



Holistic Humanism

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Holistic Humanism

Mayor of the City of Rome,

Political Authorities of other Cities of the World,

Leaders and Managers of Finalist Projects, Teachers, Students

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Standing here and looking at all of YOU filling this marvellous Giulio Cesare Hall with your dreams, inspirations and determination to contribute something really positive to this world of ours, I cannot but feel a sense of joy, enthusiasm and warm hope for the future of humanity and this planet. Indeed, we are here living a magic moment, a moment to treasure and nurture in our memories, and in our hearts, a moment in which your presence, your work, your projects brings out the spirit of innovation, achievement, solidarity and fraternity we need to face the great challenges of this 21st century both as individuals and as members of a globalizing society. As individuals because the happiness of each one of us depends fundamentally on the realization of our rich potentialities to become the best human beings we can possibly be. As members of a globalizing society, because we need to do it with others and, for others, particularly for all those less fortunate fellow human beings who lack the freedom to develop fully, being excluded by poverty, illiteracy, sickness, hunger and other preventable scourges that sweep our planet today.

Many of you have seen in the last two days a true festival of the imagination, generosity, and sheer beauty of the projects and people who made them possible. The fantasy and quality of the multimedia animations shown by schools from Singapore and Italy during the Exhibition were simply amazing and a great pleasure to watch. Most importantly, they carry a profound message for all youngsters preparing to enter the world of work in this competitive and global information society of ours. Multimedia animation is a path

to cultivate many of the skills considered crucial for success in the 21st century: creativity, innovation, effective communication, artistic sense, information and communication technologies, discipline and responsibility and, often, working collaboratively in teams. In fact, all the finalist projects gathering here today show outstanding development of 21st century skills and values, carefully, lovingly, nurtured by educational innovators: teachers and students inside schools, as well as in national and international groups of schools, who crossing the borders of minds and hearts, have crossed all physical borders and used ICTs to create international alliances of education, excellence and understanding --- truly the seeds of a more virtuous, socially-responsible globalization that challenges the negative effects of today's selfish power-maximizing globalization.

In this galaxy of virtuosity, the finalist projects working in poor areas of the world show us something special. Working in rural areas or city slums, with the young and old, fighting poverty or sickness or illiteracy, or all of them together, through the innovative use of ICTs, these projects and their social innovators are touching directly the lives of the underprivileged, striving for a better world for others in the knowledge that without this there will be no better world for anybody.

We are gathered here to celebrate all this. To celebrate the triumph of virtuosity in a society where the reporting and consumption of bad news is infinitely higher than that of news about the best aspects and achievements of humanity. Yet we are here in this marvellous hall witnessing how much beauty exist in the actions of so many unsung heroes - people who are fighting daily battles to improve the lives of others and in the process fighting not to be swallowed by the machinery of consumerism, not to be reduced to the *homo consumens* identified by Bauman nor to Marcuse's *unidimensional man*. Indeed, not to be reduced to any type of partial human being who is just a fraction of its potentiality.

No, boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, the miracle of life is just too beautiful not to live it in full, or at least to try our best to do it, always seeking to improve what needs

improvement, starting with ourselves as individuals and members of society and following with the surrounding structures and governances that play in favour of selfish power-maximization and human conflict instead of social and environmental responsibility and inclusion for all. Only this will secure a globalization for the benefit of all, a globalization of multiple interacting flows: including, financial, production, trade, profits, power but, also, flows of health, education, fulfilling jobs, solidarity, justice, peace, and freedom - In short, the globalization of the best of humanity for all humanity and the planet.

This is an immense challenge, however, and requests not just our rejection of all reductionism and alienation. Above all, it requires a world-view that is fundamentally holistic in the understanding and nurturing of our own humanity, as well as in our relationship with others and the planet. A world view that accepts that each of us is a constant battlefield where, routinely, reason, sentiments and passions -mind and heart- are faced with seemingly contradictory choices emanating from the practical realities of the world as it is and the ideal world as we would want it to be. From ancient times, philosophy, religion, poetry, the arts, psychology have expressed in different ways what we know for a fact: that we are capable of selfishness, envy, betrayal, greediness, vanity, indifference, violence, and other vices terrifyingly immortalized by Dante in his *Inferno*. But we are also capable of great virtues - generosity, humility, honesty, courage, commitment, kindness, justice, compassion and, ultimately, capable of loving one another and to recognize that there is something profoundly just and universal in, for instance, the Chart of Fundamental Human Rights, even if still waits to become a reality. Clearly, none of us is totally virtuous or vicious, all the time, in this world of ours there no angels or devils, just people often struggling to survive or to get a decent education, health or a job in the face of huge contrasts, inequalities and privileges encouraged by a governance of power-maximization that tends to reward selfish competition, over socially responsible cooperation with its compassionate care for others and the environment.

A world that places the happiness of all peoples and the planet at the centre of its sustainable development is still in the realm of the ideal. And in my view, little will change until a paradigm of *holistic humanism* takes root in the hearts and minds of each

one of us. This paradigm must integrate and nurture the best of humanity's wisdom, knowledge and sentiments, rejecting all dominations and cultural divisions between reason and sentiments, man and man and man and nature. It must encourage us to strive for virtuosity as individuals, social beings, and as habitants of this planet. In this *holistic humanism* reason should be at the service of the best sentiments and virtues, helping them to win the difficult daily battles, and helping them to rise again in times of failure and defeat, that will surely come. At the same time, the best sentiments and virtues are at the service of reason providing it with the foundation and horizon for its noble development – indeed, already in the 17th century the philosopher Blas Pascal told us: “The heart has reasons that reason does not know.”

But is *holistic humanism* condemned to remain in the realm of ideals? - like beautiful dreams that seem to get further and further away from our reach, the more we are confronted with the harsh realities around us? Paradoxically, I believe there are good reasons for hope, as the catastrophic consequences of selfish power-maximization get ever closer. Thus, today more than ever before, we see signs of growing global concern and activity by those in power about the environmental catastrophe unfolding ever more visibly in front of our eyes. We also see a number of trends in science and technology that counteract reductionism in favour of a holistic approach: ecological thinking, complex systems and chaos theories, genetic mapping, internet, are all factors favouring holistic paradigms, although we have yet to reach *holistic humanism*.

In fact, boys and girls, ladies and gentlemen, the greatest source of hope, inspiration and energy for a *holistic humanism* that spreads a global governance of social responsibility, remains YOU, the educational and social innovators, namely, the people who in the world of schools, NGOs, enterprise, government, civil society, today, are inventing and working tirelessly in the realization of new concepts, products, processes, projects and programmes for a better world for all. And this is the magic of the Global Junior Challenge, to bring together in this historic Hall so many educational and social innovators in a spirit of fair competition and of sharing dreams and achievements.

Ladies and gentlemen, as I come to the end of this speech, I wish to express my deepest gratitude all the people who have made the Challenge such a beautiful experience and

valuable gift to the world. First, I thank the City of Rome, and specially its Mayor, Walter Veltroni, and the people from the Fondazione Mondo Digitale who have worked tirelessly to make a success of the Challenge. I thank my fellow members of the jury for generously donating their time, experience and wisdom to produce results of the highest standards of quality and fairness. Last but not least, I thank all of you, the projects, the pioneers of the inclusive knowledge society, for dreaming, for combating, and for making possible the reality of *holistic humanism* in our own time.

Thanks!!