
H. E. Cardinal Pietro Palazzini

Modern man, and his dominion over nature

Cardinal Palazzini, who was unable to attend, sent the following message to the conference.

According to Christian thinking, the world, which is the work of God the Creator, is good. At the summit of creation is man.

Man, while he is himself a creature, and comes out of nature, cannot be reduced to it; he is called, rather, to dominate it (Genesis 1:28) and not let himself be dominated by it and absorbed by it. Man is, therefore, the administrator of the world and at the same time the crowning point of creation. Man being freedom, consciousness, and person, in exerting his dominion over the world, especially by his labor, must do it in a rational way; not arbitrarily and selfishly, by keeping in mind his own needs, but also those of future generations.

Modern man increasingly questions himself on his relationship with regard to the cosmos, which has become very problematic.

Is the claim of man to be absolute "owner and possessor," who imposes his laws upon nature, right? Is the cosmos an exploitable material without limits?

Certainly not! Man is a pilgrim: He traverses the pathway of the world during his earthly experience; he takes advantage of it, nourishing himself on the fruits that nature offers; but he cannot, he must not change the pathway, the road upon which others, too, will have the right to pass.

The natural resources of the world, including the air, the water, the earth, the flora, and the fauna, must be used, but at the same time preserved in the interest of present and future generations. Non-renewable resources are to be used in such a way as not to be exhausted, and the advantages of their utilization must be shared by all of humanity.

Things are subordinated to man who uses and transforms them, as we said, by his labor; he bends them and transforms them, in such a way that the entire environment is influenced. Therefore, the transformations of human labor can and must look toward progress, without, however, seriously harming the environment in which man today lives.

In a message by Paul VI to the world congress of the United Nations on this problem of the ecology, held in Stockholm in June 1972, certain general principles were traced, which can serve as orientation for the ethical solutions to the grave local, national, and international problem.

The problems of the environment, it is observed, are not

resolved by exclusively technical means. There is a limit to human creative activity, in the sense of an intelligent application of our own discoveries in the context of objective moral laws, set in the framework of a global vision which looks toward the total expansion of man, associating research in a just ecological balance with a just balance of prosperity. Man is inseparable from the environment. Therefore he must respect the laws that regulate the vital impulse and regenerative capacity of nature. The blind and brutal thrust of material progress, left at the mercy of only its own dynamic, must be replaced by respect for the biosphere in a global vision of dominion.

As to animals in particular, they too are under the dominion of man, who uses them, but must always do this in a rational way.

"The dumb animals," St. Thomas Aquinas warns, "have no rational life by means of which to guide themselves and move on their own; but they are always moved as by another natural impulse; and this is a sign that they are naturally servants and made for the use of others" (*Summa Theologica* 2-2). Such is, in fact, the disposition of the Creator, who from the beginning assigned to Adam and later to Noah, the plants and fruits as sustenance (Genesis 1:29-30); he gave man full and absolute dominion over nature (Wisdom of Solomon 9:1-2; Psalms 8:7-9). Science, for its part, continually discovers numerous services that animals can render, more or less instinctively, to humanity, supplying man with innumerable needs, together with industry.

The animals in themselves, as they are lacking in reason,



St. Francis of Assisi (by Giotto). No forerunner of animal-rights sentimentalism!

cannot be the subject of any rights. Nonetheless, man cannot simply use them at his whim; he must use them, like every other creature, according to the intent of the Creator. This obligation does not bind him to the animal as a duty (responding to a right that does not exist);

Creator himself, who wants man to use the lower creatures according to their natural fitness with regard to human necessities (eating, etc.)

perimental purposes before moving on to humans). Hence, abuse is still forbidden (making animals suffer unnecessarily; torturing them for the fun of it, etc.);

So we agree with Societies for the Protection of Animals, when they have the aim of removing useless cruelties, all the more since the habit of treating animals cruelly tends to make man insensitive toward human sufferings, too.

But one cannot agree in attributing to animals rights they cannot have, thus impeding, at times, scientific progress as well.

Nor can one indulge in sickly sweet sentimentalisms, especially when these excessive attentions divert the human heart from the primary right of our fellow man to have our understanding.

Nor, in support of certain exaggerated sentimentalisms, can one cite the example of the meekness of some saints (St. Francis of Assisi, St. Anthony of Padua, St. Francis of Paola, etc.)

a work of God, a symbol which raised them toward Him or the reminder of a particular virtue (the innocence of the lamb; the generosity of the pelican, etc.).
forms of exaggerated affection.

Dr. Victor Trad

Lebanon's plight: an appeal to the world

I have accepted with pleasure the invitation from the Schiller Institute to speak at this conference.

To speak of Lebanon today means, unfortunately, to speak of a country that is living through a dramatic war situation, with all the political, humanitarian, and economic problems this condition involves. The Lebanese people for over 14 years has seen itself forced to become used to war and have to forget what it means to live in peace.

This is a sad destiny for the Land of the Cedars, which for centuries has always been the symbol of coexistence among the various ethnic groups and religious confessions: Christians, Muslims, Jews, and Druze . . . and the symbol of freedom, as well as a fundamental meeting-point between East and West.

In all these centuries of Lebanese history, no fewer than 17 different religious faiths have lived in Lebanon, peacefully and mutually integrated with one another.

Greetings and good wishes

Greetings to the conference were received from: His Eminence Cardinal D. Simon Lourdasamy, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Oriental Churches, who sent a letter "formulating wishes for the success of the praiseworthy initiative"; His Eminence Cardinal Josef Tomko, Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, who sent a letter in which he "formulates the best wishes for the happy success of the important manifestation"; Father Pierfrancesco Landi, who transmitted the good wishes of His Eminence Msgr. Fernando Charrier, Bishop of Alessandria; His Eminence Cardinal Piovanelli, archbishop of Florence, represented at the conference by Prof. Jacopozzi of the Capranica College in Rome.

Hon. Antonio Gava, Interior Minister; Prof. Francesco Sisinni, Director General of the Ministry of Culture and Environment. The General Directorate of the Culture and Environment Ministry itself sent to the Schiller Institute a letter to Minister Bono Parrino, expressing a favorable opinion of the request to sponsor the conference, "keeping in mind the reflections which the said Council nurtured in the secular and religious society of the time, influencing all the sectors of knowledge and constituting a moment of encounter and reflection between Western culture and Eastern currents of thought"; Hon. Mariapia Garavaglia, Undersecretary of State in the Health Ministry; Hon. Tina Anselmi, president of the National Commission for the Realization of Equality Between Men and Women in the Cabinet, who sent a letter which reads in part: "The topic of this seminar is of great importance and interest and I regret not being able to attend due to previous commitments"; and the Hon. Publio Fiori, Christian Democratic deputy in the Italian Parliament.