

# Terrorism, catastrophes, massacres, deathly human traffickers... A lethal virus and the only possible antidote

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Enmity is a lethal virus. Almost a DNA we have all been smouldering since the times of Cain. The only antidote consists in personifying – thereby humanizing – others to rediscover our similarities and that we too are prone to committing evil deeds, just as they are nonetheless capable of acts of goodness



The Harry Potter saga has grown us used to the same stratagem adopted by his friends: in the effort of not evoking the spectre of the evil figure of Voldemort, they avoid calling him by name, and thus refer to him with a palliative expression: you-know-who. There was a time when I had a suspicion that the metaphor concealed criticism against the assumed lack of humanity of the God of the Bible, whose tetragrammaton, – in Judaism – is unpronounceable: Voldemort like Jhwh, and the Biblical religion as a form of black magic, which always aims at damaging the poor Muggles, human beings without magical resources to resist evil. Moreover, it appeared to me as a subliminal dissemination of theories substantiated by specific historical and critical research, like those conducted by Jan Assmann, for whom

monotheistic religions are always harbingers of violence, a burning crater of war. But then, the Latin mark of that sinister gothic epithet led me to identify another interpretation:

***God has nothing to do with Voldemort. In fact, the latter is its complete opposite, not only in that he represents evil that opposes what is good, but also***

**and especially because he is meant as a symbol of death: perpetual threat to life, namely, the public enemy number one which is virtually impossible to fight against and that – at the very best – can be dispelled with silence.**

But – following the warning of sociologists, and even of theologians (see the recently volume by Armando Matteo: *Tutti muoiono troppo giovani*) – nobody dares speak about death anymore; lest it should paradoxically entail what could be deemed as the annihilating prolixity of death itself: nobody speaks about it, but it abundantly proffers its sombre words and

**everything around us appears to sound the death knell**

Not only incurable diseases, the accidents in the era of flying machines, the disasters of nature rebelling against the constraints of progress, but also the uncountable acts of violence that human beings mutually inflict to each other, forcing them to flee from their homes, from their homeland, to dangerously migrate across the seas, to erect walls along the borders in order to reject the refugees, finding within themselves the ferocity that enables them to throw women and children overboard, to cut throats on deserted beaches or in crowded coffee shops of large cities, to break into the hall of a hotel or in the foyer of a theatre armed with machine guns, and blow themselves up in airports, buses, on the metro, in popular market places, to tear down skyscrapers turning oblivious passengers flying over otherwise unconquerable metropolis into suicide bombers. They equally ferociously slaughter defenceless youngsters on the civilized island of Utoya, or, more recently, a group of policemen along the same street where Kennedy was assassinated.

Be it organized terrorism or the insane shooting “spree” of a lone madman, be there a religious or political or even financial motivation, be it the fault of the wicked decisions of human traffickers or those of demagogues governing nation states, whether it happened in the heart of Europe or in central Asia, or in the Middle East, or in North Africa, the outcome remains the same: there ensues what Francis has called a “piecemeal World War III”, the “war of America”, as written in an op-ed by Vittorio Zucconi on the Italian daily *La Repubblica*, referring to the Dallas shooting, and many other wars, smaller but equally deadly, all of which are linked to the same shared element: **the tendency to consider others as enemies.**

**Enmity, a lethal virus.**

It's like a DNA mark we have been smouldering since the times of Cain. Something “normal”, as Pope Bergoglio explained – unfortunately misinterpreted – after *Charlie Hebdo*: “If someone says a curse word against my mother, he can expect a punch.” In reality, the intent of the Pope like a good confrere of Michel de Certeau (for whom the work of historians is equivalent to burying the corpses to prevent them from rotting in the sun and poisoning the air) was to unmask the monster:

**The violence of one is the tempest spawned by the winds sown by others.**

**The sole antidote consists in personifying – thereby humanizing – others to rediscover our similarities, and find out that we too are prone to committing evil deeds, just as they are somewhat capable of acts of goodness.** It's the prophetic suggestion of Italo Mancini, contained in a lengthy reflection in the book *Tornino i volti*: “The question about the future is linked to the communion of the faces, on what should be done and suffered living face-to-face with others. It will be a long journey, but we already know that if my face prevails, then the world of oppression and abuse of power will prevail; but if, as it should be, as human beings and Christians, the other person's face and his rights prevail, until the complete replacement of me in him, then it will be something else. It will be the coexistence of all faces, epitomised in ‘love of neighbour and emptying of self.’”

“Never without the other”, Certeau would have said. Francis, an admirer of the French Jesuit, past May 6<sup>th</sup>, upon the conferral

of the Charlemagne Prize, referred to Certeau's lesson, welcoming dialogue as a "weapon" to defeat enmity: "The culture of dialogue entails a true apprenticeship and a discipline that enables us to view others as valid dialogue partners, to respect the foreigner, the immigrant and people from different cultures as worthy of being listened to. Peace will be lasting in the measure that we arm our children with the weapons of dialogue, that we teach them to fight the good fight of encounter and negotiation. In this way, we will bequeath to them a culture capable of devising strategies of life, not death, and of inclusion, not exclusion. This culture of dialogue will help to give young people the tools needed to settle conflicts differently than we are accustomed to do. Today we urgently need to build "coalitions" that are not only military and economic, but cultural, educational, philosophical and religious. Coalitions that can make clear that, behind many conflicts, there is often in play the power of economic groups. Coalitions capable of defending people from being exploited for improper ends. Let us arm our people with the culture of dialogue and encounter."

**Yes to the fight against War. Yes to the weapons of friendship.**

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Argomenti

DEATH

MIGRANTS

PEACE

REFUGEES

TERRORISM

WAR

Luoghi

ROME

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