



Symbolic Framework

Crisis and Splendour: the Renaissance and the challenges ahead

The adventure of scouts is always played in a fascinating scenario that can evoke ideas, actions, engagements: the Jungle of Kipling for cubs, the island of pirates or the far west for young scouts and guides, the travel of Ulysses for rover and ventures.

The following notes intend highlights some ideas about the symbolic framework of Roverway 2006: the **Renaissance**

Idea 1. Splendour of the Renaissance.

1.1 Between the second half of 1400 and the first half of 1500 Italy and Europe have experienced a period of extraordinary wealth under any aspect: financial, cultural, artistic, scientific. ¹

1.2 New discoveries open new roads to the circulation of ideas, of resources, products, and persons. A process of unification and globalization started that, maybe, will be accomplished only nowadays. New courses bring new products, new flavours, new opportunities, new riches, new awareness, and new challenges.....

1.3 The pyramidal medieval structure of power become definitely in crisis. There is no more a pyramidal hierarchy where the majority is

¹ It was the age of extraordinary **painters** (as, for instance: in Italy: Leonardo, Antonello da Messina, Beato Angelico, Botticelli, Piero della Francesca, Andrea Mantenga, Masaccio, Ghirlandaio; in France Jean Fouquet, Barthelemy d'Eick, Enguerrand Charonton, Nicholas Froment, in the Flandes: Dirk Bouts, Robert Campin, Hans Memling, van der Weyden, van Eyck, in Spain: Pedro Burruquete, Jaime Huguet), In Germany Michel e Gregor Erhart, Michael Pacher, Martin Shongauer

A time for great **inventors** and **scientists** such as Leonardo da Vinci, Gerolamo Cardano, Nicolò Copernico, Galileo Galilei.

Cities were built in accordance with harmonious and elegants schemes by **architects** such as Brunelleschi, Michelangelo, Bramante...there is a search for the ideal town

The human thought is enriched by philosophers such as Telesio, Giordano Bruno, Tommaso Campanella, Pico della Mirandola, Michel de Montagne....

Literature give birth to masterpieces of **writers** such as Lodovico Ariosto, Torquato Tasso, Boiardo....

Politics become a science thanks to Macchiaivelli and Guicciardini.

New geographical discoveries are made thnks to the courage of **explorers** and **sailors**: Cristoforo Colombo, Amerigo Vespucci, Ferdinando Magellano, Vasco de Gama, Bartolomeo Diaz, Pedro Alvarez Cabral, Jacques Cartier, Francis Drake, Sir Walter Raleigh, Antonio Pigafetta...

submitted to the powers of a few lords. New social classes now emancipated and became subjects ready to fight for their freedom and power.

1.4 The idea of **perspective** saw the light (i.e. that everything must be put in its context, within its background and its time). The analysis and critics of facts was strengthened. At the same time there was a development of the flavour for **proportion and balance**. New ideals of **beauty and elegance** appeared.

1.5 In conclusion Renaissance is a time where man is put in the centre, is always an aim never a mean. Every man has a role to play in history and his task is that to live and taste his life in harmony with the creation.

1.6 **Humanism** is the thought that support the Renaissance.

From this point of view the Renaissance is one of the most splendid period of human history. The achievements and intuitions are still capable to excite our admiration and to inspire our ideas about our role and task in the world and history.

Idea 2. Crisis of the Renaissance.

2.1 The conquests of the Renaissance entailed also crisis and inconsistencies:

2.1.1 A few new languages expanded (for instance: French, English, Spanish, Portuguese) but other disappeared.

2.1.2 Cultures less strong or less prepared from a technological point of view were unable to survive or were cancelled even through genocides.

2.1.3 New germs and viruses appeared and determined new sicknesses and epidemics unknown until then.

2.1.4 A conflict between Arabs and occident was deepened. The Hebrew people were thrown out of Spain and of the rest of Europe or confined in ghettos. Prejudices and racisms consolidated.

2.1.5 War religions spread all over Europe.

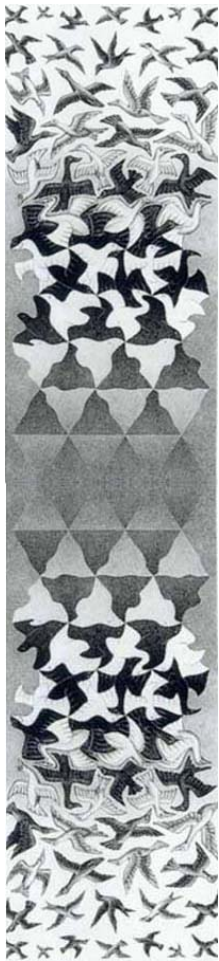
2.2 Renaissance entailed the origin of a crisis that is not yet overcome. Centrality of the man may become individualism, geographical discoveries become colonialism, the success of scientific and technical discoveries entail a terrific power of man over the environment and of men over other men that may have devastating effects and put in danger the survival of the mankind.

Idea 3. What have we learnt from Renaissance?

3.1 Renaissance has taught us the any event on the Earth has consequences that may be determined even quite far in the space or in the time. **Everything is tied and bound**. There relationships between a part and the whole, between the micro and the macro. After



Renaissance is a time of ecology, of the unity of the man. Of its relationship with others, with God and nature



the Renaissance the world has entered in a phase of interconnection. It is now necessary to have an ecological awareness of man and of his relationship with the world.

3.2 Men become subject of history and therefore responsible for his actions and choices. It is a duty for everyman to know, to understand and therefore to act in a consistent and coherent way by being aware that his action will determine consequences on the others and on the world.²

3.3 The fragmentation of knowledge is instrumental to the enslavement and to the domination of a man over other men. Knowledge means power. Lack of knowledge means slavery.

3.4 Humanistic culture helps the aptitude to be open to all major problems, to think about them, to choose the complexity of human nature and to meditate about knowledge and how to integrate it in his own life.

3.5 Scouting is a form of humanism since connects and unify the major aspects of the human condition: corps, mind, relationship with others, and relationship with nature, with his own destiny...

3.6 Today we experience both the full accomplishment of the Renaissance and its crisis: its intuitions and discoveries are shared at planet level. At the same time there are signs that indicate the cultural humanistic model of the Renaissance is under debate.

Idea 4. Today's and tomorrow's challenges

4.1 Nowadays, as 500 years ago the world is characterised by changes, technological evolution, and scientific discoveries in any field of knowledge: from medicine to genetics, from nuclear physics to bioengineering....

4.2 The improvement of technologies of any kind entailed the illusion that mankind could be set completely free from nature". This is not true: the increasing bleeding of populations and the interdependence of local eco-systems highlights how the survival of the entire mankind is strictly dependent on the good working of a whole large global ecosystem. In a global system animals, bacterial, vegetables without number cooperate to maintain the conditions for a never-ending blooming of life

4.3 New economic, social, cultural problems must now be solved by the mankind and they have a planetary dimension: Let's list some of them:

4.3.1 Challenges to the habitat in which we live:

² Essential problems are never fragmentary problems. Global problems are always essential. The stronger is the general intelligence, the larger it is his capacity to deal with specific problems (E.Morin).



- (a) Irreversible homogenization and artificialization of our habitat; Changes in climate and Earth temperature determine the melting of glaciers and worsen the consequences of natural disasters (typhoons, tsunamis, earthquakes...). We have to face the lack of water and increasing desertification of large zones of continents.
- (b) **Increase of human habitat:** large megalopolis and urban conglomerate where more than 10 million persons live have now multiplied as well as "bidonvilles", towns built on wastes, unhealthy suburbs on the margin of extremely rich centres.
- (c) **Reduction of human and natural diversities:** every year thousand animal, bacterial, floral species extinguish as well as entire human populations.
- (d) **The industrial production** determines a high level of pollution of the air and the ground that may result not reversible.

4.3.2 Challenges to the human dimension

- (a) **Demographic blow-up:** the rhythm of growth of the population of the world increases by geometrical progression. In some countries some birth control politics have been put in place that pose moral questions or appear unacceptable.
- (b) Entire human communities see their **survival under threat** because of epidemics and pandemics of sicknesses of unknown origin and for which there is no cure available for everybody (e.g. HIV deficiencies and AIDS)
- (c) **Artificialization and virtualization of human corps:** (genetic engineering, clonation, intensive use of drugs and pharmaceutical products. Which are the conditions under which the science research can be admitted? Are there ethic guidelines guide valid for everybody or is it necessary to rely on the personal conscience of scientist?)
- (d) **Male and female identities** are under debate because of behaviours and attitudes that have in their ambiguity and ambivalence the key of their success.



4.3.3 Challenges to cultural identity

- (a) **Crisis of the social function of culture.** Culture was a way to create social identity and sense of belonging to. Nowadays has still culture this aim? Inconsistencies and conflicts appear every day stronger and stronger. There are waves of melting, metissages, and multiculturalisms with an effect of being puzzled.
- (b) **There is a crisis about principles that we had considered certain:** equity or equality? It is better to protect individual's freedom or the collective identities? What about individualism and identity?



(c) We are approaching a phase of our history where someone thinks that it is no longer necessary to maintain his own tradition that are detected as an obstacle for the progress. Where the past shall go together with its lessons? **Can we live without our roots?** Will the history survive without memory? Internet time is "everything now and here".

(d) The **cultural fragmentation** era determines sense of insecurity, social, religious, cultural conflicts. Economical differences can create and deepen new injustices: those who will have access to the new technologies will have a power never imagined before.

(e) Is it possible to find **common values** in a post-ideological society?

4.3.4 Economical and political challenges

(a) Differences between **the rich and the poor side of the world** are broadening; the debt accrued by poor countries is so high that can destroy any hope of development of future generations. Emigration from non-developed countries to rich countries may have unforeseen impact.

(b) The intensive **exploitation of energy sources** can determine the exhaustion of stocks in a few years and an energetic crisis without precedents.

(c) The Industrial production is moved to countries where the cost of **labour** is very low and there are less guarantees for the workers and the population.

(d) The resolution of conflicts is sought nowadays more through the **war** than through the diplomacy. The international institutions have lost credibility. The area of crisis are multiplied (Iraq, Kosovo, Bosnia, Palestine, Afghanistan, Cecenia, Sudan.....)



Conclusion: what is the question that we want to raise at the Roverway?

The world appears today uncertain whether to continue and to progress in accordance with the values and the humanistic principles of the Renaissance or, alternatively, to find a completely new road. Is this a crisis of growth or of decadence? We want to be free to decide ourselves but maybe we are not yet sure on how to go. What will happen to the mankind as we have learnt it from the renaissance? What can scouting do? What can scouts do? Will human diversity survive?

*This is a time to **dare**. This is a time to **share***

(ideas, thoughts, dreams, projects, resources, engagements....)

a new Renaissance