



The myth of progress is built on concrete, undeniable, but also debatable, budgets. One is to say that progress would be irreversible.

According to this budget, once a positive goal is achieved in the march of human history there would no longer be the possibility of going back. The conquest becomes something definitive or, at least, something that would only be overcome (and absorbed) if something better is conquered in the future.

However, things are not so simple. First of all, because the notions of positive, of conquest, of advancement, are not clear or have the same meaning for all.

Is it right to consider an indispensable progress of humanity the elaboration and dissemination of plastic? Certainly, this material transformed the way millions of people live and became almost normal in many homes. But we cannot deny the amount of collateral problems that plastic has produced in the past and continues to produce in the present. The pressures of many against abuses and the damage caused by plastic suggest that what seemed like a conquest and a benefit to humanity was neither completely good nor harmless.

Others see the legalization of abortion as progress and social conquest. According to these people, legal abortion would have achieved a step forward in human history, as women would have the keys in their hands to accept or refuse the arrival of children according to their personal plans. Therefore, there would be no room to go back "backwards", that is, it would no longer be possible to ban abortion in the future.

Is abortion an extremely serious act, in which some are allowed the power to eliminate others? Are we not rather faced with a "progress" that leads to injustice and to the control of the strong over the weakest, over children before birth? Is it

impossible to take a step back on the issue of abortion? Wouldn't it be more correct to recognize that abortion is a step towards evil and, therefore, a "backward" that should be abolished as soon as possible?

Something similar we can say about euthanasia, or about definitions that now come about marriage and family that have nothing to do with the reality of these human institutions.

Alongside the difficulties that arise in determining what can be considered progress, as progress towards the positive, there is another piece of information that the defenders of the myth of progress forget: there are no definitive conquests in human history.

By the same dynamism of human life and societies, it is possible that what is regarded as "definitive" will be lost not only over many years, but sometimes in relatively short periods of time. In the encyclical "Spe salvi", Pope Benedict XVI pointed to these two ideas. With regard to the ambiguity of progress, which can lead to good conquests and terrifying threats, he said: "All of us have witnessed how progress, in the wrong hands, can become, and has in fact become, a terrible progress in evil. If technical progress does not correspond to progress in the ethical formation of man, to the growth of the inner man (cf. Eph 3:16; 2 Cor 4:16), it is not progress but a threat to man and to the world" ("Spe salvi", n. 22).

As for the fatuous idea of those who believe that it never turns back, that it would be possible to build "definitive" societies in which the already achieved is not lost, the Pope replied: "Since man is always free and his freedom is also ever fragile, the realm of definitely consolidated good will never exist in this world. Whoever promises the world better that it would last irrevocably forever, makes a false promise, for it ignores human freedom" ("Spe salvi," n. 24).

Nothing in human life is irreversible. Not even the good: truly healthy conquests can be lost by negligence or selfishness by individual individuals or large human masses. Thank God, the bad can also be "lost," leaving spaces open to hope.

Perhaps one day our modern world will recognize the enormous injustices that it houses within it, especially because it allowed the deaths every year of millions of children before they were born. Only from this recognition will it be possible to make courageous decisions that bring us closer not to a "overcome" past, but towards a future that becomes a little fairer, more supportive and better.