to talk about Catholicism and absolutism.

If you get rid of the absolute (principles) you'll find out a world surprisingly made of balance, serenity and tolerance. It is a pleasant sensation, you feel master of yourself, fear disappears, even fear of death vanishes and death reveals itself as an act of life, birth and death are the first and the last act of life.

As a broken spell our absolute (rulers) (cardinals, mullah, rabbis and others), who are alleged defenders of life and indeed death lovers, reveal their true face of baroque puppeteers as decorated as Sicilian carts. They are caught up in their shaman business in the name of the revealed truth. You realise that they do not have anything to give, but their presumption and unconscious ferocity, you see them the way they are: ridiculous individuals who dare claim themselves God representatives on earth.

I believe in God, but I don't have the arrogance of being his representative on earth. I think this is the only condition upon which we can worship God and acknowledge His endless wisdom and not the Pope's or Mullah's or Rabbis'.

The rule of Relativism proceeds for successive approximations, it can last a life span of one week or one hundred years, but then it will change, it will get better. God needs neither our faith nor our "absolute principles", but a challenge (in the best sense of the term) aimed at getting close to God's perfection, yet aware that God's perfection can never be reached.

To have faith in someone means to sacrifice oneself, cancel oneself completely. Are we sure this is what God wants? Are we sure that God wants our submission? I do not like this idea and I am sure He does not like it either. He can incinerate us whenever he wants, why would he need to humiliate us to that extent. I think that God only expects respect and gratitude. To believe in someone for any reason, even the most trivial one, is very different than having faith in someone. Much in history was played on this subtle difference: in the former case we remain ourselves with our own dignity, in the latter we become slaves.

Rabbis, Mullah, Bishops do not ask you to believe but to have faith...but faith in what? Obviously they ask you to have faith in them, guardians and interpreters of the Holy Scriptures and of God. This gentlemen's presumption is preposterous,

They made such blunders referred to religion interpretations and to their hierarchies' behaviour to make even the most naïve man turn pale. I am sure blunders were made in good faith, but as we all know...the road to hell is paved with good intentions.

Their the whole thing becomes even more unbearable as it is skilfully seasoned by the vast majority of church-goers through behaviour of self-sacrifice, altruism, charity, dedication to others through intercession of all saints, spirit of sacrifice and so on in a genuine and participatory manner.

Religion hierarchies are obviously the point of reference, they are master of this behaviour, they give everything to people without asking for anything in return, but one tiny detail: in return they ask for your "soul" and that is "everything".

When I was a kid my parents often took me to my grandfather's farm, which was in a little village behind Mt Porrara in the Council of Palena. The farm was located half way up on a small plateau hidden in the woods. It could only be reached on foot, walking down a path from the main road to Palena. A Sanctuary – St Maria dell'Altare was and still is located near the farm. When I passed by –as a good altar boy – I did the sign of the cross, but at the time I was interested in other things. It was July and it was wheat threshing time. It was hard work for grown ups, but for me it was a feast.

I was impatient to see mares jog-trotting in circle, expertly led by my grandfather, and I hoped I could ride one at the end of the day. Sheep and goats were frightened as kids kept bothering them and did not leave them alone for one minute.

Later I found out that back in 1235 a certain guy named Peter from Morrone went there to live in absolute solitude. He spent three years in a cave dug in the rock by himself.

Who was Peter from Morrone? Why did his name disappear from books and archives and he is only

known as "*the man who made from cowardice the great refusa*"?

"Peter from Morrone was born in 1209 in Terra di Lavoro, as state in the Papal Bull by Clemente V, dating back to 1306. When he was 20 he left the Benedictine Monastery of S. Maria in Faifoli where he spent a short and unhappy time and looked for absolute solitude, led by deep religious feelings. There is very little information about his childhood. In his autobiography he appears to be a bizarre, solitary and lazy boy, his brothers did not like him and they did not want to waste money to send him to school. He was constantly haunted by nightmares and visions and he left his village in 1230-1235 and never went back. First he lived inside a cave in Scontrone in Castel di Sangro for a short time. Then he reached Mt Polleno (today Mt Porrara) where he spent three years in a cave, dug in the rocks by himself. Later a Sanctuary - S. Maria dell'Altare – was built there. He postponed his plan to go to Rome, he stayed here for a long time, living in an absolute solitude. This was a very fruitful period for his spiritual maturity, he developed the first part of a long and deep relationship with God, without go-betweens. Later he decided to go to Rome encouraged by local people to take the holy orders, and to avoid noisy pilgrims who regularly went to visit him. There is little information about this experience, he stayed at the Lateran and diligently studied until he took the holy orders.

In 1241 he left Rome, but instead of going back to Mt Polleno, he went to Sulmona and he retired in a cave, near the church of S. Maria di Segezzano, at the foot of Mt Morrone. Later the monastery of S Spirito was built upon it.

⁹ Dante, Inferno

Here many people (later his disciples) were attracted to Peter.

As word of his sanctity spread, hundreds of people from the local villages i.e. Bucchianico, Caramanico, Salle, Roccamorice, Pratola, were attracted to the pious man eager to share penitence and hermitage privations.

Peter from Morrone was reserved and quiet, he could not stand the increasing number of noisy visitors. He left his cave at Segezzano and in 1246 he retired on the Majella massif were on the dramatic cliff Parete dell'orso at Ripa Rossa he found his first and inaccessible refuge. Later he found his shelter on one of the most inaccessible cliffs of those mountains. It was called Holy Spirit, where later a Monastery – the seat of Peter's Order - was built. Peter spent many years on the Majella mountains trying to avoid bothering followers who threatened his solitude.

He searched new and inaccessible caves, hoping to dissuade masses of sick, desperate pilgrims, who in search for comfort and pain relief, reached him anywhere even in the caves of S Bartolomeo di Legio and S Giovanni on Orfento.

Here on the Majella massif Peter's fame as miracle worker increased above all in the years between 1246-1293.

In 1293 Peter, who was 60 years old, did something almost legendary for those days. In winter he walked to Lyon to avoid that the Pope abolished his Order during the Lyon Council II. Peter's enterprise was successful, word of his sanctity spread beyond the Alps and the Pope Gregory X did not include Peter in the list of rabble-rousers who belonged to numerous sects, not approved by the Church hierarchies.

Peter from Morrone was a gentle, shy, reserved and extremely humble person, who led a life inspired to

early Christianity and pauperism of S. Francesco d'Assisi. Penitence, prayers, silence, strict abstinence, hard and prolonged fasting, mortification of the flesh constantly led Peter throughout his life.

On the other hand a fairy tale orchestrated by some of Peter's false admirers described him as a man of power, an organised industrious manager dedicated to the construction of castles and palaces, but Peter from Morrone was never like that.

Most of the estates owned by Peter's Order came from donations and other types of conveyances. Neither the size nor the existence of these properties were known to him. He was compelled to transform the first informal community into a regular Order. He had to accept the demand of hundreds of people, who attracted to his charisma, wanted to become his followers. He reached full spiritual maturity and perfection between 1274 and 1293, his hermitic vocation became stronger than the coenobitic one.

Peter from Morrone was never a community type of man. Nor was he a Church man in *stricto senso*. He was not leader of assemblies of believers. Nor was he a passive element of a shapeless mass of believers tied by dogmas. He was a Christian individual who deeply believed in the poverty and privation messages proposed by Christ. He was consistent to this messages up to the most extremes consequences.

In June 1293, strongly led by his desire of absolute solitude, Peter called the IV and last meeting of his Order. Despite his disciples consternation, he announced his irrevocable decision to retire on Mt Morrone as his earthly path was almost at the end.

In that cave he spent his last days in the deepest and conscious enjoyment of divine grace. He was fully happy, satisfied and serene. His relationship with God was in order. He was sure of being almost at the end and that the greatest dream of his life was about to come true: be reunited with God and return his soul as pure and immaculate as God had given it to him. He ignored that History prepared an ambush for him and he was about to be caught in his own cave, at S Onofrio, that was Peter's antechamber of paradise. If he had died before 5th July 1294 he would have been unknown, just like many other hermits and gurus the Abruzzi Apennine ridge was teeming with, but that day was fatal to him. In Perugia eleven surviving Cardinals ended a twenty-seven month quarrel over the vacant Papacy – it started when Nicholas IV's died - and elected Peter as the new Pope. That day the cardinal-electors, exhausted and unable to resolve the Orsini and Colonna conflict based solely on greed for power, charged Peter with an unwanted burden.

That act was truly irresponsible and it was never adequately criticised by historians. In that business and thus in the affairs of the Conclave) Charles II of Anjou was also involved as he needed a Pope who ratified the agreement concerning Sicily's return with the Aragonesi. It was precisely in that occasion that the French Charles II measured Benedetto Caetani's determination, the cardinal who became Boniface VIII, and not very politely invited the king to mind his business and stay away from the Church matters. The king was outraged at the shame suffered, and he was desperate as the effects of the agreement could vanish.

He left Perugia, but instead of going to Naples he went to Sulmona and he played a card which turned out to be a winning one. The King Charles II of Naples persuaded Peter from Morrone, who was in good faith, to write a letter to the cardinals gathered at the Conclave. In that letter Peter urged the election of a new pope, threatening that divine vengeance would fall upon them if they had left the "bride of Christ" as a widow. The cardinals, as struck by a revelation from heaven, identified the poor hermit from Morrone as the lamb to sacrifice. They assigned him that task during one of the most dramatic moments of the clash between temporal power and the church that had touched the bottom of spiritual and moral decency.

Immediately however the cardinals could not even lay a hand on their victim, because the new pope was, in fact, abducted and used as a precious political instrument by King Charles II.

From 29th August to 13th December Celestine V was surrounded by hungry hyenas, parasites, scroungers, spongers, hangers-on, bloodsuckers and dishonest people of any sort, who exploited Celestine's name and misused blank papal bulls for their dirty business.

Celestine V was forced to leave l'Aquila to follow the king heading for Naples. When he was in the cell built for him at Castelnuovo, he vaguely began to think of resigning, then as struck by a divine revelation he understood why he felt in such a distress.

The people around him were bringing shame and dishonour on the church name, and even if Celestine was normally gentle and submissive, he could not stand such situation.

He was very old and tired, decrepit and with aches and pains caused by his severe penitential practices, but he found the courage and strength to fight against that disaster.

He stood up like an armed warrior, and demanding the dumbstruck cardinals to hold their tongue, Celestine imposed his will, renouncing the papacy. He ignored the threat of the Neapolitan people who, stirred by the king and even by some of Celestine's disciples, assaulted him and raided his humble shelter.

It was a great day. Celestine, like a wounded giant, rose against those eleven sinners and cursing them in the name of God, he renounced to be a Pope (Celestine was not the man that, out of cowardice, made the grand refusal, as he renounced but did not refuse his role, and Dante knew the difference between the two terms very well). That assignment had the purpose of disgracing the church and the soul. On 13th , 700 years ago, the man labelled as a coward in History left the papacy as a triumphant winner. Neither powerful people's threat, nor praises managed to keep him stuck in a role that did not give glory to God. Celestine heavily paid for his adamant unwillingness to serve any temporal power. He was slandered, insulted, offended. False admirers and true detractors managed to attribute to him Dante's obscure cryptogram in which Celestine was accused of being a coward and inept man. Nowadays the defamation is still believed by those who identified Celestine as the one who refused out of cowardice. On 24th December of the same year, only 12 days since his resignation, Benedetto Caetani was elected pope Boniface VIII with the valuable French votes manipulated by king Charles II.

A dirty agreement, reached by the new pope and King Charles II of Naples cleared the previous misunderstanding in Perugia, but drove Celestine V's followers, the Spirituals and the Fraticelli (little Brethren) in disarray. On 1st January 1295, at night, the abdicating pope escaped from S Gennaro to reach his retreat on Mt Morrone, then Puglia and then Greece. 17 months were left before the end of his martyrdom. He was hunted by the king's police and by Boniface VIII's army like a dangerous criminal.

Celestine V was caught at Vieste and delivered to Boniface VIII. After being held at the pope's dwelling, he was transferred to the horrible tower of Castel Fumone where he spent his last days. His detention, despite numerous fake reports by Boniface VIII's supporters, was extremely harsh. The extreme severity of that imprisonment was widely revealed by those days chroniclers. After 319 days of hard detention Celestine V's beautiful soul left the abhorred bone and flesh carcass to reach the ever dreamed end: God.

Four hundred years later Lelio Marini, the most informed biographer of Celestine V, accurately examined numerous historical documents to give evidence that Peter from Morrone was barbarically murdered by Boniface VIII. Since that evidence, gathered in 1630, silence fell upon that event, and the enigma of his death – among others – was added to that extraordinary episode occurred in the late Middle Age. Everybody knows that the end of Peter's life was not natural, yet his story was marginally perceived, it did not reach our conscience and it did not stir our emotions: it is simply not there

The truth is that, even today Peter from Morrone is a loose cannon for some secular and religious powers. He is still the odd one out for some Catholic

rearguards who never forgave him his brave renounce That showed that the power is not everything in a man's life. Celestine's action was not forgiven as it was an insubordination act. That is not all. The humble hermit from Morrone is still ostracised today, because he is accused of having established a direct relationship with God without ecclesiastic hierarchies of being formally a Benedictine, but substantially a Franciscan. Celestine V's message is devastating, because if it was revealed and understood it would shatter the weak bearing frame built by those who sell happiness at cheap rates. It is no coincidence that Peter from Morrone's figure and work were removed from history books. It is not accident that search for documents concerning this Medieval hero is almost forbidding as to wear out the most stubborn scholars. It is also redundant to add that if news concerning Celestine V's life was removed, silence has fallen upon his death. His death is evidently still a delicate issue. Evidently someone is afraid that Celestine V's truth can upset certain religious-political balances. That truth cannot be concealed because is hanging over us. On top of everything the alleged instigator of that murderer was Boniface VIII, the one who instituted the Christian Jubilee. To do justice (or at least make an attempt) to all, to the victim, to the alleged murderer is now possible and necessary. The brief abstract of Peter from Morrone's life, quoted from the excellent work by Antonio Grano "Celestine V, study and research centre" is only a minor example of the crimes perpetrated by Catholic hierarchies. To apologise and to remove everything that happened in history is not enough. Peter made a fatal error: in his search for God he realised he did not need Ecclesiastic hierarchies between him and

God. They represented a hurdle as they were only interested in temporal power.

In this respect Peter from Morrone's life and behaviour are currently a hot topic. He appears as the layman archetypal who believes in other things but power and wealth. Most of all he showed that the relationship with God is private and has little to do with earthly matters. His renounce to papacy questioned all churches bearing frames, their bureaucracies, big and little sorcerers who appointed themselves God representatives on earth.

Recently we have witnessed a more significant interference of the Church in temporal power. This happens even in the Muslim world, where there would be no need, as the State is identified with the Koran. Ministers of religion have begun to feel under pressure as they may loose the power to dictate the game's rules.

In the Western world this uncertainty has led to conservative behaviour, whilst in the Islamic world it has triggered Holy-Inquisition-style behaviour. In the globalised world it is impossible to live isolated. Exchanges between different cultures and religions are inevitable. We rely on an efficient real time communication system. Information is the bugbear of all Churches and dictatorships. To survive they need to keep people ignorant and this is particularly apparent in the school system of the vast majority of countries. Subjects taught at school are: scientific subjects, Catholic religion, Islamic religion etc. Nobody ever thinks that it would be better to teach history of religions, everybody is focused on scientific knowledge, but access to the codes and tools of Logic remains the prerogative of a chosen few.

Otherwise we would not explain (with only a few exceptions) the lack of subjects such as philosophy and logical thinking.

It is dangerous to inform people that in the past many men were asked about God, about a higher being. They gave different explanations and solutions, some of them could be shared some could not.

We, Catholic, have to accept blindly what the Pope has to offer. The same thing apply to Muslims and the Mullah.

It is dangerous to study logical thinking. We, ordinary people would simply burst out laughing listening to the vast majority of politicians and ecclesiastic hierarchies. Their speeches are crammed with errors: emotional appeals, false analogy, improper generalisation, confusion among terms, logical fallacy, omission of the thesis statement, circular reasoning, tautology, fake dilemma, *argumentum ad hominem* (argument to the person), authoritative opinions and illogical conclusion etc.

The only two subjects that should be compulsory after primary education are virtually not taught at all. If any idea about God developed by these gentlemen was analytically examined by any philosophy student it would miserably fail. But...there is the magic word faith.... It sticks it all together. We have to keep being ignorant. We cannot be independent thinkers. Thinking is hard work! Some people are – very unselfishly – doing it for us!

Thinking, meditating generate doubts and fear of changing. Taking into account new ideas and new elements in our brain leads to confusion ("mentropy").

Some certainties fall, other – perhaps – can develop better than the previous ones. It seems odd, but fear

of something new and different leads us to use our brain (our mind) to the least of its capabilities and potential.

I have the feeling that things cannot be unchanged forever. The Olympus collapsed. It is a matter of time but also the Holy See, Mecca, the Wailing Wall will inevitably fall. What shall we do without churches, without mosques?

I already picture my mom worried because she will not conclude the insurance policy with the priest. That will ensure her a decent after life without suffering. Well....yes it is a virtual insurance policy. In the past there was a one-to-one relationship with sale of indulgences by professional "pardoners". Today only one company exists: the Holy See which takes care of everybody. It is paid through the eight per thousand of the total amount raised by income taxes. Is it so absurd to imagine churches and mosques where at the entrance there are only guards and not religion ministers. Anyone could go in, express one's feelings and gratitude to God. Religion is a purely personal matter and it does not allow any go-betweens.

Any law, code, Bible are divine only if considered part of the concept of all things. The idea is rather bizarre. God created man and after that He saw the his creation was going to sin and perdition. Thus He was forced to come down to earth and send us His prophets, to save us and give us His law. It is equal to say: God admitted his error. He created man, He did not do it right, and it is not possible!

So...! If in 1800 B.C. God appeared to Abraham at the age of 3. Later God gave Moses two stone slabs containing His laws. 1800 years later, as God saw that things did not work as they should, sent His son. 610 years later God revealed himself to the prophet

Muhammad. On top of everything it seems that God is not interested in the other half of the population.

The assumption underlying all three monotheistic religions is the "revealed truth".

Are you sure that this is possible? The laws we have (law of Nature excluded) are – and I emphasise all of them – the result of human invention. Someone smarter alleges that his law is God's law. I believe he will not go very far. How dreadful ...to face God alone!

We feel lost without ministers of religion as go-betweens, with their rituals, gestures, procedures developed throughout centuries. Sooner or later this is what we should do. It is human.... We hope to be reassured by third persons in the after life, but – let's face it – it is also a cowardly attitude. The social purpose of all religions was to carry this burden.

It would have been such rewarding work if they had simply given us the tools, symbols and places like churches or mosques to help understand and honour God. The problem is that religions pushed themselves much further and conceitedly claimed to be repository of God's truth.

This will cause their fall. Hence we'll just move forward. Sooner or later we'll wake up like Peter from Morrone and we'll recognise these people for what they are: they promise hot air and salvation at cheap rates. They did not hesitate to use and abuse God's name for their personal business and need of power. They have the huge responsibility of providing the basis of a war: not a war among men, but a war among Gods. We must acknowledge that.

I wish I could see the Pope, the Mullah, the Rabbis, the heads of all religions sit at the same table, perhaps chaired by the Dalai Lama.

They could make amend for their pride and presumption. As true spiritual guides, in line with local customs they could offer to help understand and honour the only possible God. The One who has no name and nobody could ever fully understand.

Personally I don't find it difficult to pray in a mosque or in St Peter's Basilica.

I prefer to pray on the coastal dunes of Sabaudia when I am in Latina and in one of Peter from Morrone's shelters when I am in Campo di Giove..

We, humans (bishops, mullah, rabbis, sorcerers, politicians included) have to do what we have always done: set the game's rules.

We have already done a great deal. We should start from the Declaration of human rights and who knows... Perhaps one day I could smoke hookah with Osama Bin Laden pleasantly discussing that even if we are labelled as Christian and Muslim we belong to the same rich yet diverse pack.

I am **Christian, Muslim, Jew, Orthodox, Buddhist, Baptist, Mormon, Waldensian, Lutheran...** and do you know why?

Because they are the same thing.

In the future, I hope not to far from now, Christian Muslim, Jew, Orthodox, Buddhist fellows will pray together at the Vatican, Mecca, Jerusalem, Lhasa, Moscow, Maya temples, on the ice expanses, in the deserts. Everybody will be proud of having built wonderful monuments as a token of gratitude to God who can only be One.

Everybody will enjoy – in their differences – the purpose of unity. There has been no law other than the law of Nature. God is positive, non-avenger and does not punish anyone. The ministers of the three monotheistic religions are alleged guardians of the three "revealed truths" (Torah, Bible, Koran).

Those divine laws are irreconcilable with each other and non amendable. They are co-responsible for the majority of violent conflicts among men. If we do not get over the "reveal truth myth" we will be unable to establish any "shared rule". To ordinary mortals hell is the inability to use the tools God gave us to live a full life (with our body and mind) based on mutual respect.

P.S. I would never be grateful enough to my son as he let me visit many of the darkest places of human nature. I have learned to appreciate and enjoy many things that are often taken for granted, only because the benevolent fate bestowed them upon us.



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