

*BUILDING BRIDGES IN TIME AND SPACE.
MARCO POLO'S AGE AS "EARLY MODERNITY" AND
ITS IMPLICATIONS*

跨越时空的桥梁：
马可·波罗时代作为“早期现代性”及其意义

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Abstract

Culture is a result of the human spirit, whereby people in a certain space realize their values. Thereby, no culture is an island but part of a universal humanity. Cultural exchange therefore constitutes a central as well as enriching feature of cultures. Relations between East and West have been marred by conflicts, but they have also brought forth fruitful exchange, when technical means for travel and communication allowed for it. The age of Marco Polo, the so called High Middle Ages, marks the first period of these contacts. At that time cultural developments took place in the West, which strongly influence developments to this day. For this reason, the period has been called the epoch of Early Modernity. In my contribution I take up three of the innovative transformations: a new relation with the material world which led to the development of natural sciences and technology, as well as economics and trade; a new civic city culture, first in Italian cities and then throughout Europe, based on deliberation and cooperation. These two transformations in turn were based on an enhanced understanding of the individual as *imago Dei* (image of God) with his/her specific capabilities,

摘要

文化是人类精神的产物，是特定空间内人们实现自身价值的结果。因此，文化是普遍人性的一部分，没有文化是孤岛。文化交流构成了文化的核心特征，也是一种丰富性特征。东西方关系曾因冲突而受损，但当旅行和交流的技术手段允许时，它们也带来了富有成果的交流。马可·波罗时代，即所谓的中世纪盛期，标志着这些接触的第一个时期。当时西方发生的文化发展，至今仍强烈影响着时代进程。因此，这个时期被称为早期现代性时代。本文讨了它的三个创新性转型：与物质世界的新关系，这导致了自然科学、技术以及经济和贸易的发展；基于协商与合作的新公民城市文化，首先在意大利城市出现，然后遍及欧洲。这两个转型又基于对作为「天主的肖像」(*imago Dei*)的个体及其特定能力、自由和责任的理解增强。因此，这个时代产生了一种人文主义和兄弟情谊的普遍主义意识，作为建立文化和宗教之间桥梁的基础。教宗方济各在2020年将其置于他的通谕《众位弟兄》(*Fratelli tutti*)的核心。因此，马可·波罗时代发生的转型在今天也值得进行跨文化反思。

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liberty and responsibility. Thus the time brought forth a sense of humanist and fraternal universalism as the ground on which bridges between cultures and religions can be built. Pope Francis put it at the heart of his encyclical *Fratelli tutti* in 2020. The transformations which took place in the age of Marco Polo thus merit intercultural reflections also today.



Fig 1: Miniature from manuscript 12th century, Austrian National Library Vienna.

INTRODUCTION: THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETIES

Cultures are physical spaces formed by people in the course of their history and thus the result of the human spirit. Together they present the whole of humanity. The aim of cultures is the common as well as for the individual good, which essentially constitutes a particular realization of values in time and space. Thereby no culture is an island. Intercultural contacts of different intensity belong to the history of humanity. They have grown immensely during the past decades, last but not least because of new technologies. Thus one universal humanity is no longer an abstract idea but an empirical reality. In this sense cultural particularity and human universality might be compared to two poles of an ellipse, which are both necessary.

引言：文化对社会发展的重要性

文化是人们在历史进程中形成的物理空间，因此是人类精神的结果。它们共同呈现了人类的整体。文化的目标是共同利益和个人利益，这本质上构成了在时间和空间中特定价值的实现。因此，没有文化是孤岛。不同强度的跨文化接触属于人类历史。在过去的几十年里，它们因新技术的出现极大地增长。因此，普遍的人类不再是一个抽象的概念，而是一个经验现实。在这个意义上，文化特殊性和人类普遍性就像日食的两个极点，两者都是必需的。

威尼斯商人马可·波罗是700多年前最早前往中国的人之一。他将大量信息带回欧洲，他的旅行开启了富有成果和相互丰富的接触。在他所处的时代，即所谓的中世纪盛期，西方发生了文化转型，这些转型至今仍在塑造我们的世界。因此，著名的法国天主教神学家马里-多米尼克·谢尼（Chenu）称其为「早期现代性」。¹ 最近的历史研究证实，现代性的核心特征是在13世纪形成的。² 这取代了早期的假设，即欧洲历史的创新时期是始于15世纪的民族和宗教战争时代。³ 因此，主要导致创新的不是战争，而是跨文化接触。首先是对古希腊和罗马传统的重新诠释，然后是对其他宗教和文化的重新诠释，例如拜占庭和阿拉伯世界。它们改变了西方社会的面貌。主要的创新转型过程因此发生在自然科学、技术和经济学、公民城市文化以及对作为「天主的肖像」

1 谢尼 1966, 第 390 页。

2 格日马拉-布塞 2020。

3 这一假设支撑了范德米尔施 (2004)。他的文章包含关于中国法律和仪式的启发性见解。对他来说，欧洲历史始于霍布斯的契约理论，省略了其希腊、罗马和基督教根源，霍布斯的“人对人是狼”构成了对亚里士多德的“人对人是朋友和伴侣”的挑衅性对立。

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The Venetian merchant Marco Polo was one of the first men to travel to China, more than 700 years ago. He brought back a wealth of information to Europe and his trip initiated fruitful and mutually enriching contacts. In his age, the so called High Middle Ages, cultural transformations took place in the West, which shape our world to this day. For this reason the renowned French Catholic theologian Marie-Dominique Chenu speaks of it as "Early Modernity".¹ It has been confirmed by recent historical research that it was in the 13th century that central features of modernity took shape.² This replaces the earlier hypothesis that the innovative period in European history was the age of national and religious wars starting in the 15th century.³ But it was thus not war which primarily led to innovations but intercultural contacts. First, reinterpretations of antique Greek and Roman traditions and then those with other religions and cultures, e. g. Byzantium and the Arab world. They changed the face of Western societies. The main innovative processes of transformation thereby took place in the natural sciences, in technology and economics, in civic city culture and in a new view of the dignity and potentials of the individual as *imago Dei*. They also furthered a universalist, humanistic worldview which was ready to open up to other cultures. In this paper I will reflect on these three transformations, which merit a closer look, last but not least because they continue to be present in global culture.

1 Chenu (1966), (p. 390).

2 Grzymala-Busse (2020).

3 This hypothesis underpins Vandermeersch (2004). His contribution contains inspiring insights on Chinese law and ritual. European history for him starts with the contract theory of Hobbes omitting its Greek, Roman and Christian roots, Hobbes' *homo homini lupus* (man is a wolf to man) constitutes but a provocative antithesis to Aristotle's *homo homini amicus et socius* (man is a friend and consort for man).

(*imago Dei*) 的个体的尊严和潜力的新看法中。它们还促进了一种普遍主义、人文主义的世界观，这种世界观愿意向其他文化开放。在本文中，我将反思这三个转型，它们值得仔细研究，尤其是因为它们继续存在于全球文化中。

12-13世纪欧洲的 三大文化转型

在中世纪盛期（12-13世纪），欧洲逐步从部落入侵（自5世纪以来）的广泛时期中崛起，这导致了大规模的文化衰退。在罗马帝国和文明崩溃之后，经过几个世纪才成功将其遗产与部落文化融合。⁴ 在政治和文化不稳定及战争时期，天主教会实际上构成了西欧唯一运作的机构。它将古典希腊和罗马的哲学以及法律传统传递给各民族，其中隐修院发挥了重要作用。我们可以说存在三个文化支柱的缓慢但持续的融合：犹太-基督教基础、希腊哲学（包括伦理学）和为新兴中世纪社会重新诠释的罗马法。⁵

第一个转型：

经验科学与技术—— 自然法则与宇宙秩序

在12世纪，知识领域发生了一场革命。实现这一目标的核心机构是当时新成立的大学。它们的任务是——正如「*universitas*」这一名称所示——研究和教授当时所有可用的知识。⁶ 重新发现亚里士多德的著作——这些著作在西方部分失传，并通过与现已伊斯兰化的阿拉伯世界的文化交流带到西方，在这一

4 晚期的生活和制度在布朗（2012）中有精彩描述。

5 这一传承过程在尤尔根·哈贝马斯（2019，第617-758页）中有详细描述。

6 大学作为一种社会组织形式，是中世纪欧洲特有的。马克迪西（1970，第258页）。

In my contribution I take up three of the innovative transformations: a new relation with the material world which led to the development of natural sciences and technology, as well as economics and trade; a new civic city culture, first in Italian cities and then throughout Europe, based on deliberation and cooperation.



本文探讨了三个创新性变革：与物质世界的新关系，这导致了自然科学、技术以及经济和贸易的发展；基于协商与合作的新公民城市文化，首先在意大利城市出现，随后遍及欧洲。

THREE MAJOR CULTURAL TRANSFORMATIONS IN EUROPE IN THE 12TH/13TH CENTURY

During the High Middle Ages (12th-13th century) Europe step by step emerged from an extensive period of tribal invasions (since the 5th century) which had led to massive cultural deterioration. After the implosion of the Roman empire and civilization it took centuries until a synthesis of its heritage with tribal cultures was successful.⁴ During the period of political and cultural instability and wars, the Catholic Church constituted practically the sole functioning institution in Western Europe. It transmitted the classical Greek and Roman philosophical as well as legal traditions to the peoples, whereby monasteries played an important role. We can speak of a slow but persistent merging of three cultural pillars: Judeo-Christian foundations, Greek philosophy (including ethics) and Roman law reinterpreted for the emerging medieval society.⁵

过程中发挥了决定性作用。大学的目标是通过客观观察获得关于物理性质的知识。神学上，这种新兴趣建基于天主，同时也通过自然法则显现自己的信念。因此，研究本身成为一项崇高的事业，同时也是为了人类的利益，⁷ 刺激了自然科学和技术的进步。⁸「法」因此具有双重含义，涉及物理自然和社会的不同领域。⁹ 两者之间——自然-宇宙法则与社会法则——关系的定义方式，对于任何文化的自我理解都是基础的。它们显然不同，但也相互关联。根据基督教信仰，宇宙法则，即自然法则，是由天主创造的，因此具有神圣起源。这在13世纪的一幅微型画中得到描绘，显示天主手持一个圆规。几乎没有其他《圣经》引文在中世纪文本中像《智慧篇》中的话那样突出，指出天主命令：「这一切，原有一定的尺度、数目和衡量」

4 The life and institutions of Late Antiquity are admirably described in Brown (2012).

5 This process of transmission is described in detail by Jürgen Habermas (2019), (pp. 617-758).

7 根据孔加尔 (1960, 第 77 页)。

8 泰勒 (2009) 写道：“西方的伟大发明是自然中内在秩序的运作可以系统地理解和解释。” (第 15 页)。

9 根据奥克利 (2005)，自然作为造物主与造物主之间的距离（以及因此自然与人类作为共同创造者之间的距离）为积极的人类参与开辟了道路。希腊的自然观是一个充满心智的智能有机体（第 38 页）。

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First Transformation:

Empirical Science and Technology -
Laws of Nature and the Cosmic Order

During the 12th century a revolution in the sphere of knowledge took place. Central institutions to accomplish it were the then newly founded universities. Their task was – as the name *universitas* indicates – to research on and teach all the knowledge available at the time.⁶ The re-discovery of the writings of Aristotle which had partly been lost in the West and were brought to it through cultural exchange with the by now Islamic Arab world, played a decisive role in this process. The aim thereby was to gain knowledge about the physical nature through objective observation. Theologically this new interest was grounded in the belief that God manifests himself also in the laws of nature. Research thus became a noble endeavour in itself but also for the benefit of humans,⁷ stimulating progress in natural sciences and technology.⁸ Law thereby has and had a double meaning pertaining to the different spheres of physical nature and of society.⁹ The way the relationship between the two, the laws of nature and the cosmos and the laws of society, is defined, is fundamental for the self-understanding of any culture. They obviously differ, but are also interrelated. According to the Christian belief the cosmic, i. e. natural laws, has been created by God, thus being of divine origin. This is depicted in a miniature from the 13th century which shows God

6 “The university as a form of social organization, was specific for medieval Europe. Makdisi (1970) (p. 258).

7 According to Congar (1960) (p. 77).

8 Taylor (2009) writes: “The great invention of the West was that of an immanent order in nature, whose working could be systematically understood and explained in its own terms.” (p. 15).

9 According to Oakley (2005) the distance between nature as creation and the creator (and consequently between nature and humans as co-creators) opens the way to active human participation. The Greek view of nature was that of an intelligent organism saturated and permeated by the mind (p. 38).

(《智慧篇》11:21)。¹⁰ 与之相伴的是人类不是自然莫测变幻的对象，而是由仁慈天主创造的宇宙的接受者和受益者的信念。它导致了自然的「去神圣化」(马克斯·韦伯所称的「祛魅」)以及人类新的自信。对经验现实的发现可以从中世纪13世纪开始的绘画中观察到，这些绘画逐步用自然和人物的自然主义呈现取代了金色背景。哥特式建筑的创新，如拱顶，允许更大的窗户，从而为房间带来更多光线。像亚西西的圣方济各这样的圣人通过将自然作为诗歌主题来促进这种自然观。这次变革带来的种种创新不胜枚举。



Fig 2: Man created as *imago Dei*. Relief on the Porte of the Cathedral of Chartres, 13th century.

10 库尔提乌斯 (1948) 第 495 页。我感谢 Leopold Leeb 提供此信息。

All cultures, however, also develop ideas of universality. In Christianity the belief in the equality of all humans is based on their being created in the image of God.... The fundamental questions: What is the position of man in the universe is thus answered in a specific way, which ascertains the universality of the human kind and stresses the universality of the laws of nature, technology and society. This furthered encounters with other lands and opened new parts for the discovery of the globe.

然而，所有文化也发展出普遍性理念。在基督教中，对人类平等的信仰基于人类是按上帝形象被创造的……基本问题：人类在宇宙中的位置是什么？由此以特定方式得到回答，这种方式确认了人类的普遍性，并强调自然、技术和社会法则的普遍性。这促进了与其他地区的相遇，并为发现地球开辟了新的部分。

with a circle. Hardly any other biblical citation was as prominent in medieval texts as a sentence from the Book of Wisdom, stating that God ordered: “*omnia in mensura et numero et pondere*” (in measure and number and weight) (Wisdom 11.21).¹⁰ Hand in hand with it went the belief that humans are not objects of the unfathomable whims of nature, but recipients and beneficiaries of a universe created by a benevolent God. It led to a de-sacralisation (disenchantment according to Max Weber) of nature as well as to a new self-assuredness of humans. The discovery of empirical realities can *inter alia* be observed in the paintings starting with the 13th century which step by step replaced the golden background by naturalistic presentations of nature and people. Innovations in Gothic architecture, as the vault, allow for larger windows and thus bring more light to the room. Saints like Francis of Assisi furthered this view of nature by making it the theme of poetry. The list of novelties this transformation brought about, could be prolonged.

10 Curtius (1948) p.495. I thank Leopold Leeb for this information.

第二个转型： 公民城市文化与 早期资本主义

对物理现实的强调与涉及社会的第二个转型相结合：社会也根据法则运作。取自古代的自然法的哲学思想被精炼和神学化。托马斯·阿奎那（1224 - 1275）为此发展出一个三层次模型。其中，作为天主创造的秩序的永恒法（*lex aeterna*）与作为人类心灵所理解的自然秩序的自然法（*lex naturalis*）相辅相成。由于人性的不完美，这种理解（对自然法和永恒法的理解）本身也是不完美的。这种理解被付诸实践，体现为人类法（实证法），即那些规范社会与政治秩序的法律。而正因为其不完美性，这些人类法始终面临着基于自然法与永恒法洞见的批判。

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Second Transformation:

Civic City Culture and Early Capitalism

The emphasis on physical reality was coupled with a second transformation which pertained to society. Also societies function according to laws. The philosophical idea of natural law, taken from antiquity, was refined and theologized. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1275) developed a three level model for this. Thereby the *lex aeterna* (eternal law) as the order created by God is complemented by the *lex naturalis* (natural law) as the natural order to be understood by the human mind. Because of human imperfection this understanding, however, remains imperfect. It is made practical in the *lex humana* (positive law), i. e. in the laws governing the social and political order. They remain, because of their lack of perfection, open to criticism based on the insights of the natural and eternal law.

This model gave a more active role to humans. Societies and with it the human lot could and should be improved through better laws. This period also saw a new emphasis on ethics, treating questions of human behavior and virtues. Human actors who in more complex societies have to deal with a wide range of issues need orientation, how to act so as to do justice to others and to God. Whereas the laws of nature are based on physical causality, this obviously is not the case of human relations. There the free will and situational particularities require a different, ethical rationality subject to continuous philosophical and political debates.¹¹

These took place in the developing civic city culture. For the first time since the Roman age, organizational structures for voting and debate were established at a wider scale. This required a legal order in accordance with human nature. The insight that laws are not predetermined, but are a subject of knowledge and are to be understood by human minds led to major political and social innovations,

11 The distinction of two rationalities can already be found in Aristotle NE II 2: 1104a.

这个模型赋予了人类更积极的作用。社会和人类命运可以、也应该通过更好的法律来改善。这个时期也出现了对伦理学的重新强调，以应对人类的行为和美德问题。人类在复杂社会中处理广泛问题的行动需要指导，使其对他人和天主公正。而自然法则基于物理因果关系，人类关系显然不是这种情况。在那里，自由意志和情境特殊性需要一种不同的、伦理的理性，这种理性需要持续的哲学和政治辩论。¹¹

这些发生在发展中的公民城市文化中。自罗马时代以来，首次在更广泛范围内建立了投票和辩论的组织结构。这需要一个符合人类本性的法律秩序。认识到法律并非预先确定，而是人类认知的对象且需由人类心智去理解，这一洞见——同时基于对希腊参与及民主伦理的重新发现——促成了重大的政治与社会革新。在这个时期，市议会成立，首先在意大利北部，马可·波罗的家乡，后来遍及欧洲。在那里进行辩论，并做出对社区重要的决定。这种政治解放过程在与封建领主的持续斗争中发生。尽管如此，市议会成为政治自由的萌芽场所，并引发了公民文化的长期变化。社会学家罗伯特·普特南 (Robert Putnam) 认为，这种影响直至今日依然可察——意大利南北方之间依然存在着发展水平上的差距；而南方曾长期处于封建领主的统治之下。¹² 在这第二个转型中，大学，主要是法学院（博洛尼亚自1088年起），促进了对话和论证文化，这种文化也独立于政治君主和教会。

11 两种理性的区分可以在亚里士多德《尼各马可伦理学》II 2: 1104a 中找到。

12 普特南 (1994)。

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also based on the re-discovery of Greek ethics of participation and democracy. In this period city councils are established, first in Northern Italy, the home of Marco Polo and later all over Europe. There debates took place and decisions of importance for the community were made. This process of political emancipation happened in a continuous struggle with feudal lords. Nevertheless, city councils became embryonic places of political freedom and initiated long-term changes in civic culture. According to the sociologist Robert Putnam, the effects of this can be felt till this day looking at standards of development which still exist in Italy between the North and the South, which was governed by feudal lords.¹² In this second transformation the universities, mainly faculties of law (Bologna since 1088) furthered a culture of dialogue and argument which also was independent from political overlords and the Church.

The age of Marco Polo was also the age of nascent far distance trade and of what has been called early capitalism, the consequences of which were ambivalent. Corporations between artisans were founded and economic activities furthered. Wealthy merchants established themselves as powerful actors. But there was also an increase in material inequality and pauperization. St. Francis, the saint of the age, called attention to these drawbacks by living a life of strict poverty and founding the mendicant order of Franciscans which was to be, last but not least, a prophetic critic of ostentatious forms of wealth in the society and in the Church.

马可·波罗时代也是远距离贸易和所谓早期资本主义兴起的时代，其后果是矛盾的。工匠之间的行会成立，经济活动得到促进。富有的商人成为强大的行动者。但也存在物质不平等和贫困化的增加。作为当时的圣人，圣方济各通过践行严格的清贫生活，并创立了方济各托钵修会，以此唤起世人对这些弊端的关注。尤为值得一提的是，该修会注定要成为对社会和教会中炫富之风进行先知式批判的力量。

第三个转型：

普遍人文主义与发现地球的第一步

人类文化在有限的物理和社会空间中发展——家庭、氏族、国家和宗教社区。它们是特殊的，不是普遍的。然而，当与其他文化的人类接触时，人们总是不禁询问：他们是完全人类，还是部分人类？希腊文化将人类定义为拥有语言（*logon echon*）的人，即那些说一种自己能理解的语言的人，这将他们归类为理性存在。因此，语言的差异导致了这样一种文化观念，即那些我们无法与之交谈的人只是部分人类，他们是喋喋不休的「野蛮人」。喋喋不休（*barbarians who babble*）正是希腊语野蛮人的意思。¹³ 然而，所有文化也发展出普遍性的思想。在基督教中，所有人类平等的信念基于他们是按照天主的形象创造的（法国沙特尔多大教堂的浮雕描绘了这种信念）。超验天主甚至通过道成肉身——即天主在耶稣基督中成为人，和人类更紧密地联系在一起。因此，人类在宇宙中的位置这一基本问题以特定方式得到了回答，这确认了人类的普遍性，并强调自然法则、技术和社会法则的普遍性。这促进了与其他土地的联系，并开辟了发现地球的新部分。

12 Putnam (1994).

13 根据人类学家米尔恰·埃利亚代的说法，文化通常从将它们置于世界中心的观念出发，埃利亚代（1986，第29-64页）。

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Third Transformation: Universal Humanism and First Steps Towards the Discovery of the Globe

Human culture develops in finite physical and social spaces - the family, the clan, the country and religious communities. They are particular, not universal. Encounters with humans from other cultures, however, made people always ask about their status. Were they fully, or only partly human? Greek culture defined humans as those having the word (*logon echon*), i. e. those who spoke a language to be understood by oneself and which classified them as rational beings. Differences in language thus led to the cultural perception that those we are not able to talk to are only partly human. They are "barbarians" who babble, thus the Greek word.¹³ All cultures, however, also develop ideas of universality. In Christianity the belief in the equality of all humans is based on their being created in the image of God. (The image of man beside God from the Cathedral of Chartres in France depicts this belief). Humans and the transcendent God are even more intimately linked through incarnation, e. g. God becoming human in Jesus Christ. The fundamental questions: What is the position of man in the universe is thus answered in a specific way, which ascertains the universality of the human kind and stresses the universality of the laws of nature, technology and society. This furthered encounters with other lands and opened new parts for the discovery of the globe. Early modernity thus brought forth an empirical and practical universalism. It led to a perception that despite the fact of different languages humans have more in common than what divides them. That the differences of cultures and religions have a common basis in human nature and thus can also become a source of enrichment and innovation.

13 According to the anthropologist Mircea Eliade cultures in general depart from a notion that puts them at the center of the world, Eliade (1986) (pp. 29-64)

早期现代性因此产生了一种经验和实践的普遍主义。它导致了一种认知，即尽管存在不同语言，人类共同点多于分歧。文化和宗教的差异在人类本性中有共同基础，因此也可以成为丰富和创新的源泉。

总结

在马可·波罗时代，西方开始了几个长期的文化发展。我简短地描述了这些转变，尽管它们是在部分仍然混乱的政治和社会环境中形成的，但它们构成了一个相当大的进步，通过技术和科学手段以及政治制度促进了人类生活的进步，增加了文化发展的空间。与其他文化的接触，在许多领域往往更有力地促进了这一进步过程，这一过程至今仍在塑造我们对世界的认知。正如所有真正的创新一样，它们成为人类的共同遗产，即使今天我们仍然必须反思科学和技术、公民文化和人类自我意识如何以真正造福人类的方式进一步发展。这个全球性问题具有哲学和实践相关性，必须由每个时代基于不同传统来提问和回答。不存在“抽象的普遍主义”，正如教宗方济各所写，不同文化之间也不存在无法逾越的分裂。因此，与其他文化的相遇是生活的事实，也是更好地理解世界的丰富手段。因此，正如著名法国人类学家克洛德·列维-斯特劳斯（Levi Strauss）曾经写道的：「对于一群人来说，唯一真正有害甚至致命的是独处，这使他们无法充分发展其本性」（由作者翻译 I. G.）。¹⁴

14 列维-斯特劳斯（1961，第73页）。

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Summing up

In the age of Marco Polo several long term cultural developments begin in the West. Though the transformations, I described in short, took shape in a partly still chaotic political and social environment, they constituted a considerable progress which furthered human life through technical and scientific means and political institutions increasing the spaces for cultural development. Contacts with other cultures, often superior in many fields, furthered this process of advancement, which to this day shapes our perception of the world. As all true innovations they became a common heritage of humanity, even if today we must reflect how science and technology, civic culture and human self-consciousness can be developed further in a way that truly benefit humans. This global question is of philosophical as well as practical relevance. It has to be asked and answered by each age building on diverse traditions. There exists no “abstract universalism”, as Pope Francis wrote, nor are cultures divided by cleavages that cannot be transgressed. The encounter with other cultures is thus a fact of life, but also a means of enrichment to better understand the world. As the renowned French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss therefore once wrote: “The only thing which can be really detrimental and even fatal for a group of humans and which will not allow them to develop their full nature, is to be alone” (translation I. G.).¹⁴

14 Levi-Strauss (1961), (p. 73).

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