

Human rights between truth and freedom in the time of COVID-19

Abstract: The pandemic experience of Covid – 19 has called into question the relationship between freedom and truth and the problem of respect and inviolability of human rights towards all people, regardless of age, ideology, skin color, economic – social and cultural conditions, religious belief.

This work wants to reconsider the relationship between truth, which must always be pursued, and the freedom to act in order to affirm and protect the fundamental rights of the person who in every time and place are universal, indivisible and interdependent.

Keywords: human rights, person, ethics, freedom, truth

1. Freedom and Truth for the Common Good

The pandemic experience of Covid – 19 has called into question the relationship between freedom and truth and the problem of respect and inviolability of human rights towards all people, regardless of age, ideology, skin color, economic – social and cultural conditions, religious belief. More than four billion people in *lockdown*, precisely because of the Covid-19 virus, have experienced a widespread

restriction of certain freedoms and civil rights, such as freedom of movement, of assembly, deprived even of the possibility of being able to participate in public life (according to the report “People Power Under Attak” of the *Civicus* organization at least 40% of the world’s population, it lives in countries where there are varying levels of repression, and only 3% live in countries where all fundamental rights are respected), to be able to work and to be able to study and educate themselves with equal educational opportunities, especially for less well-off students belonging to culturally deprived families¹. The current pandemic requires drastic health measures to protect public health and save lives, which is why states have a duty to prevent, treat and monitor the evolution of pandemics such as Covid – 19, in order to ensure that every person can enjoy the best physical and mental health conditions as article 12 of the Convention on Social and Cultural Rights. The drastic measures, however, must not have any major impacts on the enjoyment of other human rights by also increasing social inequalities and affecting the most vulnerable people, hence the importance of taking into account the legal criteria for limiting or derogation from human rights, in strictly necessary cases, in order to avoid arbitrary, excessive and otherwise dangerous measures for the protection of human dignity².

For this reason, it is important to reconsider the relationship between truth, which must always be pursued, and freedom to act in order to strike a delicate balance between taking sufficient action to respect and protect the right to health and minimising

¹ R.Indelicato, *La dispersione scolastica nel terzo millennio. Analisi e prospettive pedagogiche tra antichi bisogni e nuove sfide*. Lecce: PensaMultimedia, 2020.

² R.Indelicato, *La dispersione scolastica nel terzo millennio. Analisi e prospettive pedagogiche tra antichi bisogni e nuove sfide*. Lecce: PensaMultimedia, 2020

interference with other human rights, and in any case always trying to put in place alternative solutions that can guarantee the enjoyment of these rights to the greatest extent possible³.

Even in serious situations, such as the Covid-19 pandemic, one cannot ignore the fact that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent. In particular, it is important to invest economically to maximise scientific research, education, working conditions, safety and protection of vulnerable people, because this would be beneficial to public health and would enable the realization of other human rights. We have seen, also through the collection of scientific data, how the closure of schools in different countries of the world has seriously endangered children's rights not only in relation to education, but also to nutrition, health and safety, all rights that protect the person. In fact, during the period of stay at home, many vulnerable children have experienced situations of exploitation and abuse being in confined environments together with their families. Non-attendance has also affected the mental health of young people with feelings of anxiety and lack of socialisation and, especially in the case of low-income families, exclusion and marginality have increased, in part because of a digital gap between those who have had the opportunity to use online technology and those who have not had this opportunity with the consequence of strong discrimination on the real possibilities of learning and training. This is still a serious problem today and requires an urgent solution that must engage all and *first and most* politicians and scientists, who require courage, freedom and truth in order to safeguard the common good. Science is not a barren chain of syllogisms aimed at reason, but it acquires meaning and is

³ J. Tischner, *Filosofia del dramma*. Lecce: PensaMultimedia, 2019, pp. 62-63.

connoted as true only if it directs a greater love of oneself, of others and to the realization of fundamental rights. As Rosmini wrote, every philosophy is such and not simple science that inflates, if it serves to make man better, that is, as Augustine would say, if he turns into charity that edifies.

2. The universality of human rights

Coronavirus has highlighted the fragility and vulnerability of the human condition, leading us to ask fundamental questions about our existence such as: What is man? What is freedom? What is truth? What is good? What is the meaning of democracy? What is the meaning of law? What do human rights mean throughout the world? Are human rights such for all? Or just for some and not for others? Are human rights universal and interdependent?

Even fundamental rights such as the right to study, education, training and health have not been respected and have been called into question by undermining the very idea of the common good and in many cases denying the priority and most essential right: the right to life, without which all other rights have no chance of being. In 1993, 34 Arab and Asian governments published the Bangkok Declaration⁴ stating that the notion of human rights relates to the cultural, religious and historical diversity of nations and that Western powers should not use human rights as an “instrument of political pressure”⁵. The final document, despite the different ideas, affirmed an essentially universalist

⁴ Report of the regional meeting for Asia of the world conference on human rights Bangkok, 29 March-2 April 1993 Rapporteur: Mr. L.M. Singhvi, p. 15.

⁵ World Conference on Human Rights, Universality of Rights Is Defended by U.S.; Protest of Dalai Lama. Mars Vienna Talks. The Washington Post, June 15, 1993, p. 28-29.

position: “Human rights and fundamental freedoms are by birth the rights of all human beings (...) all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrepresented.” This document, even more than the previous ones, strongly underlines the rights of women, children, ethnic minorities and the handicapped. It specifies that the “right of development” can never justify the infringement of human rights: “the human person is the central subject of development”. Rosmini, speaking of connatural rights such as being a person, absolute legal freedom, the right to life, truth, happiness, so he expresses himself: «Man, when born, has property or is the legal possession of himself. Therefore, all the activities, faculties, powers, forces and goods that nature has are just as much connatural rights: they cannot be taken away from him or marred by anyone. The supreme among the powers is the person, apex and center, all the others come out, and all rights, since rays in the center. The others constitute human nature»⁶. The fundamental importance of the inalienability of human rights and their protection was reiterated in Nice on 7 December 2000 by the European Council, which approved the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. In its 54 articles, the Charter lays out the basic principles on which it is based and which it identifies in the values of human dignity, the right to life, freedom, equality, solidarity, citizenship, justice. It may be enough to read the *Preamble* to demonstrate the great goodness of this document: “The peoples of Europe have decided to share a future of peace based on common values. The Union is based on the indivisible and universal values of dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, the principles of democracy and the rule of law. It puts the person at the centre of his action by establishing the

⁶ A. Rosmini, *Filosofia del diritto*. Padova: Cedam, 1967, p. 247.

citizenship of the Union and creating an area of freedom, security and justice.’ On 29 October 2004, the 25 EU countries signed the European Constitution in Rome: the fundamental document that, in addition to establishing the functioning of European bodies, enshrines the Charter of European Citizens, confirmed by the Lisbon Treaty, also known as the Reform Treaty, signed in 2007. Comparing the preambles of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the latter document described by Maritain as “of great historical significance”⁷, the International Pacts, those of the Charter of European Rights of 2000, the European Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty itself, we can see a common line that affirms indivisible and universal values, among others, the right to life, human dignity, freedom, equality, justice and peace.

3. Law as an Ethical Law

Moro states that “right is the same ethical law as truth and therefore decisive of a complete process of implementation of the total ethical life of humanity”⁸.

Moro’s great lesson must be an example to us men of the third millennium because it is centered on the courage he has always had to bear witness to the value of truth and freedom, even in tragic moments of his life, stating that we must work and suffer not for us, but for future generations, for those who come after us, in the belief that Truth is always before us and is greater than us and to which we must yearning throughout our existential journey.

⁷ J. Maritain, *Le paysan de la Garonne: un vieux laïc s’interroge à propos du temps présent*. Paris: Desclée De Brouwer, 1966, p. 758.

⁸ A. Moro, *Lo Stato. Il Diritto*. Bari: Cacucci, 2006, p. 50.

In spite of those who theorize the death of man and the subject, we can say that the notion of person remains the fundamental key to all ethical, philosophical, pedagogical, legal and political thought and alone constitutes an intellectual and spiritual legacy destined for a great cultural expansion, which would be impossible to abolish without provoking an accelerated regression towards the inhuman and the infrahumano.

Then the pandemic experience of Covid-19, despite its negativity, may represent an opportunity to rethink fundamental values such as freedom, the common good, the meaning of human rights which, precisely as such, are universal, indivisible, inalienable. All values linked to an ontological and ethical-anthropological conception of the person and not already to a functionalistic conception of the person, seen in our time, only in an economic vision and therefore in a market logic.

In more recent times, well-known legal scholars such as Perlingeri, Vincenti and Grossi say that the law should not be applied, but the law. Law is justice, and it's good. If the right is experience it cannot fail to be related to the reality and the people who operate there. It is necessary to overcome the position that identifies the law with the law, because such identification leads to consider the law no longer in its function of guaranteeing and protecting against the abuses and bullying of others, but as something completely detached from reality, while it is true, as Paolo Grossi says, that "law is life, it is very mobile experience", and let us also say, with Justin, that "[...] the law is very little if the people for whom it was created are ignored. The philosopher Rosmini will come to affirm that «the person is the subsistence right».

A momentous change is therefore necessary in which an emblematic role seems to be recognized by all to the jurist, in

a panorama, such as the current one, characterized by fused and contradictory laws. The law cannot ignore ethics and the jurist, reappropriating the role that he has, will be able to pursue if not justice in an absolute sense, at least the “rightness”, to put it with Gustavo Zagrebelsky, of the law through a continuous and wise work of improvement.

What distinguishes the activity of the true jurist is not the precise knowledge of all the regulatory sources but, as the great humanist French Jacopo Cuiacio said, the use of a reasoning really based on the two requirements of *the recta ratio* and the *sensus communis*.

The right cannot be exempted from making choices that involve the relationship with reality and with people and that are the result of conflicts between values, whereing that law and its own application cannot ignore the ethical dimension, which is an essential part of the unity of being a person and of its natural relationality.

The congruence between morality and law, as Perlinger argues, justifies the recall of moral norms within the legal system.

With Capograssi the legal experience is one with the vital world and, moving from common experience and sharing of law, manages to make it clear that the still special interest of the individual becomes universality of the ends, that is, the humanity of law. In this context the “legal” belongs more and more to the law and less and less to the law, as has also been pointed out by the lawyer Paolo Grossi, and it is therefore ethics that clarify the content of the norm, which tends to return to be an expression of the will of individuals and communities, exposing the state of decision-making power and indeed entrusting it with “organization” tasks, which will necessarily be carried out in respect of ethics.

The crisis of the sources of law, linked to the crisis of the exclusive sovereignty of the state, strongly reintroduces in law the “question” of “values”.

After the illusion of the isolation of law and legal science, there is an opportunity to closely link the legal sciences with the other disciplines that serve to grasp in its entirety the legal experience, which is nothing but life, with its relational implications.

Masters such as Capograssi and Grossi have invited to move effectively from the study of laws to that of law and values that underlie its solutions.

The law cannot be an expression of abstract thought but lives in the language and legal convictions of interpreters, who are a living part of society and its most intimate motivations and convictions, since the essence of the legal phenomenon lies in the prospecting to the historical surface of needs and aspirations from deep strata of society, its convictions and its behaviors. This has potentially constituted every legal operator as a possible source of the law, restoring to man the sovereignty, in terms of the creation of the law, which had long been taken from it. But it is the historical man and not just the “expert” of laws.

From this comes the overcoming of legal uniformity and the awareness of the need to give way to effectiveness, according to a falsely pluralistic model, which tends to break down the dynamic fabric of society and its relationship with the institutions in a plurality of conflicts of interest, among which one can find the bandolo only by retracing the “reasons” of ethics and in particular of social ethics.

Therefore, the meaning of the law as a value must be emphasized, so that it, although necessarily requiring the assessment of the fact, remains as a criterion for assessing the fact, which in itself can never constitute a criterion of legality and therefore of the justice of the becoming of human life.

The purpose of the law is to realize an orderly life, not in the outer meaning of the word, but in view of the immanent ethical meaning that human, individual and social life has.

The ordering of the life of a relationship, which the law does, is not to juxtapose the subjects in an order of justice that would not even be possible, because justice means ethics, but rather means promoting the total ethical life, which commits all subjects to an active and concrete collaboration for the realization of truth in all.

Sartre teaches that there is no human nature, there is no law and morality, but every man is endowed with unconditional freedom: he is God to himself, legislator and unquestionable judge. Accepting and supporting the idea of the unquestionable legislator and judge of man, of man with unlimited and lawless power, of man made of drive – instinct – libido, paves the way for oppression, individual and political violence, dictatorships, the denial of freedom of expression and thought, the denial of human rights, denial and the search for truth that only gives meaning and value to the existence of each. Dictatorships were a terrifying reality of the last century; We must prevent the third millennium from repeating such tragedies, and that is why the person must reappropriate the sense of responsibility, of his ethical action in a world in which the subject does not disappear and returns to be the protagonist of his actions. Maria Zambrano wrote in the 1940s: “Does the frightening face of current events not present us with this image of a subjectless world, in which the subject is gone, in which he wanders wandering like a king without subjects in the kingdom, where there is nowhere that responsible someone, that someone possessing identity and of his own figure? A world before being, in which the psychic has the demonic existence of

elusive and fluid multiplicity⁹. Un io fluttuante, senza consistenza identitaria e capacità progettuali ha poche possibilità di orientarsi per fronteggiare le difficoltà.

4. Ethical-legal relativism

In the Introduction to *Relativism and Fundamentalism* G.P. Prandstraller notes that, in the last years of the last century, there was a phenomenon of great cultural importance: the advent of relativism as a social constant, practical fact, mentality. “From a philosophical point of view, relativism is that of thought that human knowledge cannot penetrate reality itself, as an absolute, but must be content with grasping, of reality, only partial aspects, particular contingents and mutually conditioned: it also recognizes the conditioning action of the subject on his objects of knowledge, making precisely the saying of Protagora “man is a measure of all things”¹⁰.

Relativism is becoming increasingly established, in this first twenty years of the third millennium, as an ideology by which it is stated that there is nothing that has a character of absoluteness and immutability, but that everything is “relative” to the time, places, people in the concrete situations in which they find themselves¹¹. This ideology also invests two important and constitutive values of the person’s being: truth and freedom. Thus, in the gnoseological field, we cannot speak of truth and error, universally valid, that is, for all times, all places, all ages and all circumstances; in the ethical field you can not talk about good or evil in an absolute

⁹ M. Zambrano, *La confessione come genere letterario*. Milano: Bruno Mondadori, 1997, p.108.

¹⁰ G. P. Prandstraller: *Relativismo e fondamentalismo*. Bari: Laterza, 1996, p. VII.

¹¹ Cfr R. Di Ceglie, *Pluralismo contro relativismo*. Milano : Ares, 2000.

sense so some acts are always good and always to be done and others are always bad and therefore always to avoid¹².

In addition to an ideology, the term “relativism” refers to a practice, that is, a practical behavior that does not take into account moral principles and norms based on nature and therefore on the natural law that, according to Maritain, is not codified, but is written in the heart of man and is based on God and divine law as it appears both in the exercise of human reason, and by a divine revelation¹³. Relativism denies any validity to natural morality – rational and to every moral norm of a religious nature. Prandstraller writes: “The relativistic cultural position represents a cognitive and existential antinomy in relation to fundamentalism, since relativism denies the Absolute, that is, the existence of entities – truths capable of solving in itself the whole reality, existence that is instead the basis of fundamentalist belief”¹⁴. It can be said that in all areas of culture and contemporary life relativism is the “dominant thought” to the point of exerting on today’s thinking a kind of dictatorship¹⁵. Thus, in the field of philosophy, all values are denied to “strong thinking”, that is, metaphysics and, instead, it celebrates the skeptical and nihilistic “weak thinking”, stating that the human intellect can draw only what is empirically and scientifically verifiable (Hume) so that, terms such as God, truth, freedom, spirit, are meaningless words, which say nothing also because the realities that with such terms are not empirically and scientifically verifiable.

¹² Cfr. R. Rorty, *Objectivism, Relativism and Truth*. Cambridge: University Press, 1991

¹³ Cfr. J. Maritain, *Le droits de l'homme et la loi naturelle*, in *Oeuvres*, vol. VII, Paris: Editions San Paul, 1986-2000.

¹⁴ G. P. Prandstraller, *Relativismo e fondamentalismo*. cit., 1996, p. 159.

¹⁵ Cfr. V. Possenti - A. Massarenti, *Nichilismo, Relativismo, Verità. Un dibattito*. Soveria Mannelli (Cz): Rubbettino, 2001.

To the extent that we want to put a levee on relativism in its most radical forms, it is appropriate to reaffirm the concept of the identity of human nature to which it can be referred, tying it dialypathically with that of historical consciousness. In this sense, already in the aftermath of the catastrophe of the First World War, Ernst Troeltsch, in order to face the relativistic and nihilistic outcome of “bad historicalism”, affirmed the need to recover the moral meaning of the idea of humanity in the commonality of a duty universally felt¹⁶. It is the same “spiritual nature of man” that is expressed in the need to obey a rational principle, a universally valid law, which has as its contents a priori “the fundamental idea of the dignity of human reason present in every individual”¹⁷, a content that, in itself, is formal and that finds its own determinations in the many configurations of history, with respect to which constitutes the “foundation and the common *telos*»¹⁸.

In the field of intellectual knowledge it is denied that there can be an objective truth because the human mind knows reality not as it is in itself, but as it is perceived by it in its cognitive activity. This takes place according to its own patterns and rules, so that the known reality is not the objective reality or the reality «in itself”, but is the reality that is perceived by the knowing subject. This means that truth is not as in ancient thought, (Plato and Aristotle) and medieval (St. Thomas and the School), “the conformity of intelligence to reality as it is in itself» (*adeguatio intellectuset rei*)¹⁹, but on the contrary it

¹⁶ Cfr. E. Troeltsch, *Lo storicismo e i suoi problemi*, ed.it., a cura di G. Cantillo - F. Tessitore. vol. I. Napoli: Guida, 1985, p. 223.

¹⁷ E. Troeltsch, *Diritto naturale e umanità nella politica mondiale* in Troeltsch, E. *Lo storicismo e i suoi problemi*, cit. vol. 3, 1997, p. 104.

¹⁸ Ivi, p. 225.

¹⁹ *Summa Theol.* I, q. 16, a. 2 *Per conformitatem intellectus et rei veritas definitur* (*De Veritate*, q. 1, a. 1).

is the conformity of reality to the mind, to the person who knows it. In other words, it is not the intellect that adapts to reality itself, to the object (objective truth), but it is reality that adapts to the mind, to the subject (subjective truth). It is “real” what is thought and in the form in which it is thought; it’s not thought what’s real. The truth is therefore precisely what is thought by human intelligence, and is therefore *always subjective*. The truth, therefore, is not one, but the truths are many, different and contradictory; moreover, people live in different times, in places, in different cultures, in different cultural and social conditions. Therefore, from the cognitive point of view, relativism is marked by subjectivism and individualism: everyone has their own truth. The same is true of ethical relativism that denies that there are laws, norms and moral values that are valid at all times, in every place and in every time. Ethical values, therefore, have no character of absoluteness and immutability and are related to the historical evolution of ideas and cultures; they can lose all validity as times and living conditions change and ideas and ways of understanding the meaning and purpose of human life change.

Therefore, moral norms and ethical values do not have an objective foundation and a stable basis and therefore are “relative”, that is, they are those that people and societies freely give themselves in full autonomy. For ethical relativism there are only “subjective opinions” not “truth” nor “certainties” objective and therefore such as to impose themselves on everyone. It puts human freedom in the foreground, as what man properly constitutes, so he is not bound and conditioned by any moral norm that imposes on him from the outside of his self, but is free to do what he wants according to the cravings of his own “I”. The card. J. Ratzinger, in the homily of the Mass *Pro eligendo Romano Pontifice* (April 18, 2003), commenting on the text of St. Paul asking Christians to be adults in the faith,

not to be “thrown here and there by any wind of doctrine” (*Ef.* 4,14) remarked: “How many twenty of doctrine we have known in recent decades, how many ideological currents, how many modes of mode. The small boat of thought of many Christians was often stirred by these waves – thrown from one extreme to the other: from Marxism to liberalism, to libertinism, from collectivism to radical individualism; from atheism to a vague religious mysticism; from agnosticism to syncretism and so on. Every day new sects are born and what is realized - says St Paul - on the deception of men, on the cunning that tends to draw in error (cf. *Ef.* 4,14). Having a clear faith according to the Creed of _Chiesa is often labelled as fundamentalism. While relativism, that is, allowing on one other person to be carried “here and here by any wind of doctrine”, appears to be the only attitude up to today’s times. It is the constituting a dictatorship of relativism that does not recognize anything as definitive and that leaves as a last measure only one’s own self and its cravings as a fast resort».

In the legal field, relativism manifests itself firstly in the fact that laws have moral value and obligatory force not because they conform to moral norms and what is objectively good and just, but because they are enacted by the legitimate legislature (legal positivism; it then manifests itself in the fact that the laws are not specific and particular translations of the universal natural law , but they are expressions of the will of the legislative power, held both by a single person, as is the case in absolute regimes, and by several people, as is the case in democratic regimes, in which the people delegate some people to legislate according to their will; taking into account compliance with the laws, not moral principles, but the will of the people or in cases of diversity of opinion of its majority.

5. The right of force or the force of law?

Now if we ask ourselves what relativism is in its deep essence, we must answer that it is not the end of the “absolute”, but it is the absolutization of man and in this way the divine Absolute is replaced by the human Absolute: “man – god”. In the relativist vision, there is an Absolute, but it is no longer God, but man.

Man is a historical being who lives in a world like ours, which is constantly changing and therefore adapts its criteria of truth and morality to the changed historical circumstances and its acquisitions in the scientific and cultural field. In this way truth and good are not absolute principles, but “historic”, and therefore change with the becoming historical, which is an essential character of the same historicity.

But an even more essential character of the same historicity is in man freedom, understood not only as “ability” to determine one’s own destiny and that of the world, and to give autonomously a “sense” to one’s life, but as a “necessity” to be himself, not to depend on anyone, to think what one believes and to do what one wants , therefore to believe true and right what you think and to be able to do what you want. Truth, therefore, is not objective, but is always subjective, that is, “free” creation of man in his individuality.

Freedom is often understood in the opposite direction to the true as when, for example, the freedom of one or a few is used for the slavery and oppression of many or most of the men of a nation. The 20th century, which according to the optimistic predictions of the Enlightenment, nationalism and positivism, was to be one of the most rationally ordered and bearers of a healthy theory of happiness for all, was one of the most oppressive and bloodthirsty that history remembers and in

which the right of force was imposed and not the force of law. There have been two world wars that have caused great grief and ruins and has been dominated by the fiercest dictatorships in Europe, Asia and Africa. All this has been the case because of the lack of a sound theory of freedom, supplanted for centuries by the “power politics” theory, according to which strong states have the right to impose their domination over the weakest states. It identified the law by force and thus made force the right. Such a doctrine had already been supported in antiquity by Trasimaco in the Platonic Republic, renewed and invigorated then by Hegel with the statelatria, and by Nietzsche with the doctrine of the will of power, by which he authorizes superior men, the so-called “supermen”, to hold as slaves the mass of humanity and to use it for their ends. Maritain writes: “The false way of understanding the conquest of freedom is based on a philosophy that, in technical language, can be called a unique and immanentist; for such a philosophy the notion of independence and freedom admits neither internal variety nor degrees; and on the other hand God is conceived as a physical agent led to infinity: and then either one considers his notion as that of a transcendent being, and denies his existence, because one thinks, as Proudhon did, that a transcendent God would be like a kind of heavenly Tyrant who imposes compulsion and violence on all that he is not; or it affirms its existence and denies its transcendence and considers all things in the way of Spinoza or Hegel as ways or stages of its realization. In this way of seeing there are freedoms or autonomy only if you receive some rule or objective measure from nothing but yourself; and the human person demands for himself a divine freedom, whether man in the forms of atheist thought and culture takes the place of God who denies, or that in the pantheistic forms he

wants to realize in place his identity of nature with the God that he imagines.”²⁰.

The true way of understanding the conquest of freedom, according to Maritain, is based on a philosophy of the analogy of being and divine transcendence, for which independence and freedom are realized in the different degrees of being according to essentially different types: in God absolutely and because, being supereminently all things, is the sovereign interiority of which all that is, is a participation; within us in a relative way and thanks to the privileges of the spirit that, to whatever dependence it is subjected to by the nature of things, becomes independent through its own operation, when it internalizes with knowledge and love the law to which it obeys. For this philosophy, divine transcendence does not impose violence and coercion on creatures, but infuses all goodness and spontaneity and is more intimate to them than they are to themselves. All that man accomplishes of good comes from God and all that he does wrong comes from man himself, “because God has the first initiative on the line of being and man has the first initiative on the line of nonessere»²¹.

It is appropriate that today the theme of freedom should be brought into focus and considered in its true essence, so that this privilege of man may be a source of universal progress and well-being for the person. Freedom as a gift and as a source of progress must recognize both man as a person and God as a source of freedom, which leaves man free of his actions and, despite being the Creator of man, never uses it as a means.

It is certainly very dangerous for the dignity of the person to erase God from the history of man and the world, or to hold

²⁰ J. Maritain, *Dieu et la permission du mal*, in *Œuvres*, vol. XII, cit., 1986-2000, p.51.

²¹ *Ibidem*.

him responsible for evil. It is necessary, above all, to eliminate prejudice, or error, always recurrent in the history of thought, particularly present today after the “holocaust”, of those who accuse God of impotence for not having avoided the two world wars, the cause of so many massacres and ruins. We must fight against this “bad faith” of Western culture which, after fighting against the idea of God, having eliminated it from thought and having tried to eliminate it from the consciousness of the peoples, decreeing its death, then lashes out at him.

6. Conclusions

The Covid-19 pandemic has revealed the vulnerability of what may seem like the unlimited power of man, of technological progress, of his illusory security, of what seems to be an impressive domination over the whole of mankind and the whole world, while showing the fallacy of economic dynamics that increasingly connote themselves as the supreme end of every human being. One tends to believe that «every purchase of power is simply progress, increased security, utility, well-being, life force, fullness of values»²².

All this has brought respect and the defence of human rights into oblivion; it is time for humanity to feel the seriousness of the challenges that await it, and the pandemic crisis, still taking place, is a stark warning to safeguard the truth, freedom, the common good and to protect the fundamental rights of the person, starting from a cultural and ethical conversion that makes us aware of current imbalances and the current crisis. Even the great achievements of technology and science do not give us and do not explain the ultimate and new meaning of life. Even the great

²² R. Guardini, *La fine dell'epoca moderna*, Brescia: La Scuola, 1987, p.80.

possibilities of good of progress, in the wrong hands, trespass in evil for lack of a corresponding ethics and thus looms “the face of decadence” as Bonhoeffer says: «Sincethere is nothing lasting, the foundation of historical life, that is, trust, in all its forms, is lost. And because you have no confidence in the truth, you replace it with the sophistications of propaganda. Lacking trust in justice declares itself to be right what suits us ... Such is the situation in our time, which is a time of real decay»²³.

Progress wants to recognize to science every power of salvation, but, let us say with Blessed XVI, «It is not the science that redeems man», but love²⁴.

The world, today more than ever, needs hope: hope for peace, justice, truth, freedom, hope in God, which man so badly needs, a hope necessary to transform «From within life and the world»²⁵,and because of which we can live: knowing that there is a reason why it is worth it.

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²³ D. Bonhoeffer, *Etica*, tr. it., Milano: Bompiani, 1969, p.91

²⁴ Benedetto XVI, (30-novembre-2007), Enciclica *Spe Salvi* , 2007, n.2

²⁵ Ibidem.

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