

A Lunch Talk with ... Thierry Vissol

Wednesday, 18th of March 2015, Global Governance students from first and second year had the pleasure to participate to a challenging Lunch Talk with **Thierry Vissol**, in the comfortable living room of the Library of the University of Rome Tor Vergata.

Thierry Vissol (France, 1951) is an important **economist and cartoonist**, and currently he is the Special Advisor for Media and Communications of the European Commission in Rome.

After a short introduction by Prof. Andrea Buratti, Vissol presented us the two books he wrote in the last year.



The first one, *“È tutta colpa dell'Europa. Euroscettici ed eurocritici in 56 vignette satiriche”* (Donzelli, 2014) offers, through **satire** and **cartoons**, an original and brilliant perspective of the origin and evolution of Europe.

Satire, Vissol said, is the maximal manifestation of **liberty of expression**, and cartoons are the means through which its purpose is fulfilled. They are **simple** and **direct**, they can be understood by everybody and they represent the **pillars of democracy**. A mere sketch is able to contain a very complex concept and, at the same time, to communicate it in a very short time and in a very simple way.

Europe today is a fragmented reality, in which the plurality of diversities such as language and nationality divide us and estrange ourselves from being part of a united continent.

Cartoons, thanks to their **popular language**, can overcome these difficulties and be perceived in the same way by everybody; regardless the nationality, the gender or the age. They go beyond physical and cultural boundaries, and they can be understood immediately with the use of few words or no words at all.

Nevertheless, even more after the attempt to the satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo*, we all know that satire and cartoons can be a very **dangerous weapon**. Hence, where are the **limits and boundaries** of satire? In the strict interpretation of its definition, there aren't.

At this point Vissol underlined a fundamental aspect: cartoons are made up of a **content** and of a **significance**. While the content is the simple image on the paper, the significance is something which goes further. It must be studied and interpreted through the **philosophy** of cartoon, which is the philosophy of the weakest, of the unconventional and of the rebel against society. If everybody would understand this point, we would never be forced to read phrases like *"Je suis Charlie"* again on the newspapers.

Another critical point is about the **mutual respect** that should exist between cartoonists and people “offended” by the content. Vissol clearly outlined that cartoons are just a means to attack a concept behind an idea. They bring to light the events that affect our day to day lives, but they are never meant to offend directly people, their culture or their religion.

In the second book, *“Toby, dalla pace alla guerra”* (Donzelli, 2014), Vissol gives the testimony of a young soldier by the name of Toby; through which he offers a detailed account of the **First World War**.

He is able to show the difference in Europe few years before the War, when everybody lived harmoniously, and the drastic transition to horror that occurred with the outbreak of the War.



In conclusion, this Lunch Talk was really challenging and interesting in order to deeply understand the importance of very important and actual topics such as satire and cartoons, and moreover to show us the extensive outreach effect that they have in our lives and in our society.

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