Vera Araújo (ed.)

Social Relationships and Fraternity:
Paradox or Sustainable Model?
A Social Sciences' Perspective

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SOCIAL
ONE

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INTRODUCTION

Vera Araújo [*]

Without any doubt, "social relationships" is a very current topic in the analysis of social sciences. The increasing interest for the relational dimension and the challenges arising with globalisation demand an understanding of the complex and multiple interconnections found in our contemporary world, even through the use of theoretic models, strategies of empirical research and applied schemes which point out and support the diffusion of positive and constructive social relationships. Is it possible to say that social sciences, starting from sociology, can be founded on a paradigm of reference capable of fulfilling both the achievement of scientific knowledge as well as the axiological orientation to which they are called to?

This is in fact the challenge which has been taken up by SOCIAL-ONE, a group of sociologists, scientists and social workers who have answered to the invitation made to them by Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare Movement.

The International Meeting entitled "Social Relations and Fraternity: a paradox or a sustainable model? A prospective starting from social sciences" held at Castelgandolfo (Rome) from the 11th to the 13th of February 2005, was an achievement and, at the same time, a starting point. The meeting was attended by 300 sociologists and researchers of social work coming from different countries: Africa, South America, Europe, India, Japan, the Philippines, the United States and Canada.

The theme of the Congress was a reflection on social relationships, but it also proved to be a very intense experience. Every talk was shared amongst the speakers and discussed in an atmosphere of intense participation before being delivered. This participation arose from the belief that every contribution has its own originality, due to the unique cultural background of each speaker. Yet there was also the desire and will to create, even at an embryonic state, a culture of unity in which differences are considered to build an authentic, human society.

We are aware, in fact, that every scientific paradigm is also based on a "community of scholars", that is a community of people who not only share an outlook of research, but also a direction, a "vision of the world", a time in history, as well as an organisational structure of the intellectual challenge.

The contents presented in this publication is a topic which is still at its initial stages; its development still needs to be defined, and we are aware that we are still at our very first steps, just like a child who has just started to learn a language with phonemes and morphemes in order to finally speak out words, sentences and concepts. Everyone's wish and ambition is that through the work which has started we may arrive to the definition of a new social paradigm.

There are, however two warnings which, as "reflective sociologists", we wish to suggest to those who we will be meeting throughout the course of our work. The first is the awareness that a new theoretic approach never emerged historically from the thoughts of solitary minds. Only a collectively organised history has brought the development of new interpretative instruments. The second warning concerns our relation to those who have preceded us in the sociological adventure, with their "tradition". In going back to their debate from this new point of view we have encountered great intuitions spread here and there which are very useful to our work. We consider all those who came before us, including their dreams, hopes and theoretical elaboration as "friends" with whom we can build a relationship and dialogue.

The reflection on fraternity is surely an incipient subject when compared to the reflection of the other values of the French Revolution of 1789, namely freedom and equality. This, however, is another reason which makes us aim to achieve what seems to us to be the most authentic project of modern days.

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Presentation of Chiara Lubich

Vera Araújo

Allow me to present Chiara Lubich, at least for those who do not know her.

Her human and spiritual story started in the city of Trent, the place where she was born and where she completed her studies.

In 1943, during World War II, together with some of her friends, Chiara rediscovered in the Gospel old but, at the same time, new values that are able to give back to man his real dignity and to reorganise the human family with unity and fraternity.

This is how the Focolare Movement was born. It holds a new spirituality, both personal and communitarian; two features that together are able to give rise to dialogues in all areas: within the Catholic Church, amongst the Christian churches, amongst believers of the great religions, amongst people with no religious beliefs but who are of good will and with contemporary culture and knowledge.

Chiara leads all activity herself and this is the reason for her visits around the whole world and her speeches in numerous international headquarters.

At the same time, the literary activity which arises from her life and from her thought is very intense: she has published 45 books starting with "Meditations", which reached 21 editions and which has been translated in both western and eastern languages, up to the recent "The Spiritual Doctrine", which gathers part of the immense richness of her charisma.

Public opinion and many international institutions have begun to become aware of Chiara's work and several recognitions have been given to her from all over the world, starting from the 70's. These acknowledgments include the "Templeton Prize" for the progress of religion (London 1977), the "UNESCO Prize" for peace education (Paris 1996) and the "Council of Europe Prize" for human rights (Strasbourg 1996).

In 1998, Brazil awarded her with "The South Cross", while Germany presented her with "The great cross for merit". Italy made her "Knight of the Great Cross" in 2003.

She has received 14 Honorary Degrees assigned to her by American, Asian and European universities.

She is also honorary citizen of various cities around the world including Rome, Buenos Aires, Florence, Milan and many more.

However, what characterises Chiara's work is love towards mankind, towards all men because it always considers each one as a possible candidate for unity and as a brother who asks for no more than to be loved and served.

This unlimited love has given rise, from its very heart, to hundreds and hundreds of social activities in aid of the poorest, such as the Economy of Communion, a worldwide economic project; cultural activities such as publishing houses, periodicals, audio vision centres for both spiritual and cultural formation; family, youth, teenage and parish movements in order to insert the spirit of unity and fraternity in all environments.

All those who meet Chiara remain touched and fascinated by her simplicity, profoundness, cordiality, and ability to communicate and build relationships.

Many have described her as one of the greatest figures of the 20th century.

For us who share her same ideal and who work with her for its fulfilment, she is simply Chiara, a fulfilled woman and Christian.

CHIARA LUBICH'S MESSAGE FOR THE SOCIOLOGY CONFERENCE

Castel Gandolfo, February 11, 2005

Ladies and gentlemen, civil authorities,

all who are taking part in this conference,

I am very happy to greet all of you and to express some of my thoughts on the theme of this conference: "Social interactions and brotherhood: a sustainable model or a paradox?"

Right from the beginning of the Focolare Movement, the charism which we had received from on high revealed to us anew that God is Love. Our eyes were opened to this reality and even though the war was raging all around us (we were in Trent in 1943), we perceived God's presence everywhere with his love: throughout our days, in the joyful and comforting events, in the sad and difficult ones….

This deep and sterling faith in God as Love immediately created a new and unshakable bond among us first focolarine and focolarini. We felt that we were sons and daughters of a Father who is in heaven, and because of this, brothers and sisters to one another.

Besides, the commandment that Jesus called "mine" and "new," "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn 13:34), seemed to be a concentrate of God's desires and it was logical for us to promise to be its fulfilment and to make it the norm of our life.

A new lifestyle was thus born in the Church, an individual spirituality, yes, but also a communitarian one, suitable for the needs of our times, characterized by strong interpersonal relationships and by those of interdependence among peoples.

God, who manifested himself to us in his essence as Love, revealed himself as love also in his interior life: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And the dynamics of his intra-Trinitarian life appeared to us as mutual self-giving, mutual dying to oneself out of love, total and perennial communion. In the Gospel of John, it is written: "Everything of mine is yours and everything of yours is mine" (Jn 17:10) between Father and Son in the Spirit.

An analogous reality was expressed by God in his rapport with human beings. As the Father in the Trinity is all for the Son and the Son is all for the Father, in the same way – it seemed to me – I too have been created as a gift for my neighbor and my neighbor as a gift for me. For this reason, the relationship between us is one of love, it is Holy Spirit: the same relationship which exists between the three divine Persons of the Trinity.

Immersed in this light, we saw how on this earth all created things are linked to one another by love, each thing with each thing.

Our human reasoning or sensibilities rarely succeed in grasping this truth. We often see only a partial side of reality in which the difficult aspects of our human relationships are more pronounced, marked as they are by contradictions and conflicts. It then becomes an arduous task to individuate, especially in today's complex societies, harmonious relationships of communion.

Our charism showed us that **brotherhood** is a spiritual principle which is also an anthropological, sociological, and political category… capable of triggering a global process of societal change and renewal.

Brotherly love establishes positive social relationships everywhere, capable of rendering our human consortium more cohesive, more just, and happier.

Our more than 60-year-old experience tells us that these relationships of brotherhood lived out on a daily basis and on a personal level, both in the family and society, in political forums and economic structures, free up untapped moral and spiritual resources.

They are new types of rapports, full of meaning, which give life to the most varied projects, which inspire structures that are for the good of individual citizens and of the community as a whole.

Based on this experience, we can thus state that universal brotherhood is not merely a utopia, a wonderful and hoped-for outcome, but something which is still beyond our reach. Instead, it is a reality which is making headway in the history of humanity.

We can observe how contrast and conflict are present in relationships within every sphere of society. This is surely a consequence and fruit of the mystery of evil which touches not only our personal life but also invests our common living.

But our charism, right from its inception, gave us a key for understanding that mystery and with it, a model for overcoming every difficulty. This key is found in he who recomposed the bond between God and humanity and unity among all human beings.

It is Jesus who on the cross cried out: "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46; Mk 15:34). In that terrible cry of a God who felt abandoned by God, every pain, every suffering, every disunity is expressed and assumed… to then be transformed into love by him.

Jesus, in fact, came on earth and offered his life so that all could be one (*Ut omnes unum sint*).

Jesus, in his abandonment, paid so that this could become a reality, but he needs a hand from us to bring it about in today's world.

I wish that all of you present at this conference may build true relationships of brotherhood in these days, so that your intellectual efforts may be sustained by an authentic experience of life of communion.

May Mary, the Mother of Beautiful Love – she who was the first to learn from her Son the message of universal brotherhood, she who went to Elizabeth to help her in her need, she, who as the true "social person," created with the Word made flesh and his disciples, a family where love united, grew, circulated and overflowed unto everyone – may she guide and illumine our entire conference.

In fraternal love,

Chiara Lubich

SOCIAL ONE: THE BIRTH OF A PROPOSAL

Maria Rosalba Demartis*

I would like to open our conference by sharing with you the initial thought we had when we began planning it: to explain its genesis, to outline its objectives and the working approach we wish to take.

As you know, the proposal of Social-One was born within the context of the Focolare Movement inspired by the charism of Chiara Lubich, a Movement which is bringing about a new current of thought, fruit of the life of its millions of members throughout the whole world. The scale of values it proposes, the gamut of ideas and experiences it transmits, its social vision have been defined as "a new paradigm" by the Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences of the University of Lublin (Poland), as he said during the conferral of the *honorary doctorate* in social sciences to Chiara Lubich[1]. His words of appreciation and esteem are very relevant if we consider the on-going research and revision of theories occurring in the field of social sciences, and the quest for new paradigms.

The thrust of this new charism is to strive towards the realization of the Gospel-based ideal, "*May all be one,*" with ample social consequences. We cannot speak at length on the charism right now but it is important to mention its source, in order to avoid any misunderstanding. This ideal is based on an understanding of unity which is not uniformity or standardization. If it were so, it would be a contradiction in terms in the light of the anthropological, theological and social implications that Christianity offers. Rather, it is respectful of existing identities and legitimate diversities.

At this point, we would like to point out that this charism, which has an influence on people dedicated to many different disciplines[2], is essentially collective, communitarian, social in nature. Consequently, it will have something to offer also to sociology and the social sciences.

For some years *Social-One*, a group composed of sociologists, social workers and social science scholars the world over have been meeting on a regular basis. They come together to further their experience of mutual exchange and study through dialogue. The attitude of listening and openness facilitate a greater understanding, enriched by the specific competence of each one. What are the objectives that the group has set for itself? First of all, to draw from the spiritual patrimony and life that emanate from Chiara Lubich's charism, with the goal of deriving new insights for research and understanding of the social reality. These insights are contributing to novel perspectives with their characteristic original content and approach.

Considering the number of professions and nations represented here at this conference, in addition to the schools of thought and practical orientations, it is not superfluous to say a few words on the reason for the journey we have undertaken together as sociologists, scholars and social workers.

At a certain point, rather than seeing our diversity as something that limits us, we realized that it was our strength and a great resource. Therefore, we valued the scientific root of the sociologist and the theoretical background of social workers. We thus began to build on this already-existing theoretical and practical foundation.

From sociology, social workers draw conceptual understandings and logical practical implications which can improve the quality of their professional practice in the complex social framework in which they operate today. Sociology therefore is seen as a science which offers new

directions and models, in addition to a practical orientation. These, in turn, develop new strategies, improved techniques to ensure the short-term and long-term successful outcome of social work.

Moreover, the considerations of sociologists, in direct contact with social service professionals, find a testing ground, offering these scholars an opportunity to draw from social work practice, giving them new creative stimuli for their own theories and analytical framework.

None of the fields (sociology, social works or social policy) has any claim over another, but they certainly condition each other. In fact, we can honestly say that we had clearly understood that a unity among the difference sciences, even in the midst of the fragmentation that our specializations can bring, is very needed and not just a utopian goal.

You may ask why we chose social interactions as the specific topic of this conference. First of all, because of one basic conviction: a social interaction, the "most human of humanity's interactions," is not only essential to the human being but also to the future of humanity. It involves our intellect and our experiences on an interpersonal, intergroup, intercultural, international level; inclusive of the religious, political and economic realms of life. The style and quality of our relationships has a direct impact on the world around us and the societies which we are building.

Given this basic premise and the multiple needs of society, we see there is an increasing interest in this topic of interpersonal and intercultural relations both in sociology and in the social sciences. We can cite, for example, what a well-known scholar has said on this topic: "Even though social interactions have always had a prominent role since sociology's inception, they have never been considered and analyzed in their central and complete essence. We can, in fact, say that in most sociologists have rarely considered social interaction as an essential key and focal point of reference to understand the development of different social phenomena."[3]

"If you want to consider a social relationship as the basic cell of society, and therefore, the cornerstone of sociology, this to me seems to be an extremely valid proposal."[4] This is how another French scholar expressed himself in regard to this premise.

At the same time, the profession of social work, has always been oriented towards considering the client not as an isolated individual but as member of a system made of relationships and connections. In recent times, this profession has identified in "the pivotal change in interpersonal relationships" a new theoretical model which supports their social methods. "In the past these intuitions and values did not always find a structural framework in which to develop interventions coherent with these insights."[5]

In the last few years we have focused our attention on the topic of social interactions and have done so in small working groups or specific conferences. From those forums we then felt the need to meet together with scholars and social workers in a wider context such as this conference, in order to exchange our ideas, to share the research studies and conclusions which matured from our work, and thus seek together new perspectives for the future.

What can we then say about the second half of the topic we are dealing with: that is, brotherhood? We have to admit that to consider these two terms together (social interactions and brotherhood) in a meeting of social sciences is a challenge. In fact, no matter how many dictionaries I consulted (of sociology, social sciences, cultural anthropology, even rural development) I never found the word "brotherhood." To say the truth, I found it in one of the dictionaries of sociology, but as a specific entry at the end of a text, in a long list of various terms and sub-terms defined within various entries, with reference back to… "religious Orders!" This was the only mention I found.

We therefore need some courage to consider it as an essential part of the topic of this conference. We hope, all the same, that it will become one of the most influential aspects of our

work, as it is laden with theoretical and practical implications for the field. But let me say no more so that we can allow for an element of surprise. The days before us, in which we will all play a part, will hopefully validate our choice of terms.

In looking at the order and content of the presentations during our conference, I want to explain that they will alternate between theory and practice, perhaps with special attention this year to issues and studies which are specifically more sociological.

Therefore theoretical elements, which include principles and criteria, will be sustained and will oftentimes be the result of concrete experiences which, in turn, will give us the opportunity to highlight specific research.

The objectives before us and the proposals which will emerge will no doubt be ambitious and will require the contribution of each of us. This conference, in fact, can be a testing ground on which we can experience that type of interpersonal and social relationship which scholars and social workers often focus on. In other words, we want that this forum for intellectual and professional exchange in these days, be rooted in an experience of relationships that are characterized by "relationships of brotherhood," which is the specific goal of our conference. There will be no lack of opportunities for this. We can live such an experience through the talks that we give and listen to, by proposing new insights, asking questions both in the hall and during the breaks. What's important is that we are open to dialogue, ready to welcome the gift that each person offers: their knowledge, their experience, their life. This would be a way to live our personal commitment and our responsibility as sociologists, as holds true for every scholar, to make our research become fruitful. It will prevent us from remaining in the abstract and losing touch with reality.

It would also prove to be an effective strategy to free us from any biases and conditionings that could, at times, be a barrier to a more complete understanding. It would also lead us to a way of thinking and studying which is not removed from real life but which includes it and gives it value in the academic level. We want to live all this as "unified persons" which the world is calling for today in every sphere, people capable of integrating the multiple experiences and the plurality of knowledge bases, and thus compose a new synthesis, fruit of that profound relationship with the other.

Notes

1.   See the entire speech with a brief introduction by Vera Araújo, in "*Nuova Umanità*" XVIII/6 (1996) pp. 699-708.

2.   Very illustrative in this regard is the documentation collected in C. Lubich, a new culture for a new society (Speeches delivered on the occasion of the conferral of degrees *honoris causa*, congresses and conventions 1996-2001, edition for use within the Focolare Movement) *Città Nuova* Ed., Roma 2002, and the articles published in the "*New Humanity*" cultural review starting from n. 102 (1995) in the section titled *In the light of the Ideal of Unity*.

3.   P. Donati, *Introduzione alla sociologia relazionale*, Franco Angeli, Milano 1993[5], p. 237.

4.   Guy Bajoit, *Pour une sociologie relationnelle*, Presses Universitaires de France, Parigi 1992, p. 297.

5.   A.M. Campanini, *Servizio sociale e sociologia: storia di un dialogo*, LINT, Trieste 1999, p. 75.

The challenges of a complex and global society

Vincenzo Zani[*]

To study a complex society from a sociological point of view at a time in which national and international scenarios provide unprecedented challenges is quite a demanding task.

Nonetheless, scholars of social sciences cannot avoid this scientific responsibility. Sociologist Z. Bauman recently wrote: "If sociology still intends to fulfil its function, which has always been that of nurturing dialogue between the human experience and its interpretation, then it must necessarily refocus its attention on the changes occurring in the social context"[6].

Faced with the growing complexity of life which is leaving an impact on individuals and modern society, one of the questions which spontaneously arises is: "Does the type of social relationship that characterises a complex society (the constantly changing western civilisation and international relations among different cultures), promote and increase the growth of individual men and women and their communities?"[7]

In essence, we are asking if in our complex society there are significant experiences in which we can scientifically trace the elements of new sociological paradigms, such as that of "brotherhood," that help us to analyse the typology of social interactions[8].

In order to respond to such a question we need to outline the typical traits of a complex society with its negative aspects, but also with the various opportunities that social beings can take advantage of.

1.   A COMPLEX SOCIETY AND ITS PRINCIPAL PHENOMENA

We need to consider that the phenomenon of a complex society[9] took root in the 1980s and soon other challenges were added to it, such as globalisation and a pluralistic society[10]. To theoretically define these concepts, which interlink and overlap, we would need a multidisciplinary approach. Here, I will limit myself to the principal expressions and characteristics of a complex society that influence the lives of individuals and society. I will focus especially on globalisation,

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1.   Bauman, Z., *Una nuova condizione umana,* Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2003, p. 60.
2.   See Araújo, V., *La persona nel cuore della società complessa* , in "Gen's" 3-4 (2005).
3.   As previously underlined, the paradigm of fraternity is here proposed as a new sociological concept, and one must clearly state that this term has hardly ever been used in sociology, and is thus not found in any sociology dictionary.
4.   It is difficult to define in sociological terms the concept of a complex society, or better yet, of "complexity" in reference to social systems. This is due to the fact that there is a considerable delay in social sciences in developing a concept that takes into consideration the current changes and the new theories being developed (See Luhmann, N., under "*Complessità sociale,*" in Enciclopedia delle Scienze Sociali, Roma 1992, p. 129). Certainly one way to study this complexity is by discerning the effects of such a widespread phenomenon or its multiple aspects. One of the ways to identify a complex society is by noting the multitude of emergencies that are distinguished by their diversity, to which the social systems are called to respond immediately even though in different ways, with the end goal of recomposing a sense of wholeness. This intergration has characteristics and developments that over time are marked by, at a conceptual level, principles of group inclusion and hierarchy or, instead, by a discontinuity understood as differentiated inclusion, in which the right to diversity is recognized (See N. Ammaturo, "Individual Identity and Globalization," in "Studi di sociologia" 3 [2004] pp. 350-351).
5.   See Beck, U., *La società cosmopolita. Prospettive dell'epoca postnazionale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2003

which is particularly pervasive and which has almost replaced sociological reflection on a complex society.

1.1. Globalisation

One could wonder whether globalisation is a novel element or whether it is a more advanced phase of development of our market economies, which developed from capitalism.[11] Many hold that globalisation is an expanding process well underway, favoured especially by the use of new technology. It would be a grievous error to think of globalisation only in terms of an economic trend, thereby limiting its action solely to that level. In actual fact it interests the fields of politics, culture and technology besides economics and has spread mostly due to the growth of communication systems.

Various studies on globalisation have shown the positive and negative aspects which characterise this phenomenon, and there are various divergent thoughts among scholars regarding the benefits deriving from the process of globalisation. As Gallino writes, one can identify at least four different opposing views of various scholars in this regard: "In the first place there are those for whom globalisation is an irresistible process which is transforming the whole world, and they moreover insist that there are only benefits to be derived from it. Even though the number of those nurturing some kind of doubt on this view grew towards the end of the nineteen nineties, this position was the one with the greatest number of supporters in the beginning of the years two thousand.[12]" Secondly there are those who do not perceive any big changes in the economic policies of today, and hold that globalisation is a phenomenon which will interest the society of the future. Thirdly there are those who can only see the negative effects brought by globalisation, and fourthly Gallino says that there is a minority who believe that globalisation is an original process of major importance, which creates both negative and positive effects[13].

In any case globalisation sets in motion a sizeable network of interdependence and interconnection, a type of process of standardisation that unites the different societies into a "global village", a widespread system that produces a worldwide economy, a cross-border culture and promotes international transactions.

Nevertheless this phenomenon brings new elements with it, which are more *qualitative* than quantitative. One can mention three aspects that distinguish it.

a)   the restructuring of our organisational productive processes and our understanding of the connection between the political and economic fields. "Today national governments feel that they are being forced to give up a part of their sovereignty to other emerging players and stakeholders in society, together with economic forces,"[14] with the result that economic factors bear more weight on decisions than political factors;

b)   the general increase in wealth, which is the cause for a progressive decrease in poverty in an absolute sense, but is contributing to the increase of poverty in a relative sense. We are referring to the disparity among the different social groups; and this is true not only in the case of the North

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6.   See Zamagni, S., "*Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazione*", in F.U.C.I., *Globalizzazione e solidarietà*, Studium, Roma 2002, p. 34.
7.   L. Gallino, *Globalizzazione e disugualianze*, Laterza, Bari 2000, p.98.
8.   In this regard the thoughts of the sociologist Z. Bauman are of utmost importance. He says: "To resist the process of globalisation would be similar to hold a protest against a solar eclipse. Globalisation, seen as that process which creates bonds of interdependence on a worldwide level, intertwining traits of vulnerability that is reciprocally induced among the inhabitants of the whole world, regardless of their distance in space and time, is now a reality." (Z. Bauman, *Una nuova condizione umana*, cit., p.76).
9.   See Zamagni, S., "*Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazione*", cit. p. 36.

and South of the world, but also within developed nations themselves. This disparity sparks conflicts and protests;[15]

c)   the tendency towards cultural standardisation, that is, the annulment or lack of appreciation for the cultural diversity of nations and regions of the world, which minimizes the richness and originality of different identities.

Along with these aspects, globalisation presents another implication: due to the growing connection between nations – which obliterates borders that used to define territories, cultures and societies – the contradictions which exist in every society are projected on a worldwide scale.[16] Since there is a dichotomy between the place of origin of a culture and the place where it is adopted, a fragmentation occurs wherein ethnic, cultural, political and economic panoramas merge together and become confused, and their well-defined characteristics are lost.

Above all, these considerations, which are in constant change and always merging into each other, give life to an ever-changing kaleidoscope of new configurations.

Therefore, globalisation constitutes a determining component of modern civilisation that influences it in a contradictory and conflicting manner.[17] It creates interdependence not only economically, but also politically and socially, involving people, organisms and countries around the world and generating new organisational and cultural structures.[18] Its characteristic drive is the expansion and acceleration of worldwide interconnection in all aspects of contemporary society, be it cultural, criminal, political, environmental, financial and spiritual.[19]

Given these sociological conditions, can substantial networks of solidarity widen people's spaces of freedom? In order to answer this question we need to highlight the effects and risks produced by globalisation, and also analyse the phenomena directly connected to it.

1.2 The risks inherent in globalisation

The first risk concerns the emergence of a *new form of competition*, foreign to previous generations, which generates insecurity. Whereas historically the creation of new wealth, which brought better living conditions, used to reduce the level of uncertainty in individuals and groups, in the transition we are going through we are faced with a society where the production of uncertainty appears to be endemic to the very generation of wealth itself. This syndrome of uncertainty has become a social illness, evident especially among the younger generations.

A second risk, yet of an economic nature, which may explode, has to do with the *threat to our so-called social rights of citizenship*, or rather the entitlement to *welfare* (wellbeing measured in terms of assistance, social security, access to education, etc.). The global employment market is constantly pushing firms to move their production centres towards those areas with the lowest labour costs. Therefore, the globalisation of market competition can lead to alarming reductions in terms of social assistance, thereby provoking a change in the rules of the game in economics.[20]

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10.   See George S, *Un altro mondo è possibile se…*, Feltrinelli, Milano 2004. This volume gathers the alternative proposals to globalisation that matured within the anti-global movements that gather periodically in worldwide forums.

11.   See Ferrari Occhionero, M. (ed.) *I giovani e la nuova cultura socio-politica in   Europa. Tendenze e prospettive per il nuovo millennio*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2001.

12.   See Giddens, A., *Il mondo che cambia. Come la globalizzazione ridisegna la nostra vita*, Il Mulino, Bologna 2000, p. 25.

13.   See Villagrasa, J., *Globalizzazione, Un mondo migliore*?, Logos Press, Roma 2003.

14.   Held, D., McGrew, A., Goldblatt, D., e Perraton, J. (ed), *Global Transformations*, Stanford   University Press, Stanford 1999, p. 2.

15.   See Acocella, N. (ed.) *Globalizzazione e stato sociale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1999.

A third risk concerns the relationship between globalisation and democracy. In a certain way, globalisation deducts from the economic and financial power of the national state compromising its autonomy and the internal balance created between the different social classes. The threat to governments' capability to exercise their internal sovereignty becomes a threat to democracy itself as a result of diminishing trust in democratic institutions.

Thus globalisation creates a contradictory situation: whereas it aids the diffusion of democracy in territories where it was previously nonexistent, at the same time it unveils the limitations of democratic structures in those countries with a long history of democracy, where people seem to become disillusioned in its regards. This creates the need to further democratise existent institutions so that they could be able to respond to the present requirements of global society[21].

Democracy in fact is similar to a container which must be filled with participation, and subsequently with values. Today instead it appears to be stalled, formal and missing the necessary instruments to tackle problems which have become worldwide, and is also lacking in terms of participation.

A mature democracy demands profound rethinking and an appreciable creative capacity to produce new tools and models and bring about change on a global and local level. Above all, it needs stir up in citizens an "attraction" to, enthusiasm and a "liking" for politics as the "art of governing" the city. It is not an easy task, and yet it is necessary and urgent.

To sum up, the subsequent reduction of suitable spaces where discussion and negotiation can take place, where culture and values promoting sociality are nurtured can be considered to be a negative aspect of globalisation. Therefore, to live in the midst of globalisation[22] can jeopardize social relationships and could result in the progressive demise of peoples' cultures, generating disorientation, rebellion and cultural emptiness.

1.3 Other phenomena connected to globalisation

Besides globalisation there are other phenomena that, in some way, are considered collateral effects or connected variables.

a) *Migratory processes*. The movement of millions of individuals is producing an unprecedented mingling of peoples, races, societies, and faiths, putting at risk different "traditional" convictions. In relation to the past, the novelty of such a phenomenon can be seen in the fact that these groups are becoming "subjects", a people clearly identified with their own culture, and no longer exploited, dominated or passive subjects of colonialism. And so the questions of *diversity* and *pluralism* that are typical of a multiethnic society arise.[23] Widespread cultural pluralism is considered to be an achievement of our civilisation, as a result of many factors, such as tolerance, freedom of expression, democracy and the acknowledgement of the dignity of every person.

However cultural pluralism often presents a rigid distinction between the public sphere and the private sphere of life. The public sphere is ruled by laws which are common to all and universally accepted, whereas the private sphere is a place for freely expressing divergent opinions. Evidently conflicts can easily arise in such a context[24].

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16.   See Zamagni, S., "*Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazione*", cit. p. 52.
17.   This is also the title of a work of Z. Bauman, *Dentro la globalizzazione. Le consequenze sulle persone*, Laterza, Bari 1999.
18.   Multiethnic societies, also present in the past, are more widespread today. They call   attention to the issues which multicultural milieus present in terms of traditions and lifestyles (See Cesareo, V., *Società multietniche e multiculturalismi*, Vita e Pensiero, Milano 2000).
19.   Only through proper multicultural behaviour can cultural diversity and equal opportunities for all be fully respected and valued. (see Rex, J., *Le multiculturalisme et l'intégraton politique dans les villes européennes*, in "Cahiers internationaux de Sociologie", Puf, 45 [1998] 105, pp.261-280).

It is a matter of identifying the means which would allow us to *hold together* a society which is increasingly culturally heterogeneous, indicating principles and norms which regulate the living together of different subjects within the same historic-social configuration[25].

b)	The *scientific revolution*, with its numerous applications in the different fields of human endeavour, has not only changed our social context but above all our mentality, creating a growing trust in its daring experiments. Hence shadowy and mysterious areas have apparently vanished as scientific knowledge brought certainties and therefore progress. Consequently, secularisation has rapidly spread forcing religion and faith out of the picture, in the name of formal reasoning. Unfortunately, reasoning alone is lame and comes up short in answering the growing questions that we are faced with everyday.[26]

c)	The latest *technological developments* applied to mass media enable those equipped with these tools to be consumers, receivers and authors of information and communication all at the same time.

The media considerably increase the possibilities of communication linking us directly with events and giving us the impression that we are simultaneously living the same reality without being in the same place together. However this access to communication is filtered by the use of languages and tools that create, decompose and recompose a reality that is no longer received directly. The widespread reality is both present and absent, near and distant, temporal and extemporal; it is a virtual reality.

While technology offers great opportunities, it also has negative anthropological repercussions; in a virtual world which is instantaneous and controls one's imagination, it becomes difficult for human beings to find a place with a historic and temporal dimension[27].

d)	A complex global society has rendered uncertain and confused the system of norms and values that gave meaning and significance to the moral choices that provided a foundation for our common living. The normal guidelines no longer apply – all of them – and we find ourselves in a society without "points of reference" in which each one is called to subjectively build and develop one's own code of behaviour, following – when capable of doing so – his or her own conscience.

This phenomenon is defined as *moral relativism*, the absence of certain objective norms, of a set of principles that serve as a reference point for our actions. We find ourselves before a sort of AIDS of the spirit, a dangerous syndrome of spiritual immunodeficiency. The syndrome is spread by the culture and mentality of our times that imparts deviant ideas on men, on women, on life, on relationships, and so forth, and spreads a mentality capable of destroying the values that are at the basis of our lives, of love, of families, of education and of society.

This relativism presents a grave danger for confusion in which we see, as John Paul II said, that people's consciences, obscured and darkened by such conditioning, "are finding it increasingly difficult to distinguish between good and evil in what concerns the basic values of human life."[28]

To sum up these multiple aspects, we can say that globalisation gives life to a society expressed on multidimensional levels with noteworthy effects on the economy, politics, culture and religious membership.[29]

20.	See Cesareo, V., *Società multietniche e multiculturalismo*, cit. p.134.
21.	See Araújo, V., *La persona nel cuore della società complessa*, cit. p.85.
22.	See Du Retail, G., *Les nouvelles technogies de l'information et de la communication et l'avenir de l'humanité*, (typewritten text), paper delivered during the General Assembly of FIUC (Entebbe, 22-26 July 2003) dealing with: *Nouvelles technologies et progrés de l'humanité*.
23.	John Paul II, *Evangelium vitae* (25 March 1995), n. 4.

From a sociological viewpoint, we note a paradox within these processes: the expansion of an *individualised society*. In fact, while the thrust towards globalisation is spreading, as the sociologist Z. Bauman wrote, "Bonds between people are becoming increasingly fragile and volatile, difficult to nurture for prolonged periods of time, needy of incessant vigilance."[30]

2.   POSSIBLE ANSWERS TO THE CHALLENGES OF GLOBALISATION

In the face of this situation, we cannot nurture a romantic desire of turning back to a pre-global society with the economy, socio-cultural elements and media of that time, and look away from the present and detract our energy from our duty to attempt to promote any possible social action. However it's a matter of understanding fully the changes occurring around us in order to discover the dynamics of these social processes. Some sociologists, like Luhmann, Beck and Bauman are attempting to do so.

By way of example I would like to mention Prof. Bauman from Poland, who describes our complex and global society in terms of the idea of "liquidity"; every aspect of society is characterised by a strong instability which the author describes using the concept of "liquidity", and which he explains by mentioning three main themes[31].

First of all he mentions the theme of *freedom*. Modernity has freed individuals from several dependencies; however is such freedom good or bad? Individuals today feel lost, precisely because they are not tied by any kind of bond. Today's modernity is different from that of the past: in both cases individuals try to beat their own limits, but in today's conditions there are two new traits: one no longer believes that the road to exceeding one's limits will ever have a reachable goal[32] and, above all, there is today a de-regularisation and privatisation of tasks.

Linked to the problems of freedom there is also individualism. The author introduced the idea of a shift towards a less rigid type of capitalism, or rather a Weber style of capitalism oriented towards emphasising the choice of methods and bureaucracy to someone who is instead thinking of the goals to reach. Consequently even consumer attitudes change, so much so that consumerism coincides more with an area of desire, rather than the satisfaction of expressed needs. Consumption becomes an element of constructing one's identity.

The extent of liquid modernity also depends on a given background in time and space. In many places of contemporary society, in urban situations, people tend to banish others, or to nullify all diversity, hence these places become no place at all. Even the temporal sphere presents new characteristics: due to the greater speed of communication and ease with which people move from one place to the other, liquid modernity has rendered many experiences to be immediately accessible. Precisely because of this focus on all that is immediate, the elements of memories of the past and hope in the future are undermined, whereas these elements have been up to now "cultural and moral bridges between escapism and endurance"[33].

It is a question, then, of facing new social issues with courage and creativity and of getting equipped with suitable tools to understand, through sociological analysis, what new roads we have to pursue.

24.   Given the process of economic globalisation, many firms create an atmosphere of   competition that can involve businesses and even nations. Transnational   politics is   growing without democratic legitimacy thus creating a dilemma for democracy. The   changing face of our societies with the multiple ethnic realities can generate a certain   amount of confusion, but it also gives rise to the need for a worldwide society (See Beck,   U., *La società cosmopolita,* cit., pp. 78-80).
25.   Bauman, Z., *Una nuova condizione umana*, cit. p. 67.
26.   See Bauman, Z., *Modernita' liquida*, Laterza, Bari 2002
27.   See *ibidem*., p. 19
28.   *Ibidem*., p. 147.

2.1. The need for new social paradigms

These far-reaching and marked social changes call for ideas and paradigms capable of interpreting such complexity: one of them being, undoubtedly, that of "*brotherhood*." Chiara Lubich, in speaking of this during the second Interdependence Day in Rome, on September 12, 2004, said: "The thrust towards unity is an unquenchable aspiration in the heart of each citizen, of each society, of every nation. I have learned to recognize the signs that mark a step forward for humanity, to the point of being able to affirm that its story is none other than the slow but steady journey towards universal brotherhood."[34]

If we consider the past, we realize that the idea of one human family, mentioned by philosophers and thinkers since the 18th century, is more pronounced now; indeed there is an urgent need for it today. In this era of globalisation and interdependence, however, the impulses and attempts to build a common human family can be better appreciated if they are measured by the paradigm of "brotherhood" and social relations, in the context of historical-cultural values integrated into society.

John Paul II has invited us on several occasions to reflect on the need to *humanise and govern globalisation*, recalling that "the processes of the globalisation of markets and media do not have inherent negative ethical connotations, and therefore there is no justification for an outright condemnation of them. Nevertheless those processes which in principle promote progress can generate mixed or negative consequences."[35] This occurs especially where there is a lack of respect for the dignity of the human being and the principle of the common good.

This leads to the conclusion that when globalisation is removed from a humanistic-communitarian dimension this can prove to be an additional support for those who are powerful and create even more serious imbalances than those that already exist. It is therefore necessary to maintain the human element that allows these processes to be shaped by values of equity and solidarity. These conditions could be guaranteed by international law and guided by an empowered government on a worldwide level.

The paradigm of brotherhood enables the forces which push society towards globalisation to be measured and valued for their positive worth. It can also become a useful instrument in monitoring the fate of the individual in a complex society. One notices, in other terms, that this fate is a continuous reaching of transitory solutions capable of opening horizons which always contain the other with whom one can open up in communication. From this one is able to know oneself, and to give sense and solidity to relationships among individuals, social groups and culture groups.

On the basis of the above-mentioned considerations, we can define other possible solutions to the challenges of globalisation.

2.2. One step beyond human rights

The juridical-political revolution of the twentieth century recognized the need for worldwide solidarity among people and nations.[36] Human rights represented the attempt to validate this fact. They were founded on basic human values expressed in their entirety with regard to the whole person and all people.

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29.   Lubich, C., "*Il nostro orizzonte*," in "Città Nuova" 1 (2005), p. 7.
30.   John Paul II, "*Discorso alla Fondazione Centesimus Annus – Pro Pontifice*," in   "L'Osservatore Romano", 10 maggio 1998, p. 5.
31.   See Cotta, S., *Il diritto naturale e l'universalizzazione del diritto* in *Diritto naturale e   diritti   dell'uomo all'alba del XXI secolo* (ed.Unione Giuristi Cattolici Italiani),   Giuffrè, Roma 1993, p. 26.

The code of human rights transcends the division between what is national and international. It surpasses apparently insurmountable boundaries, defining new ones, and raises the personal obligation to observe the basic rules of democracy to a global level.[37] In fact, the centrality of human rights allows for the surveillance of conflicts beyond boundaries, and it also opens the doors to other countries through *humanitarian interventions*.[38]

Therefore, the question on the basic premise of human rights responds to the need to find a common platform in a complex and multicultural society that allows for intercultural relationships and communication and, when seen in this light, they do indeed make all this possible.

The universal application of the paradigm of *brotherhood* introduces a further observation. Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifically refers to the principle of brotherhood[39], as a criterion which should inspire all persons in their social behaviour. This article nevertheless has not found a concrete application in strictly juridical terms, as it has been overwhelmed by political-economic interests. In this context I would like to give attention to the concept of brotherhood not only as a juridical principle, but as a sociological paradigm. In the typically post-modern debate about the dominion of the West, human rights are subject to criticism due to their excessively western form.[40] The search for cultural roots and the subsequent rejection of standardisation go hand in hand with reclaiming one's dignity on the part of the minority cultures.

The debate does not centre on human rights as such but on the fact that they comprise just those (and only those) expressed by the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations. We need to go one step further in order to avoid forms of fundamentalism and ethnic-religious conflicts. This is why it is necessary to reconsider human rights in the perspective of the paradigm of universal brotherhood, not so much by eliminating what we already have, but by further developing it in extent and in depth[41].

2.3 Towards a pluralistic democratic order

To create a new basis for common living and dialogue among peoples and cultures, we need to promote a new order with a pluralistic dimension that subjugates power to democratic monitoring. Here too, the principle of brotherhood can be of help.

This is the very perspective outlined by some philosophers so as to help citizens of the global era to live their multiple memberships within society and their corresponding spheres of governance. Each of these experiences is lived independently in each realm, and yet, people are also able to live a *communitarian* experience.

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32.   "The language of human rights changes the basis of world politics and society opening them   to   outside criticism, monitoring and interventions. (Beck, U., *La società cosmopolita*,   cit., p. 65).

33.   See *ibidem*.

34.   "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." (Article 1)

35.   For example, one scholar affirms that "human rights are universal if they are considered   from a western point of view, but they are not universal if they are considered from   outside." (Pannikkar, R., *E' universale il concetto di diritti dell'uomo?* in "Volontari e terzo   mondo", 1990, pp. 40-41).

36.   During the *World Conference on Human Rights* held by the United Nations in Vienna (Austria) from the 14th to the 25th of June 1993, numerous problems arose in the international debate regarding the different interpretation of some fundamental rights, especially that given by emerging countries. These rights were not, moreover, "new" rights, needing an initial analysis of their content, their objects and situation, but rights which were considered to be consolidated in their substance, efficacy and observance. One need only mention for example the request to revise the following: the right of individuals and Nations not to be subject to any form of *discrimination* (the concept of discrimination today has implications which are very different from those encountered fifty years ago); the right of *self-determination*; the relationship between *democracy* and *human rights* (which today must necessarily include also a third element, *development*) (See Buonomo, V., *I diritti umani nelle realzioni internaziona*li, Pontificia Università Lateranense – Mursia, Roma 1997, pp.61-80).

For example, the English philosopher Held proposed to build forms of government capable of respecting the autonomy of the people within a limited State, but capable of going beyond the State territory. He advanced the idea of creating "common structures of political action" in which everyday problems can be addressed. In other words, to create spaces in which people, while pursuing shared interests, concretely experience democracy by seeking to satisfy at least two conditions. These conditions are to recognize differences and to work to overcome them, and to apply everywhere the process of public and responsible decision-making, defined as non-individualistic structural self-determination.[42]

2.4 Towards a trans-national civil society

According to some authors, the challenges of globalisation can be answered by promoting a trans-national civil society reflecting a unitary vision of the world.

If it is true that the underlying drive of globalisation shattered the political and democratic balance between society and the State, typical of the onset of modernity in which the State contained society, then it is necessary to build a trans-national State with a worldwide outlook, capable of valuing the different local expressions.[43]

To avoid the risk of standardisation and to safeguard diversity, we need, first of all, to welcome and respect the riches and potentials of these local expressions without expecting to fit everything into a set framework. The task of interrelating people, places, cultures and institutions in line with the principle called "pluralistic empathy" by the sociologist U. Beck still remains.[44]

This can be achieved through cross-border venues by applying the principle of horizontal subsidiary character, allowing organisations of civil society to go beyond the mere task of *advocacy* and to assume well-defined tasks of *policymaking*.[45]

Clearly, to welcome the principle of subsidiary character in all its possible applications requires the adoption of a new legal framework that gives ample recognition to these types of social agents even on a legal level.

2.5 Towards humanising globalisation

The sociological paradigm of brotherhood can be the right instrument to trace and highlight, through personal biographies and social experiences, the human elements of globalisation in a complex society. It is also the tool capable of deciphering the signs of interdependence that call for "communitarian" perspectives.

Here are a few examples.

First of all, the paradigm of brotherhood can be converted into measurable criteria to gauge the interest of citizens in institutions and political debates and their participation in civil life.[46]

37.   See Held, D., *Democrazia e ordine globale*, Asterios, Trieste 1999.
38.   See Beck, U., *Che cos'è la globalizzazione*, Carrocci, Roma 1999.
39.   *Ibidem*, p. 16.
40.   Such an objective is based on the availability of nations to transfer "portions" of internal   sovereignty to other entities, such as NGOs or other types of social structures, better equipped to work in certain local or transnational areas. Actually, in many international   experiences promoted by these entities, we note that because they have no particular   interests to protect, they are able to conclude projects that meet concrete and universal   needs   better than the various governmental bureaucracies (See Zamagni, S., *Una lettura   socio-economica della globalizzazione*, cit., pp. 59ss).
41.   See Bourdieu, P., *Propos sur le champ politique*, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, Lyon 2000, pp. 46-47. This author holds that by increasing participation, risks are reduced of   what he defined as *pensée unique;* a sort of

These criteria can also capture how "pure relationships" (a term coined by A. Giddens), founded solely on the stimulus of a primal and incessant desire to satisfy one's needs, if enriched by motivational content and stability, create stronger bonds[47]. This is true because one's personal life and the social bonds that ensue from our relationships are at the root of the larger macro picture.[48]

These measurable criteria can demonstrate how one's personal life, understood as an active and creative existence, roots a person in a specific social milieu to which he or she contributes (no man is an island onto his own). Thus one's personal destiny is connected with collective societal conditions. We are speaking about the very essence of democracy where personal capacity is directly connected with institutions, making it possible to reinforce the link between private and public.

Finally, the paradigm of brotherhood allows us to measure the possibilities for peace on a macro-social level. Here one should analyse this matter more deeply due to the great relevance this theme has in the present context, but we will limit ourselves to mention it briefly. In order to give a human face to globalisation, it is not enough to bear peaceful witness in the modern world. We need to get the public sector involved on two fronts. The first is to recognize the need for a world authority that can regulate conflicts and which transcends national borders. This means that it is not enough to work towards the education of non-violence, but we need to give a rational outlet to the moral consensus for the qualified use of force. In this regard, it may be of help to consider that economic and military power can no longer guarantee security today as it has done in past centuries. The second front is to raise awareness about the options for resolving conflicts that do not involve war[49]. Such credibility should be based on a principle which is an alternative to the now obsolete principle of deterrence[50]

3.   WHAT IS THE ROLE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES?

The social changes described above pose a question as to the role of social sciences and the task of the sociologist.

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uncontested common sense that rules and   is mentioned daily by the media and by public figures of every political persuasion.

42.   "A pure relationship possesses a dynamism which is totally different from the more traditional social bonds: it depends on a process of active trust which induces one subject to open up to another person […]. A pure relationship is implicitly democratic […], it is based on communication, in a way that the understanding of the other person's point of view becomes essential. Discussion or dialogue is the basis which builds the relationship, which is at its best if the persons involved do not hide too much from each other, and practically nurture reciprocal trust. And trust has to be cultivated; it cannot be taken for granted. Finally, a good relationship should not be subject to arbitrary power, coercion or violence. All these qualities relate to the values of political democracy." (Giddens, A., *Il mondo che cambia*, cit., pp.78-79).

43.   "Personal relationships, whose first objective is sociability, when imbued by loyalty and   authenticity, become part of the social situations of modernity as well as the global institutes." (Giddens, A., *Le consequenze della modernità*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1994, p.   122).

44.   See Zamagni, S., *Una lettura socio-economica della globalizzazone,* cit., pp. 63-64.

45.   It may be useful, in this context, to be acquainted with the social teachings of the Church, which have been well summarized in the recently published Compendium of Social Doctrine: "The search for alternative solutions to war in order to resolve international conflicts has today acquired an urgency of a dramatic nature, due to the terrifying force of the present means of destruction, accessible even to medium and small powers. The ever increasing close connections existing between nations all over the world render the task of limiting the consequences of a conflict extremely difficult or practically impossible. It is hence essential to search for the causes giving rise to a conflict of war, especially those which are linked to structured situations of injustice, of misery and exploitation, and all effort should be made to remove such causes" (n.498). "States do not always possess adequate instruments to effectively guarantee their own defense: hence the need and importance of international and regional organizations arises. These must be able to co-operate so as to intervene in conflicts and favour peace, establishing relationships of mutual trust capable of rendering impossible the idea of resorting to war" (n.499) (Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Città del Vaticano 2004).

Today a new current of thought is developing[51], which holds that sociology continually goes beyond the existing boundaries between academic speculation and the subjective experience of its "empirical subjects."

Certainly, the paradigm of brotherhood draws the sociologist nearer to everyday life and the human condition. It cannot negate the reasons that prompt this current of thought to state that sociology "cannot be limited only to the reality that it wants to observe. Rather, in the process of examining the empirical world's essential features, there begins its very transformation. We can say that this is the task of the sociologist: to question reality."[52]

The many experiences of solidarity and brotherhood lived at the grass-roots level by ordinary citizens, are silently filtering into our global society. They give us some insight on the development of social projects that are rooted in different geo-political environments both on a micro and macro level.

To be a science at the service of concrete human experiences, sociology will have to objectively sharpen its measurable tools to capture the evolution of these experiences. It will have to show those aspects that go beyond the individual sphere, clear out the cobwebs that have formed obscuring the cause and effect between individual choices and the collective circumstances that produce them.[53]

Therefore sociology must play a role in the processes of a complex and global society in order to intercept them with the tools that can capture the signs of innovation, even if only embryonic, and thus contribute to forging new roads for the future.

46.   See above all the positions of Bourdieu, P. (*La misère du monde*, Éditions du Seuil,   Paris 1993, pp. 1449-1554), shared also by Bauman, Z.
47.   Bauman, Z., cit. p. 45.
48.   "Those who have the good fortune of dedicating their lives to the study of the social world   cannot remain in a neutral and indifferent position, detached from the struggle which involves   the   very   destiny   of   this   world" (Lanzmann, C. – Redeker, R., *Les méfaits d'un   rationalisme simplificateur,* in "Le Monde," 18th September 1998, p. 14).

THE BIRTH OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL INTERACTION[*]

Gennaro Iorio[**]

INTRODUCTION

All theoretical thoughts and scientific endeavors, even in their most abstract forms, are not only the product of intellectual reflection, but also the expression of a given society, of a specific historical period. Since human beings live in society and all societies have a temporal dimension, cultural currents always have a precise historical and social context.

In this brief outline, we have tried to highlight the fact that "social relationships" have been at the basis of sociological study ever since it was established as a science of human behaviour. At the same time, the concept of social relationships created a boundary which distinguished it from philosophy, law, psychology, biology, economics, history and politics, all of which had to do with the interpretation of social phenomena.

We are therefore proposing as a subject for analysis, those theories and those authors who for the first time in the story of human thought have come to be defined as sociologists. The "discovery of society" presented by sociologists, coincides with the individualization of new practices and new social relationships in the emerging modern society: therefore at a theoretical level one "invents" the category of social relation.

In making this cultural distinction, we used a method developed by that sector of sociology which looks at the development of knowledge. It considers the interdependence between theoretical models and the historical contexts in which they matured. Thus the concept of interdependence prevents us from giving a single cause explanation to the relationship between social structure and social phenomena.

Having stated this sociological premise, I will begin to develop the theme on social interactions and their role in the birth of sociological reflection.

In proposing the discovery of social interactions as a focal point of sociological thought, certainly we run the risk of structuring it excessively and oversimplifying it. This is due to lack of time to fully present this subject in all its facets.

1. ACKNOWLEDGING THE TIMING AND LOCATION OF SOCIOLOGY

Sociology is perhaps the only science where we precisely know the year it was officially started: it was 1838 when in the *47th Course of positive philosophy* Auguste Comte (1798-1857) coined the term Sociology (Comte, 1908, p. 132).[1] The writings of Comte however had already constituted a point of reference for sociology in 1820. Since the first of these texts was written in collaboration with his teacher, Henry Saint-Simon (1760-1825), credit for the birth of this discipline must be given also to this writer.

Another pioneer was undoubtedly Herbert Spencer (1820-1903), a sociologist who lived in England during the Victorian era, during the mid-eighteen hundreds. Spencer had considerable influence on the history of social theory since the first sociologists in the United States often referred to his writings. The United States was in fact the region where sociology had its first strong foothold in the academic world.

Another important element in sociology is its historical development, that is, the period in which it reached its own cultural maturity. This occurred in the years that the "founding fathers" of this discipline were publishing their works, that is, between 1880 and 1920: Emile Durkheim (1858-

1917) in France; Georg Simmel (1858-1918), Ferdinand Tönnies (1855-1936) and Max Weber (1864-1929) in Germany; the Italian Vilfredo Pareto (1848-1923) who taught at Lausanne; and the American "founders", from Lester Ward (1841-1913) to Charles Cooley (1864-1929).[1]

Sociology began to be taught at university level in France and in the United States; in Germany it aroused interest in the academic world which led to the writing of the *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Soziologie*.[1]

The latter part of the eighteen hundreds saw the birth of some important sociological reviews: the *Revue Internationale de Sociologie* (1893), the *American Journal of Sociology* (1895), the *Rivista Italiana di Sociologia* (1897), the *Année Sociologique* which Durkheim began to publish in 1898. In France the *Institute International de Sociologie* was founded, connected to their *Revue*, to which the most important sociologists of various nations belonged, with the exception of the followers of Durkheim.

The birth of sociology is therefore a phenomenon that came about in the western hemisphere, particularly in Western Europe in the course of the nineteenth century and in the United States during the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth centuries. I think it is important to underline the fact that the birth of this science is linked to a specific context, namely its Euro-Atlantic roots. A second element to remember in this brief geo-historical map is the fact that sociology is historically positioned in a post-revolutionary era.

We already mentioned that in France sociology was introduced by Comte and Saint-Simon in the years of the Bourbon restoration.

In England, the studies of Spencer took place not only after the revolution of 1688, but also after the parliamentary reform of 1832 and the abolishment of laws governing wheat production.

In Germany, Italy and the United States, sociology was formalized long after the decisive events of the bourgeois revolution.[1]

It is unlikely, therefore, that the emergence of a new science of society and the social unrest can be attributed only to mere chance. Sociology moreover was not the first application of scientific methodology to societal life: political economics had already reached a state of maturity a century before its birth and, even earlier, Hobbes (1588-1679) and Montesquieu (1689-1755) had already tried to analyze society with the methods of natural sciences.[1] The precursors of sociologists had to deal with two types of already-existing reflections on society: political economics and political theory, or rather, philosophy.

1.1 The distinction from political economics

Political economics did not arouse much interest in eighteenth century France; it occupied only marginal space in the writings of the first generation of sociologists. Comte and Saint-Simon were acquainted with and appreciated the work of Adam Smith (1723-1790). They were influenced by the French economist Jean-Baptiste Say who endeavoured to exalt the importance of industrial entrepreneurs with respect to agrarian capitalists, who were in turn defended by the physiocrats. This is why Saint-Simon attempted to relate political forms to real social forces. His objective was therefore to place power into the hands of industrialists.[1] Comte, on the other hand was contrary to an economic vision of society. He acknowledged the role of political economics in drawing attention to the new class of industrialists, yet he remained hostile to the narrow vision of social organization from the point of view of free trade.[1] Even Spencer, while defending the laws of political economics from its adversaries, did not attribute any special importance to it in "A System of Synthetic Philosophy." He used concepts and arguments like the division of labour and trade developed by economists, but stated that his interest in this area came from physiology and that his point of reference was thus the science of biology.[1]

Hence the relationship between political economics and sociology does not seem to be a useful starting point to analyse the historical development of this new discipline. Its pioneers did not

consider this new intellectual undertaking to be either a critique or a continuation of political economics.

1.2 The distinction from philosophy

The relationship with political philosophy is different. The first sociologists spent a lot of energy to consider the development of a political science and of a political system that would correspond to the needs of the new world. Saint-Simon, as we have already seen, based his entire reflection on the elaboration of a new political science capable of developing a political system consistent with the needs of the new world, which he interpreted as the building of an industrial order. Comte sought to express a positive science of politics, illustrated in a systematic manner in his *Plan des travaux scientifiques necessaries pour reorganizer la société*. In fact, one of his most important works is entitled *Système de politique positive*.

Alexis de Tocqueville (1805-1859), his contemporary and author of *De la démocratie en Amèrique,* also arrived at a conclusion from his own studies that "a new political science is necessary for a world that is now completely new".[1] Spencer's intellectual efforts were not aimed at defining the development of a new political system inasmuch as his reflection was an integral part of his philosophy of universal evolution. Certainly, political institutions were one of the main subjects of research because it was through these that the basic distinction was made between "military societies" and "industrial societies."

Political theory thus appears to be the intellectual background upon which we need to consider sociology's quest to establish a new science of society, or rather, the context within which the first attempts were made to develop the scientific subject matter on politics in the wake of the upheaval of the French Revolution.

1.3 A new subject: the social question

These were the beginnings of the era of sociology, but we must specify that its focal interest was the problem of the "social question" (the conditions of the lower classes) which had enormous importance in the process of formalizing sociology as an officially recognized discipline in the course of its historical development. Sociology addressed the conditions of these lower classes of society: poverty, unemployment, lack of housing and health care, criminality, ethnic diversities. We need only recall the tradition of the English *social survey* with the well-known surveys on poverty by Henry Mayhew (1812 – 1887), Charles Booth (1840 – 1916) and Seebow Rowntree (1871 – 1954).

Nevertheless, it was especially in the United States that *social work* research on the poverty of immigrant workers was a forerunner to this discipline which would soon be studied in the American universities, starting from Chicago.

The classic period of sociology coincided with the development of a critique of political economics and the attempt to face the problems posed by the social question.

Therefore, sociology was born as a movement renewing political theory under the impetus of the French revolution, and it was consolidated as a critique of the unrest caused by the industrial revolution. Reacting against the utilitarian-individualistic nature of free enterprise based on its principles of *laissez-faire*, the new social theories that developed in the last twenty-five years of the nineteenth century were inductive, socio-ethical and interventionist. Sociology was part of this movement together with other new related disciplines, like historical economics in Germany and formal economics in the United States.

We can therefore identify three critiques with regard to political economics, each one of which is of special importance in the development of the sociological project. One was centered on the politics of free enterprise. The second, represented by the work of Max Weber and Emile Durkheim, highlighted the importance of the community founded on shared norms and values. The third laid the foundations for a critical analysis of the epistemological foundations of economics and the establishment of the scientific method of sociology.

2. THE DISCOVERY OF SOCIETY AS A SET OF SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

The birth of sociology can be considered to be the discovery of a new society founded on new social practices and relationships. The discovery of the existence and role of "civil society" emerged as a result. This "civil society" was the driving force of the upheaval resulting from the French Revolution. Sociology took form precisely in France as a new theory that considered politics as a manifestation of broader and more general social processes.

Saint-Simon, Comte and Tocqueville emphasized that the frequency of political changes and the greater number of constitutions, solemnly proclaimed but short-lived, highlighted only superficially the legalistic value of political ideas. There was something new present in the social order and this something new had to be discovered in the new social relationships and practices. In fact, not everything was negative, chaotic, imposing terror and destruction. With the beginning of industrialization a new social force was born: the middle-class.

The newly emerging sociology highlighted the contradictions between new social relationships and political forms, but it also sought to resolve the contradictions between the new industrial-democratic society and the anachronistic political set-up of the Restoration period. For Saint-Simon, Comte and Spencer the new society was an "industrial society". For Saint-Simon the term had an anti-feudal connotation and intended to express a distinction between productive and unproductive labour: "The crisis that has gripped the political system in the last thirty years can be traced essentially to the complete transformation of the social system. All the modifications that the old political arrangement has gradually undergone up to our day in the majority of civil nations stems from this transformation".[1]

Comte's point of view was that the new society was characterized by a new economic activity organized in entrepreneurial form: "To clearly demonstrate the continual effect of industrial development on the general organization of the modern movement, I will first examine the influence of entrepreneurs and then of workers".[1] In the writings of the Englishman Spencer, we find an evolutionary outline based on a distinction between internal and external processes of a system. In the case of social systems, Spencer indicates a contrast between economic activity and war. The two types of activity give origin to two different forms of social organization. Economic activity is voluntary and consists of the reciprocal interdependence of individuals who exchange services in a system of division of labor; war is a coercive organization structured hierarchically and centralized.[1]

Therefore, in England of Spencer's times as in France of Comte and Saint-Simon's times, new economic activities shaped a society in which people did something very different from the past, a society in which productive activities replaced war as the dominant activity of citizens.

In addition to "dominant activities", another interpretation of the new society stressed that there were new forms of "social relationships" among people. This was the idea of Tocqueville when in his main work "*Democracy in America*" he introduced the key concept of social democracy, referring to the conditions of equality and inequality existing in society.

The process of transformation that the French aristocrat focused on was the egalitarian and democratic revaluation of the decline of the aristocracy and the rise of the middle class: "The

gradual development of equal conditions is therefore a providential fact; and it has its own essential characteristics: it is universal, lasting and irreversible".[1]

In the German experience, the fall of the old political order, after the French invasion, had highlighted another determining social factor in political institutions. This factor was not considered as something new but as the rediscovery and reaffirmation of something old, such as the *volkgeist:* the "national culture". It was expressed in the language, ways, values, customs and traditions of a nation.

German idealism then branched out into two currents: the Romantic current, represented especially by von Savigny's *historical school of law* and the Hegelian current. Although we do not find a conscious sociological tendency in German Romanticism nonetheless, the sociological theory developed by Simmel, Töennis and Weber indicated that the origins of German sociology had its root in Romanticism.

3. SOCIETY AS RELATIONSHIP: TÖENNIS, DURKHEIM, WEBER, MARX, SIMMEL

Thus the subject-matter for classical sociological analyses is the discovery of new social relationships and behaviours that come with modernity.

In developing their scientific discovery, classical period sociologists are working to respond to the problems posed by the social question. They do so from the cultural viewpoint criticizing political economics in its liberal viewpoint and juris-naturalistic philosophy.

In Germany this critique and concern materialized in 1873 with the birth of *Verein Für Sozialpolitik*, which gathered all the major German sociologists and economists who advocated for "ethical economics." One of these was Gustav Schmoller (1838-1917) who supported the idea of inductive and historic-based economics: economies and capital did not exist and could not, therefore, be considered as distinct phenomena, in isolation from the contexts in which they were operative.

The *Verein* had considerable influence on American sociologists, especially those who belonged to the *American Sociological Society*. One of these, Albion Small, one of its ardent admirers, dedicated special attention to it in his work on the origins of sociology in America.[1]   But   the sociologist who from overseas adopted the cultural heritage of *Verein* was a young professor who had studied Sombart and Weber while in Germany. His name was Talcott Parsons (1902-1979). His studies of the German economic tradition led him to writing a critique on classical political economics and on socialism, both of which were imbued with utilitarianism. He did so in order to attribute a decisive role to the norms and values shared in social relationships. His conclusions constitute the true subject-matter of his work *The Structure of Social Action.* [1]

The first great classical work dealing with social relationships is that of Ferdinand Töennis (1855-1936) in his *Gemeinschaft und Gesellschaft* (1887) *Community and Society*. The warmth and harmony of the family community and of the village were exalted and set against the calculating and pragmatic egotism of society. More generally, Töennis intended to present a theory of "human wills" based on reciprocity and on the rapport between the unity and plurality of human associations. He wrote: "The present theory will exclusively assume the relationship of reciprocal affirmation as the subject-matter of their own surveys,. Each one of these rapports represents a unity in plurality or a plurality in unity…. The group formed by this positive rapport, conceived of as being or subject acting in a unitary manner internally and externally, can be called association. The relationship in itself and therefore, the *association*, is conceived either as real and organic life – and this is the essence of the *community* – or as ideal and mechanical formation – and this is the concept of *society*".[1]

Töennis described the embryonic forms of community distinguishing three kinds of relationships: 1) the relationship between mother and child; 2) the relationship between husband and wife; 3) the

relationship among those who recognize themselves as brothers and sisters. Töennis emphasized that brotherhood is the most human relationship that can exist and the most authentically communitarian. Furthermore, that this relationship is based on love and reciprocal will. He said: "Brotherly love can be considered as the most human relationship among human beings, even though still completely based on blood relations.

We see this in effect where instinct is weakened by all the causes of hostility which could negatively affect this relationship. Memory seems to cooperate to maintain and strengthen the bonds of the heart by recalling all the pleasing impressions and experiences associated with the person and his or her actions".[1]

In social life, instead, Töennis identifies only thirst for power and money in individuals who build merely instrumental relationships. With regard to relationships in society, he said: "Personal interests and vanity are the motives of sociability; vanity needs other people as mirrors, personal interests need them as instruments".[1]

What emerges from his analysis is that social relationships are the foundation of collective living. If on one hand they have a classifying importance, from the empirical viewpoint they seem to be rather limited. Nonetheless, in accord with the analyses of the previous authors, Töennis emphasized a process of radical change such as the move to modernity in which different relationships characterize different types of society.

The main sociological work of Durkheim on *The Division of Labour in Society (1893)* in many respects also constitutes a work on social relationships and their transformation in the modern era. Durkheim wrote many texts of a sociological nature. We recall among others: *The Rules of Sociological Method (1895), Suicide (1897) The Elementary Forms of Religious Life (1912).* To him we owe the development of sociology, and he probably gave the greatest contribution ever to make it a subject of study, besides developing sociological theory.

Durkheim began with an observation: "A totality is not identical to the sum of its parts. Rather, it forms something else, whose properties differ from those present in its composing parts." From this supposition ensues the identification of the specific subject-matter of sociology: "Association… constitutes the source of all novelties…. In virtue of this principle, society is not simply a sum of individuals… but a specific reality endowed with its own characteristics".[1] In discovering the existence of society Durkheim defined one of the basic theoretical problems of sociology still prevalent today: that of the relationship between two given entities: the individual and society. This was the moral, sociological and political question of Durkheim's entire work. The moral question consisted in how to harmonize individual freedom and social order. The sociological question consisted in demonstrating the existence of society in so far as it is a distinct reality from its individual components. The political question was how to ensure both individual freedom and collective solidarity.

Durkheim was one of those sociologists who focused on social relationships. This, in fact, is what gives life to social events and to social integration, two of the most important sociological concepts developed by Durkheim. Durkheim holds that interaction between individuals constitutes a reality which cannot be explained by biological or psychological factors. Consequently, he is showing that relationships between individuals give life to "social events."

Durkheim is remembered for being the founding father of a theoretical paradigm which is called Functionalism. Among his followers are some of the major contemporary sociologists, like Parsons, Merton (1910-2003), Luhmann (1927-1998).

Another outstanding sociologist was Max Weber. His vision was distant from that of the founding fathers, namely of a natural science of the evolution of humanity and society guided by the rise of the middle-class. At the same time, however, he opposed both the Hegelian and Romantic idealistic schools of thought.

The principal category in Weber's analysis and in the methodological program of the new science was social action characterized by meaningful relationships between two or more subjects. In his

writings we read: "By 'social' action, we must intend an action that is directed towards other individuals and which is consequently conditioned by them."[1] Society is born from two or more subjects who have a mutual and meaningful exchange. This meaningful dimension in a social interaction is the foundation of a new sociological methodology based on the understanding of the meaning in this exchange, constituting a social relation.

Therefore, Weber is the first sociologist to define social relations as being based on reciprocity of action and meaning: "By social relations we must intend a behaviour of reciprocity between several individuals that is meaningful and consistent. Consequently, the interaction must be characterized by reciprocal actions on the part of both".[1]

Another characteristic of society is the reciprocity of people's actions and their openness to others. Of course, nothing is said about the nature of this relationship which can vary from one of gratuitous giving towards a neighbour, to open hostility, to conflict and the exclusion of others.

For Weber, paramount to the concept of social relationships is the meaning that the subject attributes to his or her action. Thus we have societies where a meaningful subject interacts with the behaviour of other individuals and is consequently conditioned by it. In this perspective also for the so-called "social institutions" – like the State, the Church, marriage, and so forth – social relationships consist exclusively and simply in the possibility that an action reciprocally established took place, is taking place or will take place in a given way, according to its meaning". [1]

Thus Weber introduced for the first time in Western thought interaction between subjects as the starting point for great historical events and macro social formation. The topics on which this very great intellectual reflected – the State, modernity, capitalism, bureaucracy, power, cities, religion – indicate some of the categories which are comprised of meaningful actions between interacting subjects.

Weber is remembered for his methodological writings and for having developed an analytical tool which is ideal in an investigative methodology that analyzes, understands and interprets actions.

Perhaps neither Durkheim nor Weber would be who they are for us today had they not known the intellectual work of Karl Marx (1818-1883).

Marx, as we know, was a political theorist, an economist, a philosopher, a political ideologist and leader and also a sociologist.

It was Marx, in fact, who defined modern society as "capitalistic," upon which the reflection of Durkheim and Weber were engrafted. We owe to Marx the empirical intuition of the relationship between social structures and ideas, as well as the concept of social classes. He was the one who developed the complex theoretical model of conflict. We are not interested here in giving a systematic presentation of Marxist theory, but we are interested in it from the viewpoint of social relationships.

In a capitalistic society, social relations are in constant flux and it is through these conflicting tensions that social change is generated. In the first place, we must say that Marx saw historical subjects in a collective manner. In fact, he had a holistic approach to society. From an analytical viewpoint, there are only "productive forces", that is, people establish relationships with one another in the incessant struggle to snatch from nature their means of a livelihood. This is the driving force of history: "The first historic action is… the production of material livelihood". [1]

"Productive forces" enter into "relationships of production." With this concept Marx intended to underline all those social relationships which people establish through their participation in economic life. Therefore, the relationships of production are not only machines which produce, but also the production processes and the organizational aspects of production.

These "relationships of production" create collective subjects which are the social classes. In the preface to *Capital*, Marx states his methodological premise defining the subject and type of his analysis: "We are dealing with people here only inasmuch as they personify economic categories, they represent certain relationships and class interests".[1]

In fact, Marx did not objectify society or classes; he recognized a degree of autonomy in the subject. Nevertheless, his thought is negatively influenced by naturalistic and mechanistic epistemology which always compels him to indicate one factor that, in the final analysis, determines the others.

However, from our viewpoint of "social interaction" Marx also introduced the concept of "alienation" to the analysis of the relationships that are established in a capitalistic society, a topic particularly important to the German cultural tradition. Marx held that all social institutions tended to alienate inasmuch as individuals lose the awareness that they themselves are the authors and builders of those very institutions. They don't see their actions connected with those institutions.

Such a process is characteristic of the working world and is expressed in four aspects of alienation: a) from the objects they produce, b) from the process of production, c) from oneself, d) from one's community: "the estrangement of one person from another… to say that a person's very essence is estranged from another means that one person is estranged from another, as each one of them is estranged from their human essence".[1]

Relationships of exploitation, alienation and conflict are a patrimony of sociological thought, thanks to the Marxist analysis.

Another great contribution to sociological thought was given by a German sociologist: Georg Simmel. Simmel can be defined as the sociologist of interaction. In fact he is the thinker that people refer to when considering symbolic interaction.

In his writings we find a definition of society based on the reciprocity of individuals' actions: "Society exists wherever several individuals enter into reciprocal actions. Such actions are the result of specific impulses or in view of specific goals."

For Simmel, the reciprocal action of separate individuals does not build a society unless unity emerges between the parts: "These reciprocal actions mean that a unity arises between the individual bearers of those occasional impulses and goals, that is, a 'society.' In fact, unity in the empirical sense is the result of the reciprocal action of elements."

Later on Simmel stated that society is comprised of the unity of reciprocal actions, referring to the actions of daily life, those infinitely numerous and infinitely small actions: "That unity or association can be present in very different degrees, depending on the mode and proximity of the reciprocal action – from short-lived gatherings such as a family gathering, or all valid connections, even retracting one's citizenship, to the passing encounters between acquaintances in a hotel, to the close connections in a medieval guild". [1]

The social order founded on daily interactions is the subject of Simmel's analysis: "Only what takes place in the domain of physical and spiritual contacts, of mutual actions which give rise to pleasure and suffering, of conversation and silence, of common and antagonistic interests – this alone constitutes the wonderful indissolubility of society".[1]

But Simmel is also the sociologist who devoted himself to developing a "sociology of interiority." In 1907 he wrote an essay entitled "Gratitude."[1] This sentiment became for Simmel one of the strongest cohesive forces of society and if it were lacking, society would disintegrate, at least as we know it. Gratitude is the link that keeps us united, a link that is inadequate in expressing our thank you for a gift received from someone who "acted first" in total freedom and gratuitously gave to us.

Conclusions

The discovery of society and new sociological reflection begin precisely with the observation of new practices and social interactions among individuals. Social interaction is the element which distinguishes the sociological realm from the reflection on the social sphere that preceded it. We feel that we must be creative and continue in this adventure, to explore new spheres of social order

and change in our day. This will allow us to find a greater balance between the principles that guided the revolution of 1789[1] in France[1], finally giving proper attention to "fraternal relationships". In fact, current sociological reflection attributes a fundamental role to inequality, above all, to analyzing the unequal access to scarce social goods. Likewise, attention is given to the principle of liberty and its usefulness in the analysis of democratic regimes. However, the concept of fraternity still needs to find its theoretical place in empirical analysis.

According to Ulrich Beck, sociology must renew its terminology because at this point it is burdened by dead categories.[1] A theoretical paradigm is needed. The social phenomena (that these categories are no longer able to interpret adequately) is calling for this new terminology, as always happens in sociological traditions.

In short, our times seem to be ripe for a new social theory.

NOTES

1. A. Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, IV, Paris, 1908, p.132; trad. It. *Corso di filosofia positiva,* vol.2, Utet, Turin 1967.

2. The initiators of American sociology are considered to be: Lester Ward (1841-1913), William Graham Sumner (1840-1910), Franklyn Giddins, Albion Small (1854-1926), Edward Ross (1866-1922), William I. Thomas (1863-1947), Robert E. Park (1864-1944) and Ernest Burgess (1886-1966).

[3]. Only with the beginning of the Weimar Republic would sociology be accepted by German universities. See F Ringer, *The Decline of the German Mandarins*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Mass 1969, pp. 228 onwards.

4. In Eastern Europe there are Ludwig Gumplowicz (1838-1909 of Austrian-Polish descent), Tomàs Masaryk (1850-1937 from the Czech Republic), and from Russia Maksim Kovalevskij (1851-1916), J. Novikov (1901-1975), Evgenij De Roberty (1853-1915), Edward Westermack (1862-1939) and K. N. Michajlovskij (1852-1906). From a bit farther away there are the first Japanese scholars, among whom we recall Nagao Aruga (1860-1921) and Tongo Takebe (1871-1945).

5. R. Nisbet, *Storia e cambiamento sociale. Il concetto di sviluppo nella tradizione occidentale*, Isedi, Milano 1977.

6. H. Saint-Simon, *Opere*, Einaudi, Torino 1975.

7. A. Comte, *op. cit*., p.138-146.

8. H. Spencer, *The Study of Sociology*, 10° ed. London 1882, pp.334 onwards

9. A. Tocqueville, *La democrazia in America*, Einaudi, Torino 1968, p.20

10. H. Saint-Simon, *op. cit*. p.182

11. A. Comte, *op. cit*., p. 189

12. H. Spencer, *op. cit*., p.189.

13. A. Tocqueville, *op. cit*., p.189.

14. A. Small, *Origins of Sociology*, University Chicago Press, Chicago 1911, Ch.3

15. T. Parsons, *La struttura dell'azione sociale*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1962; orig. ed. 1937

16. F. Tönnies, *Comunità e società*, Edizioni di ComunitàMilano 1963, p.45; orig. Ed. 1887

17. *Ibid.*, p.52

18. *Ibid.*, p.458

19. E. Durkheim, *Le regole del metodo sociologico. Sociologia e Filosofia*, Edizioni di Comunità, Torino 2001; orig. Ed. 1895. In A.R.Calabrò, *Oggetto e metodo della sociologia: parlano i classici*, Liguori, Napoli 2003, pp.56-7.

20. M.Weber, *Economia e società*, Edizionidi Comunità, Milano 1961, in A.R. Calabrò, *op. cit.* p.63; orig. Ed 1922.

21. *Ibid.,* p.78

22. *Ibid.,* p.79

23. K Marx, *L'ideologia tedesca, Critica della più recente filosofia tedesca nei suoi rappresentanti Feuerbach, B.Bauer, e Stirner, e del socialismo tedesco nei suoi vari profeti*, in K. Marx e Engels, *Opere,* Editori Riuniti, Roma 1972, Vol. V, p.27.

24. *Ibid.*, vol. I, p.18

25. *Ibid.,* vol III, p.304

26. G. Simmel, *Sociologia,* Edizioni di Comunita', Milano 1989; in A.R. Calabrò, *op.cit.*, pp.105-6

27. *Ibid.*, p.119

28. G. Simmel, *La gratitudine*, in G. Simmel, *Sull'intimità* in V. Cotesta, Armando Editore, Roma 1996, pp.91-103.

29. The principle of fraternity, in reality, was the last, after liberty and equality, to be inserted in the project of the French revolutionaries, who inserted it in 1793, as a substitute for national unity.

30. U. Beck, *Capitalismo o libertà? Varcare le soglie della modernità*, Carocci, Roma 2001.

Social Relations and Fraternity: a paradox or a sustainable model?

Vera Araùjo

Historically the different disciplines have as their formal objective an analysis of society or social themes; the research of an approach which also reflects a spirituality is unusual.

Obviously I am not referring to a study of religion as a factor of social change during different periods of history or as an integral component of social formation.

The formulation that I intend to offer is more ambitious: can spirituality in its entirety, or in one or more of its components, inspire theoretical reflections in our social disciplines? Can it inspire models of practical application or methodology? I'm perfectly aware that this is a controversial subject, one characterized by heated debates. In no way do I intend to pursue this type of discussion.

Rather, I would simply like to relate our experience, which, like every experience, is limited. It must be placed within a certain context and therefore undoubtedly opens itself to a thousand different analyses and objections. Notwithstanding this, I consider it valid to take this risk and to offer some of the first fruits of our efforts. I hope that these reflections can be perceived and accepted for what they are: an attempt to communicate something, which we believe and live and which defines who we are. I am sharing these fruits so that we can recognize even more clearly their validity.

Our point of departure is the Spirituality of the Focolare Movement. It is a spirituality of unity; therefore it is a communitarian spirituality, one that has a social influence. It inspires our study and research.

A spirituality offers a complete vision of human existence. It is a universal way to contemplate, understand, and live a reality from a religious point of view. A Christian spirituality views life, understands and lives it, from the perspective of one or more aspects of the message of the Gospel, of the message of Nazareth.[1]

The perspective of the spirituality of the Focolare is unity, that unity which is the fruit and fulfillment of love-agape. I am referring to that love which has the characteristics of the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth, with all its wealth, not only theological but also anthropological and social.

"Unity, writes Chiara Lubich, is the word that synthesizes our spirituality. Unity for us embraces every other supernatural reality, practice, commandment, and religious behaviour."[1]

Unity is not only understood for its spiritual value but also as a force capable of effectively uniting the human family. It does so by overcoming all divisions; not just territorial, but also those divisions, which are a consequence of political choices, and of ethnic, linguistic, social and religious conditions. (cf 1 Cor. 12)

Therefore we can accept and understand the Testament of Jesus – "That all may be one" (Jn. 17:12) – as an enormous resource for relationships of every kind. In its rejection of discrimination, war, controversy, and nationalism, it contains in itself the seed for every form of integration and unity,

Unity comprises every relationship among persons, groups, communities, and countries. It impacts, in the integration of various social actors, a set of values that gives it meaning and significance.

In its social context unity is called *fraternity,* an important concept that is not only Christian but also universal: "You are all brothers and sisters"(Mt. 23:8).

"Jesus, our model—we were convinced of this since the early days of the Movement—teaches us only two things that are really one: to be children of one Father and to be brothers and sisters of one another."[3]

Chiara Lubich further affirms: " In revealing that God is our Father and that all men and women are brothers and sisters, Jesus introduces the idea of humanity as one family, made possible by universal brotherhood put into practice. He knocks down the walls, which separate those who are "the same" from those who are "different," friends from enemies. Jesus frees all people from every unjust relationship, thus carrying out an authentic existential, cultural and political revolution."[4]

Throughout the centuries there is a history of fraternity informing and penetrating religious, social and political life, as well as that of institutions. This history knows moments of theoretical and practical success. (We can't but recall the monastic fraternity that determined the rebirth of Europe between the fifth and the sixth century; or that of the "*Reduciones*" of the Jesuits in Paraguay, a true example of a cultural encounter in evangelization, which brought about economic and social growth).

There is also failure and bitter betrayal (it's enough to recall the Crusades in the Middle East, the religious wars in Europe that brought about so much suffering and death, the pillaging of Africa during the colonial era). Yet it's possible, and even necessary, to identify a path of growth and maturity in brotherhood, no matter how uneven and winding it is.

Fraternity emerges in modern times as a social and political reality in the trinomial of the French Revolution: liberty, equality and fraternity. We read in the Declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen (1789): "All men are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and must act toward one another in a spirit of fraternity."

Truly this trinomial gives a face to the dynamism of a humanity that is one and multifaceted. It is one in the recognition of the dignity of each person and in the affirmation of equality and many-sided in the diversity of its cultural, social and political expressions, etc.

The ideological reading of these values gave life to various historical interpretations, which contrasted—at times very harshly with one another.

The bourgeois spirit interpreted *liberty* predominantly as an increase of economic power and individual freedom. In fact it favoured the capitalists and those who owned the means of production to the detriment of the rising proletariat. *Equality* found its place as a solemn affirmation in juridical codes but gradually became more a matter of form and less real. *Fraternity* was reduced to a narrow accord of interests of the privileged class. In reality it was disregarded, far removed from every social and political reflection and practice.

As a reaction to this, there developed a socialist or scientific collectivism. Liberty was understood almost exclusively on an economic level, to the detriment of a deeper and more profound freedom. Equality became egalitarianism, and fraternity was confined to the restricted space of the classes.

Perhaps today a more complete and richer interpretation of this trinomial is possible in order to find a new equilibrium among the three principles.[5] History itself seems to indicate that fraternity is the foundation of the entire edifice, the amalgam that binds the other two and gives them meaning. Why? Because Fraternity is reciprocity at its best. This, in turn, offers us a greater possibility to understand the authentic meaning of equality and liberty.

"Fraternity is the basic principle of the trinomial; it is its vital guarantee. Liberty conditions the others in that it has the capacity to promote the freedom of the other. The verifying element is the universal application."[6]

The comprehension of social relations throughout the history of sociology is made possible by the different paradigms that have enlightened it, often times in opposition to one another. The knowledge of relational dynamics passes through the analysis of *integration* (Durkheim), of

competition (Weber) of *alienation* (Marx) of *conflict* (Dahrendorf) and the like. In turn the paradigms are based on a postulate that has to do with an anthropological vision. Without this postulate, an explanation of the same social reality would be very difficult if not impossible. In addition there is almost unanimous consent that these paradigms were influenced by, and therefore they are indebted to, the social-cultural context in which they were conceived and in which they were developed and lived. This relationship between sociological theory and its historical-social context has already been clearly outlined by Professor Iorio in his presentation.

Currently we find ourselves in the midst of a structural-cultural change of noteworthy importance and of unknown outcome. The rapidity of changes taking place, their influence on lifestyles, knowledge and culture, not to mention in the social-political sphere, is such as to predict a new type of society. A society whose make-up, the values it aspires to (or anti-values), its principal lines of thought, its systems of communication and its political-social order are unimaginable at this time.

The noted philosopher of science, Thomas Kuhn, affirmed that every scientific revolution—and there's no doubt that the actual change has this connotation—not only transforms the scientific imagination, but also the very world in which the scientific work is taking place.[7]

Can this new situation that is developing generate new paradigms, which are capable of creating new social theories?

Or can we say that the rise of a new paradigm indicates that the present society needs a new point of reference, a new perspective to illuminate, to explain its characteristics, to clarify its aspirations and reach out towards new goals?

In the actual panorama of social sciences we have new interpretive models being presented, such as the *network* (Barnes –Bott), the *gift* (Caillé, Godbout) and s*ocial relationships* (Touraine, Donati, Bajoit). All of these are searching for a new way to interpret this late era of modernity. However, we believe that the binomial *unity-fraternity* can constitute a paradigm or an innovative model capable of leading the social sciences along uncharted and unexplored paths. It is especially so in the case of sociology and the field of social politics and social existence. This conviction doesn't arise only from a theoretical fact, but from the observation of the strong influence that unity-fraternity has on the behaviour and on the choices of millions of people, individuals and groups, whose work, in the most varied sectors of social life, is carried out worldwide.

The Focolare Movement with its eight million members and adherents—in its various branches, mass movements, social projects, little towns of witness, dialogue on all fronts—represents a formidable laboratory where one experiments what it means to believe in and live "unity-fraternity" as the inspiring principle of living together.

Such a reality is no longer a marginal bit of news but is recognized today, also by scientists, as a social phenomenon with definite influence on society. On the occasion of the conferral of an honorary doctorate in social science to Chiara Lubich by the University of Lublin (Poland), Professor Adam Biela—at the time dean of that faculty—affirmed in his *Laudatio*: "The action of the Focolare Movement constitutes a living example of the application in social relationships of the *paradigm of unity*. It is certainly necessary for the social sciences so that they acquire a new force of application—capable of curing and preventing social pathology, conflicts, psychogenic illnesses, manifest aggression, wars and crimes (…)"

The social activity of Chiara Lubich, imbued with the charism of evangelical unity, constitutes a vital inspiration as well as an example for the social sciences. It urges them to create an *interdisciplinary paradigm of unity*, as the methodological foundation for the construction of theoretic models, of strategies of empirical research and of designs of application. Chiara Lubich, together with her collaborators (first women and then also men) has created a new social phenomenon that has indicated that the application of the new paradigm of unity is possible and has a very inspiring role to play. I am convinced that it could indeed be at the foundation of social sciences and be as significant as the Copernican revolution was for natural sciences."[8]

These words are very challenging, but equally true, if we think of them as expressing not a finished work, but as having the potential of a charism that aspires (and has already begun for a long time now) to become a concrete fact. Therefore words that invite one to a fascinating work of study and research!

Having said that, in spite of my fear and sense of limitations I would still like to offer a few initial indications of the contents that are implicit in the model "unity-fraternity."

It is not of course the draft of a theory. These are mere reflections, departure points for further in depth work that we hope to continue now, and possibly also in the future, together with all of you.

1. Unity-fraternity as relation

One could think that our discussion on the value of the person in a certain way would have us distance ourselves from holistic approaches, and have us prefer those of methodological individualism that put the social actor and his choices at the centre of our construction of the theory. But it's not like that at all. First of all the category of the *individual* can be meager, abstract, closed, while the idea of the person seems rich in identity, in values, and above all, in societal and communitarian relations: in one word, rich in history.

According to Horkheimer and Adorno, "Affirming that human life is essentially, and not only casually, living together, one again puts the concept of the individual as the ultimate social atom to question. If at the very foundation of his existence man is, because others, who are his similars are, and only because of them, is he what he is, then his ultimate definition is not that of indivisibility and singularity in origin, but rather that of a necessary participation and communication with others. Before his being -also an individual - man is one of his "similars." He relates to others before referring explicitly to himself. It is a moment of relationship which he must live before he can eventually be able to be self-determining. All this is expressed in the concept of the person…"[9]

Person means relationship, the possibility and the ability to put oneself before the *other* and be recognized by the other. "The person emerges towards all of us and towards each one only when the recognition contains in itself both the designation - an empiric, cognitive indication and the reaction of the same designation-indication. Through the designation-indication I recognize that the *other* is a plumber, a faculty colleague, a fruit vendor. The person emerges when the designation triggers a moral reaction, and therefore the *other* is included in the moral universe of the self placing him within a responsibility free of sanction and of exchange.[10]

Persons form relationships which envelop them, comprehend them, transform them, conditioning them from the outside and stimulating them from the inside. The relationship then becomes a *reality* among two or more persons, which is born and nourished by their being and by their actions. This relationship in turn nourishes their being and actions. It helps them to grow and mature in a given way and with an increasing depth of life.[11]

A primary quality of unity-fraternity inspired by a Christian perspective is its *universality.* This means that fraternal relations stretch beyond the bonds of family relationships to reach and embrace every human being: man or woman, citizen or foreigner, of my own race or another race, country, ethnic group, or religion. Every human being is considered and welcomed as a brother, a sister.

One can also assert that all are brothers and sisters because the entire human race is gathered together by Christ as a unique family. Fraternity is a value so constitutive of humanity and so universal that one finds it affirmed to some degree in all the major religions.[12]

To remain within a Christian framework and bring it to its ultimate consequences, it's necessary to add that the prayer of Christ before he went towards his passion and death, "So that all may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you, may they also be one in us." (Jn. 17:21),

indicates the Trinitarian relationship among the three Divine Persons as the foundation and model of the relationships between human beings.

The mutual giving of the Three in an agape-relationship constitutes their being Person.

Likewise this occurs among human beings. "The more you give, the more you are fulfilled, the more you are; because one has what one gives. What one gives makes him be."[13]

2. Unity-fraternity requires unity and distinction

In order for the relationship of unity-fraternity to be fulfilled it contemporaneously requires action of unity and of distinction. To recognize the simultaneous presence of both elements is not only important but also necessary. A well-conceived unity reinforces and realizes a healthy symbiosis between the parts of the relations even though they remain distinct. Distinction, in turn, sustains, preserves and guards the identity of each one. It impedes any absorption, dependence, or submission, and at the same time maintains it in unity.

It is only thanks to distinction that each one becomes an actor and takes the initiative to nourish and enrich unity.

Distinction brings about a differentiation that in a certain way signifies "opposition", not in the sense of counter position, contrast or conflict, but in the sense that each one "being the other" becomes more fully himself.

How is this possible? That this being in relationship doesn't lead to mutual exclusion?

The true inter-subjectivity such as unity in distinction or in difference is possible when one has a deep cognitive and affective experience both of one's self and that of the other to the point of accepting oneself and the others as autonomous *centres* of being: conscious of self, of being free; equal in one's dignity and at the same time, different.

Difference also means the awareness that one has something unique to offer the other or to offer all together. It's this awareness that gives rise to the dynamic and the necessity to know how to take the initiative, to give new impulse to unity and the readiness to lose one's eventual *gifts* if it is not the moment to offer them.

And so, not only is each one *not* the other, but also each one is himself only *through* the other. On the one hand unity produces a very intense fusion and an intimate community of feeling, yet on the other hand, it never annuls the distinction.

One can also hypothesize a fraternal relationship that involves unity-distinction not only at a micro level but also at a macro level: among communities, peoples, nations, religions, institutions.

The process of globalization would require it as a necessary dimension of the new social reality that is being envisaged. Fraternity would be able to activate a new and innovative *plus* in international relations. It is certainly difficult and complex to articulate and realize, but it is feasible and decisive for the future of humanity. In fact, seen in this light history offers examples that cannot be disregarded.

3. Unity-fraternity as reciprocity

One of the dynamic strengths of social action is that it is *reciprocal*.

Weber indicated reciprocity as a dynamism of social action. Simmel followed suit and defined all that comes about in a social relation as reciprocal action.

Social relation is the fundamental theoretic category that must be understood as interaction, or reciprocal action.

"For Simmel the social phenomenon is not the emanation of a subject nor even of an abstract system more or less situated a-priori. It is the relation in itself - that is the reciprocal action in as much as the inter-action that it produces; that is incorporated and is manifested in something that, even though it is not visible, has its own *"solidity."* [14]

Simmel himself explains how this process, that gives life to a new reality that has its own life beyond the elements from which it is derived, is constituted among individuals.

"The life of society consists in the reciprocal relations of its elements—mutual relations which in part are developed into actions and reactions at a given time, and in part are consolidated in definite structures: in duties and laws, statutes and properties, language and means of communication. All these reciprocal social effects are born from the same determined interests, aims and impulses. At the same time they form the social fabric that comes about as the individuals' being together: one next to the other, one for the other, or one with the other."[15]

Both Weber and Simmel seek to explain this reciprocity: as being dictated by the meaning given by the subject (Weber), or in view of determined aims (Simmel).

We can say that unity-fraternity generates reciprocity in love - that is agape, a mirror and a reflection of Trinitarian Agape ("God is Love" 1 Jn. 4:8). "The God of religion is the God of relation: unity conceived as interaction."[16] We find ourselves in front of a particular type of love that is not added to human loves (paternal, maternal, filial, that of friends, of spouses) but that moulds them, and sustains all the possibilities of love in their varied nuances. And so every type of human love is fully such in the measure in which it is modelled on fraternity.

Reciprocity, according to the Trinitarian model, in the concretization of Jesus' commandment: "I give you a new commandment: Love one another. Such as my love has been for you, so must your love be for each other." (Jn. 13:34), means mutual indwelling, or mutual containment, being mutually one in the other and the other in the one. The subjects, who are so contained in one another, unite by distinguishing themselves and distinguish themselves by being united.

Fraternal relationship is essentially reciprocal, as a movement that is outgoing and receptive. It is enriched with values such as trust, of welcome, of listening, of giving and sharing. It moves towards overcoming and resolving contrast, conflict, opposition and breakdown.

The consequence is the full, authentic realization of the inter-subjectivity of the actors involved in the relation when they live a reciprocal commitment toward one another. In this way there are the conditions for an ever-increasing fulfillment of the person.

4.   Unity-fraternity as a gift

Today the gift is being presented as a "third paradigm"[17] that goes beyond methodological individualism and collective holism, that responds to the preceding paradigms, having as its logic, freedom and gratuity in its three constitutive moments: the time of giving, of receiving and of restitution.

From a sociological point of view, the gift seems to be a strong point of reference in the description, the comprehension and the interpretation of the dynamics of social relations.

"The gift contains an undeniable implication of sociality and relationship; there is a concretization of expressions and of consequences present in it, which is independent of the interior or internal orientation of the intention that one gives it with—for example, charitable, philanthropic or "interested". [18]

The sociologists of MAUSS—Anti-utilitarian Movement in the social sciences—define gift as "every form of goods and services given without guaranty of restitution, with the purpose of creating, increasing, or recreating the social bond among persons.[19]

The problem of *restitution* as a constitutive and indispensable element of gift was already raised by Marcel Mauss in his "*Essai sur le don*" in 1924. He did not however resolve the question like many other authors and the problem remained an open one.

An attempt at a solution was made through the research for a logic of reciprocity as an explanation of the necessity of restitution. Reciprocity would be the reason of the counter-concession in all situations. The question that persists is: does the responsibility of the actors still remain in the act of giving, of receiving and of counter exchange?

Recently in a conference in Germany, the philosopher Paul Ricouer, under the influence of M. Henaff ("The price of truth") indicated a new solution:

"(If the actors) want to be truly the actors of reciprocity, the only way open is to say that the gift is the pledge and the substitute of a reciprocal recognition that in fact is not acknowledged; therefore the recognition cannot be vouched for except as a pledge of the gift.. (…)

"The gift is without price: it's not that it didn't have a cost; but in the act of exchange its price is not apparent—it is *priceless*. And it is in the non commercial experiences that the gift can be a pledge and as a substitute for reciprocal recognition."[20]

Here is how Simmel explains the reciprocal action of giving and the acceptance of the gift: "In every giving there is a spiritual value that goes beyond the intrinsic value of the gift. We absolutely cannot dissolve or annul the interior bond that was created by the acceptance of the gift, with another gift, which is its equivalent on the outside. The gift's acceptance is not only a passive enrichment, but also a concession of the giver. Just as in giving so also in receiving there is a predilection shown that goes far beyond the value of the object." [21]

In unity-fraternity the gift is lived in an even greater and more profound dimension that envelops our very being.

"I myself sensed, - Chiara Lubich wrote - that I had been created as a gift for those who are near to me and that those who are near to me have been created by God as a gift for me, as the Father in the Trinity is everything for the Son and the Son is everything for the Father."[22]

Moreover fraternity reveals and explains the very essence of what the gift consists of. "Man gives origin to societies thanks to a radical *generosity* that he finds inscribed in his being, in his life, in his intelligence and love, which permits a dialogue with others and a superabundance of the gift of self."[23]

A human being, therefore, is a being made for giving, and this quality is transferred to all the bonds and to all the relationships in which he is involved.

Gift then, is synonymous with love. The gift is none other than love in action. Not only does it not close in on itself, but also in itself is diffusive. Love requires the gift. It asks every social agent, individual or collective to be transformed and to act as a giver.

"To love means to give oneself: to think of one's brother (or sister) by stepping into his shoes…(Lubich, *Unedited Writings*).

The fraternal relationship, complete symbol of love-agape, is thus weighted with substance. It's a pure gift but doesn't disdain exchange and reciprocity; on the contrary it requires it, but with a noble profile. It doesn't include what one can buy, sell, possess and consume, but it rises towards liberty and love.

The gift of self to the other is also manifested in giving spiritual and material goods, as a sharing and communion of goods. "In this way love circulates and (through its inherent law of communion) like a river of fire, naturally carries along with it, all that the two possess in order to achieve a communion of both their material and spiritual goods."[24]

The sharing and the communion of goods reinforce fraternal bonds and create a true art of giving which is abundant in other expressions that are very precise: gratuity, oblation, broadmindedness, joy, and reciprocity.

5. Unity-fraternity as communion

The category "communion" is not used much in sociology. As a matter of fact I would say it is distant from sociological language and, in a certain sense, almost unknown.

And yet today it is gaining ground and emerging as a very rich concept with many valences.

Obviously, it is above all a *category* that is widely used and is at home in the realm of spirituality and Christian theology. In fact, in this sense, one can assert that communion finds its generating font from the communion of life of God himself in his being Trinity, a communion of love among Persons.

Trinitarian communion is therefore the ontological foundation of every form of communion, as substance and as life. And it is thus that it also becomes an *anthropological category.*

John Paul II in the encyclical letter, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* affirms: "Beyond human and natural bonds, already so close and strong, there is discerned in the light of faith a new model of the unity of the human race (…). This supreme model of unity, which is a reflection of the intimate life of God, one God in three Persons, is what we Christians mean by the word *communion".* (n. 40)

The eminent theologian Klaus Hemmerle, former bishop of Achen, emphasizes and explains this relation between divinity and humanity: "Our personal being is assumed into the communion of life and love among the Father, Son and Spirit; but with that I, and only I, can no longer represent the point of departure and the final point of my being, but I can live the Trinitarian existence only in reciprocity, in "we," that nonetheless doesn't dissolve the I and the you, but constitutes them."[25]

It is evident that, even if we do not consider this spiritual foundation, the social relationship implicit in our living together known as interaction, is complete in communion.

It is thus that communion gives rise also to an *economic category* with the "Economy of Communion." This economic project launched by Chiara Lubich in 1991 in Brazil rests on two major tenets: the sharing of the enterprise's profits with the needy and the insertion of communion in economic relationships. If the first element demands surmounting the culture of having to assume the culture of giving, the second implies overriding the formal or instrumental rationality and the assumption of an "expressive" rationality that is not instrumental. The businesses that adhere to the Project of the Economy of Communion are enucleating the lines of conduct for the enterprise that revolve around the concept of communion as the essence of business relationships both internally (with the workers, clients, suppliers, etc) and externally (with competitors, governing bodies, the surrounding environment, etc). This approach implies that one gives priority to the motivations and values in interpersonal relations, and emphasizes themes such as trust, reciprocity, etc.

The economy of communion offers economic science a new stimulus and new possibilities for resolving its own contradictions with its negative effects; it forms a "virtuous" circle where new elements that are more positive and that offer new proposals find their place.

Communion also finds space as a *juridical category* within the so-named Social Law that derives directly from the functioning of social groups.[26]

Georges Gurvitch was the one who worked best to establish the tradition that widened into "Social Law", which he also named "the Law of Communion".

According to Gurvitch ""Social Law" is an autonomous right of communion that integrates in objective form every active real totality, and that incarnates a positive extra-temporal value. This right is derived directly from the "totality" in question in order to regulate its interior life independently from the fact that this "totality" is organized or not organized. The "Right of communion" allows participation in the "totality" directly through the juridical relation that emanates from it without transforming this "totality " into a subject separate from its members."[27]

Therefore we can say that the "Right of communion" and communion find their own justification, the one in the other, respectively.

This social "totality"—for the theorists of social Law—has the significance of an "immanent communion," therefore of a reality both ethical-juridical and formal-juridical.

In the formal-juridical meaning this "immanent communion" indicates both the human community that constitutes it and the fact that we find ourselves in front of something that Gierk has named a "complex juridical person." It is characterized by the fact that the "totality" is not transcendent in respect of the members that comprise it, but neither can it be equated with the members in question or even with their sum.

We can therefore really define communion in ethical and juridical terms in respect of the spirit of fraternity.

Finally and even more so, communion is a *sociological category*.

In one of his fundamental works Gurvitch makes a profound analysis of the manifestation of sociality derived from the partial fusion of the subjects. According to the degree, the intensity and the depth of this fusion, he distinguishes three forms of sociality, which he calls a "We". These three forms are the Mass, the Community and the Communion. He then amply describes the relations that the I, the He and the Others form internally within the "We."

A "we" (such as "we French," "we militant union members," "we students," "we parents") constitutes a totality that cannot be reduced to the plurality of its members, a new unity that cannot be taken apart from the whole. Nevertheless the whole tends to be immanent to the parts, and the parts immanent to the whole. This reciprocal indwelling, which could also be defined as a mutual participation of unity in plurality and of plurality in unity can assume varied forms in the different "We."[28]

Communion represents the maximum degree of intensity of participation, of the force of attraction and of the depth of fusion of the "We." If we look at the heart of the "We", where the fusion is the greatest and "reunites the most personal and the most intimate depths of the I and of the Other, no aspect remains outside the participation and the integration of the "We."[29]

Gurvitch's reflections are developed in the field of micro sociology and are of unquestionable interest for a greater understanding of face-to-face relationships.

In the case of fraternal relations a series of correlated dynamics are expressed that enrich, give singleness of purpose and further meaning to the relation itself. In fact it includes being one *with* the others, where freedom and the absolute choice to enter and to participate in the relation come into evidence. Being one *for* the other brings into evidence the "how" of the relation, that is, its modality. Being one *in* the other underlines the capacity to be and to make a gift of self to the others. Being one *thank*s to the other, brings to light the fact that the identity of each one can best be expressed in the reciprocal communion of each other.

In the fraternal relationship we can further assert that the depths of the relations, the intensity of the interaction and the feelings of love, esteem, affection, trust—raised to a universal level—form relationships of communion. On all levels in social reality these relationships are able to inspire a positive current which fosters harmony, equilibrium, order - and because of this - progress, development and perfection to a considerable degree. All elements particularly requested by a society characterized by social instability, alienation and contrasts.

THE SOCIOLOGICAL VALUE OF LIFE STORIES

Enrique Cambón[*]

I have been asked to introduce the various experiences that will be narrated during our conference from a sociological perspective. I will do so, briefly, in three parts in which I will:

1.   explain **why we have allotted considerable time** to the empirical aspect;

2.   describe **some of the incentives** that the facts discussed here can offer to sociologists and experts in the field of social assistance and social policy;

3.   offer **some elements or clarifications** towards a better understanding and interpretation of what we will hear.

1. Relationship between theory and practice

In all branches of human knowledge, theory and experimentation go inseparably hand in hand.

It would be easy to show how, throughout history, while ideas, intuitions and working hypotheses have often opened up new roads to humanity, many times life itself has frequently preceded, enlightened, and even sparked and enhanced the understanding of reality and science. It is the so-called "hermeneutical circle" which, in the understanding and transformation of reality, combines *eidos* and *praxis*, theory and practice, scientific hypothesis and experimental verification, in a mutual enrichment.

All human history is a succession not only of events and currents of thought, but also of *mind-frames and sensitiveness* of various eras that have attracted new concepts and legitimate theories. It could not be otherwise, since – as the sociologist M. De Certeau keenly pointed out – every experience, even the ones we are least aware of, holds an idea which is neglected.

The various specializations of sociology offer a privileged opportunity – and a passionate one for me – to demonstrate and study their reciprocal influence or interaction (sociological studies on the family, on power, knowledge, culture, to mention only a few that are directly involved).

Pierre Bourdieu used to repeat that we often produce false opposites in sociology.[1] I believe that one of these unreal opposites concerns precisely the topic we are discussing here: the sociological relationship between theory and practice. In our case this particularly refers to the importance of "real life stories"[1]

Recently, Zygmunt Bauman gave a long interview during which he summed up his thought and position. He made two statements which I would like to examine more closely because I think they are co-related and very important.

The first statement indicated "that if the sociological calling is in some way useful to humankind, it is so in the service it offers human beings in their daily struggle to *understand*, to *give meaning* to their lives."[1]

In the second statement, he said: "Sociology draws nourishment from its continuous dialogue with human experience."[1]

This is exactly what we intend to do in presenting these life stories.

It is not a matter of offering a "spiritual" witness, although obviously this is not to be excluded. The goal we have set is to offer to sociological analysis *an experience* which on one hand

is *inspired by a specific understanding of human relations, and on the other, is a precious opportunity for verifying the feasibility and universality of the criteria that imbues these relationships*.

2. Open queries

Given this premise, the social experiences we will listen to can be an inducement and may raise many questions from a sociological viewpoint. I will just give a few examples.

2.1 These experiences help us to see why it is so important to focus on a sociological analysis, as we are doing in this conference, precisely on human bonds. In fact, they reveal to what extent **the type and style of relationships** established on all levels is central and decisive to the social sciences for understanding the reality (on the following levels: interpersonal, intercultural, interreligious, political, economic, among ethnic groups, sectors or social structures, peoples, states).

As Alain Touraine has underlined on several occasions, it is not enough to speak of a civilization. We need to define what we mean by this concept, to clearly describe the characteristics that would enable us to recognise as "civil" a behaviour or even a society.[1] Therefore, in listening to the experiences we will present, a question spontaneously arises: **which model of civilization are these experiences stemming from?**

Edgar Morin was among the sociologists who with great clarity and courage sensed the danger of a "western socio-centrism." He did so above all in reference to the present-day phenomenon of globalisation (which he likes to call "planetisation," world-society, homeland-earth, acknowledging in all human beings our common destiny as "earthlings", as "terrestrial citizens").

In his opinion – as confirmed by several other authors – what globalisation actually tries to do is to "westernise" the world, **confusing western civilization with "the" civilization**. Without realising – he affirms – that the western model has not eliminated myths. Rather, it has created new ones: science, rationality identified with the western way of reasoning, identifying progress with a weak and unilateral concept of development, one which over emphasises shrewd calculation, technology, trade, profit maximization: an economic-technological development that produces moral and psychological underdevelopment, exaggerated individualism and the loss of a sense of solidarity.

"Although," he concludes, "technological-scientific, medical and social progress is admirable (and the poor must not be deprived of these), we must not underestimate the potentially dreadful, destructive and manipulative power of science and technology…. The western model of development is not sufficiently aware of the fact that its wellbeing generates unhealthy conditions; its individualism includes a good dosage of egocentrism and loneliness; its urbanistic goals create stress as well as noise and environmental pollution; and the rage of its power could lead to nuclear death …. A change of direction is needed."[1]

Obviously, we could also list positive aspects and values that are transmitted by western culture. However, we quoted this text with all its provocative force because this problem clearly highlights *a first important aspect of the experiences we will present*: that is, the fact that **they express a noteworthy diversity of cultures, geographic areas, socio-economic realities and spaces of human-experience**.

2.2 There is a second aspect which I feel is worthy of special mention. We recognize the fact that the social phenomena most fraught with consequences for humanity are not the changes "**in the**" world, but the changes "**of**" the world, of which these smaller changes are only symptoms.[1] Therefore, we can legitimately ask: could the type of experiences that will be presented be a sign that **a process of the change of an era has begun?** A change which will bring a new awareness of

the human condition that unveils the centrality of dialogue and harmonious common living among the different components of society, as never before?

The question could be formulated in another way. Much has been written, in classical texts on sociology and in more recent ones, which clarify that the profession of the sociologist is not to be confused with that of a fortune-teller or prophet. Nevertheless, in these testimonies we will be listening to, and which are increasingly repeating themselves throughout the world, it is easy for experienced sociologists *to identify at its inception something that will later become a wide-ranging social phenomenon.* Could they not signify that humanity is positioning itself – in spite of the inevitable slowdowns, regressions and huge tragedies we are all familiar with – to make an evolutionary and cultural leap?

Can we not see, in the experiences that will follow, that reciprocal relationships which are more harmonious, based on freedom, equality, justice and solidarity - in a word, on brotherhood - **are as necessary to human beings and society as oxygen is to the lungs**?

If, as Bauman also affirmed, sociology "must necessarily focus its attention on the transformation of the human condition,"[1] it would be possible to see, exclusively from the perspective of sociological analysis and observation, a paradigm (of the person, of society and civilization) is coming to life on our planet which expresses a more unitary and integral vision of the human being. Would this paradigm respond in greater measure to the demands of a good part of humanity today?

I cannot speak about this at length, but the same type of question can be formulated from another perspective. Sociological research demonstrates – as Stefano Zamagni, a prestigious economist, indicated in a recent conference – that the great contradiction resulting from the prevailing model of development in the world is the following: never as in recent decades has social inequality been so evident, while global wealth has continually increased at an unheard-of pace. At the same time, the increased wellbeing of a privileged minority is not at all accompanied by an increase in overall happiness[1]. Are these not signs, also to a sociological observation, of the outdated, inadequate and inhuman parameters which often determine economic, political and cultural relationships among individuals, States and multinational institutions?

2.3 Finally, I will very concisely deal with a third obvious question that can arise from listening to the experiences we are introducing.

We cannot fool ourselves, we all know that one can end up being extremely pessimistic when we observe that humanity appears to be still immature, unprepared and far from taking steps of the kind exposed here on a wide-ranging scale, on a global and structural level. Nonetheless, this does not detract from the meaning of the experiences that are being lived, of which a small sample will be presented to us during these days.

Above all, which **social behaviour, actions and mediations** are capable of influencing public opinion, creating new awareness, improving the future of minorities today making them the majority of tomorrow? Has this not occurred in many other moments of history, when behaviours that seemed utopian become the common mentality?, The *sociology of social changes* could for example considerably assist us in our search for the answers to these questions. Perhaps, for those who wish, this could be one of the tasks that we take on from this conference: to work towards a collaboration on the level of reflection and research.

3. A *Trinitarian* key to understanding

So far we have mentioned the reason for the importance of the empirical dimension of our work, and we identified three important aspects of the life stories that will be presented: the wide

range of backgrounds (social, cultural, geographic, and so forth), their human and social significance, and some future perspectives.

Before concluding, I felt it was imperative to highlight a fundamental aspect that will provide us with the *key* to understand better what will be presented.

When these experiences focus our attention on human relations, what is exactly meant by the term "brotherly"? I do not want to enter into explicit definitions, but rather to explain briefly a vital dynamic process.

I have to make a brief reference to the heart of Christian faith, not of course from a theological, but a social and sociological view, to arrive at the perspective which interests us most in our Congress.

The Christian faith in a God who is Love implies that he is "relationship in himself" (there cannot be love without a relationship). Therefore, from the early days of Christianity it was possible to affirm that God "is one but he is not alone," because his intimate life is a total and reciprocal gift among "Three real Persons who are One" (C. Lubich), where *each one is himself in the other and through the other*.

But what we want to bring into evidence here – our conference is sociological not theological – is that this statement of faith, today is increasingly perceived not only as a religious reality, but also as an archetype symbol[1], an exemplary "model"[1], a paradigm[1] for all realms of human existence.[1] This conviction or intuition is expressed by all kinds of experts, believers and non-believers, ranging from the fathers of Federalist thought to well-known exponents of psychology, contemporary pedagogy, scientists, physicists and biologists, theorists and professions in the fields of economics, politics and sociology.[1]

What are these "*Trinitarian*" characteristics that evoke abundant elements for thought and practice? Chiara Lubich mentioned them in her opening message to this Congress. Vera Araújo will offer us some in-depth reflections in this regard, but because her paper will be given after the experiences are presented, I think it would be helpful to mention some of these "*Trinitarian* elements*".

Let us take, for example, the fact that the total gift of self can be considered as the fundamental "law" of human existence. If this gift is given wholeheartedly, the individual grows both personally and socially. It is a giving which finds fulfillment in reciprocity, a reciprocal giving capable of reaching the deepest unity, fully respecting and promoting the others' unique gifts. It is a holistic vision that takes into consideration the whole, precisely because everything is in relationship with everything, from the micro to the macro in the universe, from the individual to society. There is inter-relationship and indwelling, which also has typically "*Trinitarian*" characteristics.   example, the result of the combination of several elements is superior and different from the sum of its parts; in some way the whole can already be present in each of the parts.

These few words undoubtedly require further explanation, but they simply want to highlight the wealth of meaning contained in the experiences we will hear. When the speakers talk of a certain way of listening, of an attitude of acceptance and dialogue, of deep and free attention for others, of identity or empathy with regard to the situation of others, of that mutual "losing oneself" in the other which makes each one more fully himself or herself. The experiences speak not of imposing, but of offering convictions, of warmth, friendliness and sharing which enlightens the intellect and facilitates even the systematic search for truth. They speak of a kind of brotherly love which produces greater fulfillment and happiness. Well, I must point out that when we speak of this type of behaviour, we are not speaking of simply "good"*, edifying experiences, but of a behaviour which bears a profound and stimulating intellectual and social insight, due precisely to that "Trinitarian key" which is the soul of all such relationships.

One day a great thinker, Emmanuel Lévinas, made the following surprising statement: "It takes the courage of a Samurai to describe ordinary, everyday life." If those who during these days will speak of life experiences have found the courage to do so, it is because they are convinced that their experiences are the fruit of a particular vision of reality. Besides deserving the interest of

sociology, these experiences contain a potential and positive factor which some authors have called "revolutionary", in the sense that they can offer hope to humanity for a different kind of world, a more civilized world because it is more humane.

It is an undeniable fact that the *quality and style of relationships* established in all sectors of life radically mark each culture. Therefore, I would like to conclude by quoting one of the many definitions of culture,[1] one that is in harmony with our reflections during this conference and on that "Trinitarian style" we mentioned. This was said by a political analyst and an expert in social doctrine, and can be applied not only to individuals but also to entire nations: "Culture is a process of self-transformation through relationships, contacts and encounters."[1] It is in this light that I feel the following accounts of social living are culturally very significant.

NOTES

1.   See the collection of his conferences and interviews published with the title *Choses dites,* Les Éditions du Minuit, Parigi 1987, the first answer of the chapter which is entitled *"Punti di riferimento"*.

2.   These precise topics have been dealt with a number of times, for example by F. Ferrarotti: for a summary of his thought one can see Le storie di vita come metodo, in *Le storie di vita come metodo*, in *L'ultima lezione. Critica della sociologia contemporanea*, Laterza, Roma-Bari 1999, pp. 63-101 (where one finds reference also to his former works where he deals with this theme more extensively).   For an autobiographic approach see L. Porta Autobiografie a scuola. *Un metodo maieutico*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2004 (note the aspects of sociological importance of this methodology in the writing of R. Cipriani, pp. 175-185, with bibliog.) on sociology of everyday life one can see the "classic" text of A.W. Gouldner, La sociologia e la vita quotidiana, Armando, Roma 2002 (with an introduction by R. Rauty); for an overview of the different meanings of the expression "everyday life" in sociology see M. Ghisleni, "*Vita quotidiana*", in A Melucci *Parole chiave. Per un nuovo lessico delle scienze sociali,* Carocci, roma 2003, pp. 225-232; see also P Jedlowski – C Leccardi, Sociologia della vita quotidiana, Il Mulino, Bologna 2003; P. Jedlowkski, fogli nella valigia. Sociolgia, cultura, vita quotidiana, Il Mulino, Bologna 2003.

3.   Z. Barman, *La sociologia di fronte ad una nuova condizione umana*, in "Studi di Sociologia" 4 (2002),   p. 346.

4.   *Ibid*, p. 359.

5.   A number of his writings can be quoted in which reference has been made to this topic, but   we can cite one for all, in Italian, expressed during a conference in the Third University of Rome, published in part with the title *Il trionfo dell'individuo. I valori nell'età dei consumi*, in "La Repubblica" (17 gennaio 2004), pp. 42-43; much more detailed and explicit is the book published by the same author when interviewed by F Khosrokhavar, *La ricerca di se'. Dialogo sul soggetto*, Il Saggiatore, Milano 2003.

6.   See a summary of his thought in this regard given in a conference and the discussion that   followed, published in: J. Baudrillard – E. Morin, *La violence du monde*, Ed. Du Félin –   Institut du Monde Arabe, 2003.

7.   *Il mondo che cambia* is the title of a book by Anthony Giddens, Il Mulino, Bologna 2000.

8.   Z. Barman*, cit*., p. 360.

9.   See S Zamagni, *Beni, ben-essere e scienza economica. Nuovi approcci ad un tema antico*, in "Nuova Umanita'"", XXVI (2004/6) n.156, pp 931-946, where he analyses two recent works: L. Bruni, *L'economia, la felicita' e gli altri. Un'indagine su beni e benessere*, Citta' Nuova, Rome 2004; L. Bruni – P. Porta (edd), *Felicita' ed economia. Quando il benessere e' ben vivere*, Guerini, Milano 2004.

10. See G.P. Di Nicola, Per un'ecologia della societa'. Problemi di sociologia, Ed Doniane, Rome 1994, pp 264-275. "God may seem as an hypostasis of all that is social (but also, as Kingsley Davis, the symbol of a communitarian human world which is unseen)" (p.265)

11. "A *model* is a formal interpretation and/or description, usually similar (but at times also metaphoric or metonymic) of one thing through another for euristic, explicative or verifying aims" (W Outwaite, T. Bottomore, E. Gellner, R. Nisbet, A. Touraine, [edd.] *Dizionario delle scienze sociali*, Il Saggiatore, Milano 1997, p.436).

12. A general definition of paradigm can be that coined by T.S. Kuhn: "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by the members of a given community" (*La struttura delle rivoluzioni scientifiche*, Einaudi, Torino 1995, p.212)

13. For a broader and more detailed description allow me to refer to my publication entitled *Trinità modello sociale*, Città Nuova, Roma 2005.

14. The importance of social relationships based in some way on a "Trinitarian action" is expressed by Christian sociologists, eg. P. Donati in his many works or T. Sorgi, *Costruire il sociale. La persona e i suoi "piccolo mondi"*, Citta' Nuova, Roma 1991, as well as sociologists who have no specific religious belief, like E. Morin: see *Il metodo 5. L'identità umana*, Raffaello Cortina, Milano 2002; or his previous work *Introduzione al pensiero complesso*, Sperling e Kupfer, Milano 1990. We would like to point out not so much that he repeatedly uses the word "trinity" but the reference to the "Trinitarian" type of dynamics, which we will mention afterwards. He grasps this and describes its various levels of reality, using some of the most varied and updated scientific disciplines.

15. The classic text of C. Kluckhohn – A. L. Kroeber, *Il concetto di cultura*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1982, includes hundreds.

16. J. Y. Calvez, *La creación de una nueva dirigencia y una nueva cultura política*, in "Foro Ecuménico Social" 1 (2004), p. 25.

RELATIONSHIPS IN SOCIAL COMMUNITY WORK
AS SEEN IN THE LIGHT OF THE PARADIGM OF UNITY.
AN EXPERIENCE OF THE *UNITA'* COMMUNITY CENTRE IN BUENOS AIRES

Rolando Cristao[*]

I am a social worker, specialized in the promotion of community work. This experience which I will briefly present to you, relates to social promotion work which I am carrying out, together with a numerous and varied group, alongside my work at the national Ministry for Social Development.

It has to do with a Community Centre which was founded more than 15 years ago, in the province of Buenos Aires (Argentina), in the locality "La Matanza", which has a population of 1,500,000 people, 70% of which live below the poverty-line. The project is being developed in a community of six districts where 16, 000 people live.

It is a complex project towards the development of the community, which has as a reference the experience and perspective of unity, which is also the inspiration of this congress.

The most daring aim which we aspire to achieve is to satisfy not only material needs, but also fundamental human needs, which we have grouped in the following aspects: work, social relationships, the search for direction and self realization, health, a place where to live, learning and communication.

At the basis of all our work we have placed personal and social relationships, which we try to establish between social workers and the persons and groups within the Community. In this context, the fundamental categories which have guided us were, among others, the following: persons, relationships, unity/distinction and reciprocity.

1. THE PERSON: BEING IN RELATION.

We started by trying to put into practice the principle of human dignity, by trying to have a profound respect for each person, of his potentiality, capabilities, self determination, looking for his full participation in the management of his own promotion.

This perspective in our professional intervention made us break away from the way which social workers may at times look at the person to whom help is offered, when the person is only looked at as a client, as one being assisted, as a beneficiary, or as a simple object for whom one has to intervene. We are convinced that the other person cannot but be the leading subject of his transformation and growth, the "co-subject of the social action" – as we like to call him

This not only helped us avoid all attitudes of paternalism and welfarism, but also any patronizing manners which, at least in our country, always tempt political parties when implementing social policies.

We find it is of utmost importance to maintain this behavior in the aspect of employment: in Argentina the situation is really difficult, where more than 20% of the working population is unemployed and 40% of those in activity work without a permit, which leads to exploitation, insecurity and default in pension contributions.

In our Centre we organize professional formation courses and we can say in all frankness that those who participate in the various types of courses always declare that they are enthusiastic about them. In the course for waiters, for example, we tried above all to give rise to constructive

relationships amongst the young participants. The atmosphere created there was so positive that the participants found a lot of motivation and new energy to find a way to get out of their situation of unemployment. After two months of the conclusion of the courses, 27 of the 50 young participants found work (an unusual occurrence for our country). This confirmed once more how important groups and relationships are to establish self-esteem, a just self-evaluation and to promote initiatives to find solutions for seemingly insurmountable situations. All persons remain touched by the behavior we maintain among us agents and with them, because of the deep sense of fraternity that is established among all.

Recently we asked a lady who followed a course for bakers why she had come to us. She said: "Here I find a different atmosphere". The word "atmosphere", I believe, is significant to understand how the people of the Community perceive the type of human relationships that we try to build and which helps them in their fulfillment as persons.

At the beginning of the year, Alfredo, a member of the Community, asked to work as a volunteer in our Centre, saying: "I have always dreamed of doing something to help the unemployed find work; now that "the office for employment" has opened in the Centre, I felt that the time has come to fulfill this dream". And so Alfredo started to commit himself as a volunteer with us. His enthusiastic commitment brought about a very positive coincidence: some time back, an ex- colleague of his was going into pension. Inspired by Alfredo's enthusiasm, he decided to pass over to him his list of clients, in which he found by chance one of the most important employment agencies in our area. This agency is now gathering the *curricula* of many unemployed members of the Centre and is doing everything possible to find work for them.

Another thing that keeps us particularly busy is our aid to small entrepreneurs. In helping potential small entrepreneurs of the Community we realize how they remain touched by the firm commitment with which we carry out this task. Until now we have supported five small agencies: a pizza shop, a small sewing factory, a confectionery, a carpentry shop and a shoe factory. All their employees, about forty, were students of our formation course for small entrepreneurs and these activities have become solid firms.

2. THE RELATIONSHIP.

The *mission* of our Community to work for the well being of society corresponds also to try to approach every person "being the other", in trying to understand his life conditions, seeking to forget our way of thinking and our own cultural background, to enter into those of the other person. In this way we direct all the techniques and professional instruments that we use, from the very initial professional interview.

This effort to try to understand really well the other person is an attitude which can be stated as "to be one with the other", to put oneself "in the other's shoes", to be in his situation, "to transfer ourselves" in him, by forgetting all that we are, so that the other person feels that he is welcomed with all his problems, taking on us all the other person's situations so that we can together find a more adequate solution.

Such an attitude demands a preceding condition: it consists in "creating an emptiness", or rather to chase away all our thoughts, ideas, opinions, possible alternatives, which come to our mind, to put aside all prejudices. Only in this way is it possible that the thoughts and the needs of the other person can penetrate profoundly in us and find a place where they are well received, and so the other person can fully express himself. We realized that, behaving in this way, when the other person has finished talking, we generally find together the appropriate answer, and at times we end up agreeing with the ideas of the person in front of us as the one and only solution.

Countless times we have seen that when in our work we establish a sincere fraternal relationship, the result is not only a greater knowledge of the other person, but also a type of

"surplus" an additional knowledge of the reality; it constitutes a lot of understanding, a well founded creativity in the searching of solutions to the problems faced, and produces results that would never have been thought of before.

Another particular problem felt in our country is that of youths and children. We have thousands of "street children", exposed as one knows to all types of danger, from drugs to criminality to violence, and so on. Because of this a particular attention is dedicated to these problems of our times in our Community.

We have set up a games room as one of the activities to deal with this situation. It started as an activity run by the teenagers themselves with the help of some of our workers. The programme they follow is always open to a dynamic and creative process. The participation and commitment to the various activities, including the scholastic programme, is worked out in a spontaneous and natural way, even during free time and recreation.

The social impact that the fraternal relationships built with these youths can be identified through various effects: socialization, getting used to keeping order and cleanliness, learning to co-operate, to take the initiative (starting to offer themselves spontaneously to collaborate in activities), openness to new subjects, the sense of belonging in one big family, showing respect to the environment and rules, self management of their own projects, overcoming traditional formal relationships such as teacher-pupil and assistant-child.

3. UNITY AND DISTINCTION.

The central components of our work are the dynamics of unity and distinction, which result in the relationships established social workers and the persons of the community. The fundamental criterion for every project, every objective, goal or activity, is expressed by the question we ask ourselves: "Is this project we are proposing an aid towards building unity between the persons and the groups within the community?" If the answer is no we understand that it is not a valid or sufficient project. This principle always guides us to try and see clearly the way to undertake in planning and carrying out our projects.

To sum up we can say that our social work has a double objective: on one part it seeks to resolve social problems, and on the other hand it tries to reach as far as possible the profoundest unity with the persons of the Community. This unity is a means and, at the same time, the final goal in overcoming all social problems.

Even the wisdom of the simplest persons confirms that this is the way to follow. When we started our work in the Community, for example, a lady told us: "Here, it is not enough to give food to the people, (even if the majority live in sheer misery); what people here need most is solidarity, to be friends with their neighbors, to be able to overcome separations, to succeed in solving our problems and be able to go forward united".

We always try to keep the relationship of social-worker/person as one of unity and distinction, maintaining the strongest possible bond without ending up in uniformity, so that each part preserves and grows in one's own identity. This has helped us to face the other person by respecting his singularity, since singularity and the ability to socialize are mutually involved. The more we took in consideration singularity and the respect of the individuality of each person, the more unity grew among all, and the more we tried to generate singularity and interpersonal and group relationships, through meetings, events, etc., the more the singularity and the identity of each and everyone came to the surface and the talents and the capacity of each person could be seen.

It is not surprising that 50% of those responsible for the activities we carry out emerged from the Community's reunions: they offered themselves spontaneously to help the Community in holding courses, workshops or activities to promote solidarity.

These reunions are held every month and they serve, amongst other things, to build and reinforce relationships amongst everybody, to report to all about the activities being held in a way that all programming is transparent and shared by everyone as much as possible.

One of the signs that show we are moving in the right direction is that when people get to know us they do not look at us in a detached way or with a sense of inferiority, but they look at us as being "part of them". Without any doubt this presumed superiority of the agents is one of the most difficult barriers to overcome, because it is very easy that a wall of diffidence is built. But, the fact that one tends to, always "be one with the other" has helped to overcome this barrier, and today I can assure you, that in our Centre this type of difficulty does not exist any more. Some masons, for example, who work at the construction of a hall for formation courses told us: "Some persons study to be more than you are, to make a fool of you and to show you that they are above you; you do not make this difference but are equal to us, you treat us well, you come near us, you talk to us, you take interest in what we are. And you do so with everyone!"

In a few words, we discovered how distinction, diversity in duties and even in situations, instead of building barriers can enhance the building of unity in the Community.

One of the practices which helps our work, is that which we have called "reflection together". We are sure, in fact, that putting in practice the relationship of unity and distinction in the process of social promotion, must involve not only the action, but also the thought. We noticed that the way we do things as well as our way of thinking must start only from these dynamics of unity and distinction. Our experience tells us that reflection together is reached only when each one does not try to impose on others, but offers one's own idea to the other, having understood that even thinking is something that has to be given, if one wants to build a relationship of unity, based on empathy, on service, on co-operation and reciprocal collaboration.

This way of putting our thoughts together in the weekly meeting of the workers' group, together with the local persons, has become a fundamental routine. It generates new ideas, diminishes the margin of error remarkably, and improves programming, increasing the effectiveness in finding solutions and in the choice of strategies and actions to be undertaken according to the different circumstances. The "general understanding" is so much superior, more intense and profound than that which we reach when we analyze the cases alone. Such procedures made us generate a methodology and to find time to "analyze together" with an interdisciplinary form of approach.

Naturally, we realized that to arrive at unity of thought is not easy, we have learnt to keep in mind that progress in communication and reciprocal comprehension are often slow, and entail at times tensions and conflicts that arise not only because of lack of internal disposition of each person, but above all because of the fact that complex questions are generally faced the solutions to which are not easy, and for which prospective and different procedures are possible (or at least debatable). But our experience tells us that, when one puts into practice an adequate relation based on reciprocal profound and respectful listening, presenting one's aspirations and ideas in a clear but serene manner, communication is more effective and the ideas will be appreciated for all their true and positive content.

Once, a doctor who knew us offered himself to work with us in courses of health prevention. A little later, the government of our Region requested him to open a pediatric outpatients' clinic. He proposed to open this clinic in our Centre. We had never thought of opening an outpatients' clinic in our Centre, because there already was some kind of sanitary assistance in the area and we thought it covered the basic needs. But we said: "We should know how to listen to the needs of the local people and see what they think". So we shared this proposal with the working group, trying above all to arrive at that type of relationship amongst us that generates "reflection together". After a moment of this reflection with the people and among us, we decided to open this clinic. Today our outpatients' clinic is one of the most successful activities of the Community, with a turnover of about 200 children each week. Through this and many similar experiences of this type, we have

learnt that in community development one never needs to fossilize, one must always be open to new situations and needs expressed by the Community itself.

4. RECIPROCITY

Reciprocity is another strong decisive point for all our work. In considering the other as a subject and not as an object has permitted a relation of interaction, in two ways, "going and coming back", and this has produced unexpected consequences and developments, since it has already been experienced, that when the 'I' goes out of oneself to go towards the other and this happens reciprocally, a third reality is created, a "tertium", *that surpasses and goes beyond both of them.*

We make it a point that such reciprocity amongst social workers and co-subject, is present in all the phases of the methodical process of intervention: in the diagnosis of the situations, in the planning stage, in the execution and the appraisal of the projects and in all the work we do, we always try that this reciprocity constitutes the typical style of our relationships, and this forms every aspect of our community life.

In a meeting with the Community we talked of "Camping for the holidays". This argument aroused a lot of interest because the summer months constitute a problem for the families of the place, because of the difficulty to give a healthy occupation to the children, as well as because of the economical difficulty that does not consent their children to take part in activities for which they have to pay. And so the idea of camping arose. In the meeting in which we dealt the subject we made it known, that we will commit ourselves to give each child an economical help so that he could participate. The parents, in their turn, offered to cooperate by selling typical food which they agreed to cook to finance the initiative. Even the poorest wanted to give the little that they had. They proposed that every child should keep a money box to save and eventually give back whatever the Centre would have lent them. A spontaneous experience of giving and reciprocal help was born.

We could relate endless episodes of this type, where the poor are capable of giving not only what they do not need, but even what is a necessity for them. These episodes are almost a daily occurrence, sometimes moving, and often they are about most elementary necessities, from a bed to a refrigerator, to a door for the poor houses of the district. This type of "sharing of goods" is very important for the people, not only because it satisfies an urgent and immediate need, but above all because it gives faith and hope to all, showing them that fraternity is possible.

But what is more important is that this reality is not practiced only on an interpersonal level, or in families or with neighbors. Now it has become a structural practice over a large area, which has an effect even beyond the circle of the Community in which we work.

Ever since we have tried to put into practice this dimension of reciprocity even among different institutions, we have always kept in mind that all projects needed to have a network approach with other associations to look for significant bonds with all those taking part and all organizations within the Community, with the leaders of existing groups and with the institutions present in the area.

For example, besides others, we give help to a network of 16 community centres of "La Mattanza", to whom we offer formation courses for their social projects. In return they offer additional personnel on whom we can rely to work with us on a wider scale. In addition we have offered our study of the community and our social diagnosis to this network of associations. This has been greatly appreciated, not only because no such profound work existed in the region, but also because usually each institution is jealous of its own achievements and experiences. Above all this "breaking" of existing models has helped to create a relationship of trust and real collaboration in the region that is proving to be very fruitful.

Together with other organizations we have also formed a network of micro-entrepreneurs to study the possibility of productive initiatives and we will be presenting the national Government with projects for micro-firms to receive subsidies. In all 51 organizations and many entrepreneurs are now launching their projects through us. The novelty consists in proposing initiatives and projects as a network and not so much as single, separate organizations.

Undoubtedly this constitutes an advantage for everyone in a way that even at a political level the proposals for the obtaining of funds and government subsidies acquire more strength and are positively valued.

Moreover in all the other areas of intervention we have proposed to work in a network which for us means in a social relationship of fraternity at an inter-institutional level with the other organizations (schools, associations, NGO's, unions, parishes, etc.). In this way we have launched a network formed by 15 organizations with whom we meet to think and find together solutions to the numerous problems in the area. Because of this, different initiatives have come into being that are advancing in their work with good results, even at a level of institutional relationships

An important factor in this sense is the Town Council, with whom we have established a relationship of co-operation and with whom we are working on a project for youth entrepreneurs which is being subsidized by the local Government.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion we all well know that, everything we talked about can constitute, always more, a basis for an irreversible comprehension of social theory, as well as social assistance and social politics. We actually think that our experience can be a significant contribution, in respect of two perspectives: on one hand in as much it can help to reaffirm those values that today social professionals are making clear on a level of principles, theory, criteria of action, and methodology; on the other hand it seems to us that it can show a way and offer concrete hope to those who venture on this road, or to others who for years have been working in this profession.

Above all it seems to us that, at a practical rather than theoretical level, our experience can constitute a valid test bed for the principles of social work as a profession, although one must keep in mind some basic convictions, which cannot be renounced, and which I would here like to underline:

- ready-made recipes do not exist: solutions for social problems can be found by the quality and the positive aspect of the relationship that one succeeds to establish with all the others and that always result as new;

- it is necessary to keep in mind that social service consists in going towards the other person, and not towards a social problem;

- the social action consists of three fundamental phases:

a)   to make the other person's problem your own, as a co-subject;

b)   to establish social fraternity relationships;

c)   to face the social problems together with the other person;

- the transmission and the sharing of the experiences is an inexorable necessity, since through the application of ideas, of proposed values and practices, one learns not only verbally, but also through the "vital contamination" of a lived experience.

EMPATHIC COMMUNICATION AND "MAKING YOURSELF ONE WITH THE OTHER": A WAY TO CREATE NEW MODELS OF INTERVENTION IN SOCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Mario Giostra[*]

For almost twenty years I have been working as a social worker in the area of drug addiction.

At the moment I am working with clients with double diagnoses and am also collaborating on a research project to establish criteria for the empirical revision of results for therapeutic communities.

My involvement in this profession happened almost by chance, as I had in actual fact been reading a degree in mathematics. While I was working as a volunteer, and tried to apply in a very simple way some of the intuitions that Chiara Lubich had on the way to love one's neighbour, I discovered I was able to establish a profound relationship with the young people with whom I was working. I was surprised to see how their therapy and educational development were enriched by this approach.

A few years ago, the results produced by this approach were beginning to attract attention and I gradually became convinced that my experience was not an isolated case. There was rather a precise relationship of cause and effect that brought about those results. I had the impression that I had discovered something new which would have significant potential in this field.

Therefore, I felt the need to study what was happening and try to express it as a theory, as a model with a certain structure, and then to formulate appropriate strategies of intervention.

Over these years I have reflected a lot on these ideas, but perhaps the sociological concept that has been most useful in this research is that of empathy.

The sociologist Achille Ardigó, for example, describes empathy as the capacity of a person who intentionally puts himself in front of another human being with the purpose of creating a relationship. Therefore, this person has to become deeply aware of what the other person is living, without comparing this to his or her own experience and without reducing it to one's own frame of reference, but rather acknowledging it from the other person's point of view.[1]

Empathy, therefore, is not seen as a mental act, but rather as an experience through which a social being goes beyond his or her own daily experience and opens up to other experiences, including relationships with other people.

Carl Rogers is one of the authors who have contributed most to the understanding of this term. He describes empathy as "the ability to live the life of the other person for a few moments." In 1959 he states that this means "to perceive the inner frame of reference of the other person with accuracy, and with the emotional components and meanings which pertain thereto, as if one were the other person."[1]

It's almost impossible not to see the evident similarities between empathy, as described here, and what Chiara Lubich expresses in her spiritual expression, "make yourself one," which is a fundamental idea in the relationship of reciprocity as she understands it. It is an expression that is already present in several authors, especially those of the school of phenomenology and yet, in this context, it is enriched with new meaning. Among the many talks in which Chiara Lubich explains this concept and the technique for living it effectively, I have chosen a few quotes:

"To love the other person 'as you love yourself.' The other person is me. And so I love the other as myself. The other is hungry, I am hungry. The other is thirsty, I am the one who is thirsty. The other needs advice, I am the one who needs advice."[1]

Another quote: *"You need to stop and feel with your neighbour: to become one with him or her until you take on their painful burden or experience together the joyful event... This making yourself one demands a continual death to oneself."*

And another: *"To make ourselves one with every person we meet: to share their feelings, to carry their burdens; to feel in us his or her problems and resolve them as if they were our own ..."*[1]

"To make yourself one it is necessary to be totally detached from yourself, for the whole time you are in contact with others. In fact, we know that there are those who do not listen right to the end, because they are attached to themselves or to something else. These persons do not die totally in the neighbour and instead want to give answers as soon as they come into their head...."[1]

In this way, it is easier to explain what Carl Rogers and his school of thought call the "techniques of empathic understanding," which to date are still very widely used in counseling and are applied by many social workers.

It would take a great deal of time to describe them adequately, and so I will only underline some of the essential characteristics. Empathic understanding is based on three fundamental suppositions, which are empathy, congruence (the therapist is congruent in the relationship) and positive regard toward others. These assumptions are not only very present, but even indispensable for all those who want to make themselves one with another person. The approach of Rogers also considers a whole range of nonverbal attitudes that serve to put the other person at ease, to make him or her feel relaxed, to make them "feel important." These gestures include one's posture, one's facial expressions, and even inner silence to make room for others. These nonverbal expressions, as we said, are indispensable, and are especially evident in someone who is "making themselves one" with another. We could give numerous other examples about this.

However, we cannot ignore a fundamental and profound difference [between Rogers and Lubich], that is the need "to die to one's ego" which Chiara repeatedly mentions, describing it as a necessary, obligatory step. In this way she develops a vision that we can call "other-centred," a vision for which it is not enough to merely put oneself in the shoes of the other, but requires instead a revolutionary operation of self-annulment. I believe that this is the first time that the relationship with the other is based on removing one's ego from the first and primary place.

Many modern approaches to social work insist on the idea of reciprocity, which can run the risk of being a bit inflated. But, I must say that none of them come close to the purity and depth of Chiara's concept of reciprocity.

However, in my opinion, we cannot fall into the error of considering these reflections solely from the speculative point of view, since these ideas can be applied in numerous ways in daily life, and even more so, therefore, in the professional activity of a social worker. In my case, for example, these ideas made me totally change my way of carrying out an interview with clients, helping me to develop techniques that are very effective and easy to apply. I experienced many times that the very act of removing my ego, as we just described, allows the individual in front of me to give more of him or herself, because they find "emptiness" in a person who is open to them, an emptiness waiting to be filled. In this way, the person who needs help loses, so to say, the feeling of being in an inferior position, with respect to the person who is helping them. He or she feels they are the protagonists of their life, and this can help them set aside their reticence and defence mechanisms and open themselves spontaneously and with greater depth. Very often, when people who are defensive and closed in on themselves meet with someone who is empty so as to listen to them out of love, they seem to "unwind" and manage to open up.

I think it is important to add that this process does not in any way diminish the role of the therapist as someone who supports others, but actually, through this type of communication, that is

so effective, the role is reinforced, since annulling one's ego out of love is not a way to disappear, but rather a deep expression of "being."

Besides, I have experienced that it is possible to draw a relationship between these methods, or to use a term that is not quite precise, to "merge" this new approach that we are describing with theories or techniques that already exist, and thus reach very interesting results with great value for the sociologist and the therapist. In this case, we cannot speak of one way being superior to the other, but rather of a fusion of two paradigms that gives rise to a "third way" so to speak, enriching both with new beauty and new meaning… In our case, for example, "making yourself one" can enrich and facilitate the application of the techniques of empathic listening, which on the other hand, can offer very effective instruments to the act of "making yourself one."

Another aspect to be underlined, which is at the basis of all we've said, is that these techniques and approaches, which before were the exclusive patrimony of a few experts can now be transformed, with due caution, into effective instruments in the hands of many.

To explain myself better, I will tell you something that happened to me a couple of months ago.

It had to do with the grandson of one of my friends, who had lost his father at an early age and had started to show signs of being a troubled child. He had left school, seemed totally indifferent to his future, was completely closed in on himself and was demonstrating the first symptoms of the use of "light" drugs.

When the mother's relatives, worried about how quickly the situation was deteriorating, tried to open her eyes to what was happening, the woman, as often happens in these cases, reacted violently against them, rejecting what they said. She accused them of passing false judgment on a situation they didn't understand and of ordering her around. She insisted that the boy was just going through a normal crisis of adolescence and did not need anyone's help. She accused them of being spiteful, devious, etc.

This is more or less the picture I got of the situation. It seemed obvious that any intervention on my part or of any other social worker would run the risk of an even greater explosion. What could I do at this point? My experience led me to think that probably the best way to reassure the woman would be to use the method that is often used in these cases, which would be to express one's point of view not through an objective truth, which could sound like an accusation, (using phrases like "your son has a problem"), but rather from a very personal point of view (through expressions that are undoubtedly true but are subjective, like "you know, I'm worried and this worry is making me sick"). Having said this, I would still need to explain this technique to a person who normally doesn't engage in this kind of counseling.

And therefore, I thought it could be important to start by advising my friend about how to "make himself one" with his sister, and in this I was helped by the fact that he already knew what I was talking about when I said "make yourself one." In doing so, he could say he was sorry for what had happened, have his heart open to receive her pain, and listen to her right to the end, without giving any advice.

Only after doing all this could he eventually bring up the problem of the son, but presenting it as something that worried *him,* and not as an objective situation. Here, too, the fundamental passage had to be the act of "stripping oneself" of one's ego so as to lose completely any attitude of a "wise and brave person" in order to go to her with great humility and give her the possibility of expressing herself freely.

The result was amazing, because in front of this unexpected attitude of interior emptiness, his sister felt the impulse to fill this void with her own love and as a consequence she opened up, pouring out all her worries and her desperation as a mother, seeing the situation of her son slipping out of her control.

I think that in this case what happened is exactly that dynamic that I spoke of a moment ago. The empathic approach was understood and effectively applied because the person who used it started off with the attitude of "making himself one." At the same time, however, the person who wanted to make himself one right to the end was able to do so in the best way by applying intelligently the technique that was explained to him. The result was a new technique, which included the strengths of both approaches, and resolved the problem.

One important element to emphasize is that this was the experience of a person who had no previous experience in helping other people in this kind of relationship. However, since he was an "expert" so to say, in the art of "making himself one" with others he was able to use this spiritual resource, and also (and in this case, above all) his educational background that helped him to understand a methodology which he was not familiar with, successfully applying it and creating a relationship of reciprocity, based on empathy.

Encouraged by the first results, I decided to keep going along this way. The next step was to form groups, which would urge the participants to aim at an experience of sharing and mutual help, based on the success of what I just described. This project began with young people who have often lived for years in a state of total isolation, closed in on themselves, filtering every relationship with others through those forms of self-gratification that are typical of drug addiction.

The literature and the various experiences that already exist in this area came to my aid, furnishing me with particularly valid instruments. I am referring in particular to several groups that utilize interactive games proposed by the school of bioenergetics, and other groups that use the approach of Rogers, or those who follow what is commonly known as the socio-emotive approach.

My idea was basically very simple: to choose several of these instruments and put them together in a socio-therapeutic course to propose to the youth I was taking care of. However, the fundamental idea would be that of sharing, based on that particular interpersonal relationship of the empathic type we just described. Here, too, several of the ideas of Chiara Lubich helped me to enrich these methodologies with new content. I am referring in particular to some "passages" that she proposes and that are particularly effective to help small groups of individuals who want to bring ahead a way of sharing and growth, towards a reciprocal relationship of brotherly love.

The first phase of this course was to make a "pact," which can be described as a "pact of solidarity and mutual aid." This requires a fundamental passage, which has the purpose of helping those involved in the process to cement interpersonal relationships with one another and to remove any egocentric attitudes, in order to be actively interested in others. In this phase, which might take more than one meeting, it might be opportune to insert moments in which there is the use of classic instruments, such as sociograms or other interrelational activities, which are adapted and formulated into interactive games that help the participants get to know one another better and enter into more profound relationships. Enriched by the spirit of reciprocity and mutual sharing, these activities acquire new life and new significance.

To give an example, one idea that might appear very simplistic but which, however, has very interesting results is a "game" in which each one draws the name of someone else in the group and during the week tries to give special attention to this person, getting to know them better, being close to them and sustaining them in moments of difficulty…

In this way, each one is transformed into a "tutor" so to say, a supervisor of the life of the other (or as a child would say, to be the "guardian angel" of the person). He or she is urged to go outside his or her own world to leave space for the other. Besides, the name of the person is kept secret and so that contributes to creating a stimulating atmosphere of curiosity. It would be too long to describe in detail all the results obtained, but the amazement and enthusiasm often demonstrated by the participants, not to mention the way in which they manage to concretely help one another, to my mind merits great attention.

One aspect to underline is that, no matter what techniques we decide to use, if the "pact" we talked about happens to become "shaky," or for any other reason the will to help one another diminishes, these groups, and also subsequent meetings, will be almost totally emptied of significance and lose all effectiveness.

Proceeding in this way, it was then possible to structure other meetings, based on a very intense exchange of feelings and experiences of life.

Here, too, the goal is to help these young people emerge from the prison made up of their egocentric attitudes and to urge them to share their interior world with others.

This can be done in a variety of ways, on condition that the exchange of experiences is not an end in itself, but rather a mutual gift between those who speak and those who listen. Here, too, I will limit myself to just one example. It is a technique that, among many others, has proven to be very effective. It consists in asking each member of the group to give as a gift to the others a "postcard on his or her life," recounting an event that was emotionally significant. This creates an atmosphere of empathy that allows the others to re-live that experience together with the person. Normally these groups deal with strongly emotional topics.

Sometimes, however, it can happen that the empathic atmosphere does not "take off." In these cases, when we asked why, it was almost always because of unresolved conflicts among the youth themselves. This is just another confirmation of the therapeutic importance of having everyone in the group adhere fully and sincerely to the "pact" mentioned before…

Finally, in the moment in which, through this process, the relationship among the people involved has matured sufficiently, it was possible to take a further step ahead, using more demanding techniques. I am referring in particular to a new type of group meeting in which the participants, urged by the will to help one another (which is mandatory), choose a person and under the guidance of a moderator, tell that person with respect, but very clearly, which are the person's defects and those areas that need to be improved for the person to grow and progress, and then which are his or her good qualities and strong points.

It is a moment (which we could call a "moment of truth") to be done with great attention and care, since it is so delicate and because of the possible fragility of the people involved. Similar methodologies are present, with some differences, in various classical approaches, but what makes it different in this case, is exactly this effort to go out of oneself to concentrate on the characteristics and the problems of the other.

I have to admit that I am often moved by the results of these groups. I could never have imagined developments of this type. These youth, who are hardened and corrupted by life circumstances, distrustful of others and reluctant to establish relationships with others, begin to soften, creating this empathic atmosphere, which is so difficult to describe. The amazement and enthusiasm they showed facilitated communication with me and among them, in a way I have never experienced before, and was too obvious to be merely a random happening.

I repeated this process various times, with different types of participants to be sure that the results do not depend on a particular combination of persons, and yet the results were more or less identical. It is clear that an experience repeated so many times with the same results cannot be the fruit of accidental circumstances. We are certainly considering a topic that needs further development, since we are dealing with instruments in an embryonic state. However, in my opinion, these first timid results show forcefully the effectiveness, and the revolutionary aspect, of the socio-cultural patrimony that comes from the experience of universal brotherhood proposed by Chiara Lubich.

A Centre of formation for families " SCUOLA LORETO".

Alberto Zurlo[*].

1. THE AIM.

The aim of this brief communication regards "Scuola Loreto", an information Centre for the families of the Focolare Movement.

In this school, periodic residential courses are held. This makes it possible to observe the activities promoted and the relationships that develop, internally as well as externally. By reading the contents and dynamics of this small "social laboratory", so original when one considers the great diversity of the families that participate therein, we will try to eventually find the factors and conditions of micro-social innovation. Particular attention will also be given to the possibility of creating a permanent system of research and experience related to the social function of the family. The analysis of the different cases and situations that the Scuola Loerto presents, may lead to the identification of   elements useful for the growth and development of the natural functions of a "social mediator" of the family.

The Scuola Loreto was founded to put into action adequate strategies for a marked sensibilisation of the family in its role as protagonist and propagator of a culture of responsibility and interdependence. There were two specific aspects of this experience: the internationality that favors the opening up and osmosis among different cultures; the "full time" immersion in an environment the search for dialogue is a daily commitment.

It is difficult, in a few lines, to give an exhaustive description of such a complex gathering even from a psychological point of view.

The scientific material available for a more profound analysis is still partially being gathered. Moreover, there is no specific bibliography on the subject.

Notwithstanding, some summing up and some partial considerations can be formulated on the basis of:

- some observations made on the place,

- interviews of the protagonists of the School;

- a questionnaire proposed to the families of last year's studies;

- conversations with experts up to date with the progress of the School.

This brief study on some aspects of the universe-family, is carried out according to a multidisciplinary methodology aimed at the "we" of the family group, at its subjective dimension as a couple. These assumptions require naturally, more complex selections that go beyond "the individual-psychologist". Consequently the work is directed at the understanding of the persons in the couple and of the actions of the persons as a couple. It takes care to interpret the actions and the interactions as expressive manifestations, representative not so much of "individuals", but of "couples" as a single subject, and amongst couples, as groups, that act and interact as couples.

2. THE STORY.

Born in 1943, the Focolare Movement and, with it, The New Family Movement which is its most developed branch, has seen in these past years quite a widespread and capillary diffusion.

A little more than twenty years, in 1982, the Scuola Loreto was launched. It answered the pressing need, felt by many families all over the world, for an adequate place for the formation and co-habitation of families from the most varied nations and cultures.

With little resources, supported by international solidarity amongst the families of the Movement, they restored and rebuilt some ruined farmhouses on a hill in the region of Loppiano – a locality administered by Incisa Val d'Arno, a step away from Florence.

The locality of Loppiano had already been chosen since 1964 to become the first international Cittadella – or small city - of the Focolare Movement. The presence of the new School represented a later development.

It gave rise to an original laboratory of interpersonal relationships, of new models of living together within the families, innovative relations between families, and other sectors of the Cittadella. Consequently educational models and behavioral patterns arose, able to face the multi-faceted problems that assail the fundamental cell of society in every part of the world.

Families experience a visit varying from a few weeks to months, creating an influx of arrivals and departures of interest to all nations.

Above all, its diversities makes the school of Loreto, a unique laboratory of its kind.

The family, in itself, is already an entity which is characterized by the cohabitation of subjects of constitutively different types - in gender, in age, who, in a certain sense, find in their reciprocal diversity, the basic aim of their union. In the Loreto school one finds an extraordinary concentration of diversity amongst the families: different cultures, different languages, different religions, different social and political grouping, different levels of education, different ages, different habits whether linked to climate or nutrition.

News of the richness of these experiences, thanks, also, to theses families protagonists of the School, has reached different countries. They were the reason for the progressive increase in the demand for participation, so much so, that it has led the persons responsible in the Movement to restore other buildings adjacent to the first ones.

3. SOME QUANTITATIVE DATA.

It all began, in 1982/83 with 5 families from 4 nations.

In 2003/04, there were 6 families living there permanently, and 11 that stayed there for the whole scholastic period, about 10 months from September to June. During the holiday months, July and August, the apartments were occupied by 15 other families for short periods, to rest, study, work and formation.

Each year the families present at the school, occupy all the houses available; nowadays, the demand for participation is always above the number of persons that the School can take. At the moment there are 17 apartments, with a total of 80 beds. The residential area of the Scuola Loreto is made up of 4 groups of buildings:

• the first complex houses 4 apartments, of which one is now used as a kindergarten, a nursery and a play-room for the children and it is mainly used while parents are having lessons. Next to the school, besides the apartments, is a hall with about 120 places (a church of the year 1200 which is no longer in use).

• The second group of buildings is made up of 5 apartments used as lodgings for the families.

• The third group of buildings is made up of the school premises (secretary's office, congress hall, booths for translation, small halls, service premises and restaurant), and of three different apartments for the families.

• The fourth group is composed of 5 different apartments and a play-room.

There are 10 cars available for the *family/students* of the school, making it possible for a family, to move from one place to the other, when necessary.

4. THE ORGANIZATION.

The ten/twelve families, guests of the School are helped in different ways by four families living permanently near the Scuola Loreto.

These "permanent" families, voluntarily, in cooperation with other families, external to the School, live in the 4 residential groups of buildings of the School. During the year they are there to help, with an intense, careful attitude, the families that gradually arrive. The preparatory work begins months before the arrivals, above all for the families that come from different States and Continents.

These are some examples of the work done by the permanent families for the School families:

- the teaching of Italian, translations during lessons and other meetings;
- technical bureaucratic assistance, for documents, permits, visas, passports;
- medical-sanitary assistance, especially for children;
- assistance for the scholastic admittance of the children in relevant public schools;
- help in the management of the house, clothes, food, transport etc.;
- help in finding simple working activity for parents so that each family can support itself;
- helping the parents fit in the school , and participate in the lessons;
- help in other activities, religious, social, recreational, cultural, free time.

5. DIDACTICS.

The management of the didactic activity of the schools merits to be mentioned: it consists of: 14 study themes; 180 hours for lessons; a teaching body of 16 teachers coming from various European cities, who stay at the school temporarily, for one or more days, depending on the duration of the lessons. Even the teaching body works gratuitously.

During the year, the School families, participate in the local congresses, at the international cittadella, or at a regional or national level, giving their contribution of ideas and culture. Through the narration of their experiences, they are elaborate models of the family and amongst families.

After twenty years of activity the necessity was felt to multiply and facilitate the entrance of more families to this rich social and cultural richness that has been formed in time.

In 2004 the "Family Point" was born in the Scuola Loreto - a formative course of 5 years, made up of annual modules of 40 hours, carried out during the weekend, open to persons and families wishing to become competent in helping with relations in the world of the family.

The project, based on the direct involvement of the participants, is supported by the contribution of the university teachers, of expert teachers of the Scuola Loreto and of the families of the residential course.

6. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL FAMILIES.

It is calculated, that from the foundation of the Scuola Loreto to this day, 1300 families have participated , for varying periods.

In 2004, the 9 families who stayed for the whole year had between them 24 children. Two came from South America, two from North America, two from Africa, one from Asia, one from East Europe and one from Italy.

• In 2003, 12 families came: 5 from 5 different European countries, 4 from 4 different states of South America, one from Oceania, one from Asia, one from Africa. And they had 12 children.

• In 2002 10 families came: 5 from South America, 2 from Asia, 2 from Europe, one from Oceania. And they had 26 children.

7. THE MOTIVATION QUESTION.

One knows that, normally, social phenomena are asserted, are maintained in time, develop etc. only, if there exists, as a base of the phenomena, valid aims that urge the subjects - in our case the families – to be consistent in their behaviour

Therefore a question spontaneously comes to the fore:

What attracts families, so different amongst themselves, to take part in the life of the School and what urges them to leave behind their own routine, their own security to face problems, even big ones, including heavy economic risks?

In trying to give the first answer to this query one can consider the following :

1. Motives of an "extrinsic" type, that have to do with an economic type of satisfaction, cultural, or simply the urge to gratify the wish for novelty or adventure, are to be immediately excluded, since the stakes are high, even from the economic point of view. The difficulties when transferring a family for a whole year, will not be compensated not even by the good things one learns on the cultural level. Even the wish for novelty vanishes at the thought that, with the family, with children, to go from one place to the other, is no joke.

2. Therefore to try to understand the reason why the families of the School do so, one must look at the "intrinsic" type of motives, that is, those which do not aim at a reward of the "estrinsic" type. As Vittorio Pelligra affirms, in his recent writing: "In fact, we can think of many other types of activity, where "doing" the activity itself is at least more important, to motivate the subject, than the extrinsic results it produces"[1].

3. What seems to be the specific characteristic in the behaviour of the families is, that they normally have "intrinsic" motivations. In fact, these motivations are responsible for the majority of the actions that are taken in the internal family nucleus.

4. The "intrinsic" motive, (e.g. one goes for a walk, not to go from one place to the other or to go along a road, but, because the simple fact of walking up and down, is in itself, useful) is probably even a type of motivation that keeps the "permanent" families at the Scuola Loreto there, notwithstanding the grinding, extra "care-work" generated by the presence of the guest families.

5. It is probably, an "intrinsic" motive that brings the teachers from all over Europe to teach; in fact it seems that it is a satisfaction to participate in the work of the School, the reward that gratifies them.

8. "INTRINSIC' MOTIVES OF THE FAMILIES.

From the answers of a questionnaire, given to a specimen of the families, it results, that the motives that have urged the families to leave their proper homes and come to the Scuola Loreto, are all the result of self-consciousness as a family. Some of the expressions used in the questionnaire are:

* the willingness to know oneself;
* the willingness to be conscious of one's proper role in the family;
* the willingness to grow as a family;
* the willingness to be conscious in the field of family life;
* the willingness to improve interpersonal relationships in the family;
* to grow as a couple and with the children.

A second aspect, that comes to the fore, from the answers given, is that this better living, as a family, is not pursued for itself, narcissistically, but it is aimed to become a better person, so that one can help other families in the fields:

* of education;
* of communication;
* of education of the world
* of inculturation and dialogue.

All these fields are linked in their inter-independent dimensions, for a useful searching of ways, that can result in universal reciprocity.

9. THE PROBLEMS BEFORE ARRIVING AT THE SCHOOL.

The problems encountered by the families when moving from their original countries to the School, as resulting from the questionnaire, in order of frequency and importance are:

* The economic aspect of work is surely the first and most common;
* the language (obviously, for all non-Italians), a problem that has generated difficulties of different degrees, depending on the family and on the languages spoken;
* the difficulties linked with the transfer of children;
* for some families, it's passports, not to mention, the long and tiring voyages (some have to fly for days).

10. PROBLEMS DURING SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

The problems encountered during the ten months of school are:

* of communicating with others because of the language; this applies to both parents and children;
* the different cultures, time tables, different methods of education and the care of children;

- initial difficulty in the scholastic placing of the children;

- tiredness, above all in the first period because of acclimatization;

- discomfort, because of the building structures and of the services: e.g. excavated streets, shops and schools far away, etc.

11. SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THE FAMILIES.

- **To solve the working problem,** normally, after having established a good relationship of faith and trust with their bosses at their place of work, the families have applied for a year's leave without pay; some families, in order to leave, have left their place of work, and when they returned had to look for another job.

- **Regarding the economic problem**, some families have budgeted their income and expenditure, in the years preceding their departure so that they could save money for the School period. Others had to have two jobs to save money; others, actually came to the point of selling important items, like the car or even the house; others even borrowed the money. In many cases, what was important was the solidarity of the families in the city of origin.

- **To tackle the language problem,** foreign families attended with great commitment the specific courses and they studied, in all the free moments even during the night, learning Italian, quickly and well, depending on the language of the place of origin and on their personal ability (many showed gratitude for the help received and satisfaction at the obtained results). The effort to listen and understand the others, even if the language and the culture is different, has considerably increased self respect and the possibility of dialogue.

- **The problem of detachment from their places of origin,** has been resolved by communication in the family itself, and with the other families and, by letters, e-mail, and telephone, with the persons of the country of origin (relatives, friends, the children's teachers, work colleagues). This problem of detachment has been compensated by the many new and profound friendships made and by the great self enrichment received by getting to know families a lot different from themselves.

- **The question of different cultures,** that during the School months have been the cause of a lot of difficulties, especially for some families who had to adapt themselves to a different lifestyle and to new ways of caring for their children, has been solved by a type of a continuous training, *a school in the School,* as revealed by the questionnaire, by:
  - ➢ understanding the other family's culture, giving them space;
  - ➢ to reconsider one's one concept in relation to others';
  - ➢ to compare openly one's position;
  - ➢ to dialogue in a frank way;
  - ➢ to know how to suppress one's desire to immediately affirm one's idea.

- **The general problems in housing shortage** and in the supporting services in the houses, for the many children and so for the need of baby sitting since they are often sick; have been taken care, from time to time with a reciprocal and increasingly intensive help amongst the families

- **The problem of emarginalization of some of the children,** especially of foreign families, in the local public schools, has been faced by the parents, who talk to the teachers and the parents of the other children, and even by the children themselves, who when they are offended, try to be nice and friendly to their companions. This quickly changed the relationship among the children. It is worth knowing, that concerning this problem, while in the first years of the Scuola Loreto the population and the local authority looked upon the School families indifferently, now the children and the families invite each other reciprocally for feasts. Beside that, the public school teachers

appreciate a lot the presence of the foreign children because of the contribution that they bring, and the public authority are sensible and attentive to the problems of the Scuola Loreto.

12.   RESULTS: SOME TYPES.

To some "permanent" families of the Scuola Loreto an apparently provocative or perhaps a naïve question has been put:

During the school months of this experimental laboratory of social innovative relations, do concrete facts exist, that makes one think of solutions capable of facing some of the problems that characterize the family of today?

These were noteworthy:

- *stories that tell of families with serious conjugal crisis, that were restored;*

- *stories of families faced with apparently irreconcilable social diversity, politics and religions who succeeded in building a profound, friendly relationship between them;*

- *families with diametrically opposed educational patterns, who at first tolerated each other, then respected and understood each other, and at the end, esteemed each other;*

- *when a family from Colombia returned to Bogota, they founded a Centre to help the progress of the families of a big district, and later became a consultant to the Bolivian University;*

- *a Swiss family discovered the Scuola Loreto through internet as a model of their own social aspirations and they came for a whole year;*

- *many others, just as significant.*

13.   CONCLUSION.

A family formed with such interaction with other families, has its own resources to become a social leader, creating solutions that can even be a model for society in each place of origin.

All this can contribute to the development of a significant "network" of families, operating all over the world; subjects of a new solidarity and social practices so much needed in this historical moment. This will result in a "society of families", intended as a net of a concrete realization, constructors of sociality and peace.

A possible realization of this, at world level, can be seen in the Familyfest 2005, in which the Scuola Loreto will act as a very important reference regarding both methodology and content.

"Giorgio La Pira" Centre in Florence.

Maurizio Certini[*]

Down there, I can see Earth, a blue and white planet, beautiful, shining, our human homeland. From up here on the Moon it can all fit in the palm of my hand. Through this perspective there are no whites or blacks, no division between East and West, communists and capitalists, North and South. We all form one Earth.

(Astronaut John W. Young, "Diary on board" 1992)

In the seventies, Italy started being considered as a land of immigration: a new phenomenon for a country, which though a land of migrants itself, ended up being totally unprepared to welcome whoever came from afar. One could immediately realise that adequate laws were needed to address the social reality that was taking place, and many other obstacles had to be overcome, in order to render possible an encounter that was to become, as was described later on by Pope John Paul II, "a culturally enriched society, increasingly fraternal in its diversity".

Observing this phenomenon from the outset, in **1978**, the Church in Florence was moved to act above all by the presence of a characteristic and significant experience of multicultural dialogue that stood at its doors (in the nearby town of Loppiano, which the Focolare Movement started in the beginning of the Sixties, located in the municipality of Incisa Val d'Arno,). The Church of Florence started offering several rooms in the historical part of Florence, inside the St. Michael and St Caetan building, to create a place for sharing and cultural exchange, where youths arriving in Florence (at that time in Tuscany they were mostly university students) could experience that differences in religion, social status, culture or origin could, through dialogue, become an enrichment (though, of course, not without overcoming difficulty).

Some members of the Focolare Movement started offering voluntary help which through the years developed and spread among numerous other collaborators and institutions.

The Centre soon became known as a place of solidarity, but besides simply giving assistance, it aimed at becoming a laboratory that would show Europe as being open to all, ready to give and to receive, to learn from everybody. In this way foreign youths would soon realize that they could become **cultural bridges** needed by all, especially in today's world, which is interdependent at all levels.

The new Centre was dedicated to Giorgio La Pira, who had passed away some months before. A Florentine by choice, through his genial intuition he knew how to speak of the reality of Florence to his fellow citizens. He was a university professor who showed great trust in young generations, and was a mayor who succeeded in making Florence known internationally as a city promoting peace. He was also a member of parliament who understood deeply the difficulties suffered by Third World people, and in the Fifties he had already spoken openly on the correlation between certain economic policies and world peace.

The need to give priority to formation and culture to the centre was soon clear, as one can see from the words of Cardinal Giovanni Benelli who, having sensed a reality of difficulty, of solitude and bitter disorientation amongst foreign youths residing in Florence, had proposed setting up an "Information Centre, offering orientation, meetings and necessary help". He wrote to Chiara Lubich[1], saying: (…) There are meeting places everywhere which show these students all that our City offers. Who will reveal its soul though? (…) I wish to see the success of this delicate attempt at penetrating into the world of culture (…). We want to serve these youths, to know them, to make them feel welcomed. We want to be respectfully at their side and help them in every way. We want to enter into dialogue with them about living in today's world. If they are Muslims we will help them to become better Muslims, if they are Hebrews we will help them to be Hebrews[1] (…).

In the footsteps of Vatican Council II, the Cardinal of Florence had drawn out the basic principles so that intercultural and inter-religious dialogue could become a daily reality at the La Pira Centre: by moving from solidarity towards the development of one's own humanity, through knowing each other and through friendship.

Throughout the years, as the surrounding social reality became increasingly multicultural and multi-religious, the Centre became a meeting place for youths from all parts of the world. Thanks to the presence of foreign students and intellectuals, those who were running the La Pira Centre received first hand experience of the great changes which social life was going through, becoming involved in a unique human experience which in a way preceded and encouraged positive attitudes of friendship, openness, mutual understanding, and intercultural dialogue, helping many to overcome the fear of losing their own identity in a serene encounter with others.

Many things make La Pira Centre a truly unique place in Florence: the study groups, seminars, initiatives in aid of international cooperation projects carried out by ex Florence students in their country of origin, the school for Italian language as well as that for political education, the lectures on education for international awareness requested by schools in Florence and many other activities.

The Teatina Hall has become a permanent intercultural workshop in the city due to the great concentration of persons coming from various parts of the world. Most of the leaders of the various foreign communities learnt to speak Italian at this Centre; several youths who returned to their homelands after their education period kept in touch with Florence through the Centre; some developed an artistic vocation in Via de' Pescioni[1]

This old Hall, which at the centre of its vault carries the emblem of the Teatini family, a cross raised over three hills, was moreover the official meeting and prayer hall for Muslims from 1989 to 1992, thus becoming the first Mosque in Tuscany.[1] It was not by chance that the Centre chose to offer a place to Muslim faithfuls on Fridays, whose leaders had built a very good relationship with the Centre. This resulted from the idea that Florence could support the true and profound roots of Islam, and contribute with its tradition of openness to consolidate and spread these roots, and help to discover the link that exists with Europe's own values. It was a small gesture that will always be remembered.

The presence of people from so many countries makes the Centre a unique observation post on earth, where these people are not hostages of mass media, but first line witnesses of the true international reality, filtered through the eyes, the experiences and life stories of those who frequent it. This made us feel close to the major events of the time that are of international interest and are leaving an impact on society all over the world.

We often asked ourselves how we could raise the voice of Florence when faced with challenges that show the whole world different visions, originating from a particular cultural environment, or outdated and selfishly short-sighted economic policies, when today we live in an era of interdependence and globalization.

Florence, a European city of culture, a city on a mountain as Professor La Pira loved to call it. Florence: full of humanism, where man and his freedom are at its centre. Christian Florence, with its 39 saints. Florence: symbol of solidarity, of sharing.

Industrious and enterprising Florence; where contrasting parties still exist, arrogant at times, yet tame at the same time, ready to discover the value of all that is new and to learn. Florence: unique in the world, a peaceful city, harmonious and perfect in its structure. A city that has exalted human dignity, the first city to have declared that capital punishment is useless and absurd. Several times we asked ourselves how we could reveal its soul to new citizens, and to ourselves, so as to continue making it a great City, and to spread its cultural heritage. And we understood that the soul of Florence in reality is a treasure which we can only discover together: it comes forth from interpersonal relationships, and the more one is open to others, the more one loves disinterestedly, the more one gets to know it. And surely La Pira, who came from far away, understood this well,

showing the citizens of Florence the soul of the City of the Annunciation; a soul capable of embracing all people completely, with all their characteristics, their languages and their cultures.

In the utopia of La Pira *"(...) Florence is a city where everyone has a home, every child and youth has a school to go to, where men and women have a place to work, where all sick have a place where they can be cured, and every believer has a place where to pray"*[1].

And so, in the era of globalization, remaining faithful to the ideas which lead to its birth, the Centre tries hard to continue in the footsteps of Giorgio La Pira and of several others who gave rise to a permanent anthropological revolution, which looks ahead, at brotherhood, at peace, and courageously seeks to put this into practice in everyday life. It is a pragmatic revolution, in which "I" and "you" exchange roles constantly in their concrete reciprocity of friendship and love.

Living everyday life with people coming from different countries helps us to live in the world as in one home for all humanity. This could provoke a crisis within us, as actors in the history of singular nations, however it brings us back from a history of groups and tribes to the one great, mysterious story of humanity.

Those who carry out voluntary work at Via de' Pescioni, and all those who are ready to offer their professional competence to solve the specific problems which crop up in everyday life in such a complex reality as that of the Centre, represent the fuel which gives success to the Association. But today, the Centre has a vast network of collaboration, with links to similar national voluntary associations, as well as links to several private and public entities.

The Ministry of Education contributes towards its intercultural educational activities, by annually providing a teacher. The communes of the region of Tuscany, those of the Province of Florence and other centres in the city have many times given their support for the development of its various projects.

The commune of Florence partly covers the costs of teaching of Italian and offers legal assistance in immigration problems. The University for foreigners of Siena entered into an agreement with the Centre to offer courses to its teachers leading to a diploma to teach Italian (DITALIS Certificate) and to provide a certificate to non-Italian speakers who take an exam in Italian (CILS certificate). For eight years our helpers have been running radio news in seven languages through a Tuscany network. Considering the progress of activities at our association, we can say that: in the face of the ever changing social and cultural realities of our time, the Centre has shown that it forms a living part of society, knowing how to adapt dynamically and with wisdom to new needs, giving, even though with scarce economic resources, concrete answers to people based on listening to others and the search for qualitative human relationships. This has helped to give rise to good practices that in turn stimulate specific requests for commitment from politicians and public bodies who are called to offer a service for the common good.

FONTEM (CAMEROON):
A LABORATORY OF FRATERNITY *

INTRODUCTION

(BENNIE CALLEBAUT**)

Since 1966, an African people from Cameroon, the Bangwa, together with the Focolare Movement are living a very singular experience, defined as an experience of 'solidarity'.

The question that we ask ourselves is: what can we, as sociologists, deduce from this experience for our congress, the subject of which is fraternity? In sociological analyses there must be factors, a context and the dynamics of interactions. In these dynamics sociologists will pay attention to detect the ways in which these realities combine amongst themselves, difficulties that cause tension, possible, visible or less visible conflicts, and to identify the eventual methods of overcoming these conflicts.

Let us therefore present the factors, the salient moments of the "Fontem" story, the geographical place that has given a name to this paper, and try to formulate a sociological commentary. This is a task that I undertake initially as a member of the Focolare, personally involved in this experience, then also as an outside observer with a detached outlook, fully aware of my limitations having worked mainly on research of the sociology of religions.

I have to keep in my mind two elements: a sociologist knows that he practices a limited science, or rather a reduced one. Together with you, I would like to propose to cautiously examine this dossier. Why? One can quote in this regard one of the founder fathers of sociology, Max Weber, who reprimanded those who from a professorial chair hoped to found a new religion. "You will only form the hundredth sectarian group" he wrote[1]. He was convinced that an experience which succeeds in bringing people together, especially if these have religious roots, does not come from study or from some genial idea, proclaimed in some Congress.

Which are the factors and what is the context?

We are in 1966, in Cameroon, in open equatorial forest. This part of Africa, situated to the south of the Sahara, has just overcome a colonial period with all the wounds that it had caused. The principal factors are three: the first one is a tribe, the Bangwa, who live in a remote valley, which is very hard to reach. This tribe had been the victim of such a high infant mortality, that it was risking becoming extinct. At this point, the main authorities of the tribe asked for help from a Catholic Bishop of the region, Julius Peeters who was Dutch.

The second factor is therefore this bishop and the Catholic Church, missionary or otherwise, that in those years was living an intense period of renewal brought by the Vatican Council and was re-evaluating all the set rules that had for centuries moulded the very action of the Church.

The third factor is the Focolare Movement, a movement that promotes an evangelic approach to life, following Jesus' new commandment on reciprocal love. Max Weber, the abovementioned sociologist, when talking about religious leaders who propose strong messages, states that one can verify in them what he calls a "unitary vision" of life. They see everybody and everything from a sound experience. In Chiara Lubich something similar is found: she understands, she lives and interprets the entire Gospel from the point of view of mutual fraternal love! Such things were not usually heard of in the pre-conciliatory Church. The Church had however just approved the Focolare (1962) and this approval was accompanied by an important period of the spreading of the Focolare in the whole world.

THE EXPERIENCE OF FONTEM AND THE AFRICAN VISION O F LIFE
(MARTIN NKAFU NKEMNKIA[***])

Julius Nyerere, an African sociologist, in his fundamental treatise *Ujamaa[1]*, affirms that African socialism consists in an experience of sharing everything amongst everybody. This is why no African is a millionaire, and why there is no place for capitalists and for exploiters. The same Nyerere also sustains that having goods as a guarantee of power and prestige is antisocial. For socialism, all the members of society must have all that is necessary.

African socialism is based on the sharing of goods. In such a society the State plays an important role, since poverty is not concentrated to just one individual agent. This conception is founded on traditional society, characterized by communal living. In fact in African traditional society no one lacks food, no one is deprived of his dignity.

"This is exactly what African society managed to achieve. The rich as well as the poor were absolutely secure in the African society. Natural calamities brought famine, a famine that made everybody suffer, rich and poor. Nobody suffered hunger, neither from lack of food, nor from human dignity because of the fact that they had no personal richness; each and every one depended on the richness of the community of which he or she was a member. This is pure socialism. In our African traditional society we were individuals in the community. We took sincere interest in the community and the community provided for our needs. We did not feel the necessity or the desire to exploit our equals or to abuse them"[1] as Nyerere says.

If there still are African people who live in this way these are certainly the Bangwa people of Cameroon. The foundation and the ultimate object of African socialism is the extended family. The true African socialist does not look at one class of men as his brothers and at another class as his natural enemies. He does not establish an agreement with "brothers" for the extermination of "non-brothers" (so says the above mentioned African sociologist).

The analysis presented here describes the meeting of Chiara Lubich and the Focolare spirituality with the Bangwa people of Cameroon, and all that renders this story such a singular experience in the world to this very day. From it one can see that unity between races, cultures and people is possible even when everything around seems to induce to the contrary, to hatred and mistrust of one another.

The experience and the message of the citadel of Fontem – that with pleasure will be exposed during our Congress as a "laboratory of fraternal relationships" - were capable of "informing" a society of tens of thousands of persons, to be a model of healthy, exemplary development.

Today is a historical day, because, this experience has become part of the story of many people, not only of the Focolare Movement. The good result of this experience is indebted also to the profound religious sense of the Bangwa people, to its capability of being always available and open to others - to the extent of adopting the Focolare spirituality. From all these elements a laboratory of fraternity was generated, and this is Fontem.

THE INSPIRATION BECOMES DAILY LIFE:
THE SIXTIES, THE INSPIRING SPARK, THE COMMON INTEREST
(Bennie Callebaut)

Which were the dynamics that put together the three factors that we have just presented? Max Weber, amongst many others, explains that man's story moves principally according to the dynamics of interest of different factors. These are the driving forces that move things along the paths of social life. But Weber indicates also that, where these paths lead to can instead be determined by the great ideas of the present moment that give a sense of direction to everything.

The question that we can ask is: what were the interests at risk in this relationship?

The interests of the Bangwa were more than evident: to survive, to defeat disease. In order to survive a health system had to be established. But how could one attract competent personnel to come to such a place, far away from everything? The State of Cameroon in the nineteen sixties did not have the possibility to provide the Bangwa people with the basic necessities. The politics of the regional government of the time were clear: it expected missionaries (catholic or protestant) to take the burden to furnish the indispensable elements of a modernized civil society. Thus it expected the missions to build schools, day clinics or hospitals and parishes; only then was the State was ready to guarantee its presence.

At the beginning of the Sixties the relationship between the Church and the regional government was a very positive one. The government had administrative authority over the English-speaking part of Cameroon, where Fontem is situated. The Prime Minister of this region had stipulated an agreement with the Catholic bishop: the Church had to provide the personnel and to build hospitals, whereas the government had to find the money to pay the wages.

So bishop Peeters tried to find health personnel as the classic missionary personnel were not enough to see to all the needs of the population. He looked for persons who were ready to undertake pioneer work, with low wages, of course. Bishop Peeters got to know the Focolare when he met a lay Focolare doctor (Giandomenico Catarinella). Peeters was Dutch, and he very well knew that lay people were a new strength in the Church, a strength that had to be made use of and valued, in ways still to be discovered. He went to the Vatican Council and made it a point to meet Chiara Lubich (1963), and to ask her whether she could send competent persons, doctors and nurses, to start the Movement' s experience in Africa too.

What interest did the Focolare Movement have in this initial phase?

As I said before, Chiara's fundamental idea, her "unitary" vision – according to Max Weber's expression - is, that the only intelligent thing to do in life, the only thing which makes one happy, is "to live for universal fraternity", as she often says. Besides, the Focolare in the sixties was fast spreading: could Africa be left out? The interest, in this request, was therefore to verify, from the point of view of fraternity, if its way of thinking and of dealing with problems would also work in that part of Africa, south of the Sahara. The bishop's request seemed to suggest that the time had arrived. And so a group of Focolarini, men and women, went to work in two hospitals in the north-western region. However, after two years, the results were only slightly positive. They had made the first experiences in the African world, they had worked with skill and were respected, but they had achieved very little to be able to make contacts and make the Movement more known. The distance between the male and female communities and the bad state of the roads made it very difficult to travel, and this prevented a general testimony. Besides, the existent missionary structure was well rooted, and it appeared to leave little space for anything else - in other words for the Focolare - and after all nobody could well understand what we really were! The situation seemed to be at a deadlock.

What comment does this state of things bring to a sociologist's mind?

We have here a situation that in many aspects recalls the well-known writings of Max Weber on how traditional societies change. Changes come mostly through charismatic figures, who pass on a new message that totally overturns current convictions, and that consequently gives rise to a retinue who believe that such a person has a particular gift (of divine or even human origin). Among other things Weber emphasizes that it is due to the authority and the faith in these persons, that many persons change their way of thinking and begin to live differently. Eventually the novelty becomes a new tradition or translates itself into a new legal-rational system. Weber calls his way of thinking **typical-ideal,** thus indicating that it deals with an intellectual formation which cannot be found in reality as it is known, because in real life there is always a mixture of things: tradition, the legal-rational system and sometimes even characteristic changes under the action of a "charismatic" person.

The sociological approach imposes another element. "It is too easy – some sociologists would say – to try to find confirmation of a pleasing theory in current reality". It is necessary, as Popper proposes, to counterfeit the working supposition, to try to analyze the contrary hypothesis; or, control also the hypothesis called "hypothesis zero". In our case this hypothesis would be that the meeting between the Bangwa people and the Focolare were totally normal, absolutely rational and logical, entrenched in a tradition that provided for this kind of cooperation. Now with these questions in mind I invite you to listen to the talks that relate to the initial phase, that of the sixties.

We have therefore two alternatives: we can either arrive to the conclusion that all this was a normal evolution, or else we will see that this does not explain the real dynamics involved, and so we will be constrained to resort back to the other hypothesis, which shows that this is something which contains original elements and which shows a process of change under the influence of a charismatic person!

What was the spark that triggered these dynamics?

Bishop Peeters remained impressed by a member of the Focolare, a doctor, who worked as a lay missionary in the diocese of the north west of Cameroon, who was trying to understand how the Church could overcome a certain deadlock.

We, therefore have our three factors**,** and the context. Let us therefore look for the dynamics.

The story of the Focolare with Fontem actually started on the evening of 6th February 1966, when six men arrived there, sent by the bishop in agreement with Chiara Lubich. They were a doctor, Lucio Dal Soglio, a land surveyor, Franco Pellegrini; a mechanic Vittorio Brugnara and three youths from Bamenda, Dominic, Florian, and Benedict who had already shared the Focolare way of living in Shisong.

"A PARADOXICAL CHOICE"

AN INTERVIEW WITH LUCIO DAL SOGLIO

We interviewed Dr. Lucio dal Soglio, who is presently a very close collaborator of Chiara Lubich for the whole sub-Saharan continent, and who personally lived the initial twenty years of the Fontem adventure.

MARTIN NKAFU NKEMNKIA: *You had already been living for some years in the northwest region of Cameroon. How did the idea to go to Fontem arise?*

LUCIO DAL SOGLIO: Bishop Peeters presented us with an idea, saying: "There is a tribe that for some time has asked me to help them, but I cannot help because I do not have sufficient personnel to start this mission. They live in a very remote area, there are no roads, it is all so difficult … it is almost an impossible enterprise. So, if you consider going there I would suggest that all of you go, men and women Focolarini as well priests, if there are any. I suggest that you all go there and take over the responsibility of this mission. You can bring it to life, live your Ideal, and live an experience in Africa, without the interference of anyone, without any conditions, be they civil or religious". That was his point of view. He perceived that besides our own difficulties there were also other difficulties arising from the missionary Church of the northwest to be considered. We were in fact a special case as we did not belong to any evangelization scheme. Every missionary society had its own way of evangelization, its own guidelines and regulations which were justly respected. We had no such regulations. We said, "We must go to love one and all, to see Jesus in everyone and to try to live with Him in our midst". No-one else had any idea of this style of life. The bishop was aware that his missionaries did not understand what we wanted to do. He thought, though that the moment had come, and he put together two things: our will to do something together, and his necessity to answer to the urgent need for this new mission. He said: "I will talk to Chiara and ask her that you go there".

Chiara came to Douala (1965), where we joined her, and we remained together for a few days. We had already written to her about our going all together to this place, called Fontem. But it was not easy! It meant hours of discussion to give an affirmative answer to the bishop.

I remember that one day we went with her by car out of Douala, to see the forest, the villages around, which she did not know at all. Along the road, Chiara turned to me, I was driving a Volkswagen car, and she said to me: "What do you think of the bishop's proposal to go to Fontem?" My answer was: "Chiara, to tell you the truth, I do not think that we should go. When we were at Shisong and at Njinkom, we had a lot of difficulties to spread the Movement, to organize it in a simple way. Now, if we go to Fontem the difficulties there will be ten times as much". I actually answered her in this way.

Chiara was lost in her thoughts, and after a while she said: "I do not think so. I think that it is a good idea, so prepare to go to Fontem, and next year I will come to lay the first stone of the new hospital".

Chiara is the foundress of our Movement and our president, and so I did not say another word. But, still a little bit doubtful, when Chiara left, I went to the bishop wondering how he would consider the difficulty which I saw and I told him: "Your Excellency, do you know Fontem? How does one get to Fontem, if there are not even roads to get there? You want us to build a hospital, a college and a Church, but what shall we do if we do not even know how to find a sack of cement, because there isn't any, if we do not know from where to find food because there is not even a shop, if we do not know where to sleep? Tell us of a place where to find all these things!"

And his reply was: "No, no, no, you have to go there together. Because you have to live your experience, your Ideal in Africa! So you have to go there, all of you!" I gave in to this evidence, to Chiara's idea and to the bishop … I did not know who else to turn to. It was all this which determined our going to Fontem.

And so, without any further hesitation we went there, following Chiara's and the bishop's urge.

But as a condition, the Movement had asked the Bangwa people to give us a plot of land, big enough to build a citadel in time. This was therefore of an advantage to the Movement. Going far away from built up areas, we asked to have a territory where to build our buildings, in particular a citadel. We certainly went there to help the people, for love of truth and of justice, but I must say we also thought that it would pay back on the Movement.

THE FIRST VISIT OF CHIARA LUBICH TO FONTEM (1966)
VIDEO: *A MIRACLE IN THE FOREST*

Speaker: When Chiara arrived in Fontem for her first visit, all the people, with the Fon and the Chiefs at the head, got together to make a feast for her arrival. In the spacious area in front of the royal palace, official, moving speeches and a series of unending, beautiful dances were performed by the different villagers to give homage to Chiara. It was a special moment. Chiara really felt the presence of God, like the sun which illuminates and welcomes all those present in unity.

When speaking of this event Chiara said: *"(...) I had this intuition. It was as if God embraced us all together, us Focolarini who were present, together with all the tribe. There, in fact, for the first time I had the idea that we, also, were involved in inter-religious dialogue, namely with followers of other religions. And I felt there was God's blessing on this initiative, on the Bangwa people in the way they presented themselves and on us, together with them".*

There was an extraordinary understanding between Chiara and Fon Defang, who, in virtue of his profound union with God, had immediately perceived the divine intervention in the events of those days: God had answered the invocations for help of his people and had loved them through the Focolarini. And his wise look, which brought to our minds that of some patriarch of the Old Testament, saw far away things. "Chiara – he liked repeating – was sent in this land by God, to tell us something that He wants to explain to the world of today".

And Chiara said: *"With the Fon Defang, I had a marvellous relationship. I remember when he invited me to his royal palace and asked me this question: 'You are a woman, and so you are not worth anything, so how could you make this movement?' And so I answered him: "Precisely because I am a woman and am not worth anything, it is clear that here there is someone else's intervention. And since the Movement is very big and widespread, it could not be but God, it cannot be a human force'. He understood and then followed us for many, many years".*

"SMALL TOWNS OF THE FOCOLARE"
AN INTERVIEW WITH BRUNA TOMASI

We asked Bruna Tomasi – who is a direct collaborator of Chiara Lubich for the African continent and who is one of her very first companions, since the beginning of the Focolare in Trent -– to tell us more about an aspect of these first years: the dream of having a small town.

MARTIN NKAFU NKEMNKIA: Dr. Dal Soglio has talked about the idea you had that one day Fontem would have become a small town of the Focolare in Africa. Can you explain to us what the idea of building small towns reflecting the typical inspiration which form the Focolare life meant to the story of the Movement?

BRUNA TOMASI: During every summer of the nineteen fifties people of the Movement, of different social categories, used to meet in the valley of Primiero, (north of Italy), to get to know more about the new spirituality which Chiara Lubich and her first companions – I was one of them - had started to live. Together we spent, I would say, original holidays, living according to the way of life that was clearly emerging in those years. We spontaneously formed a temporary small town, the Mariapolis, with people of all ages, vocations, nations and languages. This experience was so

strong that it made us wish to build similar permanent small towns: the desire, as Chiara herself one day said, to give rise to a small town which was to have all the elements of a modern city, with houses, churches, schools, shops, workplaces and factories. Different persons living together, bound together by the commandment which is the basis of our spirituality: "Love one another as I have loved you".

A little before the arrival of the Focolare in Fontem, in 1964 this idea became a reality in Loppiano, near Florence, on a large plot of land. Today Loppiano has almost one thousand inhabitants coming from 70 nations from all continents, and it has become a meeting point for different cultures, an open worksite where one can experience universal fraternity. In all these years, 32 other small towns have been established in different nations in all continents. Each small town gives an answer to problems which have to do with its socio-cultural environment in a unique and particular way. Each has its own characteristics, like the importance given to ecumenism in Ottmaring, in Germany; dialogue and fraternity lived with Buddhists in Thailand; the attention given to social problems in Brazil; the openness towards youth in Argentina, etc.

And what about Fontem, one may ask? When Chiara went there for the first time in 1966 she laid the first stone for the building of a new hospital. I have been asked whether there was a particular significant moment in those first years which I still remember. I believe that the key to understand what and why this experience was successful can be found in the extraordinary relationship of trust that was established right from the very start between the Fon and Chiara. She consequently met Fon Defang again several times. He was the highest authority amongst the traditional heads of the Bangwa. As we read in the book on Fontem written by Michele Zanzucchi[1] the Fon made a long welcoming speech, a speech of thanksgiving of which I would like to recall two phrases: "Madam, when you sent a group of persons from your Movement in Africa, you did not in the least expect that these members of your mission would have ended up in this lost and forgotten part of Cameroon. (…) Just when we began feeling discouraged for having been abandoned for so long, like the Israelites in the desert, God finally sent us help from heaven, he sent us a saviour in your person, to look after our souls, by sending us priests for the future parish of the Bangwa, a school for our children and a hospital which we needed so much". The Fon added more beautiful words, that evoked this answer from Chiara: "I can sincerely say, neither in America nor in Europe, nor in Asia, where I have been, have I met such a welcome and such understanding of our Movement, and the love which you have mentioned (…) is exactly that which we would like to bring here, together with you. On this love, we would like to build all the work that is necessary for the people. (…) I would like to assure you in my name and that of the whole Movement that we will consider this part of the world as the first in our hearts, that to which we will dedicate ourselves with most love".

It is perhaps in the conversation held a few hours later that we find the full dimension of a totally personal and collective relationship which was to determine all that was to come afterwards. The Fon, at a certain point during the reception held after the feast, asked Chiara: "You, who are so close to God, explain to me why, in two months, 400 children of my people have died". Chiara was absorbed in thought for a moment and then answered: "This happened because fraternity is not lived yet among all people. You will soon see however, Mr. Fon, that with the arrival of the paediatric doctor, mortality will diminish".

This path which scientifically reflects on those elements that sociology discovers as being fundamental for a more fraternal cohabitation is perhaps the right way for this Congress.

CHIARA'S SECOND VISIT TO FONTEM (1969)
VIDEO: *A MIRACLE IN THE FOREST.*

Speaker: Three years after her first visit, Chiara Lubich returned to Fontem to inaugurate the first pavilion of the hospital, which was already functioning. At the official ceremony, beside Bishop Peteers, there were present this time Bishop Ndongma, and the Minister for Public Works of the west of Cameroon. Undoubtedly, this is the work for which the Bangwa show a lot of gratitude. Above all, they were profoundly touched by the fact that many children were saved, because for them life is very important. A gratitude that was expressed, this time, also with colourful dances performed in the presence of thousands of people coming, not only from the Bangwa village, but also from the Mundani tribes.

And Chiara, once again, was touched by the spiritual atmosphere that could be felt in the whole valley, and it made her feel a sort of an intuition, when she stopped to look from the top of a hill at the intense green of the basin of Fontem, dotted, here and there by few buildings.

Her comment was: *"Well, I think that, there in that valley, all forest, extremely green and blooming, a city shall be built, and this city will be a model, therefore a city on the mountain, so that it can be visited by many persons, who will not find material goods, but spiritual richness, that is Jesus' commandment put into practice by all inhabitants".*

To sustain this initiative which always appeared to her to be God' work, in the spring of '69 Chiara involved the youth of the Focolare Movement, the gen, in an international project to collect funds to contribute towards the realization of social works in Fontem.

At the end of that same year, Chiara decided to send one of her first companions, Marilen Holzauser, to Fontem. When she was about to leave for Africa, Chiara suggested that she was not to talk, but to live, for at least six months.

Chiara said: *"(...) I had clearly understood that it was useless to go there to talk, to make known our spirit, if our brother was hungry, thirsty and had no abode. Even the Scripture says: if your brother is hungry and you say to him 'go in peace'...no, you cannot say that, first you have to give him something to eat. So it was a piece of very useful advice. So Marilen remained silent, and so did all the the others, and they made their actions talk. Hence all our friends who lived there were convinced that they had gone there to love, and not for any particular interest. Consequently they were able to talk, of course, and could tell them what had made them go there. In the meantime reciprocal love and collaboration had grown, and everyone was able to see and understand this".*

'LEARNING TO TOLLERATE DIVERSITY'

AN INTERVIEW WITH LUCIO DAL SOGLIO

Martin Nkafu Nkekmnkia: When you arrived in Fontem, did everything go smoothly or were there any difficulties? And how did you overcome them?

Lucio Dal Soglio: There certainly were many difficulties: I can say we encountered them from the very first day. In this sense, difficulties accompanied us for many, many years.

I'm speaking of difficulties which have to do with culture. For example, legal problems on property ownership: we went on top of a hill and the *chief* who accompanied us showed us all the plain below. Pointing to all that was below, he said: "All that you see is yours". He was chief

Forchap and he resembled Moses on Mount Sinai! And we said: "Good, at least this is clear". Then we went to cut a small tree, and they told us: "No, you cannot cut that". And we said: "Why not, if all this is ours". Their reply was: "The ground is yours, not the trees!" And so we understood that perhaps there was some difficulty. In the culture of the Bangwa the ground can belong to somebody while the trees growing on it can belong to others. And the place was full of trees, and full of palms. If we did not cut down the palms we could not build anything.

Then there was the problem of the huts which were already there. I remember, one, which belonged to Alexander's father (a young man who was helping us) who lived in a hut three metres by three. And we had to build a college just there (one of the conditions, why we were there was to build a college). We asked him: "But are you going to move from here?" "Going where?" "We have to build a college here and this hut has to be demolished!" He answered: "This is my town. Where do you want me to go, if this is my town". Besides, underneath the house, his ancestors were buried, and so that was his sacred place! These were all the difficulties that arose, of a cultural nature, as you can easily imagine.

Once a person came to us and wanted to be operated on for a strangulated hernia. In those first days, we did not even have a knife to cut bread with, so you can just imagine us doing an operation! And where? In the open? But this was what was expected of us. People thought that our presence could solve everything, and this was unbelievable, the thought of it made us shudder… Subsequently we understood that it was a marvellous thing. We had not understood at once how much they believed in the possibility that we could help them. They helped us to carry stones, wood, sand – they carried the sand from the river: everything was done as a benevolent collaboration fto develop what was to be our citadel and that of the Bangwa.

In fact, the citadel of Fontem began to grow, not only as a citadel of the Movement, but as a citadel of the population of the region that was made up of the Bangwa and us.

This was absolutely marvellous, and we were not yet fully aware what was happening. It happened just like that. Even our houses were not fenced, we did not build a closed citadel. Because we had to build on spaces here and there, with all those trees and the cultural prohibition, we could not even build big houses, so we were obliged to construct to the right and to the left, and so live together with the people.

FRATERNITY AS A CODE OF BEHAVIOUR-1
(BENNIE CALLEBAUT)

What can one conclude from the first years of the Fontem story if looked at from a sociological point of view?

The "zero hypothesis" will surely present us with hints that may be useful while analysing the praiseworthy interests of the story, and it may be plausible. But I am inclined to think that the Fontem story explains itself better if one were to use the hypothesis of decisive influence of persons with charismatic traits, as Weber states. I am aware of the fact that lack of time will hinder me to give sufficient proof of why I have chosen this theory, but I will try to make up for this by making a comparison between this case and another historical fact.

Very often Fontem brings to my mind the birth of the European Community. Taking certain facts into consideration, I have discovered a common element. It is a known fact that, back in 1950 Jean Monnet, the person who contributed most to the birth of the European Union, was motivated by a very precise idea. He felt the urgent need that European history, marked by recurrent conflicts

between Germany and France and by two world wars, had to change its course and avoid a third conflict, which he and others were already foreseeing in 1950. When Monnet analysed the situation, he realised that the tension between these two countries was mainly due to steel and coal, two resources that were the driving power of their economic development. Monnet proposed that this difficulty should become the solution to settle their latent conflicts. So he thought: "Let us share equally the access to these resources, let us create a common interest that goes beyond national interests."**5** This idea was very well accepted by both German and French politicians. From the very beginning Monnet made it clear that he was presenting a political suggestion and not an economic one. Peace in Europe was at stake. France and Germany were to behave like brethren, and according to Monnet no other idea made sense. Monnet argued that the individual interests of each were always a menace to peace.

Now I will try to present the facts about Fontem.

Chiara Lubich understood the idea of universal brotherhood as presented in the Gospel, and in 1943 she decided that this idea should be the corner-stone of her life. Maybe two short phrases taken from the thousands of thoughts that enrich her understanding of universal brotherhood, can explain her interpretation: "Unity is built through diversity". And: "When we are together, each one is more beautiful".

The interest that dominates Chiara's life is universal brotherhood. Even in her approach towards African people, once and for all, her decision is: they are my brethren. Bruna Tomasi's report about the crucial moment of the meeting with Fon Defang of Fontem, shows that Chiara has discovered a man who did not hesitate to adhere to this idea, because he believed in it as well. On the other hand, neither Chiara nor Fon Defang thought that universal brotherhood might hinder the development of good and necessary partial interests or that it would abolish diversity.

Universal brotherhood does not destroy but it stimulates. It helps each one become better while it also helps to indicate the right direction towards which partial and particular interests should be oriented.

Just as Adenauer, Schumann and Monnet understood that the main interest was not bound to steel and coal, Fon Defang and Chiara understood that in Fontem there was more than just the sanitary development of the region. And they put their resources together to achieve this scope: universal brotherhood, now promoted as a common interest by both the Bangwa people and the Focolare.

We now come to the end of the 1960's, and we must say Chiara and the Focolare entered into contact with Africa through the privileged relationship with this tribe. This happened at a very dramatic moment in the life of the Bangwa people, but later on, one discovered that this was also a unique moment for the Focolare, because the Movement could measure the impact of its ideal in a completely different environment, very different from the Jewish-Christian reality. According to the anthropologist R. Brain, the Bangwa people of that time, represented Africa that was still very profoundly tied to its traditions, that had not yet suffered from its contact with the West, but this was a situation that could not have lasted for a long time.

Max Weber teaches that once a social change starts, the real challenge is to make it become a normality, to make it become everyday life. Can brotherhood become a culture; can it become a social behaviour, a code of living that answers the question: is this brotherly behaviour?

One understands that the clan society and African tribes are particularly privileged in this sense, but the challenge lies in making this brotherhood go beyond traditional structures, where traditions enforce a strong solidarity.

So one can understand how at the end of the sixties, Bangwa and Focolarini, Focolarini and Bangwa, ventured together in a process of **apprenticeship,** *where one had to be formed to live this universal brotherhood. In this process there* *were many new things, and it consisted of*

successes and difficulties. Just as for Adenauer and Schumann, in the case of the building of the European Union, one can also ask about Fontem: without this agreement and the fundamental understanding between the two moral authorities (Fon Defang and Chiara) would Fontem have become what it is today? It has been up to them to give the final word when difficulties arose. If they were not there, would the events of daily life have become the pang of normal difficulties that crop up in each historical project? Maybe, yes!

To-day it is difficult, or rather impossible, to think of another war between France and Germany, and it is as difficult to think of Fontem without this story. How could it be that from the 1970's till the 2000, a common biography - as sociologists would say – was built in Fontem, in such a way that no one would ever dream of reversing its course of events, even because this consolidated experience now attracts and astonishes many beyond Fontem itself?

THE STORY OF EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY (1968-69)
(ALBERTO FERRUCCI)

In 1969 Chiara launched an appeal to the Movement's youths to start "Operation-Africa". Through this she wanted to answer to the material needs of the place and establish a real experience of equality. The qualities that Chiara found in the Bangwa people when she first met them convinced her that there could be a real exchange of gifts, an authentic reciprocity. Africa had a lot to give to the western world. Not only the young, but also the adults of the Movement felt stimulated and acquired a dynamism that helped to establish a reciprocal relationship that was to the advantage of both parties. Alberto Ferrucci, a chemical engineer, relates briefly an experience that is in many ways an example of the commitment of the Focolare during these years.

At the age of twenty I became a student worker at the Refinery ERG of Genova (Italy), and ten years later I became head of the distillation department in the same refinery. During those first working years, I managed to establish a lot of friendly relationships with colleagues and workmen, with whom I passed long working hours in day and night shifts.

In 1967, when I heard about Fontem, I become personally involved.

So I started to relate the Fontem story to my friends at work. I talked to them about the necessity to think of the future of those children who were being saved by the doctors and the contribution needed to modernize the country. Electric energy had to be installed, at least for the hospital, and metal pipelines were needed so that the river water could be used by means of a hydroelectric plant that was already in place.

When I finished relating all this, I asked my friends at work if they were ready to give an hour's pay every month for nine months, so as to buy this equipment and set it up. I repeated this talk to 140 friends, and again I got a positive reply, so we decided to affix a letter, signed by all 140 of us, in the reception area of our factory, proposing this initiative to all the workers of the factory.

550 out of 900 workmen answered positively to our appeal. A "Committee for the Collaboration to the Development of the Bangwa People" was set up and this committee entered into a deal with a Genovese iron and steel factory to purchase the material needed to build the water pipeline. When the iron and steel factory got to know why the things were being bought, the material was given at a special price. With the funds collected from the workmen, it was possible to obtain two kilometres of steel piping for the first aqueduct in Fontem.

The steel sheets were shaped into water pipes and this work was done gratuitously by mechanics at the factory. A shipping agent was ready to transport the material to Douala without any payment. The Genovese dock workers stopped a strike they were staging so that the material for Fontem could be loaded without difficulty. The assembling work in Fontem was done with the help of different local workmen, and by two experts from ERG, who returning back to Genoa could testify that the workmen's contribution was indeed for a good cause.

An unforgettable feast concluded this first experience of cooperation between our factory and the African people. This was an experience that united us all as equals, regardless of hierarchical positions: workmen, directors, proprietors. We had all given our share towards human solidarity.

The news of this twinning project between workmen of an Italian oil industry and African people living to the south of the Sahara was reported by the Italian media. The following year Cameroon's minister for labour visited the ERG refinery to personally thank the workmen for all that had been done.

"BREAKING DEPENDENCE"
AN INTERVIEW WITH LUCIO DAL SOGLIO

Martin Mkafu Nkemnkia: For a number of years, only the Bangwa and the Focolarini lived this way of life together, but later the citadel (small town) of Fontem attracted many more Africans. How did this happen?

Lucio dal Soglio: *This type of life that we lived together with the Bangwa people increased because it was based on unity and fraternity. But I must say that difficulties were not lacking, because when you start going through tangible circumstances of everyday life, things do not always run smoothly. In fact, in 1972 a commission from the Bangwa people came to speak to me and Marilen Holzhauser, because at that time we were responsible of the Focolare Movement in that place. The Bangwa told us: "We would like to speak to you". "Yes of course, let us talk", was our reply. And they said: "You have now been here for six years, but we have not yet understood what you came here for, what is it that you want." And we said "How is that possible? After six years?" We had already started building the church they had asked for; we had built a hospital and a college. And yet they did not understand why we were there!*

So, we thought of organising a Mariapoli (a meeting of a few days that gives the spirituality of the Movement). We thought of inviting all the Bangwa who wished to attend so that we would be able to explain what made us come to live together with them and what we expected that they would do. We held the Mariapoli and we repeated it in 1973 and in 1974 and the ones who came from afar kept increasing. When the Mariapoli came to an end, the Bangwa people said: "No, this is not good for us!"

"Why, isn't it good?" "It is not good because you are doing it for them, for all these people who came". And we said: "We do it for everybody". And they said: "No, you are making use of us; through us you are showing that this is a good thing, so that you convince them to do something for you". This really surprised us!

It makes you understand that nothing is obvious where cultures meet. There are at least ten things to be solved each day. We stopped holding the Mariapoli. And we told them: "We are not going to do the Mariapoli anymore. We will live for you".

And we started to improve their existing roads, to build new ones to make it easier for them to go to their fields and to be able to take the coffee they cultivated to Dshang, to the market, etc. We levelled hilly ground, because as those who visited Fontem know, the territory is very hilly and the hills are steep. It was necessary to level the ground to build more adequate, more spacious and more hygienic houses. Well, all we did was just work for the Bangwa; all the rest did not interest us anymore.

However we had to be constantly animated by a spirit of adaptability and of acceptance of diversity .... One could not say: "We will do this, because this is good!" One could not tell whether a thing was just or unjust, whether it was good or not. We needed to consult the other party, who was different from us. In this way we learnt to know diversity, and to love diversity.

Notwithstanding all this, we were always the ones "who were holding the knife from the handle's end", as the saying goes, because we were the ones who had the means. We had a Caterpillar, which Piero Pasolini, another Focolareno, managed to get from Italy; we had a Landrover to go from one place to another; we had a truck to carry the material, and we had the money, the knowledge of how to carry out the different jobs, we knew how to repair the machines. The Bangwa had nothing of all this; they did not know how to repair machines because they did not have any. We taught at the college, and we were the ones to tell them what to learn, how to study, etc.

At a certain moment the Bangwa people felt that they depended completely on us. There was nothing wrong in this, everything was done with a good intent, but it was a situation of dependence that made them say: "Are you so indispensable for us? So go away".

And so we were faced with another surprise, one surprise after the other. And we asked ourselves what to do. It was a question of either going away or of changing. We had to change ourselves and not the Bangwa people. So all of us together, Focolarini, men, women and priests, we all agreed: "We need to be converted, we will stay but we must remember that we are all equal. We are here to live with the Bangwa, not to make big things. We are not here to save the life of the Bangwa; we will do so if the Bangwa ask this from us. We do not want to build a super hospital, we do not want to set up a university, we do not want to teach this or that programme; we just want to do what we agree to do together with them".

And this is what we started to do. And we were blessed with a true grace because we understood that we had to be equal and that this is where universal brotherhood really begins. What you say is as important as what I say. One is not more important, or more holy, or more beautiful than the other. This is not important; what counts is that we understand together, in a reasonable manner what should be done. This is the basic principle of equality and of brotherhood. And this is what we have done.

FONTEM SEEN THROUGH ITS STORY
THE OPINION OF SOME OF THE LEADERS OF THE BANGWA PEOPLE

We will now present the interventions of five Bangwa leaders, who very briefly want to show the impact that the common effort by the Bangwa and the Focolare left on the story of Fontem.

My witness of an event – Focolare Movement and the Bangwa people of Cameroon

Ndi Asa'ah Fontem Fontava[*]

Your Royal Highness, Mafua Ndem {Chiara Lubich}

Dear participants,

Distinguished guests, Ladies and gentlemen

First of all allow me to thank the organizers of this conference for giving me the opportunity to be here in this beautiful and historic city of Rome. I'm here to bear witness to the truth. The people of Fontem have asked me to convey to all of you here present their sincere message of goodwill and fraternity at the start of the New Year 2005.As the third person in rank to His Majesty the Fon of Fontem, traditional Ruler par excellence of the Fontem people, I feel proud to be called upon to talk about a theme so dear to the heart of all Fontem people.-

Fontem as a laboratory of relationships

The Fontem - Focolare relationship came about at the urging of my father, His majesty Fon Fontem Defang after a meeting he had had with the then Bishop of Buea, (Monseigneur Jules Peters.) The Focolare came to Fontem to rescue the people from an unprecedented infant mortality rate.

Since the creation of the Mary Health of Africa Hospital in Fontem, the death rate has dropped significantly. I stand here as one of the survivors of that tragic period, having lost two younger brothers and a sister.

In 1966 Chiara Lubich visited Fontem. During that visit she and my father the dearly departed Fon Fontem Defang, together made history. They laid the foundation stone not only for the Mary Health of Africa Hospital, but also for a relationship that would soon blossom like the morning flowers. As in all relationships there is bound to be initial apprehension and anxiety on both sides especially as the partners hail from different socio-cultural backgrounds.

The Fontem experiment was no exception. Fortunately that period did not last long enough to forestall the good intentions of the people of Fontem and the Focolare movement represented by "Madam Chiara Lubich" as she is fondly called in Fontem. It did not take long upon their arrival in Fontem for the Focolare people to discover that the Fontem people were a tightly-knit society where, if one member of the community had a problem, everyone else considered it as their problem. Moreover the Focolare found that the Fontem people were not only hospitable, they were also a peace-loving people with an amazing sense of mediation.

These characteristics seemed to go down well with the Focolare movement whose mission statement calls for love and peace amongst people of all races on the face of the earth in keeping with their motto- that "ALL MAY BE ONE".

In turn the message of the Focolare movement resonated well with the Fontem people, who welcomed the Focolare movement with open hearts. The Hospital saw the light of day. Then a secondary school, Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College Fontem was inaugurated. Fontem became a

beacon of hope as we saw one Focolare member after the other arrive. Their backgrounds were as varied as their fields of specialty. For example, amongst them were Italians, French, English, Philippinos, Kenyans, Zairians, Nigerians, and later on Cameroonians, most of whom came from Fontem. Many were medical doctors and nurses, but there also were engineers, lecturers, priests, carpenters, and electricians, to name but a few.

The stage had thus been set for what the Archbishop of Bamenda, Paul Verdzekov would later describe as a veritable revolution unfolding in Fontem. A bond of fraternal friendship between the Fontem people and the Focolare movement had taken hold in Fontem. Presently there is a strong emotional relationship between the people of Fontem and the Focolare movement. To the Fontem people, the Focolare movement represents everything to every one of them.

The leader of the movement, Chiara Lubich, is the personification of all that my people love and admire. Chiara Lubich has brought good health, education, fraternal love and a sense of well-being to the Fontem people. Perhaps more importantly, the miracle city, which she promised the Fontem people, has become a reality as Fontem has graduated from a purely farming community to a modern city- thanks in no small measure to the Focolare movement under the distinguished leadership of Chiara Lubich. A little miracle occurred during Chiara Lubich's last visit to Fontem for she was conferred the highest title of 'MAFUA NDEM" {QUEEN OF GOD} by His majesty the Fon of Fontem Njifua. This can only lead me to conclude that Chiara and the Fontem people have the same goal –the well being of humankind, so that all may be one.

The interaction between the Fontem people and the Focolare movement has proved that social–cultural diversities, far from separating peoples, can often bring them together if these diversities are well exploited and tolerated. The level of social integration between the Fontem people and the members of the Focolare movement has been quite amazing. In the area of culture, for example, let me say that not a single cultural ceremony takes place without the organizers extending an invitation to the members of the Focolare movement. They are frequently seen at such festivities dressed in very beautiful traditional Fontem clothes.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, if Fontem is today being christened "A LABORATORY OF FRIENDLY RELATIONSHIPS" this is because of the determination of the Fontem people and the Focolare movement to forge that relationship ahead. I must say, at the risk of being disproved, that both parties have done their part in order to come to where they are today.

The result is that today Fontem has become a point of reference within the Focolare family – indeed a second home to many. I have been told that there is a message circulating among many young members of the Focolare movement, which states "SEE FONTEM AND THEN DIE". Certainly Fontem may not be Paris, London, New York, or ROME yet it has what most big cities lack: the right setting for anyone seeking fraternal love, peace of mind and religious devotion. I encourage all of you here to visit Fontem. You would not regret doing so for you will be meeting some of the most generous people on the African continent. And there we are all one thanks to the uncompromising love brought about by mama Mafua Ndem {Chiara Lubich}.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Fontem people are very proud to note the presence in the Focolare family here in Rome of their very own son MBE NKEMNKIA, prof. MARTIN NKAFU who has been a wonderful link and inspiration between Loppiano and the people of Fontem. For the younger generation wishing to join the Focolare movement he is a success story.

Last but not least let me pay glowing tribute to both my parents, His Majesty Fon Fontem Defang and his beloved wife {my mother} Madam Lekeleface Susan Fontem for their dedication to the development of the Focolare movement, as well as Fon Fontem Defang's first wife, the dearly departed Mama Ngwiikonga. You only have to see the first publication of the Focolare movement magazine – "The Living City" where the three of them appear on the front cover to get an idea of what I mean. I should have been here today with my best friend and loving wife Fontava Caroline to take part in this occasion but she just gave birth to a beautiful baby boy. With that joy in her heart she asked me to extend her full love to all of you here today to show our full support for the Focolare movement too.

To conclude, let me say on behalf of the people of Fontem, whom I represent that, if there is anything I have brought with me in my briefcase, it is the pledge that we are going to do whatever it takes to keep the flame of the relationship between the people of Fontem and the Focolare movement burning for generations to come.

Prayers and an invocation to the Ancestors

Now we will recite a traditional prayer to invoke the blessings of God and our ancestors and call on some of our dearly departed ones in Fontem and some of the members of the Focolare Movement's family.

Thank you all for listening to me.

Please stand up and join me.

God the Creator of the Sky and the earth, Our ancestors, Fontem Asonganyi and Fontem Defang, Mafua Nkeng and all the Nweh and Lebialem ancestors, Marilen, Piero Passolini, Pa Nika, Maria Mai, Ita, Mani Ekobena, Vittoria and all the ancestors of the Focolare Movement,

We call upon you all to assist us in this gathering and help us strengthen our friendship and love for one another, protect us from bad thoughts and deeds and help us always to be at the service of one another for a better society and a better world.

Please raise your hands to invoke blessings of our ancestors and of God.

Linking Generations and Building Strong Families: The Life Span of Lebialem Women from 1960 to date

Paulina Khumbah[*]

'A young man's gait is rapid, but he does not know the way; an old man's gait is slow but he knows the way' (Apt 1997, p. 7). This statement is a clear indication of the symbiotic relationship between the generations. In the following discussion I will talk about some of the experiences and life course transitions of the women of Lebialem from 1960 to the present. Who are the women of

Lebialem? I am one of them. Lebialem Division is an administrative region in South West Province, Cameroon, West Africa.

Definition of family

The family is the oldest and most fundamental of all social institutions (Sullivan 2001). It is universal and involves both biological and social ties. The family is a very important social group that carries out specific functions. Historically, the family has been the centre of many important activities. In most societies children and adults expected and usually received emotional nurturing and support from members of the family. The institution of the family regulated sexual activity and reproduction. It is the economic centre of society, where all the members work together to earn a living and support one another financially. The role of the family changes constantly as the economies around the world shift from local industries based on agriculture to massive global industrial bureaucratic entities. Formal schooling and the possibility of family members working independently outside the home has changed the way families meet their material needs. As such what form the families of the 21st Century are taking and what functions they perform continue to vary widely among various societies (Gelles and Levine 1999).

Some sociologists see the family as an established social system that lasts and changes over time. They consider the family as a resilient institution that has remained stable even in the face of constant social changes. In studying families as a social institution we recognize that families are organized in socially different ways. Moreover, the family is closely intertwined with other social institutions such as the economy, law, religion, education, health care, government, science and technology (Anderson and Taylor 2004, Kornblum 2005). We cannot define or study the institution of the family in isolation. The criteria of family ties vary enormously at different times and according to various cultures.

As the nature of family life, work, social change, sexual preferences, use of assisted reproduction technologies, divorce and remarriage, global labour market dynamics continue to change and fluctuate around the world, the issue of what a family represents continues to be widely debated (Kendall 2004). The social functions of the family include ensuring communication among its members. This is done through language and specialized networks such as the media. The family also ensures the production and distribution of goods and services. Another major role the family plays is the protection and defense of its members. The family is responsible for replacing its members socially and biologically. The family also controls its members to ensure that other social institutions continue to function and conflict is reduced (Kornblum 2005). Thus, one may conclude that today's families face exceptional challenges. For the purpose of this discussion we have to broaden the scope of what we consider as the family to be more than a social and spiritual kinship. At the very least I would define family as the people that we meet and interact with on our life's journey. We form different relationships at different times. Therefore, the family cannot be limited to blood relations. For believers, it is a spiritual bond. In a way we are the family of God's children.

The Multiple Roles of Women

In most of sub-Sahara Africa, men and women live very different lives. Globally, the social conditions of women and the very concept of family are rapidly changing (Stuckelberger 1997). When I was growing up in Lebialem in the 1950s and 1960s, a typical day for most women started very early in the morning preparing meals or working in the fields. Depending on the day of the week, women would go off to the local market where they bought and sold consumer goods. There were no paved roads or means of transport so they would walk long distances to carry out these activities. Like most women in sub-Sahara Africa, the women of Lebialem have always played a

very important role in the production, processing, marketing and storage of food and cash crops (World Bank 1990). The families in Lebialem, like most families in sub-Saharan Africa, depend on women for the household production of consumer goods (Adepoju and Oppong 1994 and Boserup 1970).

In the 1960s and 70s fewer girls went to elementary school. The numbers and rates of female schooling have since increased and improved through high school and even at university level. When I was an adolescent many girls started school but the drop out rate was high as they approached puberty. Cultural practices included marrying girls off shortly before or right at puberty. Polygamy was widely practiced. Even when girls had the opportunity to finish elementary school there were always suitors waiting anxiously. When we were teenagers in secondary school we had these conversations among ourselves about which girl was betrothed to which young man. At the time our culture evaluated a girl's worth on her reproductive capabilities. Very young girls and women served the family and community in various ways.

Stages in Life

As we go through life, changes, various events and family relationships are processes that challenge every race, class, social structure and geographic location (Haraven 1982). The changes that we experience are not isolated and in general are not unique individual human experiences. History, events, social change and time are some of the crucial factors that determine what happens to all of us during our life span. Historical conditions change. Some of the changes are individual and some are collective. Those who study these changes argue that we must be concerned with understanding what happens to people at various stages throughout an entire life span. The occurrence of significant events such as being born into a particular biological family, growing up, marriage, bearing children, working and growing old become important to the social structures, and historical changes affecting them (Haraven 1982). This is true for all human beings.

Historical Transitions

By the late 60s few parents in Lebialem sent their daughters to school. There were both parochial and public schools. Our administrative area had only elementary schools. Thus, after completing elementary school, girls who had the opportunity to further their studies had to go far away from home to seek higher education. Most of the girls married very early and started bearing children. A few fortunate ones were able to find paid employment. Personally, my first job was a summer position with the rural council in 1967. I went to work full time for the Ministry of Territorial Administration as a translator in Manyu Prefecture in January 1973. Normally people migrated from rural to urban areas to seek higher education, employment or to join a spouse. Some young women left the country to get married to spouses who lived in other countries.

By the late 70s single women started venturing overseas to further their education. Some went on scholarships, others ventured on their own. I left on my own in 1979 because of the encouragement of a male friend who felt that such a venture would enhance my life and that of my whole family. I was not only the eldest of eight children, I was also a single mother of a special needs child. I sought admission to several schools in the USA. The admission to the University of Wyoming in Laramie came first. A cousin I grew up with was a medical student at the same university and was able to get me admission into an undergraduate programme fairly easily. In August 1979 I left my job and set out for the USA. This was done more with the spirit of adventure, not really knowing what to expect. At the back of my mind I knew my goal at the time was to attain some degree and go back home to get a better-paid job. People I knew who had studied abroad had better chances and a better quality of life. So I bid farewell to my loved ones and headed for the cold Rocky Mountains. I arrived in Laramie on August 22, 1979. My cousin helped me to enroll and for the first time I registered as a foreign student. I settled down to this new phase of being a

foreign student. I kept in close touch with other peers around the world and with my work colleagues back in Cameroon.

The Catholic Church: Faith, Culture and Centrality

The Catholic Church has played a major role in the development of Lebialem. Fontem was until recently a simple parish in the Diocese of Buea. In the 1960s the Bishop was the late Monseigneur Julius Peters. In the late 1950s and 1960s there were several Catholic parochial elementary schools in addition to the public schools in the area. The priests travelled throughout the region and would come around as frequently as their duties in other parts of the diocese permitted. These were mainly Mill Hill missionaries and were usually always respectable white men of Dutch, Scottish and English decent. One of the priests who came in the 1960s was commissioned by the hierarchy of the church to dig the road through the hills linking Fontem to Dschang so that vehicles could come through. We used to call him "Father John of the road". He got up early in the morning, celebrated mass, ate breakfast and got on the caterpillar and worked till dusk everyday except Sunday.

Even though Catholic doctrine clashed with some of the local traditional practices, most people in Lebialem went to church faithfully. The local people adapted the religion to their culture and life style. One of those adaptations is exemplified in the fact that in a polygamous marriage the first wife could be baptized in Church and was allowed to receive Holy Communion but the husband and other wives could not. My maternal grand-mother was one of those first wives. My own parents were devout Catholics. My father married only my mother and they actually had a Catholic wedding. We were baptized as children and practiced the faith right alongside our parents.

The Focolare Movement: Health Care, Education and Infrastructure

In the spring of 1966, the focolare movement in collaboration with the Catholic Diocese decided to open a coed secondary school in Fontem. The new institution would   bridge the gap between the all girls secondary school of Okoyong and the all boys secondary school of Sasse. The Principal in Sasse came up to Fontem that rainy season in July and August to interview potential candidates. I was one of them. They were to try many new strategies. The school would be coed unlike most other schools of that nature. The students would also be day students. The establishment took over a main building with four rooms from the local catholic school. The first batch of forty-two students, thirty-boys and four girls, had to find accommodation anywhere in the town. The faculty was made up of a mixture of local teachers, members of the focolare movement and a Mill Hill priest who became the first principal. The Secondary School was named Seat of Wisdom. I am a pioneer and a proud graduate of Seat of Wisdom. Two of my five sisters graduated from there as did my daughter and several nieces and nephews. Today, Seat of Wisdom is one of the best schools of its category in Cameroon. The high quality of education, discipline and graduation rates for both boys and girls has set records nationwide. The demand to get students into the school is so high that there are long waiting lists every year.

Simultaneously the focolare started a health clinic. Over the years the health clinic has been expanded to become a fully-fledged hospital named Mary Health of Africa. Years later the government set up some primary care units offering basic health care services to the population. However, the health care services that Mary Health of Africa has offered to the people of the region for nearly forty years is unequalled in quality, quantity and intensity. People receive the care they need irrespective of their ability to pay the highly subsidized rates. I know personally that the availability of such high quality health care has been a major factor in reducing both maternal and infant mortality as well as illnesses. Patients travel very long distances to seek care. The focolare has set up other satellite health centers in surrounding areas.

The focolare movement loved the people of Lebialem so much that they made Fontem their headquarters in Africa. This has propelled the infrastructural development of the whole region

forward. It is absolutely amazing what a single organization such as the focolare has achieved. This model is exemplary and unsurpassed. The results are unbeatable.

Migration and the Global Labour Market

The migration and mobility of people across local, regional, national and international boundaries is not a new phenomenon. Since the beginning of human history, groups of people have been wandering the earth following food supplies, exploring, conquering and building civilizations (Defay 2002). The concept and study of international migration and mobility patterns of persons in various parts of the world is limited in scope to the establishment of the modern nation-state and to populations in the post-industrial age. One of the central questions that we ask when discussing migration at any level is "why do people move?" What are the conditions in the country of origin that propel people to want to relocate? What are the circumstances in the receiving region that make it attractive to prospective immigrants? Economists talk about the push/pull factors. In other words what factors combine to provide an element of necessity that "pushes" individual emigrants away from their homes and what factors "pull" them to the receiving environment (Defay 2002). Marxist political theorists use the structural-historical approach and a macro level focus to look at larger underlying structures that link sending and receiving regions in several ways. This perspective contrasts attitudes about the effects of social and economic change as well as transformations occurring in the global labour market over a given time span. Others who identify reasons that encourage or discourage migration question in particular whether international migration   is determined by a combination of individual decisions or by compelling structural changes in society that supercede individual actions (Smith 1996, Defay 2002).

The issue here is that each individual emigrant has different circumstances, motivations, hopes and dreams for wanting to uproot themselves to go to a far away land. The individual approach treats each migrant as a rational person who makes an optimum combination of choices and seeks to obtain the best results in the long run. This human capital approach widens one's view to discuss migration as a group or family decision. The family as a unit decides to make a series of investments in the migrating member(s) with a view to reaping long term benefits (Stalker 2003).

Another factor that we must consider is how economic globalization is shaking many people and making them falter. Globalization and economic development continue to pose challenges that compel people to displace themselves from their native countries to locations where they can enhance their careers, their quality of life and that of their families. Some of us left our countries to go overseas and seek an education then go back home to live the "good life". The educational system in Cameroon has never been able to satisfy the needs of all those who are able and willing to pursue higher education. During the colonial period, many people were given scholarships to go abroad, get a formal education and return to better paying civil service employment. I knew a lot of people who even went to neighbouring African countries, particularly Nigeria, Ghana and Sierra Leone to attain a higher level of education. The majority won scholarships and financial sponsorship from some entity. Personally, I had a paternal uncle who went to the American University in Cairo in the early 60s and pursued a degree in chemistry. When I was ready to seek higher education I was considering going to Nigeria but no further than Sierra Leone or Ghana. I had tried in vain for over eight years to gain admission into the University of Yaounde or a similar professional school like the Nursing School in Bamenda, the Agriculture School in Bamboli or the Public School of Administration and Law. I also felt that my job as a translator at the Manyu Prefecture in Mamfe had very few chances for advancement or promotion. I was even refused an interdepartmental transfer to the Provincial Office of the Governor in Buea or to Ministry in Yaounde. I was told that there was no one to replace me in Mamfe and my services were crucial because Mamfe is situated on the international border with Nigeria. I made the decision to leave my job and my whole family supported me. My parents gave me their blessings and I left my five year old daughter in their care.

Once I arrived in the USA, I maintained close contact with my friends and family in Cameroon and around the world. I also kept abreast with my civil service colleagues. For the first few years, my main goal was to work hard and attain a degree in Education then return to Cameroon. My father had always said that teaching was a good profession for a woman because it was very compatible with being a wife and mother.

I had been brought up in a very international setting so I was able to make new friends easily with Americans and non-Cameroonians. In my third year a faculty member at the University of Wyoming helped me raise money to bring my daughter from Cameroon. She arrived in Laramie in September 1982. She underwent intensive treatment for her medical condition first at Shriners Hospital in Salt Lake City and then at Laramie. I achieved a B.A. in Education in 1982. I knew that this would not get me very far anywhere in the world. My academic counsellor, Dr. Robert Point, advised me to specialise. I enrolled in the post-graduate programme in Sociology at the same univesity. I had taken a Sociology course in my senior year and was very enthusiastic at the idea of becoming a Sociologist. In this way I could travel the world and work with women on family planning, maternal health care, childcare and economic empowerment issues. These are some of the things I had watched my mother do as a little girl. She still does them today. During my years as a translator for the Cameroon Ministry of Territorial Administration I had seen some of those needs first hand. From 1975 to 1979 I served as section secretary for the women's wing of the only national political party and worked extensively on women's issues at the local, provincial and national level. Therefore, I was convinced that a masters' degree in Sociology would equip me with the knowledge to work on global issues that will enhance the lives of women, children and the elderly around the world. As a single parent of a special needs child I myself continue to experience some of these challenges at first hand.

Social Change and Patterns of Intergenerational Relationships

Moore (1979) defines social change as the meaningful and decisive alterations in the social structure. These alterations are characteristic of a system of organized life. Likewise, social change is the process by which the underlying structure of society becomes more complex. Social institutions, values, norms, class systems, and social relationships are altered at both the macro and micro levels (Giddens 1991, pp. 778-779). Social change occurs because of the innovations of populations and efforts to use new ideas and behaviours to improve on their material and physical well-being as well as to enhance their access to valued resources (Handwerker 1989, p. 8). Social change is the shift in the characteristics of a culture and society. It is a vital part of social life. It is a process through which patterns of social behaviour, social relationships, social institutions, and class systems are altered over time. Social change also refers to the variations in the ecological order of populations and communities, in patterns of roles and social interaction as well as in the structure and functioning of institutions and the cultures of societies (Henslin 2006, Kornblum 2005, Thompson and Hickey 2005). It is also the result of forces that were set in motion thousands of years ago, beginning with the domestication of plants and animals (Henslin 2006). The first social revolution made it possible for hunting and gathering societies to be transformed into horticultural and pastoral societies. The second social revolution was brought about by the plough from which agricultural societies emerged. The third phase was the industrial revolution that was prompted by the invention of the steam engine. The fourth and current social revolution has been stimulated by the invention of the microchip and other technological innovations, population growth, mobility, modernization and massive rates of migration (Henslin 2006). These processes in human history have been far reaching and universal in their consequences (Henslin 2006 and Kornblum 2005).

When I look back on the last forty years or so, I find that social change has had a great impact on the patterns of intergenerational relationships. I have recollections of many of the daily activities of my childhood and adolescence. I spent a great deal of time with my cousins, aunts and grandmother cooking, going to the fields or to the local market. We went to church together on

numerous occasions. I have vivid memories of wonderful conversations and confidential counselling sessions with the older family members. I remember the visits of my maternal great grandmother to our house. She always brought us the first harvests of ground nuts. We were thrilled by her visits because she used to bring carefully chosen packages for each one of us. Towards the end of her life she was brought over to my maternal grandmother's house (one of her three children) and all four generations of family members took care of her. She passed away very peacefully with many loved ones present. Her life was passionately celebrated by the whole community. I participated in the celebration. This is an illustration of what the family was like when I was a child. In those days family, kinfolk and relatives lived in the same geographic area.

Today the picture is so different. Very few of us live within the same geographic area or close to our parents and the older people in the families and communities of origin. We have migrated from our places of birth to different parts of the world to get marketable skills, work and have reasonable careers. This trend has greatly altered relationships between the generations. We are also marrying and having children who have limited physical access to the biological grandparents and other relatives.

The people in my age cohort have had to be creative in keeping contact with and having some level of long distance relationship with relatives-. We continue to do this by writing letters, making phone calls, sending e-mails and traveling on an international scale. Sometimes we travel to our native countries and at other times our relatives come to visit us. The situation is more complicated than meets the eye. When we go home, most of us can only afford to stay for a short while. When relatives come to visit, some find it boring and too confining. My own mother told me that she felt like a prisoner in my house because I locked the door every day and was gone for hours and she could not go anywhere. The same sentiment has been echoed by other relatives. When some of the relatives arrive they experience a culture shock. This creates its own set of head aches.

One of the most critical aspects of intergenerational relationships is the funding of travel for various family events such as funerals and anniversary celebrations of the dearly departed. Somehow there is always a demand for funds without much regard for the availability of such funds. Child bearing for parents in Cameroon and many developing nations constitutes an investment, mostly because mothers in particular can maximize their income and social status through their children (Khumbah 1997). However, in the face of globalization and social change in work patterns, there are economic issues that we must address when it comes to providing financial support for the older people in the family while at the same time caring for our children and planning for our eventual retirement.

What the Future Holds

As a world community we have not actually started addressing the issues and challenges posed by increasing rates of migration of young people from their home towns to far-off lands, and the effects of such movements on the psychological well-being of different generations of family members. People are living longer. Families are dispersed geographically. New technologies are useful in solving some of the problems we encounter as we communicate and handle daily family matters across continents and time zones. However, there is an urgent need for some serious research and brainstorming on how to deal with the financial and emotional burdens that weigh down the working generation as they try to carry out their multiple roles. It is true that there is a degree of filial love and responsibility towards parents and older members of the family but where do we draw the line between the needs and desires of both the older and younger generations. If the choice is between buying a bicycle for a ten year old son for his birthday and sending money home for a relative to go to a funeral what takes precedence? In the light of current global labour market possibilities what are the chances of family members 30 years old and younger finding work in the homeland and actually earning a living? There is a trend for schooling in several areas yet, in spite of this, one is unable to find gainful employment in the homeland! How many funds have been sunk

into fruitless ventures of younger family members who left their homeland trying to venture to the Far East, Eastern Europe and Russia only to meet obstacles and be deported or end up in a nightmarish judicial system.

At present we have no appropriate system in place for resolving intergenerational conflicts without investing money, time and other resources into fruitless ventures into trips home, and hours of fruitless telephone conversations. If we take into consideration the challenges on a family by family or case by case basis the premise is clear: there is a great deal of work to be done to create support networks for all three generations of family members that were discussed earlier. I for one can carry out my daily activities in Dallas without worry or anxiety about my mother who is in her 70s because I know that she is surrounded by young women from the local church, by all the extended family members including her younger siblings and their families, as well as all the young school children who just visit her because she has always had a very open door policy. It is not unusual to find fifteen people in her house at dinner time. I am tranquil because I know she will never be alone. The situation is not the same for other families.

Health Impact Assessment of the Focolare Mission in Bangwa Cameroon: 40 years on public health"

Asa'ah Nkohkwo[*]

HRH Mafua Ndem (Chiara Lubich),

Organisers, participants, dear fellow Lebialemers here present,

Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Friends:

Greetings again!

Further to my comments at your 60th Anniversary occasion in London[1], last June, perhaps, as a more poignant observation to start this address, I should invite you to consider the following extract. Chief Fuankeng Ajuah Alemanji of Bangwa, in his recent work, anthologizes a couple of names Bangwa people gave to their children. While they show the seeds of the Word of God in Bangwa culture, they also reflect the frustrations of the Bangwa people, with rudimentary health facilities overwhelmed by high child mortality, at the time the Focolare Movement arrived in 1966:

Ageh'ndia = the one who stuck with the family (while others died)

Ale'feh = the cry of a baby here?

Ambo'ndem= God's wishes (shall prevail)

Ndem'azeh= God knows (what the outcome will be).

From this background, perhaps I should next invite you to consider the Focolare Movement in Bangwa, Cameroon, as a Catholic/divine policy statement. Then employing the WHO Gothenburg Consensus of 1999, let us consider how this divine policy may have influenced the key determinants of health among the Bangwa people. This is precisely the exercise that the Bangwa Focus Group undertook last October.

Anecdotal accounts, focus group discussion reports, rudimentary field statistics and other tools have been employed to gauge the public health impact of a divine miracle that came in time to save a people from virtual extinction. While looking back with measured gratitude, let me then urge you, Focolarini, to join the Bangwa people to consolidate the amazing achievements, with the following perspectives of the future:

-         Can the Mary Health of Africa Hospital, in Fontem, with its satellite centre in Fonjumetaw together be upgraded into a formal centre of training for Primary Healthcare and Basic Health Technology personnel?

-         Can a more formal partnership be forged with the increasingly meaningful Lebialem Diaspora, so as to really empower the Bangwa people in a sustainable way?

Managing diversity within the gospel context of **one united world**, the Focolare have produced a miraculous dividend on improving the public health of the Bangwa people from near extinction to admirable national levels within a couple of decades. The challenge now rests on consolidating, sustaining and indeed disseminating the gains of this oasis of excellence in healthcare and education within and beyond Bangwaland, investing through education and training.

The Focolare Movement Bangwa 1966-2004: A Public Health Impact Assessment

(By the Bangwa Focus Group - see below)

THE BANGWA PEOPLE OF CAMEROON

Bangwa, (literally, people who speak the *nweh* language mix), actually defines an ethnic entity of nine ancient African royal settlements, (from pre-19th Century), known today as Fondoms (ruled by Fons), prominent among which is Lebang (formally known as Fontem), under the legendary and influential Fontem dynasty. The Bangwa, indeed Lebang people, make up the vast majority of some 300,000 people, constituting the wider administrative region of Lebialem Division in Cameroon.

AN ENCLAVE ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION?

Thanks to persistent lobbying by Fon Defang Fontem, the Catholic Focolare Movement from Europe - Rome eventually arrived Bangwa on the evening of the 6th of February 1966.

Legend has it that disease prevailed in the region – measles, smallpox and chickenpox, sleeping sickness, malaria, filariasis. The rudimentary healthcare facilities were completely overwhelmed at the time. A basic Government Dispensary, under the legendary Nurse Martin Atemajong, was housed at the Azi Palace of Fontem, administering vaccines for the poxes and other drugs, brought in by head load some 100km away from Mamfe. The nearest hospital was either in Dschang in French speaking Cameroon, or in Mbetta, both some 40km away on foot from Azi. Hardly one of five children reached their fifth birthday. Mortality rate was also very high for adults.

Thus, the raison d'etre for a high birth rate - to make up for those to die! There was no awareness of sleeping sickness. Due to the high prevalence of malaria, anaemia was common in both children and adults. Traditional native medicine as an alternative was ineffective against malaria. Coupled with a diet poor in proteins and minerals, the blood haemoglobin levels were very slow to recover following bouts of anaemia.

Pregnancy complications were often fatal for both baby and mother-to-be. For example, pregnant women who suffered premature separation of the placenta bled to death with no possibility of caesarean section. Foetuses with cord complications and those in transverse position often died, with occasional successes on the delivery of transverse babies by traditional doctors. Such obstetric complications were often attributed to witchcraft and the victims had a special burial rite performed on them.

Due to illiteracy, there was poor public awareness of hygiene and sanitation. There were very few primary schools. The young pupils had little ability to transform their environment into what they learnt in school. The local bamboo building material was infested by blood-sucking bed bugs. Poverty level was such that most households could hardly afford soap for washing and bathing.

The death rate varied with the vegetation of the hamlet. Generally, hot moist areas with lots of palm trees were disease prone pockets. This was probably due to the presence of tse-tse flies, mosquitoes and loa-loa worms in hotter zones and along river courses. Generally, quarters such as Atchang, Atohangeh, Takweh, Nnyuy, Nwechen, Esoah and Menji were areas of very high mortality. The same applies to Njohgwi and Essoh-Atta. Moreover, the communicable diseases such as measles, chickenpox and sleeping sickness were certainly affecting nearby areas. Therefore people in the upper areas were known to be reluctant to marry off their daughters to men settled in those lower areas.

Few adults reached old age in these areas, (although deaths were generally wrongly attributed to witchcraft). Old age was therefore geographically linked. It is not possible to get statistics for these deaths. However, anecdotal accounts from bereaved mothers estimated the death rate to be 80%.

BANGWA SINCE THE ARRIVAL OF THE FOCOLARE

The Mary Health of Africa Hospital (MHA) was set up by the Focolare Movement. From various options presented by the late Fon Defang Fontem, the present site, in Mveh, was chosen by specialists for its nearness to the River Begeh, where sand and water could be quarried for construction work and hydroelectricity installed for an intended "urban" village. Thus forty acres of land was secured by the Fon, from Chief Forchap, and offered free, for the freehold of the Focolare Movement to help his suffering people, the object of his earlier lobby of Bishop Jules Peeters of Buea.

The foundation stone was laid by Chiara Lubich, the Movement's founder, on June 19th,1966. Three years later, she came back to formally open the hospital, accompanied by Bishops Peeters of Buea Diocese, the then mother diocese of Bangwa, and Albert Ndongmo of Nkongsamba, the mother diocese of the neighbouring town of Dschang. Together with Fon Defang Fontem they inaugurated the hospital which to-date serves as the regional referral centre and has saved countless lives.

The lobby for the Movement, the acquisition and offer of the hospital site were a significant testimony to the bravery of the Fon, given the mistrust held by the Bangwa people, who had previously fought the Germans for taking away a number of porters assigned to the Germans by Defang's predecessor. Moreover, Defang heeded to the request for land put forward by a woman, and this was an anathema in Bangwa culture, as recorded in the following inspired dialogue with Chiara Lubich: "You are a woman and so you are worth nothing. Tell me how all this happened that you are spread all over the five continents."

MHA SATELLITE SERVICES

A satellite health centre was later opened in Fonjumetaw in 1972, on land donated by Fon Fonjumetaw. It was appropriate to have a health clinic on higher grounds away from the focus of sleeping sickness. The Focolare will later bring mobile clinics to the villages of Besali and Fozimombin. The government has since joined in and set up health centres in some villages in Bangwaland.

HOW MANY ARE TREATED?

Recent statistics estimate annually and on average: 30,000 consultations, 300 major operations, 800 deliveries, 3,000 in-patients of which 600 are men, 900 are women and 1,500 are children. These statistics are for the Mary Health of Africa Hospital only.

The major causes of admission include: malaria, typhoid fever, bronco-pneumonia, high blood pressure, anaemia, diarrhoea, intestinal worms, tuberculosis, hernia and HIV-AIDS. The number of in-patients is increasing and the duration of admission is also getting longer. This is due largely to drug resistance. It may also be due to the improved facilities for diagnosis and treatment. There is the added contemporary epidemic of HIV-AIDS with severe lifelong morbidity.

Sleeping sickness has dwindled from the peak of 271 (1974), to one case in 2004.

HEALTH PROMOTION CAMPAIGNS

The Focolare Movement co-operates with the Cameroon Ministry of Health in that the Ministry carries out the campaign for vaccination against polio, measles, and DTP while Mary Health of Africa (MHA) Hospital is a referral hospital in Lebialem Division for treatment. The MHA Hospital is working also with some traditional doctors in order to understand their practice and to enlighten them on dosage and the risks associated with their herbalist practice. There are also risks associated with the practice of sharing blades and tattooing in the spreading of HIV-AIDS and other illnesses.

CREATING HIV-AIDS AWARENESS AMONG COLLEGE CHILDREN

The Movement regularly goes into colleges for HIV-AIDS awareness and education through various forms: question and answer sessions, lectures and religious morality lessons. Children are

divided into age groups and take part in appropriate exercises. MHA hospital staff occasionally work with government staff when protocols and views agree.

PRE-MARRIAGE COUNSELLING

Couples getting married are prepared for the challenges of the vocation along Catholic guidance on family health. The government's local officer for Women's Affairs frequently invites the movement to organise conferences on HIV-AIDS for men and women.

FOCUS ON EDUCATION

The Movement started Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College, Fontem, in September 1966, enrolling 42 students including 4 girls. The college has come a long way, with hundreds enrolled today, and offering a complete modern 7-year mixed coeducational curriculum secondary level education. In the academic year 2003/2004, the college's Advanced Level graduates topped the provincial performance table and featured among the top at national level in Cameroon, according to Government published figures.

Many graduates go on to further their studies abroad. A few eventually return to teach briefly at the college, motivated by the hospitality of the Bangwa people, their ties with, as well as the friendliness of, their alma mater. They soon move on, though, due to the low salary level, a situation not helped by the extremely low and patchy level of subvention from the Cameroon Government. Moreover, the Diocese of Mamfe, now in charge, is a severely economically disadvantaged region.

The above notwithstanding, the multiplier effect of the education gained and spread by graduates locally cannot be underestimated in terms of improving literacy and hence primary health education within Bangwa.

CHILD DAY-CARE

A small day care centre was established to help the staff of the MHA hospital and Movement workers, so as to release school-aged children from babysitting their younger siblings, while parents were at work. Following the intervention of the local government officers this useful centre was recently upgraded and expanded to include a Nursery school and also allowing access to other workers. It now enrols 30 children.

A NUCLEUS FOR SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

A craft training centre for carpentry and building existed from as far back as when the Movement started in Bangwa.

Over the last four years a three year School of Carpentry, enrolling 9 boys, has developed serving local furniture and technical trade needs with quite sophisticated machinery brought over from Italy. So far no girl has applied to join the school. A garage for motor vehicle maintenance now employs 5 workers. Welding is also done in the garage. A building workshop now employs eighteen workers. All these activities help to employ local youths, thereby substantially controlling the rural exodus which is increasingly a major socio-economic challenge in Bangwa.

The Movement has thus frequently developed simple workable pilot socio-economic solutions, with a significant impact on health, some of which methods have eventually triggered government intervention.

DISENCLAVING A PEOPLE

The first digger-grader caterpillar was brought in 1972 by the Mill Hill Mission through Rev. Father John Brummelhius. He popularly became "Father John the Road", because he surveyed and supervised the construction of the road linking Dschang and Fontem. The Movement and the villagers worked together to maintain the new road, whenever necessary. The Focolare Movement also used the caterpillar to support various village development projects, charging for fuel only.

EU LOBBY

Under the banner "Together Everything Is Possible", the Movement together with local dignitaries lobbied the European Union to support the work on the worsening road, and eventually won a grant. Hence after 30 years of self-maintenance, an EU grant enabled the construction of over 200 culverts and laterite macadam all along the 45 km in 1998. The caterpillar has however, since gone out of service, severely hampering road maintenance, making it impossible for non four-wheel drive vehicles to use the road in rainy seasons. During the rain season a journey could take up a whole day for those willing to pay at least twice the usual fare by private transport sharing.

HOUSING STANDARDS

Depending on their availability, the Movement's experts help either to supervise or carry out local building projects. They occasionally help to produce and interpret template drawings. The Movement has thus helped to improve local standards of civil engineering, occasionally under the personal intervention of the then Bishop Peeters, through the introduction of such trendsetters as floor concrete cementing and aluminium sheet roofing of dwellings for the Focolarini.

A SOUND BODY IN A SOUND MIND

Health to the Movement does not only mean physical or bodily health, but it is extended to include health of the soul or spiritual health. In this realm, the Movement is particularly keen to provide hospice care for the terminally ill, from a Catholic ethos, while accommodating the patient's own faith wherever possible. Occasionally, Christians who had gone astray are reconciled with their faith and non-Christians seek for Baptism at the terminal stage, which is provided; and in the case of minors this is done with informed and mutual parental consent.

Spiritual guidance as an avenue for health promotion was also emphasized following the third visit of Chiara Lubich, who launched a Bangwa programme for the papal message on New Evangelisation of the year 2000. This on-going local programme is a concerted partnership involving the local Focolarini, the Fons (notably Fontem Njifua and his colleague Fonjumetaw Njiendem) and the people of Bangwaland.

LEBIALEM WITHOUT THE FOCOLARE?

As the locals themselves testify, the Bangwa were clearly a disease-overwhelmed and endangered ethnic group, prior to the arrival of the Movement. As previously mentioned, HRH Fuankeng Ajuah Alemanji has eloquently captured the hopelessness in the afore-mentioned anthology of typical Bangwa names before the arrival of the Movement.

Not even members of this Focus Group would have lived to tell this tale. Only 4 girls for example (three of whom the daughters of Fon Defang) were at secondary school at Okoyong girls Catholic college, a 100km trek away towards Mamfe in the mid 1960s. A few more were at St Francis College further away in Kumba The establishment of the local college, OLSWC, in Fontem not only provided local access to secondary co-education, but also conveniently allowed parents to pay fees in kind, hence boosting attendance. This was especially significant for boys who had to face a journey of over 300km to a boys' Catholic college at Sasse in Buea.

Coupled with the high level of mortality from disease, the consequences of lack of education on an enclaved population that would have certainly been left at the mercy of the risks associated with indigenous practice and ignorance is obvious.

THE WITNESS OF A UNITED WORLD

Parents quite commonly show appreciation in kind to teaching and other staff of the Movement in Bangwaland. This exceptional phenomenon is probably influenced by the ideology of sharing of the Movement. One finds a similar attitude in the hospital with in-patients where food brought in for one patient is shared by other patients voluntarily. Bangwa people who get admitted in other hospitals find the MHA hospital in Fontem unique in this attitude to sharing homemade food.

Through living the gospel concretely, moment by moment, the "urban" village of the permanent Mariapolis in Bangwaland has also demonstrated that it is possible to unite, into one harmonious world, people of a diverse race, culture and belief. Present in the Focolare Mariapolis community of Bangwa-Fontem are as many as 15 nationalities from 4 continents, from three different Christian denominations, Judaism and people of indigenous traditional religious beliefs. What matters most is to promote a culture of concrete love.

Managing diversity within the gospel of **one united world**, the Focolare have produced a miraculous dividend on improving the public health of the Bangwa people of Cameroon, from a near extinct population (under 50,000) to admirable national levels (an estimated 300,000) within a couple of decades. The challenge now rests on consolidating, sustaining and then disseminating the

gains of this regional oasis of aspirations, excellence in healthcare and education within and beyond Bangwaland, investing through education and training.

REFERENCES

THE AUTHORS: This report was based on the deliberations of October 2004 held in Fontem by the Bangwa Focus Group, including:

1.   H.R.H The Mafua of Fontem (Mrs Christine Asong), who also recorded the discussions

2.   Anne Plantard, Matron, Mary Health of Africa Hospital, Fontem.

3.   Mbe Tasong (Charles Etiendem).

4.   Mrs Mary Ategwa.

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Focolare Movement/LECA-USA Partnership to improve the quality of life for Lebialem People"

Valentine A. Nzengung[*]

INTRODUCTION

Lebialem Cultural Association (LECA-USA, Inc) is a certified and registered non-profit organization in the United States of America. The membership consists mostly of sons and daughters of Lebialem, residing in the United States of America (USA). The mission of LECA-USA is first and foremost to foster unity and love among Lebialem people in the Diaspora and to build on that unity to leverage the cultural, economic and educational aspirations of Lebialem and our motherland Cameroon. This, I believe can only be done through the many opportunities offered by our host country the United States of America. LECA-USA is poised to make the best of both worlds by capitalizing on the positive aspects of the mystical, rich cultural and social heritage of the people of Lebialem, and the fast pace, materialistic, contemporary life of our New World.

Without the aspirations of Chiara Lubich, a noble laureate and founder of the Focolare Movement, it is likely that the name Lebialem would not be appearing on this document. This is because the upgrading of Fontem Sub-division to Lebialem division by Cameroon's administration is attributed to the development of Lebialem and its exposure to the rest of the country and the world thanks to the Focolare Movement. The original goal of the Focolare Movement, to create in Fontem a model of unity that could be applied to the rest of the African continent, has been termed "Miracle in the Forest" and is well depicted in the documentary that bears this name. From this vision came the Mary Health of Africa hospital that saved the life of this speaker who was a sickling at birth and, like many of his eight deceased siblings, was not expected to live past the age of two.

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College (SWC) came next and is credited with training a new breed of successful and accomplished Lebialem sons and daughters who would otherwise never have seen the four walls of a secondary school. The role of the Focolare Movement in the transformation of the lives of the people of Fontem in particular, and Lebialem in general, has been succinctly summarized in *Partnership in Lebialem* ("Lebialem Development Partnership" edited by Nkemnji, Tazi and Bezejouh, 2000), from which I quote "The saving of lives, the building of the college, the new church and the introduction of the great 'new commandment' in Fontem by the Focolare Movement, are acts of kindness and love which humanity is in search of." These acts of kindness in Lebialem are being extended beyond Fontem to Nweametaw and other Fondoms of Lebialem.

The many achievements and acts of kindness of the Focolare Movement to the Lebialem people not only provide motivation, but also a challenge to LECA-USA to emulate Chiara's message of love and unity. A new generation of Lebialem sons and daughters has been inspired by this social transformation that is occurring in Lebialem and have embraced the selfless service message and example of the Movement. Guided by the miracle that is Lebialem, we in the Diaspora have rallied to a single cause and are willing and determined to improve the lives of all Lebialem people. We want to be participants at both the formulation and realization phases of both projects and the aspirations of Lebialem. As a result, LECA-USA has identified clear visions and an execution plan. Our approach includes the establishment of sustainable and effective collaboration among the many cultural and development organizations in Lebialem and the Focolare Movement.

1. LECA-USA's VISION

Our organization is working closely with the entire Lebialem community in the USA to foster unity and love. Our guiding principle of "unity in the development of Lebialem" is the rallying song for the entire Lebialem family as we embark on multiple cultural, developmental, educational, and health projects. It is LECA-USA's vision to acquire human, technological, and financial resources from the USA and around the world and utilize such resources to improve the quality of life for Lebialem's 160,000 inhabitants. The very heterogeneous topography of Lebialem coupled with the dispersed rural settlement pattern of modest homes constructed of red clay-bricks and an aluminum zinc roof scattered throughout the peaks and valleys of the tropical mountain villages of Bechati, Besali, Bamumbu, Igumbo, Nkong, Lepi, Esso-attah, Lebang, Lewoh, Mmuockmbie, Mmuockngie, Ndungated, Nwangong, Nweametaw, etc. poses an extra challenge as our young organization implements its vision. The specific aspects of our organization's vision are:

• To be a project-oriented organization. To this end, LECA-USA conceived a record number of projects in 2004 to be executed in the immediate and long term. There are ongoing health projects to combat HIV/AIDS and provide much needed medical equipment and basic medical supplies to all Lebialem health centers. Additionally, LECA is researching ways of acquiring and

applying the voluntary service of those Lebialem sons and daughters who are highly trained and qualified medical doctors and nurses in the Diaspora, to address the enormous shortage of qualified medical specialists in Lebialem. A cultural heritage center that will be constructed in Menji would enable us to observe, research, capture, nurture, house, preserve, and transmit the mystical, cultural and social heritage of the people of Lebialem.

- To raise funds to support projects. The organization continues to identify and seek different avenues to raise funds to support multiple development projects: essential medical equipment, the construction of a library with a community development and training center, and supporting the efforts of Fondoms and regional development organizations in the implementation of local development projects.

- To continue to strengthen our existing partnership with the Focolare Movement to implement the many development projects in Lebialem.

- To serve as the umbrella organization for Lebialem division by building partnerships with the smaller local and regional development associations and organizations including Lebialem Cultural and Development Organization (LECDA), LECA-EU, Lewoh Cultural and Development Meeting (LECUDEM), Lebang Educational, Cultural and Development Organization (LECUDO), Wabane Development Association (WADA), Non-government Organizations (NGOs), etc. By functioning more as an umbrella organization, LECA-USA recognizes the need to unite all the people of Lebialem administrative division of Cameroon, be they from any of the 17 Fondoms that make up the area.

- To build partnerships with foundations and private institutions in the USA to finance our development goals.

2. PREVIOUS AND ONGOING FOCOLARE – LECA-USA PARTNERSHIPS

There is a lot of work in progress in the partnerships entered into between the Focolare Movement and LECA-USA. We would like to highlight the following points:

2.1. The expansion of Mary Health of Africa Hospital to include an HIV/AIDS ward. The Mary of Health of Africa Hospital was the first hospital to be opened in Lebialem. Over the years, this 120 bed hospital has played a leading role in providing health care and improving the quality of life for about 160,000 people who live in the Lebialem Division as well as thousands of others who come from neighbouring regions to seek healthcare in the facility. This hospital has played a key role in the fight against such devastating endemic diseases in the Division as Sleeping Sickness, Malaria, Tuberculosis, Infant-related diseases, and recently, HIV/AIDS. LECA-USA has made a cash donation to the Focolare Movement of $5,000.00 (US dollars) towards the construction of the HIV/AIDS ward and expansion of the hospital. LECA-USA members raised this sum from out-of-pocket contributions. Future financial contributions are planned.

2.2 The accreditation of the Mary Health of Africa Hospital. HIV/AIDS currently is the leading cause of death in Lebialem Division. Over the past 4 years, the Focolare Movement has documented a prevalence of about 13% of HIV-infection among patients seeking care at Mary Hary Health of Afica Hospital, and over half of the patients hospitalized are HIV-infected patients. The

HIV-infected patients often do not have the financial capability to afford for antiretroviral therapy. Even those who can afford the drugs face serious difficulties traveling to get drugs from different treatment Centers, such as the Limbe Provincial Hospital. Several other factors have raised tremendous barriers to accessing lifesaving antiretroviral drugs:

a)   the cost of transportation to treatment sites,

b)   the high cost of laboratory tests, such as CD4 counts and Chemistry

c)   the poor state of the roads in Lebialem, especially during the rainy season.

Mary Health of Africa Hospital and the people of Lebialem have a strong commitment to fight HIV/AIDS. The hospital has implemented a voluntary counseling and testing facility, a program to prevent pre-natal transmission of HIV, and the treatment of opportunistic infections.

LECA-USA and the Focolare Movement, through the hospital's Matron, have applied for Mary Health of Africa hospital to become one of the Ministry of Health's accredited sites for providing HIV anti-retroviral treatment. Through the efforts and intervention of LECA-USA, the Ministry of Health has already conducted a site inspection and the issue of the official accreditation is awaited.

2.3.   Education. LECA-USA recognizes the role of education in sustaining the socio-cultural and economic institutions of Lebialem. LECA-USA also recognizes and is especially grateful to the Focolare Movement for operating one of the top secondary and high schools in Cameroon – Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College (SWC) Fontem. In fact, most of LECA-USA's current members received their secondary school education from SWC. Seat of Wisdom College Fontem is ranked at the top of all secondary schools in Cameroon when placed on both the standards of education and costs. Were it not for the Focolare Movement's vision of providing secondary education to Lebialem people by opening Seat of Wisdom College, many of our members would not have had the opportunity to obtain secondary school education, let alone be in a position to contribute to the above mentioned partnership.

While embarking on multiple initiatives to support education at the primary level, which is in dire need of resources including manpower, our organization has recently donated several hundreds of books, computers and a printer to SWC. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Board of Trustees of LECA-USA and the President of Seat of Wisdom Ex-Students Association in the United States (SWESA-USA) are exploring ways of building a partnership for the purpose of financing the Focolare Movement's vision of providing computer facilities for teaching and learning at SWC.

3. LOOKING AHEAD

The rich Lebialem culture is rapidly being lost, as the younger generations tend to adopt a foreign culture. LECA-USA has conceived contemporary methods of preserving as much of this culture as possible. Our Lebialem Heritage Institute project, upon completion, should serve as a research and development center, a heritage museum, a heritage-training center, a re-enactment laboratory, a heritage communication center, and a heritage library. To ensure the rapid success of this project, LECA-USA would be seeking another partnership with the Focolare Movement, to oversee the construction of the physical structure after LECA-USA has completed the design and secured funding.

LECA-USA plans to ship medical equipment and supplies to Lebialem on a yearly basis. Through this effort, LECA-USA hopes to encourage and finance the Focolare Movement's expansion of the Mary Health of Africa Hospital. It is also hoped that in the not too distant future, the hospital will expand to include such specialized units as cardiology, infectious disease units, entomology, cancer center, etc. LECA-USA would like to consult with the Focolare Movement in the identification of any potential obstacles to the expansion of the hospital.

We are also collaborating with LECUDO-USA and RIGID Systems to complete the development and installation of a "Patients Tracking System" for Mary Health of Africa Hospital. Presently the situation is as follows:

•   The Hospital does not store vital historical data,

•   Doctors do not have access to Patients' History,

•   There is no statistical reporting capability available, and

•   Critical diseases such HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria are not tracked.

LECA-USA has made a commitment to provide Mary Health of Africa Hospital with technical advice on laboratory monitoring of patients who will be receiving treatment in the facility.

We are especially disappointed by the deplorable state of the roads from Buea, the provincial capital of the South West province, to Menji and the Dschang to Menji road. Thanks to a grant from the European Union, the Lebialem people for the first time in their history enjoyed a road that was passable all year round in the late 1990s. The same grant made it possible for Menji, the divisional headquarters, to be linked with Besali and Esso-attah by a motorable road. LECA-USA would like to partner with LECA-EU and the Focolare Movement to maintain the road that links Menji to the rest of the South West Province of Cameroon. LECA-USA in collaboration with LECA-EU will provide the engineers and part of the funds for this road project. We hope that the Focolare Movement will assist our organization to raise the necessary funds within the EU states and to be responsible for the implementation phase of the project.

The leaders of our organization recognize the fact that a major difficulty met during the execution of any project in Lebialem is the lack of people with the will and determination to provide selfless service for the common good. As a result, many development initiatives conceived by Lebialem elites have failed during the implementation phase because of lack of people committed to the tasks. LECA-USA has learned from the failures of our elites in the past and is building positive and sustainable partnerships to meet the challenges of the future.

Finally, I am proud to mention that the Focolare Movement has been and remains the most committed and reliable partner that LECA-USA utilizes to successfully implement its projects in Lebialem. The trust and excellent working relationship that exists today between the Focolare Movement and LECA-USA is the result of more than 30 years of the Focolare Movement's teaching and living God's message of love and unity in Fontem through service. A new generation of Lebialem sons and daughters, who have lived and shared the words of life with the Focolare Movement while growing up, now feels even more comfortable than their parents in collaborating with the Focolare Movement in many ways. The solid foundation of love, faith, service, trust, and unity on which the relations between the Focolare Movement and LECA-USA is built leaves no doubt that it can be sustained in the years to come. LECA-USA is at ease having the Focolare

Movement as a partner on multiple projects whose goal is to improve the quality of life of Lebialem people. Chiara Lubich's message of love and unity is, indeed, "The Miracle in the Forest of Lebialem. Thank you all for your kind attention.

Education in Lebialem Before and Since the Arrival of the Focolare Movement: Seat of Wisdom College, Fontem

John Nkemnji[*]

Introduction

Some members of the Focolare Movement from Italy started the first post primary school on their arrival in Bangwa on the 6th of February 1966: Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College (SWC) located in Fontem. Since then, other Colleges have been established in Bangwa by the Cameroon government, individuals and private organizations. To date, Seat of Wisdom College remains a leading institution of choice for the people in Bangwa and Cameroonians in general.

The impact of this institution on the lives of the Bangwa people and Cameroon will be examined from an educator's perspective. Published reports, anecdotal accounts, and national statistics will be employed using a power-point presentation to analyze the impact of the first institution of higher learning [post-primary], focusing specifically on the academic, moral, economic and social well-being of the Bangwa youth and society.

Background:

I greatly appreciate the opportunity to speak on "Education in Lebialem Before and Since the Arrival of the Focolare Movement: Seat of Wisdom College Fontem," at this important international conference of Sociologists, Educators, the Bangwa people, and the Focolare family. I thank the organizers for the invitation.

Our Lady Seat of Wisdom College started in September 1966 with 42 students from the Bangwa community and beyond. There was a non-Bangwa student from Buea in the first intake of students. The College currently has a great impact on education in Lebialem and Cameroon. Fontem is the name for both the location of the College and the paramount chief of the clan. Lebialem today is the name for the division having three subdivisions namely, Fontem, Alou and Wabane, and is one of many divisions grouped together to form the ten provinces in Cameroon. Lebialem, inhabited by the Bangwa and Mundani people, is an administrative division in the Southwest Province.   In some cases, the name Bangwa and Lebialem have been used interchangeably and without clear distinction.

Seat of Wisdom College was established in Bangwa after a humble appeal for help from the Fon, Fontem Defang, to Bishop Jules Peeters of the Diocese of Buea in Cameroon.   The Bishop had served as parish priest for Mbetta parish that included Bangwa in 1948 and thus he was already aware of the needs of the Bangwa people. Bangwa, formerly a mission station under Mbetta parish of the Diocese of Buea, later became Fontem parish (1974) and Fonjumetaw parish (1995) prior to the creation of the Diocese of Mamfe in 1999.

Following the appeal for help from the Bangwa to the Catholic Diocese of Buea, the Bishop invited the Focolare Movement to establish the necessary health and educational facilities in the Bangwa area. The Focolare came to serve and save the people of Bangwa who were seriously lacking in education, healthcare, communication and road infrastructure. Anecdotal accounts showed that their mortality and illiteracy rates were very high, however my presentation will concentrate on the development of education, while a separate presentation will examine the impact on healthcare since the Focolare arrived in Bangwa.

Genesis of a Name:

The name of the College, "OUR LADY SEAT OF WISDOM," from a Christian point of view is a fitting appellation of the ideals of what liberal education and learning are about - educational wisdom and growth guided by our Lady and the Holy Spirit.

According to Fuankem Achankeng, a 1966 alumni of Seat of Wisdom College and a traditional ruler from Bangwa, there is another point of view regarding the name: Seat of Wisdom. Research on the name of the College will be inadequate without mentioning Cunningham's mind frame when he arrived in Bangwa to open the College and serve as its pioneer Principal.

Rev. Father George Cunningham, a visionary, who had been principal of St. Joseph's College Sasse, Buea had noticed that students from the Bangwa area stood out in several ways during their College career in Sasse. One of his great ambitions had been to open a College in Bangwa where he could work with more exemplary students in their homes. He told some of his students that Bangwa boys in Sasse were particularly always well behaved and bright, though sometimes not very financially healthy. Most class prefects in Sasse were in fact Bangwa boys. In other words, Rev. Fr. Cunningham finally brought the "Seat" to Bangwa where Wisdom dwelled.

First Post Primary Institution:

Seat of Wisdom College was the first post primary school in Lebialem, set up amongst other important establishments by the Focolare Movement on their arrival to the area in 1966.

The College started with 42 students - (38 boys and 4 girls) by sharing in the buildings of the Saint George's Catholic Mission Primary School Fontem. After about two years at this primary school site, the College moved to its present site in Nveh and has since been expanding into a modern College campus on the hilly terrain. I was so impressed with the scattered structures of the campus and its surroundings that I produced a postcard of the area, showing the College, hospital and neighbouring homes in 1990.

With the advent of the Focolare Movement to Bangwa and the growth of the Christian doctrine in the area, a new Fontem parish administered by the Focolare was formed, in 1971, out of the former larger Mbetta Parish, which was administered by the Mill Hill Missionaries. The Mill Hill Missionary Society had been the proprietor of most of the primary schools in the area. The government of Cameroon, the major proprietor of Colleges and higher educational institutions, had no post primary school in the region. The government is usually accused for neglecting the development of the Bangwa hinterland.

Female Population Increase:

Since 1992, there have been more girls than boys attending Seat of Wisdom College. In 1972 the school had its first female principal, Ms. Ann Bustarret who served as principal from 1972 to 1977.

The second female principal, Ms. Jane Dube – may her soul rest in peace - had been a teacher in the College for several years prior to serving as principal from 1998 to 2001. She died in a motor accident on October 26, 2001 due to the bad road conditions in the region while in service of Seat of Wisdom College. The students proclaimed, "Mother Jane acquired an eternal home in Fontem." She devoted 29 years of her life serving the people in Bangwa. During her time as principal, Seat of Wisdom was transformed into a high school which provided the students with the facilities to study for both the General Certificate of Education (GCE) ordinary level, (O/L) and advanced level, (A/L). During her time the students scored highest in the nation at the certificate examinations.

Ms. Jane Dube will always be counted as one of the many heroes of this great institution of learning and as an example of one who loved and served to the end. Jules Peeters, in addition to Chiara Lubich, Fontem Defang, Father John Brumehius, Chief Dominic Nkeng Fobellah, Chief Forchap Bisongbeng, Chief Fotabonganche, and Mr. Michael Wetngem Nkeze, contributed in many ways in making the establishment of Seat of Wisdom College a reality.

Regional Impact:

The establishment of Seat of Wisdom College in remote Bangwa, Cameroon, made a great impact on the education of girls in the region. The tradition of the Lebialem people made it more difficult for girls to attend post primary schools outside the Bangwa area. Parents felt comfortable investing their scarce financial resources in the education of boys than in the education of girls. With the establishment of the first College (Seat of Wisdom College) in the region, the smaller burden of expenditure for tuition and board made education for both sexes more affordable. Parents found in SWC a haven because they were allowed to practically pay tuition and boarding fees in kind, a rare opportunity at the time. Many parents thus found work as kitchen or cleaning staff in SWC to be able to pay the school fees for their sons and daughters.

Less than a dozen boys of College age in Lebialem could annually afford to go to Saint Joseph's College Sasse. Sasse was the College of choice for boys prior to Seat of Wisdom College, while Queen of the Rosary College Okoyong, Mamfe was the College of choice for girls from Bangwa, Lebialem. However, only three to seven (3-7) boys and girls could annually leave Bangwa respectively for Sasse College, 290 km away or Okoyong, 99 Km away. A few alternatives existed for youths who wanted to become teachers or who wanted to study in the francophone system. Even then the least distance from "home" was 45 Km to the nearest school, in Ngundeng, East Cameroon.

The establishment of Seat of Wisdom College was bad news for Sasse College. Sasse was now deprived of bright students from Bangwa. This could be a reason why the first two principals in Seat of Wisdom College were principals from Sasse College. The pioneer principal of Seat of Wisdom College was Rev. Father George Francis Cunningham. He was there for a little over a year. The second principal of Seat of Wisdom College was Father John William Stumpel from 1967 to 1972, and like his predecessor he came from Sasse College, Buea.

There have been eight principals (six males and two females) who have served SWC to date since its establishment in 1966.

Today, with Seat of Wisdom College within reach, the number of boys or Bangwa male students entering College has doubled and the number of girls or Bangwa female students entering College has quadrupled.

Seat of Wisdom College enrollment for the 2004/2005 academic-year was 453 students (233 girls and 220 boys). Many of the Bangwa students are gifted both in the Arts and Sciences.

Sacred Heart College, in Bamenda, Northwest Province, now competes for Bangwa sons who cannot find admission into Seat of Wisdom College. There are currently at least 12 other technical and grammar secondary schools in Bangwa. In my interview with past and current

students of Seat of Wisdom College for this presentation, I heard them jokingly recall that students attending one of the schools in the area are often asked, "So, were you not able to find admission to Seat of Wisdom College?"

Healthy Competition:

There is a healthy competition amongst students in the various Colleges in Bangwa, and students work hard to meet high academic, moral, and social standards set by Seat of Wisdom College. This healthy competition has a positive effect on the well being of youths in Bangwa.

The administration of Seat of Wisdom College has been more varied than that of other Colleges in Bangwa, and most principals have been non-Cameroonians. This diversity in the Seat of Wisdom College administration and staff has provided for a greater exploration in social interaction between the administration, staff and the students. The students learn in new social contexts from the administrators and the administrators also learn to interact with students whose cultural background and social experiences are different. The mix of experiences is not the same with the staff-student interaction in other private and government established schools in Lebialem.

Seat of Wisdom College students have affiliation and contacts with students from other nations and cultures that their friends in Lebialem government Colleges do not.

Graduates from Seat of Wisdom:

It is due to the good education of students in Seat of Wisdom College that former graduates of the College are in every professional field at national level or in advanced educational institutions in Cameroon. Many former students of Seat of Wisdom College (SWESA) are also in foreign institutions of higher learning and in profitable careers worldwide. A good number of them belong to the Lebialem Cultural and Development Association (LECA-USA).

Lebialem people in other parts of Cameroon and worldwide now send their children back to Lebialem to study at Seat of Wisdom College. They study both academic disciplines and their culture. I cherish the days when the program of studies in Seat of Wisdom College had a place for Bangwa cultural studies. In the early days of the College, there was a "Bangwa Cultural Hour" once a week.

After many years of a "5-year education cycle" preparing students for the Cameroon General Certificate of Education (GCE) examination, which is a final competitive examination for secondary schools, Seat of Wisdom College has added an advanced section to prepare students for the GCE advanced level certificate. Upper Six as some call it, comes after five (5) years of studies. Both the GCE O/L and A/L certificates prepare students for university studies in Cameroon and abroad.

I take this opportunity to thank the Focolare Movement for the sound education that Lebialem people are receiving through Seat of Wisdom College. Parents have pointed out that they have sent their children to Sacred Heart, Our Lady of Lourdes, Baptist High School, Sasse, Seat of Wisdom, and Saker Baptist, and that Seat of Wisdom has stood out tall from the lot for a variety of reasons. My sister started College in Mamfe Grammar School before transferring to Seat of Wisdom College. Though she paid no fees in grammar school while in Mamfe, we found out that it was cheaper and better for her at Seat of Wisdom. She was healthy and more studious and her stay in Bangwa was financially less stressful.

In the last five years, Seat of Wisdom College students scored a 100 percent pass in the GCE. Many of the students have A grades in the subjects passed. The excellent graduation result in Seat of Wisdom College stands in contrast to the poor performance of students at the elementary level in Bangwa.

When Seat of Wisdom College started the first batch result in 1971 was 28 percent. There has been steady improvement since that rocky start with a very marked improvement in 1986 when the school scored 100 percent.

New Evangelization:

The impact of the Movement on education has spread widely. Now the Bangwa people have learned the ways of the Movement. Many of them embrace the new evangelization started by Madame Chiara Lubich during her recent visit to Bangwa. Prior to the fraternal pact between the people and the Movement both parties were not very sure of each other. The way of life of the Movement in the early days of their arrival in Bangwa appeared strange to the culture of the natives. They had not been used to a culture devoted to living and practising the gospel. They were used to ordained religious people but not to having the laity embrace and practise a communal lifestyle. The knowledge of the Movement has been acquired by the Bangwa people and more and more of them now aspire to live by its tenets.

The Focolare members have educated many people, especially the youth, in the Bangwa area by providing a forum for them so as to learn a variety of trades. The Focolare constructed the first hydroelectric power plant in the area and trained many youths to generate and service electricity. They also assisted the youth learn other trades like nursing, brick-layering, carpentry, auto mechanics and road construction. The Bangwa people observed the Movement for some time before convincing themselves of the sincerity and transparency of the Movement and its tenets.

Atmosphere of Love and Progress:

As an educator from Lebialem who did not attend Seat of Wisdom College, I am proud that many of my brothers, sisters, and friends have studied in this great institution of learning. I encourage the College, students, staff, and the Focolare Movement to keep up the good work. I appreciate the support from past students (SWESA), the parents of current students (PTA) and elites from the area. I appeal to the Diocese of Mamfe to support the school administrators and staff in their noble effort of providing a good Christian education to the students in this remote community.

CHIARA LUBICH'S THIRD VISIT TO FONTEM (2000)
From the Video: **A MIRACLE IN THE FOREST**

SPEAKER: If today one were to stop to look at the valley of Fontem from where Chiara Lubich looked at it in '69, when she spoke about future developments that at the time seemed almost impossible, one has to admit that some sort of miracle happened here. Today, Fontem is an amazing reality and this is how Chiara looked at it in May 2000, during her third visit to this small town.

The crowd, gathered on the plain of Azi in front of the royal palace, was the one that is usually present for big occasions. All awaited with joy, there was a colourful and festive atmosphere. (..)

The welcome songs, the speeches showing appreciation for the work done by the Focolare, the dances – all these were different ways through which the Bangwa people wanted to show Chiara how much she meant to them.

In her speech, Chiara asked all those present to do all that they possibly can to save the vocation of Fontem, the "city on the mountain":

"Let us always ask ourselves: are we at peace with everybody? And if we are not, let us promise ourselves to do so as soon as we possibly can. Only if love continues to shine in this city will God's blessings from heaven continue to be upon you and upon your children. And now, I do not feel that I can leave you without first doing a solemn pact with you: a pact of reciprocal love that is strong and binding. It is a sort of oath through which we commit ourselves to live together the fullness of peace and to rebuild this peace again each time we realise that something has gone wrong. Now let us shake hands as a sign of this pact of ours."

Fon Lucas Njifua answered by saying: "If we follow the example you have given us by your life (Chiara's life), there will be peace, harmony, and there will be love on earth. (…). We do not know how to express our joy; for all that you have done for us through your way of life. Giving you the title of Mafua Ndem, which means, 'queen sent by God', is a way of showing our gratitude and our appreciation for all that you have done for us'.

BROTHERHOOD AS A CODE OF BEHAVIOUR –II
(BENNIE CALLEBAUT).

In May 2000, Chiara Lubich visited Fontem for the third time; she was there for almost fifteen days. She was then eighty years old, so one can imagine the value of this visit. How can one sociologically value all that happened in the year 2000 together with the developments after that visit?

At the end of the nineties some questions were being asked. How could the population of Fontem, the second generation, who had not lived the initial period, keep intact the initial spirit of this story? How could the new generations remember the old ties, the initial enthusiasm; how could they remember all that happened, and renew the choice made, although they had not lived those first heroic beginnings?

The sociologist may also put another question.

Has the spirit of brotherhood really penetrated in all the different strata of the population, even the lower classes? Or, was this the story lived by just an elite few? It is also necessary to keep in mind that in the meantime, the Focolare Movement spread in all Africa. So, was it still necessary for the Focolare to speak of Fontem? Was Fontem still at the heart of the Focolare, as it was before? Just as France was considered to be the firstborn daughter of the Church, was Fontem the firstborn daughter of the Focolare in Africa?

Another thing: Was the idea that at Fontem a relationship with the whole population had to be established still valid? Or was this more binding on a particular section of the population? And one asked these questions because here, as in so many other places, some people in Fontem were closer to the Focolare than others, who were more attracted by other things and ideas that kept them busy somewhere else, even in other parts of the world. Did this make them abandon the common effort to live for fraternity? And then, can one really say, that many of the Bangwa emigrants

continued to keep contact with those special brethren of the Focolare that lived in the countries to which they emigrated? These and many other questions made me look at the events that happened after the year 2000.

The sociologist is not a prophet and therefore I cannot look into the future. But it seems to me that the event of May 2000 has renewed the old understanding that existed between Fon Defang and Chiara Lubich. This happened with the new Fon, his son, Lukas Njiufa and it gave unexpected results.   The rare privileged title of **Mafua Ndem** given to Chiara Lubich on that occasion illustrates this.

To continue with the same historical metaphor, it can be said that just as the situation between France and Germany had started the ball rolling towards the construction of the European Union, in the same way the understanding between the king of the Bangwa and Chiara is the fundamental force for Fontem. The example of Fontem affected other Fon in the vicinity and this new event resulted from the meeting of the year 2000. In these regions, where relationship difficulties between tribes are more often the case than intra-tribal difficulty, this beneficial effect may be considered as the most fruitful development for these regions.

Besides, the Bangwa's contributions show that they are a people of remembrance, and there is no doubt about this. The different inter-religious manifestations of the Focolare held in Washington (2002), in London (2004), and also in other places, show that there is quite a solid bond between the Bangwa and the Focolare. So, at least for a long time, there is no risk that the new generations will forget the past.

But, the event of May 2000 can also indicate a creative re-interpretation of the old understanding between Fon Defang and Chiara. I think that this time there was a step ahead because the collective pact was proposed to all the Bangwa people. The proposal of the Fon and Chiara to hold meetings named "a new evangelization" has created a common language, a possibility for the Bangwa of all creeds, together with the Focolare, to interpret together this common activity, to build – as theologians say – a narrative community, that elevates the interpretation of its proper story, to a significant religious level. This was something never heard of before and in this way, all the participants became, more active actors of the Fontem story.

One is struck in a very special way by the explanation given by Fon Lucas Bjifua, who spoke about what induced him to intensify his relationship. He realized that   the Bangwa who were in a more direct contact with the Focolare, and who were convinced of this way of life, were those for whom he never had to solve any quarrels or disputes.

And so, as a sociologist of religions, I find here a phenomenon very frequently found in all groups that live an intense religious life. The positive tension produced by the Gospel and found throughout Church history as a decisive duty, is not to forget the great number of people who are not yet aware of a direct religious commitment, and long for the same fraternal spirit. The new evangelization helped Fontem to do a very significant step in continuing this first intuition which then proved to be a completely new experience for the Focolare: the brotherly relationship with a collective group that wanted to maintain these relationships as a group.

I would like to propose one last remark. The Focolare had never really thought of doing the typical work of an ONG, or to work strictly for social development. This was not their specific talent. They wanted rather to evangelically animate a community. However, in reality for many years they had to put aside most of their ideas because of a collective social commitment. Only after almost forty years were they able to dedicate themselves to this campaign of evangelization, that involved everyone (faithful of the traditional religions, Catholics, Protestants) and which seemed to confirm the Focolare's most genuine vocation. It is important to note that it was not the Focolarini who suggested the initiative for evangelization, but it was the Fon himself and this idea was addressed to the advantage of the whole tribe. The Fon was the first one to take this commitment.

"Together, each one becomes more beautiful". This is what Chiara Lubich said on the 31st May 1945 when she met a girl who asked her about this the new life. Doesn't the story of Fontem show that both the Bangwa and the Focolare have become "more beautiful" in their initiative of solidarity? Will the various partial interests be fulfilled through the effort of living a fraternal relationship between them, a relationship not thought to be instrumental although great and important in itself? Sociologists know that only long and accurate research can say if this is an ideological talk or if it corresponds to the truth. But, in the meantime the vision and the practice of universal brotherhood in the story of Fontem provokes some thought for their analysis.

PROJECT AFRICA 2000.
THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE YOUTHS OF THE FOCOLARE MOVEMENT
(MARCO AQUINI).

Marco Aquini is a legal expert on questions that deal with the development of Youth for a United World of the Focolare Movement and he is also the world co-responsible for this section. He will speak to us about "Project Africa", the name given after May 2000 for the initiative taken by youth in favour of Fontem.

In August 2000, on the occasion of the world Genfest, Chiara Lubich encouraged the youths of the Focolare Movement to renew their commitment and their collaboration with the Bangwa people.

This proposal recalled "Operation Africa", an activity in the seventies through which the youths of the Movement contributed to the development of Fontem both through funds and through periods of time spent in the citadel (small town).

Operation Africa united the youths of the Movement of that time, especially European Youth. It presented an opportunity to face a very hot subject: the underdevelopment of the Third World. Operation Africa presented itself as a bond between Europe and Africa, as a way to "repay past debts" in the context of the decolonization that was taking place during those years. When Project Africa was taking place in the year 2000, the situation was a very different one.

The first element to be considered is that the novelty in Fontem during the year 2000 was the pact of fraternity between Chiara and the Fons. This pact involved all the strata of the population. Thus Project Africa was "to be at the service" of this pact of fraternity, with some development projects and with the collaboration of the youths of the Movement whose presence in Fontem enlarged the net of the already existing relationships between the Focolarini, the Bangwa and the Mundani (another tribe present in the territory).

In the year 2000, Project Africa followed the footsteps of Operation Africa, by answering to the requests of the Fons who identified the priorities to be worked for.

Fontem started giving attention to the technical formation of the Bangwa youths who were more inclined to learn a trade. The Centre for learning carpentry has been functioning since 2002.

Project Africa has also been attending to some needs of the area next to Fonjumetaw, inhabited mainly by the Mundani people. It is helping to make the water of the villages fit for drinking: a work that had already been started by the parish; and it opened a new dispensary at Besali to provide a better health service. It aimed to provide a local health service which till then was mainly centralized at the Fontem hospital. Since 2001, however, this health service in Besali

encountered a fundamental difficulty: its continuity. In the coming two years a revision and eventual adaptations are needed to make this service become more efficient.

One notices that the methodology of development in Project Africa correctly uses the technique of answering local needs first. The sectors that they attend to are those pointed out to them by those who are locally responsible for the interested communities.

Voluntary work carried out by youths at Fontem continues to be an important factor. When one compares the youths who have been going to help at Fontem in recent years with the youths who were there in the 70's (in Operation Africa), one notices that the 40 young people who were there from September 2000 to December 2004 presented a wider international range. It is worth mentioning that together with Europeans, there were more young people from various African regions, from Asia and from North and South America: nurses, mechanics, carpenters, land surveyors, teachers.

Such experiences enrich Project Africa in its work for brotherhood on a universal scale.

AN INTERVIEW TO THE MAYOR OF FONTEM

The town authorities of Fontem are also pleased to give their share towards a more authentic brotherhood lived by the Bangwa people and the Focolare. After Chiara Lubich's visit to Fontem in 2000, Mr. Francis Mbiaoh Nkemabi, the mayor of Fontem felt that he should also pay a visit to Chiara and he went to Rocca di Papa in September 2004. We were able to interview him during this visit. The fact that this gentleman was the first native of Fontem to be elected as mayor shows the development of the relationship between the Bangwa and the Focolare since 1966. Presently, at Fontem there are five political parties but when he was elected as mayor he was not involved in any of them.

The political system is very similar to the one of the town councils in the western world. If traditionally the village is united and has a traditional chief *as its head, the council is responsible for a group of villages and sees to the administrative tasks for the whole territory. The municipality now comprises about 65,000 people. The rural council of Menji-Fontem started in 1964. It has 25 members that are elected every 5 years. The executive committee is made up of the mayor, two members and a general secretary. The territory, characterized by hills and valleys is situated at 1200* metres *above sea level, and has an area of 1050Km^2. To the east, the vegetation is green savannah while there is a tropical forest to the south. The climate is hot and humid (it rains for 8 months and there are 4 months of dry season). The main resources are the very rich flora and fauna of the country, while the main economical income comes from agriculture (cocoa, coffee and cassava).*

The African historian Se'ke'ne' Mody Cissokok says that in most African languages there is no word which indicates the city, the urban reality. They always talk of a village or of the "big village", depending on its size.

In intercultural relationships, all this can easily lead to a misunderstanding and could make one believe that the city and the council do not exist in the African culture. Now here are the three questions we asked the mayor.

Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia: *When did the reality of Fontem start?*

Francis Mbiaoh: The "division" of Lebialem and the reality of Fontem started when Chiara Lubich came and she put this name in the limelight. Before Chiara came, no one talked of this reality; the district, the "division" of Lebialem did not exist. The reality of Fontem came into being with the coming of Chiara and her people. The population began to grow. You know, that before the coming of Chiara's people, many children used to die and many people died because of the sleeping sickness. We were all the time crying, going from one funeral to the other. When Chiara came and we were freed from this sickness, then we found time for development. Now, the public authorities are very grateful to Chiara, not only because of the new evangelization but also because she has given us this new administrative unity. Very often one looks at Fontem as a model and this has been happening since Chiara Lubich came to us.

Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia*: What relationship is there between the council authority and the traditional authorities?*

Francios Mbiaoh: *The state authorities and the traditional ones are complementary in their relationship. The tribal authorities have an authority that is limited to the village, in a traditional sense. When it comes to global matters or to state administrative matters they help the council by being the link with the population of the village. We are complementary and between us there is collaboration and cooperation. There are no conflicts even if at times there is some sort of misunderstanding when a traditional authority does not understand the role of the administration.*

Martin Nkafu Nkemnkia: How *does the presence of the Focolare Movement influence the political life of the Bangwa?*

Francis Mbiaoh: *This is a really good question. The Focolare Movement has had a very positive influence on the political life of the Bangwa people. Before its arrival in 1966, the Bangwa people had many difficulties, and political matters were tense. When the Focolarini arrived and they shared with us their idea of brotherly love and of unity, we started to understand that whoever won the electoral campaign had to administer the same municipality. Now, since all politicians take part in meetings organised by the Movement or attend the same meetings on evangelization, they have understood the importance of loving one another, of caring for the other, and so there reigns an atmosphere of gentleness, peacefulness and brotherhood. Chiara has brought a breeze of real gentleness in political relationships.*

CONCLUSION

Fontem challenges us as sociologists and not only. In fact there are other things that we have not mentioned. For example, Fontem is significant when one considers inter-religious dialogue, in a context where there are no problems of relationship with a big population that embraces mainly traditional religions. It is also significant where the ecumenical aspect is concerned, and this is because of its very cordial relationship with the Presbyterians. We have not mentioned the long list of persons who have dedicated their life, or an important part of it, to make the experience we related possible.

Fontem is an open story: the Bangwa people, proud and strong, known in all Cameroon to be particularly faithful to their roots and customs, managed to value the unexpected resources of their privileged partner, the Focolare.

One day, the great orthodox Patriarch Athenagoras said that his dream was to put all theologians on an island, let Christians live unity between them and then ask the theologians to explain how Christians achieved unity.

In the same way, Jean Monnet wanted all diplomats of the European nations to be out of the game during the process of the building of a united Europe because he said that they were not capable of forgetting the interests of their individual nations.

Let us hope that no one will ever wish to imprison us sociologists on an island and to put us aside because in our social work we were not able to discover those useful elements needed to build society, and stimulate men to go beyond conflicts – without undervaluing them – and to achieve more pleasing social experiences.

<div align="right">

BENNIE CALLEBAUT

MARTIN NKAFU NKEMNKIA.

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Notes

1. M. Weber, *Le savant et le politique*, PlonPocket, Paris 1987, p.96

2. J. Nyerere, *Ujamaa: Essays on Socialism*, Oxford University Press, Nairobi –London -New York 1968.

3. *Ibid.* p.2; pp.6-7.

4. M. Zanzucchi, *Fontem, un popolo nuovo,* Citta' Nuova, Roma 2002, pp.90-93.

5. J. Monnet, *Mémoirs,* Fayard, Paris 1976, p.342.

An introduction to the presentation of Piritim Sorokin's book: *The Power of Love*

Alberto Lo Presti[*]

Many social and political scientists have encountered, in the course of their studies, the quotation in Pitirim Sorokin's work about altruistic love and have not been able to go beyond this same quotation. On the other hand, Sorokin has often been included, by many sociological critics, within that group of intellectuals who are inserted in a somewhat undefined disciplinary area, somewhere between social philosophy, emotional sociology and social psychology. Therefore, to delve into Sorokin's altruistic love meant moving out of the principal body of sociological reflection. Those who wished to and have actually read the English edition of this book were much less than the number this work deserves.

It is easy to realise that Sorokin's work is not the original act of an already famous and bored sociologist who had no arguments left in order to deceive time. Neither is it a simple senile whim, or an act of pride with the ultimate idea of finding a celebrity niche where the world of sociological studies seems to proceed towards a Parsonsian paradigm. Sorokin's work is much, much more than this. In order to be able to show the dimensions of this greatness we have invited professor Michele Colasanto, professor of general sociology and vice-rector at the Catholic University, and professor Tommaso Sorgi, ex-professor of Sociology at the University of Teramo, ex-member of parliament, one of the few who introduced Sorokin in Italy and probably the scholar who best delved into the part about altruistic Love (I remember his book "*La Sociologia del Profondo di Sorokin*" which was one of the most beautiful readings I did when I was still a student).

They will introduce us to the sociological books of Sorokin. Sorokinian sociology belongs to the stream of great sociological analysis which derives from universal history and is not satisfied in only explaining the phenomenon found in a specific historical or geographical event, but demands an explanation of the human system and its social relationships, as well as how these established civilisations and the great historical and social dynamics. He was, I must say, a sociologist in the classical sense of the term. Despite the era he lived in (mid-twentieth century), Sorokin may be well included amongst the classics of sociological thinking, for the wideness and the value of his reflection and for not allowing himself to be imprisoned by the artificial disciplinary constructions which today, in some cases, have broken down and divided excessively the sociological profession. The first question is in fact a classic: why does man produce a social and civil order? Another classic is the method used for elaborating an effective answer: the nature of a creative personality in its altruistic being.

Today it is possible to propose this question once again and ask ourselves if the improvement of our societies might bring about different answers to the classical ones based on scientific and technological progress, on the increase in the democratic content of political action, on the planning of balanced economies, on the creation of supranational organisms which are able to redeem global controversies, etc. Is it true that sociology cannot formulate an answer containing the spreading of love and altruism? One must realise that we are dealing with information that is readily available to every social actor, who is universal in his intercultural and inter-classical data, structurally independent of intellectual and professional profiles, independent with respect to personal, ideological, and cultural conditions and one may continue listing how much altruistic love is a constructive element in formulating a model of social and universal relationships. In Sorokin's times, on the social sciences scene there were no supporters of the effectiveness and capability of love to elevate itself to a sociological category and to become a means to provide solutions to current crises. Sorokin was truly a pioneer in affirming all this.

Today, the wind is blowing in the other direction. The publication of the Italian version of this book shows the work that social sciences are carrying out towards paradigms and theories which do not ignore this common, daily, wonderful force of our social nature. It is really worth

aiming high in the elaboration of the profound meaning of sociological theory, re-assuming the concepts and categories on which societies built their own initial group, such as fraternity, friendship, altruistic love. The Sorokinian inspiration offers a precise horizon to the content of social relationships which will one day govern global, complex, strongly related societies. Half a century after the original edition of this book was published, Sorokin's figure may be given its rightful place in the scene of social sciences. In this way, the destiny of this sociologist of Russian origin is equal to that of many others whose greatness has only been recognized by history after a long time.

Presentation of the book "The Power of Love" written by Piritim Sorokin, Part I[*]

Michele Colasanto[**]

One can say that I will be talking about a classic only to a certain extent, knowing that Sorokin had in fact been somewhat opposed by his contemporaries. Thus the sociological tradition presented to us here had passed through some rough times. I intend to talk about this great author of sociology by highlighting the points that really struck me. In this way I can also give an account of the text that I have been asked to present.

The work of Sorokin is not easy to read, but it really deserves to be tackled, at least in its most interesting parts. The second part of the book may be read all at one go, because it is a narrative, and it exhibits extraordinary historical figures. It speaks of episodes and gives news and historical facts.

It is my intention to show what Sorokin means to us to-day, to discover his role within a context which I consider to be a sort of sociological parable, that started with very great ambitions, as we have heard during this morning's beautiful lecture given by Gennaro Iorio, showing how to understand almost all sciences with this thought in mind. The word sociology comes from "societas" and "logos" the verb, the word. Sociology should be the science of sciences, but presently it seems to be crushed by doubts. You have heard Baumann being quoted rather than Beck, and you have heard about man's insecurity because of his loneliness and of his risks. So sociology is faced with a very profound task, that of humanizing society. This is a paradox, but at the same time it reveals the failure of a discipline meant to be an explanation that is fully comprehensive. In fact, only through this can Sociology be saved, given that it puts itself on the same line of thought as the message and cry that come from the heart of a society that does not merely need to be understood but also to be helped out of its tragedy.

My talk will focus on these two points.

My colleagues know that this is not a happy moment for sociology. It is definitely the fault of bad sociologists; maybe it is the fault or the responsibility of a society that does not want to be discussed. When sociology started, it was meant to be a critical science. It began when the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution, that also proclaimed fraternity, started to question the society that preceded them. And this led to questions about what should be done to integrate society and what the elements that enforce it could be. Obviously, a constructive sociology is needed, but it must also be a sociology that can criticize the actual state of things. At this point, we realise that a reflection on sociology and on other social sciences is badly needed, because, to put it simply but effectively, as Sorokin teaches in his book *"The Power to Love",* even sociology needs a soul. One must find the focal point from where to start.

In sociology there are social actors, there are subjects, individuals. In politics there are consumers, beneficiaries - this is the name given to those who benefit from political policies - but no persons. This forcefully reveals the importance of a social science and of a sociology that focus on the person.

So what is it that strikes me in Sorokin, a classical author one meets when studying sociology, but who is certainly not known because of this text?

We know that Sorokin is a sociologist of social mobility and this makes him different from his contemporaries, because he sees a dynamic and not a static society. This helps us perceive better his frame of mind.

This book was not known in Italy; one had the opportunity to find the English version in libraries, but anyhow, it presents a novelty. I must confess that it is new even to me and I was really amazed to discover this type of reflection - I think it is good to have this capacity of being amazed.

The first thing that struck me was the reference to an autobiographic experience. I think that this is very important because very often, in social sciences, the theoretical reflection starts from what one lives, even if this is not said. We work as sociologists because in the course of our life we came across certain situations that made us question ourselves very profoundly. In fact, Sorokin wrote this text – as he states in his introduction - because the terrible situations he encountered, (he was imprisoned for years; first he was in the Tsar's prisons and then in the Bolshevik prisons; he was condemned to death), convinced him of three fundamental things, namely:

1)   that life is worth living,

2)   that doing one's duty is one of the most beautiful things a person can do in his life,

3)   that "cruelty, hatred, violence and injustice can never and will never lead to a psychological, moral or material rebirth. The only road to achieve this is the noble way of creative and generous love, a love that is not just preached but lived coherently".

These are the words of Sorokin the sociologist, who draws our attention to the adjectives that qualify love. It is not any kind of love, but it is a creative and generous love. It is a love that has the power to generate, and this is the most important point. Love can generate society, love can create society, and as reminded by the Trinitarian image, social living can proceed from love. From the sociological point of view, this is a very strong statement, because although it gives importance to relationships, to the subject, yet it also gives importance to man's experience of God and to the divine connotation of love. Bringing such ideas to society is definitely something out of the ordinary, but what we have heard here yesterday and to-day show that this can be achieved. What will generate all this? I am unable to answer this question, but I know that this is becoming one of the roads we should lead because we have no other alternatives. Post-modern sociology, as I have already said, is demanding the humanization of society, but it cannot indicate the roads to achieve this. It can only appeal to moral conscience, but this is an appeal that depicts a strong sign of crisis, of degeneration, in any case a sign of the difficulty our society is encountering.

Let us however go back to the text. The original title of the book: *The Power, the ways and the methods of love. The techniques for the production of love*, referred to a positivistic sensitivity that certainly has been lost. The title indicates that love is produced by means of particular techniques and instruments. In reality, the techniques mentioned here have a particular meaning. The term used may upset us but it does not refer to what we imagine or suspect when we initially come across it. There is a methodological and epistemological price to pay, and Sorokin says this very clearly: the price is that we cannot imagine love unless we experience what he calls integral knowledge, a knowledge which contains the various aspects of subjects like sociology, but also psychology, physics, ethics, and somehow, also the relationship with the divine.

Here the words of John Paul II come to mind; he suggests that knowledge should be acquired through faith and reason. We find the same thought in Sorokin; he refers to an integral knowledge that reminds one of the Russian tradition, which is strongly longed for at our universities. Knowledge to-day tends to be very specialized and fragmented; it lacks a unitary sense and has lost its taste. Yet Sorokin's call for integral knowledge was misunderstood by his contemporaries, who accused him of not being scientific enough. On his part, while debating quantitative sociology, Sorokin accused his contemporaries of being obsessed by quantities; he accused them of falling into a sort of *quantity mania,* while he started a debate that had both epistemological and methodological significance, thus intervening on questions of indisputable importance, namely on what we manage to get to know and on how we get to know it.

Sorokin continues his reflection with methodological discipline and very meticulously analyses all the dimensions of love which he considers in seven aspects, namely: religious, ethical, ontological, physical, biological, psychological and social. The paragraph about the religious aspect is very beautiful because he compares the experience of God found in various religious views and studies how this experience of God associates itself to the idea of what is good. The social aspect of love is defined in this way: "Love is a significant interaction or relationship between two or more persons, where the aspirations and aims of a person are shared and brought to their fulfillment by other persons". In spite of the fact that he is against the quantitative dimension, he tries to measure love and says that it has five dimensions, that are not scalar but that can be measured. These dimensions are: its *intensity* that is related to the gift: the greater and the more precious the gift, the greater is love; its *extension* that can go from hatred to love because the quality of love changes according to sentiments; its *duration;* its *purity,* or rather whether love is an end in itself or not (because there is also egoistic love); and finally its *fairness,* considering whether it corresponds to its scope or is something different from it.

"Society produces very little love; there is very little love in society", states Sorokin, who somehow accuses his colleagues of lack of attention towards this subject.

What must be done to produce more love in society? This is another interesting point. Sorokin turns to individuals, to social groups, to institutions, to culture and somehow urges them all to produce love. In fact, love is produced if common people are able to live experiences of love in their everyday life, because, primarily, love forms part of our everyday life. Love cannot exclude others: it must rather be inclusive, projecting itself towards others. Love, then, is present where there are those great figures having a great power to love. Sorokin calls them "the geniuses of love" and we need these great heroes of love, these charismatic figures because they can help us understand what love is.

Only after understanding what love is, can it be institutionalized and crystallized: once institutions are permeated with the grace of love, they can contribute towards producing and spreading this sentiment, thus giving life to "a permanent atmosphere that embraces all human beings from birth to death" - as quoted from the text. This beautiful expression reminds me of the experience of the social state, of the welfare contained in the motto: "From cradle to coffin". This grim expression, together with the one used by Sorokin, contains very effectively the paradox of the present social state, its main gap: as I have already said before, there are no persons present in the social state; there are beneficiaries, there are the clients of the politicians that need to be satisfied, there are the consumers. But Sorokin's perspective exceeds the most advanced concept of those who know what to do "to have friendly institutions". He denounces the failure of society he calls "sensist", a society engulfed by its own selfish interests, competition, hatred, its negative instinct and by the exasperating importance of economic factors, and has become the arena of a series of social tragedies and of degrading social situations. But there is also a contrasting society and Sorokin shows that it exists by relating facts about it. This consists of groups of people and of individuals who entrust themselves to love and who produce the medicine needed for the failures of the society with a "sensist" culture. Sorokin starts by mentioning the unitary dimension of love, that asks one's ego to identify itself with another, thus resulting in a "we" where solidarity and

harmony are present and if there is separation, there is "unhappiness and an effort to be together again".

Finally, I was struck by the definition of love given by Sorokin in its being a relationship with another person, and this is what I would like to share with you. What is the person in this context with reference to love? Sorokin uses an expression, which is a bit difficult: "super conscious". He uses this expression technically, referring to the super conscious ego. One is surprised by the fact that a person's experience may be complete not only if it refers to the multiplicity of disciplinary references I have mentioned, but also if it is a divine experience, if man relates to the divine that exists in him. Sorokin's idea of the person is one of the decisive points of his reflection, and in this way love becomes really the highest moral value and all other positive values can be integrated with it very harmoniously.

The sociology of Sorokin is very demanding, and it lends itself to an epistemological reconstruction of the idea of social relationship, that presently risks to be too closed in itself, to be distinct, to have nothing to do with other subjects or persons. We can very simplistically distinguish two ways in which to look at society: on one hand we can look at it the way sociologists do – systematic, solistic, organistic; on the other hand we can look at it as fragmented and individualistic, where the unusual becomes specific and somehow justifies its right to exist. Sociology related to a system dates back to the great tradition, from Durkheim to Parsons, and there is also Simmel, and naturally, we owe a lot to it. In very simple terms, one can say that it starts from society, but somehow, at a certain point it ignores the subjects, the persons. On the other hand, the vision of a sociology that is not related to a system is a very heterogeneous vision, and there are those, who in the name of the failure of systems or in the name of obligation or moral obligations, think that society is a dionysiac fact, derived from vital impulses and instinctive factors.

There is, however, a reaction to this view, which developed from the thought of recent post-modern minds like Baumann, Beck and others. In it, one can read the attempt to humanize society, to reconstruct a social behaviour by starting from something that is out of society. This need is felt, and this something is "the other person's face" as Baumann says, while he uses the words of the philosopher Levinas and bases sociology on something that is not sociological at all.

The problem remains: what should be done to shift all this into sociological theorization? This is a fundamental point, because on one hand, our authors help us identify the sense of drama in to-day's society and consequently the drama of sociology itself, that almost sees no point of its existence as a science - because if society disappears somehow so will sociology -, and on the other hand they still do not give us systematic answers.

In my opinion, one needs to try to give these answers even by applying those points, those intuitions, those anticipations that emerged during the course of sociological tradition, both when the dimension of the community was recalled, and also to-day when one speaks of communitarianism, and so of social relationships that are not only of the contractual type but also of the communitarian type. There is a series of references that should somehow be taken again and put together, not to form a new social theory - I would be ambitious to say this and I should not be the one to say it - but to try to reconstruct an epistemology and a methodology, sociology that is appropriate to the present situation.

I conclude by saying that all this is very important and urgent, because social sciences can offer very interesting tentative answers where the governance of society is concerned. I take as an example the debate that is going on to-day between two different lines of thought. The "American dream" about the market society, drafted by the sociologist and culturalist Rifkin, hopes that through competition all problems are solved, eliminating inequality and social injustices. In contrast to this there is the "European dream" or the model of social cohesion where politics intervene in business matters, introducing variants and rationality. But then, as Darendhorf says, this seems to be a model where wealth is under the thumb of democracy, accepting business without accepting either the democratic model that goes with it, nor the possibility of regulating the market. One can very clearly give an alternative reply to these two methods and this is the Economy of

Communion, that does not deny the market, but uses it, regulates it in a different manner and gives it its own rules. However, there must be an appropriate cultural and sociological reflection or else we will witness continuous clashes between those who believe in the market and those who believe in politics. This is why sociology exists.

Political reflection and discussion still lack the ability of regaining a concept that goes back to the time of Sturzo, when civil society was considered a body that could organize itself, produce norms and values, enhance the value of internal resources, and could be in a position to create relationships of love, as Sorokin says.

So Sorokin seems to accompany us on a journey and, together with others mentioned during these days, he prophetically empowers certain intuitions and lays an important foundation for a project, which consists of working together on these themes. Various sociologists have already started to recognise their importance.

I think that putting all these parts together and attempting to build a systematic thought about society's incentive to love may be of value not only scientifically but also politically and culturally. And this is capable of generating the unexpected.

Presentation of the Book, "The Power of Love", written by Pitirim Sorokin - Part II

Tommaso Sorgi[*]

Many years ago, when I was still lecturing at the University of Teramo, I tried to convince the directors of Publishing Houses to translate this work of the Russian sociologist Sorokin. I had an abridged version of the book, an English edition of 1967, and I could see how well this book suited my intention of offering sociology as a humanistic science, one full of warmth, useful or rather necessary, to young people.

It was my duty as a professor to supply my students with instruments for "inclusive" analysis - as suggested by the Weberian *Verstehende Soziologie* - because I felt that this could help them not to lose track when faced with the conditions of social structure and with so many incentives to abandon institutions. My status, my role and my conscience made me feel that it was my duty to be at their side so that they could discover the positive aspects of social living and so that they could cultivate their personal energies. Both could be used fruitfully to achieve maturity and to be fully aware of their ability to contribute towards the *Construction of Society,* by reinvigorating it, where necessary, and by renewing it.[1] I thought that the precious words of the layman Sorokin could serve such a purpose, since he spoke about creative love, about true values and realties of whole historical periods[1], about the *supra-conscious*, which is the highest level in the structure of personality[1] and the divine aspect of man, the manifestation of Divinity.[1] All these elements, especially the last one, gave me the opportunity to speak on a spiritual level when dealing with this 'positive' science.

I was then confronted with the fact that this book spoke of Jesus only from the human aspect. I was made to notice that this 'was not a theological treaty' and I was sad to see that the editors were legitimately upset.

Yet, the directors of the publishing house *Citta' Nuova* translated two reviews of the sociological thought of the same author. One was written in 1928[1] and the other in 1966[1]. The translation was published in two volumes in 1974, and it was given the title "*History of Sociological*

Theories”. I still feel very grateful that *Citta' Nuova* gave the opportunity to give my share towards the introduction to these two volumes, even though this meant a lot of research. I felt I had to know more about this sociologist and I drafted 44 pages entitled: *"The Integral Sociology of P.A. Sorokin"*[1].

Times changed and they have changed drastically, and the proposal to publish Sorokin was this time presented with greater authority. I have tried my best to do all that is possible to support this idea, and I intervened when I got to know that there were queries about the title that had to be given to the Italian translation. I think that the title as it is now - *The Power of Love* - presents itself well and it brings to mind another book that has a very similar title: *"The Art of Loving",* [1] written by Eric Fromm, even though the reading of the text may not be so easy.

I must confess that the book we are presenting here brings to mind some religious problems. Somewhere else, Sorokin describes himself in this way: “Politically I am a wild donkey; I am a conservative Christian anarchist”. After a childhood of illiteracy, he was educated at a college of the Orthodox Church; but evidently he was influenced by Leo Tolstoy and by his non-violent, civil and religious “anarchism”[1].

In this book, Christ is presented as any other founder of the great religions. He is like Buddha, Confucius and Lao-Tse. These names, together with those of Francis of Assisi, Damian of the Lepers and other Catholic and Orthodox saints, Gandhi and some Muslim mystics, seem to carry a certain weight in the *Index of names,* while Jesus Christ does not appear at all on the list. But one can find his name in the index of the present edition of *Citta' Nuova,* a translated revised edition of 1982, prepared by relatives of Sorokin (maybe by his two sons).

I cannot say why in the version published during his lifetime Jesus' name did not appear on the list of names.

My theory is that this ends up being a sign - maybe an unconscious one - of the very particular consideration that Sorokin has of Jesus. It is enough to consider the fact that he opens his introduction by quoting three of the eight beatitudes found in the Gospel of St. Matthew. He quotes the ones about the humble of heart, the merciful and the peacemakers[1]. Very often, he refers to the Sermon on the Mount to incite its application not only in the life of individuals but also where civil institutions are concerned, because he sees in it a solution for today's crisis[1]. Throughout the book we find that he uses quotations from the Gospels; he gives special attention to the Passion of Christ, referring especially to Christ's agony in the garden of Getsemani and to His cry: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”[1].

I believe that deep down at heart, Sorokin had a special love for Jesus.

This sociologist is very dear to me, also because I have found great resemblance between his sociology of love and the thought and action of the Focolare Movement of which I form part. I intend to focus my attention on three points to support this.

First point: In his last chapter, Sorokin launches an appeal, saying that: “Universal love (…) should replace tribal selfishness”. This sounds very much like the invitation for universal brotherhood launched by Chiara Lubich, who tirelessly delivers this message to people of different religions, of different nations and to local and world politicians. Does Sorokin speak explicitly of “brotherhood”? The term “brotherhood” is not found in the English abridged edition which I have. There are 15 chapters in it and besides the *Index of names* it contains also an *Index of subjects.* I went through the actual translation of the text and I have found that Sorokin speaks of brotherhood when he mentions the traditional monastic communities (chapter 21) and when he writes about some typical Society of Brothers of his time in USA (chapter 22).

I read chapter 23 very thoroughly. This is the conclusive chapter on universal love and finally I have come across the following:

- page 650: “ (...) if each one of us behaves as a brother who loves everyone, or as a sister who really cares, it is only then that altruistic love will be extended to the whole of humanity”.

- page 654: "Within the span of one or two generations, this phase will lead humanity to be much closer to the ideal of safety, brotherhood and peace on earth. More would be achieved than what patriotic tribal leaders and their followers have succeeded to do in thousands of years, and more than whatever they can succeed to do in the future".

- *page 660: "(...) such a change would mean great progress in the extension of love to all humanity; it would lead to being one united family, finally free from tribal conflicts and human clashes".*

Second point: When the sociologist mentions the seven aspects of love in the first chapter, he includes its physical aspect. He speaks of it as unity and integration between the forces of the "organic world" found in the atom as well as in the whole universe[1]. This unity reminds us of Chiara Lubich's writing about her concept of "all things being in love with each other. So if the stream ends in the lake, this is the outcome of love". Speaking of the organic world, she continues to say: "If a pine tree grows next to another pine tree, this is the outcome of love"[1].

Third point: In most of his talks, Igino Giordani used to say: "Humanity needs *vitamin A* (A standing for Amore - Love)". This is not so different from what Sorokin expresses in this book when he speaks of *vitamin L* (L stands for Love). He says: "To love and to be loved is the most important *vitamin,* one we cannot do without for our own healthy personal growth and for a happy human life"[1]. But the perspective of these two varies, because while Sorokin focuses on the life of the individual and speaks also of the effects on physical health and longevity[1], Giordani thinks of the whole human race and its history. He also adds that: "love is the vitamin for sanctity"[1].

Both Sorokin and Giordani support the same idea with almost identical words: "the world perishes because of lack of love". Giordani confirms this in more than one of his books[1]. Sorokin states it in a report about an activity carried out by the *Harvard Research Centre on altruistic love.* In this report he entrusts the *reconstruction of humanity[1]* to social scientists, claiming that they should be "the gardeners of this marvellous flower", namely of love - *vivos voco* (he writes this in Latin)[1].

At this point we should ask: are sociologists the ones to rebuild a new humanity?

This is the task of all human thought. We believers know that this is not enough. We also need the help of "Our Father who is in heaven" and who walks on earth with His children.

Some years back I expressed my reflections about this in two publications of mine[1]. Now I intend to give the gist of them, with some slight changes.

I am not the only one to believe that the revaluation of some classic philosophy and of certain old and recent religious concepts may be beneficial towards generating a new generation, a new humanity. I refer particularly to the Christian concept of 'person' and of 'new human being'. I refer also to Christian universality. While placing itself at the origin of modern internationalism, Christian universality considers all human beings as members of one human family, all gifted with identical humanity regardless of the differences that do not in any way change the substance. "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female"[1], wrote Paul of Tarsus. In the history of thought, he was one who strongly believed in the renewal of "I"[1] and in the radical unity of all humanity. He contributed towards both.

While proposing such reflections, sociology does not intend to replace philosophy and theology. I do not think one can support the generous intention of some, who like Bouthoul and Duvignaud, want to see in sociology "the image of contemporary humanism (...) the key and the centre of modern humanism"[1].

Each science, like each human being, must possess a sense of the limits of its own field. It is the philosopher who formulates ideals for man, as long as he does not abdicate and give in to "weak thinking". It is the work of religion to announce and give testimony. Every now and then in history, we come across social reformers who do not fit in any specific academic category, as for example Gandhi. Reformers may be politicians, economists, writers, artists, humanitarians of various tendencies, who manage to mark the era in which they live. Persons who cause some sort of cultural movement can also be reformers. For example, to-day there are certain singers, who manage to influence masses of young people and there are those, who manage to promote morbid violence by the use of the screens. Some of these daily pictures contribute not only towards the denial of values but also towards reversing them completely (and love takes different meanings). The result is that we have the *homo televisivus*, emptied of interior spaces and of strong principles that regard his personal, family and social life.

At this point the sociologist has even more right to consider himself as a master of life. His teaching, however, contains in itself a fundamental problem: being a sociologist, he starts by taking into consideration the norms and customs that prevail and that are empirically noticed by him (social values), and then he elevates them to general ethical principles (moral values) and uses them to judge very delicate problems that may deal, for example, with life, death and the very nature of man.

When the sociologist does this, he may not have any "general concept of the world" (that which is known as *Weltanschauung*) as part of his cultural background; and this becomes a risk for himself and for others, and becomes dangerous. On the other hand, the sociologist may have "a concept of the world" that is more or less precise, and this will become the source and the soul of his "teaching". In both cases, sociology itself is not the *magistra vitae*.

 Very often the sociologist tends to trespass his limits: besides being enchanted by observation, explanation, classification, he is also attracted by the charm of "thought". Scientific loyalty combined with intellectual honesty make him feel bound to declare very serenely "the ultimate values" that become his aspiration.

Gianfranco Morra rightly claims that the sociologist "cannot be obliged to be only a sociologist", but he also reminds the sociologist that he is not allowed "confusion where methods and fields of research" are concerned[1].

Sorokin tries to avoid "confusion": in his "integral" method he includes and evaluates the empirical level.   But his being a sociologist is enriched by his psychological, almost philosophical and religious interests, and he persists in carrying out theoretical research and practice and accumulates information to support these same interests.

Even Gason Bouthol tries to avoid "confusion": while he reconfirms that "sociology is at the centre of modern humanism", he admits that in this way one remains in the sphere of a "positive science", and he suggests that one should promote a new social science: *metasociology*. He even shows the need "to widen our horizon" by resorting to "metaphysical thought"[1].

We have to be sincere and say that the "metasociological" sciences already exist, but one has to look for further opportunities to make them become "a scientific community" for their own interest, or better still, for the good of their only subject: the whole human being. One should not disdain to do this even where sociology is concerned.

To remain within the parameters of this social science, we must accept with simplicity and humility the idea of Durkheim and adapt it. It "does not propose the construction of an ideal"; it only tries to "analyse it and explain it (...) and to look for the conditions necessary to help man - if possible – regulate the functioning of it"[1]. It can be clearly stated that sociology tries to help men fulfill the ideal in the complex situation of social life. But it is aware of the fact that men need to inculcate themselves, and this means incarnating a universal idea in the different specific cultures

and individuals, that are 'situated' in a precise social-cultural context. (This can therefore be useful even in theology, in pastoral work, in confession).

Let us go back to the *vivos voco* used by Sorokin to address social scientists. "The living do not rest", says Morra, referring to American social scientists. He explains their deafness by claiming that they are "over-integrated in the system and dogmatic to the point of intollerance", so he questions the principle of neutrality of their science.[1]

We have a thousand motives to consider ourselves "alive". And now, as expressed lately, we have to function as "a network", or as one used to say before, we have to function as a "body". First of all, we sociologists or apprentice sociologists have to be a body. And this can give birth to the big and whole scientific community based on a common thought. Here we can join forces and let our commitment as sociologists be "alive". While being humble enough to admit that the task is by far superior to our abilities and our science, we have to understand that through our theoretical research, our practice, our thought and behaviour guided by our horizons and fulfilled with the same seriousness and love of the author of this book, we can offer a partial, but necessary and precious contribution to today's humanity.

NOTE SORGI

1. Refer to *Costruire il sociale,* Città Nuova, Roma 1991, 3° ed. 1998, cap.2°, (*L'unità del corpo sociale*) and 3° (*I "piccoli mondi")*, pp. 58-128.

2. With the help of many other researchers P.A. Sorokin analysed the fluctuation of such values during almost three thousand years of history and published the result in 4 volumes: *Social and cultural dynamics*, New York 1937-1941.

3. In *Id.*, *The Ways and power of love*, Boston 1954, It. tr. *Il potere dell'amore*, Città Nuova, Roma 2005; see *La struttura della personalità creativa,* chapters 5 and 6, pp.149-189.

4. *Ibid.*, p.167.

5. Id., *Contemporary sociological theories*, New York 1928.

6. Id., *Sociological theories of today*, New York, London e Tokyo, 1966.

7. T. Sorgi, *La sociologia integrale di P.A.Sorokin*, Introduction to P.A. Sorokin, *Storia delle teorie sociologiche*, Città Nuova, Roma 1974, vol.1°, pp. VI-XLIX.

8. E. Fromm, *L'arte di amare,* New York 1956, tr. it., Mondadori, Milano 1975.

9. In his book *The Ways and power of love* pp.230-231, Sorokin praises the Russian novelist for his admiration of the *Sermon on the mount* and the law of love that Christ preached; and he gives quotations of Tolstoj (who was excommunicated in 1901 by the Holy Synod). Among other things, Tolstoj wrote: "Jesus founded no church, he created no state… he imposed no external authority, but he simply committed himself to write the law of God in the hearts of men so that they could govern themselves", as they say (and live): "My God, take me wherever You decide". (L. Tolstoj, *The law of love and the law of violence*, 1910, tr. English New York 1948). Tolstoj is considered to be utopian in his views in that he wanted law to be abolished and suggested that love should be attributed the task that guridical laws failed to accomplish effectively: v. G. Fassò, *Storia della filosofia del diritto*, Il Mulino, Bologna 1970, vol.3°, pp.185-188.

10. P.A. Sorokin, *Il potere dell'amore* cit., p.35.

11. *Ibid.*, pp.55, 89, 178, 186, 220, 272 and so on; in other publications he also proclaims how necessary it is to apply the love expressed in the *Sermon on the mount* in "personal behaviour, in inter-individual relationships and in groups, in social institutions and in culture": Id., *La mia filosofia è l'integralismo*, W Burnett, *Questa è la mia filosofia,* New York 1957, It. tr. Bompiani, Milano 1961, pp.243-257, spec.255-257.

12.   Id., *Il potere dell'amore* cit., p.73.

13.   *Ibid.*, p.49; refers to V.S. Soloviev (and others).

14.   Cit. in G. Rossè, *La creazione,* "Nuova Umanità", XXIII (2001/6) n. 138, p. 830. Even Sorokin speaks about the organic world in his book *Il potere dell'amore* where he examines *"the biological aspect of love"* (*ibid.*, pp.49-50) and then he passes on to the *psychological aspect* and finally to the *social aspect.*

15.   *Ibid.*, pp.128-129.

16.   *Ibid.*, *L'amore, importante fattore di vitalità e longevità* e *Potere curativo dell'amore*, pp.121-127.

17.   I. Giordani, *Laicato e sacerdozio*, Città Nuova, Roma 1964, p.268-269 ; see also Id., *Le due città*, Città Nuova, Roma 1961, p.163.

18.   Id., *Le due città*, cit., p.493; he uses the term "penury".

19.   P.A. Sorokin, *The reconstruction of humanity*, Boston 1948; with this book which he wrote immediately after *Society, culture and personality*, New York 1947, Sorokin started to accentuate his commitment to study altruistic love.

20.   Id., *Les travaux du centre de recherche de Harward sur l'altruisme créateur*, in "Cahiers int. de sociologie" 1955, vol. XIX, p.103; this appeal concludes the text given in French (pp.92-103), but it is not present in the original English text *Studies of the Harward center in creative altruisme*, 1955 inserted in Id., *A long Journey: an autobiography*, New Haven 1963.

21.   T. Sorgi, *Costruire il sociale*, cit., pp.170-172 and *Sorokin and the sociology of love* "Sociologia", a. XXIV, 1990, n.2-3, Roma, pp.9-24, spec. 23-24.

22.   *Gal* 3, 28.

23.   "Though our outward man is corrupted, yet our inward man is renewed day by day" (*2 Cor*, 4,16); "put off the old man… who is corrupted according to the desire of error, … and put on the new man, who according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth" (*Ef* 4, 22 e 24): "I live, now not I, but Christ lives in me" (*Gal* 2, 20); see also C*ol* 3, 10; *Fil* 1, 21; *Rom* 13, 14.

24.   G. Bouthoul, *Trattato di sociologia*, Paris 1949, It. tr. Città Nuova, Roma 1974, vol.1°, pp.22 e 41; ref. also to J. Duvignaud, *Introduction à la sociologie*, Paris 1966, pp.149-173.

25.   G. Morra, *Introduzione alla sociologia del sapere*, La Scuola, Brescia 1990, p.136.

26.   G. Bouthoul, op. cit., pp.41-44.

27.   E. Durkheim, *Giudizi di valore e giudizi di realtà*, in "Revue de métaphysique et de morale" 1911, vol.XIX, tr. it., in Id., *Le regole del metodo sociologico. Sociologia e filosofia, Parigi* 1895 e 1924, It. tr. Ed. di Comunità, Milano 1963, p.220.

28.   G. Morra, *Sociologia della conoscenza*, Città Nuova, Roma 1975, pp.41-42.

Round Table: dialogue on brotherhood in various cultural spheres

Moderator: *Vera Araújo*

 Speakers: *Sergio Rondinara, Michele Zanzucchi, Eshter Salamanca, Simonetta Magari, Luca Crivelli*

We have come to the end of our second day of work.

We have tried as much as possible to show the influence that brotherhood, considered as a social category, has and will have on social relationships in the future. We seem to understand that in spite of the contradictions, conflicts and contrasts of a society that lives an epochal change, this influence can be accepted for its positive contents, for being able to stimulate processes of integration and social interactions that result in development and growth, in human and intellectual maturity.

Convinced of this, we are urged to continue in our work as social scientists, seeking also collaboration and dialogue with other humanistic and scientific subjects.

The colleagues we have invited to take part in this debate have already been working for some time in their respective cultural spheres on the idea of brotherhood. We would like to ask for their contribution so that a richer dialogue can be developed on this important subject. With discretion but with firmness, this subject is gaining more interest in the academic sphere and it is also being attributed a specific placement in the studies of various subjects.

We hope that this will be an interesting and creative moment that widens horizons that go beyond themes that are specifically sociological.

On our panel we have Prof. *Sergio Rondinara,* an Italian nuclear physicist and a professor of philosophy of nature at the Pontifical Gregoriana university in Rome. He coordinates the research group *Eco-One* that is inspired by the charism of unity and deals with environmental sciences.

Then we have Dr. *Michele Zanzucchi,* the editor of the fortnightly magazine Città Nuova. He is an expert in communication sciences and a member of the group *Net-One* that is now quite known in the media sector.

Dr. *Esther Salamanca* is Spanish and comes from Madrid. She teaches at the university of Mursia and is an expert in international politics and relationships. The interesting topic for her doctorate was "Water, heritage of humanity".

Dr. *Simonetta Magari,* who is a psychiatrist and psychotherapist, has a very long professional background. She teaches at the Catholic university in Rome and also works with a group of psychologists, psychiatrists and psychotherapists who get their inspiration from the charism of unity.

Prof. *Luca Crivelli* is Swiss and comes from Lugano. He is an economist and a professor at the university of Lugano. For years he has been doing research about basic concepts that characterise the project of the Economy of Communion, about which I have touched very briefly this morning in my report.

Having presented our panel, we can start our debate by asking each member to answer the following question:

"What does brotherhood mean and what does it convey to your respective disciplines?"

Sergio Rondinara

One of characteristics of today's environmental problems (the ozone layer, climatic change, etc) is that they develop on a planetary scale and hit all humanity. So the attention of individual nations is not enough; a worldwide policy is needed to guide all people towards a more careful management of our planet and to achieve an ecological global strategy before it is too late.

In other words we need a worldwide policy that enforces a *global strategy for safeguarding the environment.* This is one the greatest and most urgent cultural challenges of our times. We must understand that good and positive choices of individuals or of single nations are not enough.

For example, in 1990 the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) pointed out that the Greenhouse effect would lead to an increase in the mean temperature with all the consequences we are all so well aware of. But only a few countries acted unilaterally to reduce their output. The European Union proposed the introduction of a carbon tax in Europe, but seeing that other countries (especially the USA) had not followed its example, the programme was changed. Why did this happen? Because the most important environmental resources (water, air) are global public resources and this renders unilateralism (like strategy in environmental politics) deceptive.

In fact economical structural changes on a worldwide scale are needed to make our model of development a sustainable one.

Besides, there exists a very strong relationship between the sustainability of development and the problem of poverty. It is illusory and irresponsible to think that the first problem can be solved by separating it from the second one, or worse still by opposing it to the second problem. All the efforts to improve or preserve the environment of the Northern part of the world, are not of much good if at the same time these do not help the countries of the South to develop in line with their own cultures. It is very clear that a programme developed on a global scale is needed, because politics on a national scale cannot achieve such an aim.

But it is easy to foresee that this will be impossible unless we acquire a new sensitivity to common good, to universal brotherhood, to a universal destination of goods, and unless a considerable part of the world population changes its consumerist habits radically.

This operation demands an anthropological model about which we do not know much today. In this operation the attitude of communion has to replace the individual point of view. The limited view of a group has to give place to the view of the global human family. And everyone is called to give one's share.

Michele Zanzucchi

My talk comes from the reflection and work carried out by NetOne during these four years – a very short span of time, I should say - and it is the result of the "coordination between us communicators".

It is no easy task to speak of universal brotherhood in the world of media, where antagonism prevails. Whether we like it or not, we media people have to deal with enemies; they may be present both within our circles (the manager for example) and also outside them (Osama or Saddam, for example). Unfortunately, these enemies are there in front of us, even if we do all we can not to see them and not to create them. The media system – a system, that according to well know theories is based precisely on the amplification of contrasts and conflicts – seems to be purposely made to instigate us against someone.

So the professional communicator, who wants to work seriously for universal brotherhood, has a lot to risk. Technology and sophisticated communication techniques are continuously increasing the extraordinary possibility of bringing society closer together, or, on the contrary, creating divisions and separations. Bridges and gaps depend also on us.

An example: recently, Sunta Izzicupo, an italian-american from Los Angeles, who was the deputy manageress of the powerful CBS station, told me how television contributed in a very decisive manner to the events following 11th September, helping to prevent an implosion within the entire American territory. She related that the attention of TV viewers was concentrated on long forgotten values like solidarity, brotherhood and reciprocal help, rather than on fear, hatred and revenge. There were certain debatable aspects in what she related, but there was also a certain amount of truth.

Unfortunately, in media professions there is also the tendency of "creating" an enemy *ad hoc* that gives one the opportunity of projecting on the outside the bad feelings and division one may feel inside. Therefore great attention is needed when one is actually contributing to media projects. It is here that brotherhood can live or die, due to influences very often doomed by the media product itself. With regards to this, communication among communicators is of utmost importance. Brotherhood has to be exercised by those who work in the field of communication. And this means that as brothers they should communicate their frustrations and also their stimuli and their projects. It means that they should help one another to discover the qualities and the potential that each one possesses and that are frequently discarded. Very often better work is the result. And this is not "being good". Because "being good" does not risk anything, it is living quietly, it is tackling problems and contrasts superficially. A goody is one who tends to demonstrate compassion about things he is not really sensitive about.

There seems to be three consequences that arise. The first one stems from the fact that in the act of communication not just two are involved (the one who talks and the one who listens, the one who gives the news and the other who receives them, the one who interviews and the one who is being interviewed), but there is always a third one. At times it may be one of the protagonists of communication; it may be the one helping out in an interview (the reader or the viewer), but it may also be our friends who listen to our transmission on the radio, or even a group of people mentioned in a news programme. Communication is never solely two-way. And very often this third element, more than any other, appreciates the behaviour of the media operator who tries to overcome divisions and to love the enemy. So it is of utmost importance to learn to speak to our listeners, explaining to them very clearly and truthfully the situations being dealt with, giving the bright and the dark side of each fact, without concealing any hope that may exist.

The second consequence deals with forgiveness, which is necessary both for our personal and social life and also essential in our media sphere. It is logical that no one asks for it by law; yet those who practise it internally or externally, manage very often to have a certain lucidity and shrewdness that they would otherwise lack. Don't we say that anger makes one go blind?

The third consequence is about memory, or better still about the purification of personal memory and even the historical memory. This means that one is ready to be merciful where mistakes of others are concerned (and as Simone Weil reminds us – it also means being merciful towards our own mistakes). It means that we look for what is good to present a solution and to start afresh from the good things we manage to achieve together. Through this, the communicator is not burdened with resentment that paralyses him or induces him to vengeance and to sterile contrasts. The communicator will also have no regrets about the irreparable mistakes committed, while confidence in future possibilities becomes the driving energy that leads to true communication for a united world.

Simonetta Magari

If brotherhood means what in psychology is termed as reciprocal relationship, then I believe it has much to say to my subject. But I must confess that psychology never speaks of brotherhood. Maybe only Maslow, who is indirectly interested in it, stresses the idea of "communitarian sentiment", an expression borrowed from Adler, used while speaking of the various characteristics

of the person that achieves self-fulfillment. This sentiment of communion shows a genuine desire to help humankind. It is as if one is a member of the same big family.

I think I can claim that from Freud onwards psychology became interested in brotherhood, but here brotherhood simply meant a relationship between brothers, considered from a negative aspect, where conflicts arise and sentiments of jealousy and hatred take the upper hand and make one feel very guilty.

So rather than speaking of brotherhood, here one speaks of "fraternal rivalry".

Anna Freud attributed a mechanism of pathological infantile defense to this and she called it: "altruistic renunciation".   But I think that there still exists an orientation that is quite known and found in various schools of thought and which is important for my report. In this sense, the subject of brotherhood may find a reason for confrontation, of great interest where psychological research is concerned, because most schools of thought consider it to be the foundation for human relationships.

Being continuously immersed in the situations that crop up from family and social interactions, the psychologist is bound to look for a common element that regulates communicative exchanges that frequently break out into violence, clashes, etc.

The concept of brotherhood may represent an indispensable element to combine each relationship in the respect and recognition of complementarities.

This brings to mind the news of some days ago: 11 suicides were committed in the span of 50 days in a certain Italian region. I do not know other details, but I think it is a bit hasty to conclude that this situation is simply the outcome of personal "pathology". Even the journalist who commented about the event spoke of a competitive society . . . etc, etc.

Definitely, a certain amount of self fragility, of a certain anguish, do not depend exclusively on external conditions, but they depend on the subjective answer one gives when passing through a critical moment, through a trauma. . .   What would the situation be if such fragility were faced within a social community, within a family, where one inhales an atmosphere of brotherhood? In a culture that favours performance, competition, appearances and where even the most intimate and sentimental relationship of a couple frequently changes into a struggle where the dominating partner decides to leave the one who is not up to the mark, let us try and think of an atmosphere of brotherhood.

Brotherhood is solidarity; it is a trusting alliance that goes beyond the characteristics of the other person. It says no to discrimination; it is able to compose diversity (we know that brothers have the most varied characteristics). Brotherhood is the place where even the one who is not productive finds a space. If we live this type of relationship, how many persons and families who live under the burden of a big or small psychological discomfort, would feel relieved, if not completely cured!

An interesting example of this is a self-help group of drug addicts and alcoholics: they have the chance to speak in a group, to share their fears, to open up to others. All these things help the person to understand himself better, to feel more cheerful and to contribute towards a positive change. Knowing that there is someone who can share your experience without judging you and who understands what you feel because he has passed through similar experiences, contribute to changes that will never happen just through individual psychotherapy.

Esther Salamanca

From a theoretical point of view, I think we can stop on two levels of different analyses. On one hand, it is necessary to look at this question considering the debate based on International Law (the moral foundation of international legal order) started during these last years at the heart of the scientific community. On the other hand, it is necessary to get to know the possible effects such a

category can have on the structure of international society. These two different levels that we have mentioned – a normative one and an institutionalised one – are very closely related since International Law, like any other legal system is conditioned by the social group it regulates, and in our case by the characteristics of international society[1]. I would also like to clarify that this theoretical analysis is not sterile. On the contrary, it leaves a fundamental mark in international politics, because the general performance of all States is based on their concept of international law and international relationships.

An introductory statement: what do we mean by brotherhood when speaking of international order?

The concept of "brotherhood" that I have in mind comes from two objective facts that are universally accepted:

• In the first place it means that all human beings belong to "a global entity" known as humanity. In the Preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) this is accepted explicitly when it speaks about "the dignity of all members of the human family". The notion of humanity contains a double meaning. It brings together into one space all men that live at the same time, irrespective of the place where they live and it brings together not only those who are living presently, but even those who will live in the future.

• Secondly, there exits a filial bond between all members of humanity because human nature is common to all of them. This is what is termed by article 1 of the Declaration of Human Rights (1948) as the "spirit of brotherhood".

"All human beings are born free and have equal dignity and equal rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and they have to behave towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood".

Klaus Diche, a jurist and critic of the Declaration, affirms that the human dignity found in the Universal Declaration is "an expression of the unity of humankind"[1].

By introducing this concept of brotherhood in article 1 of the Declaration, the value of a programmatic principle[1] has been conferred to it. This interpretation explains article one of the Declaration of the UNESCO on the human genome: "The human genome is the basis of the fundamental unity of all the members of the human family and the recognition of their intrinsic dignity and diversity"[1].

Nevertheless, on a political level, such a natural reality is determined by the existence of a political entity, by the sovereign State. Humanity is politically structured in sovereign States and it will continue to be so, unless an international political authority emerges that will be above the authority of the States. Yet, such a temporal reality does not eliminate the natural reality, but on the contrary, it supports the characteristic relationship of each human or political community: countries, states, international organizations[1].

Explaining the concept of brotherhood as mentioned in the beginning – "the unity of the humankind" - I would like to refer to the first level mentioned: the aims of international law.

I do not intend to enter into details about the new theories on the moral and judicial justification of International Law, or in other words, about the function that International Law should be exercising to-day[1]. But we can be brief and say that to-day we have two lines of thought. There is the classic idea – the static approach. This considers international juridical order to be there to safeguard the interests of the States. The second one is the human rights approach. This claims that international juridical order is there to safeguard human rights, to see that justice is done with all human beings on our planet[1]. Yet, I feel that I should present a further juridical philosophical concept. This concept is trying to introduce a new function of International Law in international fora, and it speaks about the rights of humanity – the humanity approach. Punishment

against "crimes of humanity", the recent evolution "in humanitarian international law", all humanity as the owner of the world's common heritage (the seabed, the Moon and other planets); the common human problem about the environment, together with the principle of intergenerational equity - all these are developments of the present international law. If man does not belong to humanity, then no one will be able to explain these developments.

My personal conclusion is that to-day brotherhood does not constitute a normative principle of International Law, because it is not being translated into norms that explain the international rights and obligations, not even in institutions that control the fulfillment of such regulations[1]. Yet, this does not mean that it has no repercussion on international law as "a programmatic principle", which in future may show all its potential.

With regards to the effect of brotherhood on the structure of international society, I intend to make other references later on during the debate.

Luca Crivelli

In my opinion, economy is, at the core of social sciences, the discipline which, more than any other has believed it can do without the principle of "fraternity". Of the three principles that have inspired the French revolution, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity", only the first two have, in fact, penetrated the field of economy.

- Liberty is, undoubtedly, the characteristic that best finds fulfilment in the exercise of free trade. Markets are actually the place in which one meets free thinking people – free and endowed with equal dignity. It is worth remembering that the mercantile society has replaced the feudal society which was, definitely, less liberal and more unjust, and that the exchange of equivalents can result – in the typical, ideal situation of perfect competition – in a level of equality among contracting parties. Exchange can, therefore, prevail over relations regulated by the principles of hierarchy or class of origin, and can create the premise (in terms of liberty and equality) necessary (even if not enough) to allow fraternity to flourish.

- When perceived not only in terms of a potential dignity but also in terms of an availability of a real resource, and of an opportunity for economic and social development, equality has guided the building of the models of welfare, the setting up of taxes and of fiscal systems, and the logic adopted for the esteem, of normative matters, attributed to neoclassical economists. One cannot deny the fact that in these last 30 years, equality has inspired the thoughts and actions in the field of economy in a much lesser way than liberty has.

- Finally, during the last two centuries, fraternity still remains to be considered as an irrelevant principle in economic considerations. It has been surpassed and, consequently, in my opinion, liberty and equality have been separated from each other. This has brought about the notorious juxtaposition between state and trade, between equity and efficiency (according to Dkun-"the big trade-off"), between the stage of producing economic well being and the moment of its redistribution.

This is not the place to investigate, in detail, the reasons why the principle of fraternity has not found an adequate space in the field of economics. I will limit myself and say that in this resultant situation, the influence exercised on economic sciences, ranging from utilitarianism and, I assume, the intransigent recourse to ontological individualism in describing the rational characteristic of mankind, are not unrelated. In the theory of rational choices, the characteristic relationships of rational man are, a priori, denied. The principles have lost their fundamental affinities and their social bearing and have assumed a further more personal and subjective dimension and have reduced themselves to the level of simple individual 'preferences'. Quite consciously, we have come to believe we are able to apply a principle which in economy marks the relationship between man and goods; in other words, the concept of utility even in relationships between persons. Through a semantic metamorphosis, happiness – *eudemonia* - which describes the flowering of social relationships has progressively been made to coincide with the concept of

utility, a concept that defines the relationship that exists between man and goods. However, this actually means that the circle of interpersonal relationships is based on self gain. It is obvious that in such a paradigm, there is no space for fraternity. This, in fact, presupposes the recognition of the values and the identity of another person, perceived as necessary in order to be able to co-exist. When relationships are built on fraternity, the other person is always an end and not a means to achieve one's objectives.

Let us now consider this question: why is the principle of fraternity relevant to economic sciences? Even these sciences sense a growing discomfort when confronted with discipline and, in particular, because of the incapability to give adequate answers to the many afflictions of contemporary society. This discomfort is testified in a very effective way by the Swiss economist B.S. Frey, who, in the volume entitled "Inspiring Economics", notes a loss of contact, in the 1980's and the '90's, between this discipline and reality. The analysis of the economy of these twenty years is marked by a high degree of formalism and vigour, while the relevance and the originality of the theories are not given so much importance, and, above all, the programs of research have rarely been formulated to consider the "evils that afflict society", or with the intention to find remedies for them. This situation threatens to transform economy, from a "sad science", as Thomas Carlyle described it in the 18th century, into a "boring and insipid science". How can this stagnant situation be solved? The Swiss economist stresses the need to return and draw inspiration from knowledge that has developed in other social sciences. After years of imperialism of the economic method, years in which economy exported its own model of analysis and knowledge to all other social sciences, while remaining itself impermeable to the goals reached by other disciplines, it is now opportune to invert the signal of these specific "commercial scales", and move on to fully import knowledge from psychology, sociology and anthropology. I personally believe that this importation is already taking place (it is sufficient to think of the Nobel prize in Economics given in 1998 to the philosopher Amartya Sen and in 2002 to the psychologist Daniel Kahneman), and I am convinced, but this is perhaps still a stake for the future, that the principle of fraternity is specifically one of the most fruitful and inspiring ideas for the development of economic sciences.

Let us now move on to some specific questions.

Prof. *Rondinara* *the environmental themes in today's society provoke an endless discussion and generate very variegated and possibly, contrasting positions. However, I believe that, undoubtedly, the problem is not only a scientific or technological one, but that it is also a cultural problem, a matter of mentality, of approach and of vision. Do you agree?*

Humanity, has always felt to be part, and a special part, of the environment, and capable to learn its secrets, capable to contemplate its beauty, capable to work and transform it in order to satisfy its needs.

A typical characteristic, nowadays, is the experience of being able to know how to manage an ever increasing number of natural events, which, when taken as a whole, continue further to make us feel masters of nature, capable of exercising systematic control on nature – real control.

If in the recent past – especially when society was built on agriculture and farming – the relationship between man and nature was a relationship of collaboration, nowadays, we have to realize that this relationship has taken a critical configuration and is rightly considered by many to be an ethical problem.

Human behaviour, in fact, presents itself as the cause of problems of an ecological nature and also as the place and means, necessary for their solution. The environmental problem begins and identifies itself with man's actions on nature and particularly with those actions that cause an alteration in the balance found in nature.

The environmental crisis takes us back to a more profound crisis that assails a person in his entirety; and this is an anthropological crisis. The environmental crisis, the alarm bell secularized understanding of contemporary man, produces a culture of power, of dominion on natural reality and exalts the idea of progress totally guided by economic and technical reasoning that has never learnt to interrogate itself on the causes that have given rise to an irreversible growth.

This crisis is the offspring of a precise concept of modern man, a 'secularized' man who in his search for independence has called himself absolute master of his own destiny.

Each one of us can see how the present crisis of the man-nature relationship indicates the incapability of contemporary man to manage his own creativity and to put nature to good use. These aspects, in the present cultural situation are in juxtaposition among themselves, in that, if one makes space for human creativity, it is nature that suffers the consequences – one only needs to think about the impact of technological development on the environment – and, if one were to protect nature from man's works at all costs, it is the creativity of the latter that would have to be sacrificed.

The exploitation of nature and of human creativity are presently in conflict with each other, as very often human creativity is not in line with strong values like universal fraternity and the universal destiny of the environment, but is conditioned and, at times, even guided by a model of social – economic development with a strong anthropological deficiency: not focused on the person and on those values of which the person is flag bearer, but rather on profit. However, the ethical aspect, in respect of the performance of one's creativity, is only a component of a more articulated and complex problem such as the relationship between man and nature.

I think that such a renewed relationship, suitable for today's world necessarily restores the significance of relationships that link each one of us to nature itself. However, how is this possible? How can we build a correct "ecological ethos"?

These questions are a challenge for contemporary man who after having put aside – but not discarded – the spectre of a nuclear holocaust of mankind because of the contra opposition of the military blocks of the East and West, now finds in the environmental crisis a new and further decisive problem for the future of humanity.

Prof.essa *Salamanca, international relationships – from my point of view – are dripping with every type of interest: first of all, political and economic interest, but then also cultural, national, in other words, always interests of the individual. I know that you are profoundly convinced – by the research you have done and continue to do – of the need of bonds and more Unitarian, even gratuitous implications in international relationships. Would you like to explain your views to us?*

Fraternity, on the institutional level, can be a structural principle for the "future". If, in a general way, one mentions "interests of power", then the structure of international society to which I referred to earlier, continues to be the basis of a structure of power[1]. However, it is important to note that states have never remained in isolation. In 1965, Professor G.I. Tunkin, e Russian writer, stated: "States have never existed in isolation from each other. Each state finds itself from its very inception in a system of States".

Independently, from the beginning of the philosophy of politics, and here, we can refer to many theories about the organisation of the international society (from the Victorian *tutos orbis* to *civitas gentium* of Kant, or Rawl's international community of liberal states) we can find this "relational characteristic"[1].

Regarding international relationships, *strictu sensu*, as, for example, the relationship between States, history says that relations between States have never been "static". On the contrary, they have been profoundly "dynamic". We have been able to appreciate an evolution which allows us to say that up to this day, depending on the type of relationship established among States, we have three types of international societies:

(a) the simple juxtaposition of sovereign States, in other words, co-existence;

(b) the recognition of their common interests, in other words co-operation;

(c) a differential organisation, in other words, the institution of relationships.

I have to explain this concept further, to help you understand it: at the beginning of the international society of today, a beginning which can be dated back to the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of the Modern Era, with the appearance of the first nation States, States simply existed in juxtaposition. Sovereignty and equality of States were the basic notions. However, the actual development of society led, from the beginning of the 19th century, to the recognition of common interests of States, interests established on the notion of "interdependence", thereby giving rise to co-operation in order to fulfill these interests. This society – in turn, gave rise, in order to fulfill always greater common interests, to an institutionalized co-operation; in other words, international organisations came into being at the beginning of the 19th century and especially, prospered in the 20th century. Today, these three types of societies co-exist together.

At this point, may I ask: is it possible that the actual dynamics of an ever more closely linked interdependence between States, can transform itself into a new structure of international society built on the fulfillment, not of common interests but on the common welfare of humanity? In order to be able to give a positive answer to this question, a profound trust in humanity, not shared by all, is necessary.

My final conclusion is this: since the principles that have formed modern international societies are liberty, equality and the independence of basic political autonomous entities (the sovereign States), then, in this way, when the concept of fraternity, or, in other words, the concept of the "union of the human family", will learn how to politically structure international society, in a very different way from today's reality, then we will be able to say that fraternity has become a principle in the structure of international society.

Dott,ssa *Magari, your subject has recognized an exceptional development in these last decades, however with very uncertain results. We have less certainties, but do we have better instruments of knowledge to help men and women of today find a more mature balance to be able to make knowledgeable choices? Can the paradigm of unity pose an option in this regard?*

It is true! Psychology has developed very much in these last years, both in its theoretical aspect and in its practical application.

Your question indicates that we have a lesser number of certainties. In this respect, we can affirm that a greater knowledge of oneself and a greater liberty to express oneself and to make choices can lead, in the initial stages, to the perception of uncertainty, typical of the attitude of man towards new discoveries.

However, once consolidated, this greater knowledge and awareness of ourselves, leads us to a goal: the liberty of being, of choosing. Certainly, the risk of an absolute and extreme use of this, is the ethical relativism and an exasperated individualism, just as, in the past, the emphasis placed on the group to which one belongs, has, very often, led to an impersonalised social adaptation.

However, and we often witness this in our clinical activity, an opportune use of awareness and of liberty leads man to be able to give freely, hence increasing his personal equilibrium and social cohesion. Also, each person's contribution becomes the added value to the free choice of being part of, of belonging to a social group: a group which, in turn, completes and empowers the personal value. And that group, as Gestalt says, is more than the sum of its parts.

This seems to us to be a real and ordinary opportunity, facilitated by cognitive instruments which psychology offers.

These are the dynamics of the paradigm of unity which, in contrast with uniformity, is characterized by the choice to love: offers itself for our own personal good and to accept fully whoever is besides us.

Therefore, it is perhaps true, that we have less certainties, but, it is actually this feeling of uncertainty that stimulates us to more real, spontaneous and free pursuits.

I feel that I can state that the paradigm of unity is actually the best opportunity, in this sense.

The first feeling is that one can somewhat assimilate the paradigm of unity with that of fraternity, in other words, as a reciprocal opening and wide disposition that allows persons to be close together, to help each other, to feel more similar to each other.

However, if we consider it in its full meaning, I feel that unity completes and surpasses those realities described earlier, because it requires a different measure of disposition, "to the point of giving up one's life", doing this with everyone, friend, neighbour and relative.

I think that the most important aspect is to state that living in "unity" does not destroy the person; there is no loosing oneself in another person (altruistic renunciation) because one does not give oneself up to the will of the other person, but, in an active way, one opts to love. Consequently, on the personal level there is an expansion of "I" and not a missed fulfillment; one's real needs are recognized, and not an emulation of what certain individualistic cultures propose.

Prof.*Crivelli*, *nowadays, economy takes the lion's share in a global society. The market controls and determines the life of peoples and of society, with its values and lack of values, with its processes, with its cultures. As a result, however, society has become more competitive in conflict rather than in agreement and harmony; has become greedier for consumer goods and possessions rather than sharing and giving, much more than economists of the 18th century ever thought of. Do you see, in modern economic theories and in many initiatives of social and civil economy, that have started in these decades, something which indicates, or better still, that recalls fraternity as a category useful also to economy?*

Even among economists, awareness is growing that an hypertrophied expansion of a mercantile nature, of instrumental relationships dictated only by personal interest, could lead to a progressive dissatisfaction of society. Without necessarily sharing the positions of critics, even most radical ones, like Serge Latouche, and convinced that any form of market can destroy civil virtues, trust and social capital, many are those who today perceive the necessity to establish economic activity on other scales, so that they can find space on the market next to other spheres such as equality and justice, responsibility and reciprocity, donation and gratuity.

I am impressed by the contents of these speeches that important people of the world have made a few days ago on the occasion of the World Economic Forum. Proposals which we were accustomed to hear mostly in Porto Alegre have been formulated. They might remain nice words, but, in any case, the fact that such speeches have been delivered already constitutes a historical fact, "a sign of the times". In these years, one of the most promising sectors in which work has been done, on the theoretic and experimental level, concerns the type of man with whom economic research has to come to terms. We are becoming aware that abridged theories like that of "homo oeconomicus" end up by modifying one's object of studies (man), making legitimate and thereby favouring the diffusion of one' own interests and anti-social behaviour. Theories in social sciences are never "neutral" instruments of knowledge. I, consequently, claim that studies, published in these last seven or eight years by many influential economists, studies that have often been made in collaboration with researchers in other social disciplines, like topics on reciprocity, trust, the removal of intrinsic motivations determined by monetary incentives, the role of social capital that allows the good functioning of businesses and institutions and the risk that completion, in terms of positional consumption, removes the growth of relational wealth, are of particular significance. Consequently, it is important to admit that a culture of politics that aims to encourage reciprocity and to promote the presence, in every level of society, of persons who focus their attention on interpersonal relationship generates higher results even of the performance of an economic profile more than policies which promote efficiency through monetary incentives which actually exasperate individualistic and self-interested behaviour. Allow me to refer to an experience with

which I am well acquainted known as "Economy of Communion". It is a project that today involves 800 firms worldwide and which affirms, by its very existence, that economic activity can make room to more principles than those which promote the logic of interest and manipulated rationality. In firms adhering to the Economy of Communion a fundamental resource has a cultural matrix that pervades the whole project and is defined as "the culture of giving". This culture that promotes commercial and occupational relationships as occasions of authentic encounter between people, and regards firms as a social benefit and a collective resource; such a culture transcends the idea of markets as being solely a place for efficiency and of instrumental relationships. In perceiving and living economy in this way and remaining at the same time entirely together with all firms present on the market, the experience of the Economy of Communion reunites the market and life, efficiency and solidarity, economy and sharing. The project also carries a cultural importance, as it is followed by a lot of research and cultural reflection which has matured some significant results: an initial theory of relational goods and an important contribution towards the debate on economy and happiness, giving some guidelines for the foundation of a relational theory of happiness centred on the notion of the person.

If it is true, as someone mentioned, that the decline of a society begins at the moment in which persons do not find within them that motivation which binds their destiny with that of others; then, it is probable that no other resource can be more useful and necessary than fraternity, especially in the economic world.

Conclusion: The aim of these brief insights on the subject of fraternity taken from different perspectives was to make you see how our working together around the subject of fraternity is motivating us not only within each discipline, but also among the various disciplines. We are trying to seek dialogue among ourselves, to build together a plan of interpretation of a reality that has a meaning, a value. Our proposal – in line with the method we have adopted – is open to discussion, to the contribution of whoever would like to add a part that could enrich the whole picture in harmony with all the other contributions.

SOCIABILITY AND FRATERNITY:
NEW POSSIBILITIES FOR REFLECTION, RESEARCH AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

Tiziano Vecchiato[*]

The evolution of sociological thinking has efficiently represented the behaviour of society and the forms of human conviviality, above all those which have characterised the Western World in the last two centuries. In addition to intuitive coordinated theories, functional, symbolical, structural, systematic, interactive and other theories have been added. The effort to describe has very often been confused with that of explaining, of identifying reasons and causes why social organisations work in a certain way and how they will fare in the future.

This effort succeeded with great difficulty to free itself from those ideologies, social philosophies and political science, which, contemporarily, animated the debate and the cultural scene. Social action theories in particular have absorbed great theoretical and observational commitment. In front of analytically interpreted scenarios in terms of aggregation, social classes and groups of reference, the individual has remained in the background, rarely considered as a person, in scenarios, which dominate and direct him towards acting and conforming to social rules.

The vital unity to build a social structure is looked at more keenly by other sciences, in particular psychology in its various branches, ranging from intra-psychic to psychosocial.

Sociological diminution of the person has, however, in time been compensated with the development of greater reflection on social groups, on identity and belonging, on symbolic foundations which orientate and regulate choices. In addition to important theories, other more specific theories of medium range were developed, studies on daily behaviour were undertaken, shedding light upon normality as a question of consciousness and comprehension, making it coexists with matters raised by major social changes.

This great effort (of the analytical or synthetic kind) has not been enough to carry convincing synthesis and the predominant result is describable in terms of a dominating attention to "strategies": of the market, of communication, of social influences, etc. that is, of ways to manage power, not on a grand scale (as used to happen in relation to classes) but on a smaller scale to obtain and manage advantages on a medium and micro-social level. In a certain way, a cycle was completed, giving its best in the expert management of techniques: multi-factorial study, shared observation, the combining of quantitative and qualitative approaches and the mix of horizontal and longitudinal analyses. This is facilitated by technological support (information technology and others) functional in the big sociological reflections to strategies about hermeneutical knowledge. That is to prevalent interpretative orientation, with the support of quantitative data. It seems, therefore, the victory of methods and techniques on capability to manage singularly analytical and synthetic dimensions of scientific thought. In the background all that is left is the effort to know the history of sociological thought. Nevertheless, the contribution is less evident that this thought succeeds to give today to the ways and prospects of social cohabiting or as used to be said, of social change which today there is so much need of. We are therefore presented with sociological thinking but more fragile and difficult on the level of capability to develop new theories and new explicit capabilities. One may think that this evolutive crisis is partly a reflection of the crisis of two paradigms which, in good measure, have inspired its evolution: on one side the individual and on the other the individuals both to be freed with liberalism and collectivism. Liberalism is loaded to propagate and promote the liberation of the individual, denouncing slavery, the negation of rights, the perverse effects of a sociality based on a few who are privileged and a lot who remain excluded. Collectivism, especially Marxist, but also in other expressions, has made out of the social emancipation fight the main question, even when it has become other than itself, a fight against race, nation, often losing sight in the last century the reasons which "justified" this fight, the freedom from oppression, making in itself an ulterior instrument of oppression.

Today we witness and remember with dramatic effect, the rights negated of groups, social classes and other human and social belonging trampled upon, even eliminated on an ethnic base, racial and other diversity.

Sociology has a tendency to consider these phenomenon from the side of the weakest, without considering the devastating potentials which the strongest social aggregation could have expressed, making of the need of social cohabiting a question of domination, of safeguarding itself, of negating the other. In certain cases one may hypothesise that one's own freedom is carried legitimately. The elimination of diversity. The wounds of this story have been painfully reopened and a long time needs to pass to be able to understand the ways of healing. That which binds us – liberalism and collectivism – is, particularly the fact that both have lifted and taken revenge upon the rights of the excluded, identifying in conflict that is, in the fight for civil rights, in the fight for class and other forms of fights, the necessary cost for the conquest of good, the freedom, which although borne out of conflict, would have guaranteed a better world. For two centuries this conquest of rights and dynamics has become the principal object of study, research, reflection and proposal. Unincidentally, functionalism has found conditions of development in the United States and not in the "Old Europe" because the problems of social organisation including the new dynamics of the market, had a ground for culture which was freer from the quests of the great belongings, manageable at micro level and social-medium for the physiological cohabitation of many diversity.

The national constitution has represented and legitimised in a noble way this research, marking in a contractual way of social contract, the ground for its own values and its own rules of human co-habiting. On the contrary the wars of the 90's have become the sacrificial altar where blood of contrasting tensions was shed. It is a drama which confounds our conscience and forces us to take paths of memory, without losing, however, the attitude to manage the memory in a selective and conflicting way. Even now the memory of victims is managed as a legitimate sense of belongings, without exploring others keys of reading like perhaps a "new" interpretable sense of human brotherhood may seek to do. A sociality traditionally based on conflicting sides cannot not respond to the call of its proper supposed naturalness. On the other hand, the same rights, or better still, the modern culture of rights is born and finds its reason to be precisely because of contracts between equals, where the limits include those who have rights and excludes others.

It is in fact in the marriage of advantage inside this belonging which cements the difference against the outsider over the limits of a social community of interests. The person outside is "*extra moenia*" analogously to whom, as much as extra communitary; does not have a title to benefit from rights which do not belong to him and who has not historically gained for succession reasons of race, nationality, even regional belonging nowadays or for reasons to gain territory, as in the animal world.

Therefore, there have prevailed some of the big promises of French revolution, the first two *"liberte' "* and *"égalite'"* understood as affirmation of individual rights and of nations (constitutionalised groups) whereas the other big promise of *"fraternite'"* has been lost along the way. Its absence has substantially rendered impossible experiences of sociality of which we are discussing, based on research on giving equilibrium and fertility to the coexisting of the three dimensions.

Fraternity could have been explored by searching its social potential, not only as a value in itself, but also as a necessary balance between a culture of individual rights and of a social group which has prevailed and a culture of duties which has remained in the shade of private choices. On the criteria, one can affirm that it has been a great occasion lost or nearly, suspended for two centuries, maybe perhaps the challenge was and is so high that it required or requires a toil which is longer than historically or reasonably one can think of.

It might have been able to develop, by studying the social potential of brotherhood not only as a value in itself both human or spiritual values but also as a vital social value and therefore a vivifying balance of categories just quoted, almost totally oriented to having, that is about the issue

of individual and social issues, not yet put in direct rapport to personal and social duties (the Italian Constitution has tried doing this bit with very little results). We have, therefore, to explore this possibility and prospect and to understand how to find a happy medium between rights and duties not in moral terms. The experience of fraternity with its values and potential represents therefore a promise which is too fragile for new sociality frontiers, maybe, for more, for new ways of being a society. The global challenges which we are faced with daily speak to us of needs that cannot be avoided, of new roads to be explored because those which are known, as has already been said, are based on conflict, on reasons of diverse belonging, starting from the tacit understanding of the other person as an obstacle and as a problem to tackle and, in the worst of scenarios, to negate.

To commence with good reason (that is with motivation which is culturally capable of social gathering value), the building of positive ideas for brotherhood it is first of all, necessary to learn from experience, which has already shown us that we have lost. It tells us that at present and in the future, the consequences are that we are really thriving to leave behind the reasons for conflict and violence. These dominate even now the daily news scene and above all our social life.

Isn't there an alternative then? It is not enough to recognise it and take note because the apparent temporary resolution of a conflict leads to irreparable harm, even if it's just for a short while, because it keeps away more stable solutions.

So therefore the intellectual and cultural acts of paradigms which have now been overcome forces us to go through paths of negation and suffering, there is a need to explore and practise new sociality, keeping in mind that the intellectual exploration of a solution is not at stake but the birth and growth of new practices which liberate us from present difficulties. The hope is one of a reconciled sociality which can be equivalent to a high standard of civilisation, not in a presumptuous way which this term usually conjures but an expression of a more positive way of human co-habiting. It has already happened in the past and therefore, it will not be the first time that it will happen. The efforts have been numerous of an ambivalent nature and perhaps it is because of these that the outcomes have been inadequate. For example, in a negative sense, behavioural utopia has for a long time accompanied the sociological illusion of understanding and therefore dominating the rows of decisional paths and the determining factors. This has happened while contemporarily the theories of relativity and of complexity were seeking to act as a counterweight to the prevalent thought and to the illusion of technical domain on the social dynamics.

The same evolution of philosophical thought, particularly generous in feeding the liberal development and the socialist inspiration has put on guard from the temptations of total (final, end) thought Even the logic reflection has provisionally taken note that the end of the rules cannot contain the infinite. (according to Goedel's theorem). This teaches us even today the potentialities of social experiences not based on the constituted (the present/past) opening opportunity towards possible worlds, new ones to explore and live in.

A good model of this dominating culture that is of having, shows its profound and radical limits even though having found noble expression. As for example, the idea of the demand for fundamental rights. The same notable opposition between having and being today does not help us. In fact, the dominance of a certain way of understanding being, in terms of a definite identity of opposition, has not done anything except sustain and feed the positive vision of conflict and the costs it incurs as a substantial alternative to peace. That is the possible co-existence of difference, which is an idea for fraternity. The dualism between having and being, in fact as in all cases of dualism, has ended up by soliciting positively, a basic thought on an apparent obligatory option (being), hindering the recognition of traps of opposite identity, for the reason, the prospects of fraternity may help us, to overcome the dialectic forms of thinking and being, of integrating them, making them evolve, towards forms in which fraternity is the source of a new way of personal and social life.

For example, fraternity may characterise in a new way the dimension of the gift, not only as altruism and reciprocity, that is in terms of exchange, which is prevailing in today's culture, even in

voluntary work, but a gift in it. One can, in fact, give not only for the sake of justice or altruism but also for ulterior motives very difficult to think of in human relations. It might sound disrespectful, discussing mental and evaluative schemes, which have inspired the growth and the reflection of generations. If we do not seek to do this, they would find a substantial continuity, of individual thought not "bother", that is capable of thinking, in terms of reciprocity and justice. But not yet capable, of thinking in free terms and a gift without exchange, which are not the good of the other and of all.

The icon which best describes the condition of a leap, not only of a choice of faith, but also as a cultural prospective towards a new sociality, is presented to us in the Bible, in John 15, when he talks of the real vine:

I am the real true Vine, and my Father is the Gardener. He chops

off every branch they doesn't produce. And He prunes those

branches that bear fruit for even larger crops. He has already

tended you by pruning you back for greater strength and

usefulness by means of the commands I gave you. Take care

to live in me, and let me live in you. For a branch can't

produce fruit when severed from the vine. Nor can you

be fruitful apart from me.

Yes, I am the Vine; you are the branches. Whoever lives

in me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit. For

apart from me you can't do a thing. If anyone separated from me,

he is thrown away like a useless branch, withers, and is gathered

into a pile with all the others and burned. But is you stay in me

and obey my commands, you may ask any request you like, and it

will be granted! My true disciples produce bountiful harvests.

This brings great glory to my Father.

It is a proposal of a deep sense of fraternity. In sociological language, of bygone times, one might say, mistakenly, organic and functional. It, in fact, does not propose a source of security, almost an assurance to keep us bound to the source of life, but, it proposes a profound sense of fraternity, and a tie of sonhood (a blood tie), that is vital blood (the nutritional liquid which runs in the branches and the vine), and the less intuitive meaning of the content not being contained,("*Whoever lives in me and I in him shall produce a large crop of fruit*") which is "another" thing and an ulterior respect, to a generative belonging of difference and conflicts. Even, the risk of conflict is shown clearly by John with the possibility of being "*thrown away like a useless branch, withers, and is gathered into a pile with all the others and burned.*". The fire, which burns, when thrown, is the war as the strategy of social solution, to all problems. Cain had summed this up in his question "Am I perhaps the guardian of my brother?" and the answer of a brother less society, which breaks its vital ties ,which instead is the symbol of the Vine which represents us. It would be shameful, to liquidate the potential of "fraternity", humanly understood as mere utopia. On a different level, in fact, the challenges of globalisation are adding up – even better showing us accumulated debts, – of a human and social development, but eco-environmental) no more sustainable, at least until Cain's apparent reasonable logic prevails. From here onwards, a challenge to sociology, better still to its capacity, to develop theories, knowledge and solutions, to experiment and to put to the service of the problems, which are facing us and inside of us.

If, for example, we abandon the macro sociological prospect, which might appear presumptuous, and for this reason, discouraging, we are brought back to a circumscribed horizon,

we may recognise, the traces of these contradictions, in certain social "novelties" which have characterised the last 20 years of social politics. The scenario is of an Italian system of welfare and of dynamics, between subjects and groups dedicated to offering a service to people. In the 80's, the answers to fundamental human needs, (healthcare, care and promotion of the weakest, social integration needs) were attributed and carried out by the institutions, (the state, regions and local enterprise), thanks to the work of fiscal solidarity. A misunderstanding arose, that is, that the welfare system was a welfare state, forgetting, that the institutions, were given the responsibility to administer the patrimony of solidarity, and redistribute it, seeing that socially there were no other solutions. (those which today are defined as welfare communities).

The main reaction, was in trying to relocate the responsibility in more social terms, broadening the responsibility to suit our needs, replacing certain institutional subjects, to the social organisation, part of the responsibility of taking care of the problems of the weakest, to the fight of inequality, and to the promotion of the common good. Therefore, more organised voluntary roles have arisen, more co-operation to social solidarity, and other non-profit organisations, which have answered the demands of welfare to human needs.

One has also tried to go beyond, risking more, because one has been freed from the weight of solidarity, and expressed in peremptory terms, "less state and more market". That is less solidarity government and more competitive exchange, in the hope that this would increase productive efficiency. The dual thought and dialect, did not stop to generate differences and counter positions obscuring the potential, of a wider meeting of responsibility, which only a reconciled society and more capable of fraternity may adequately express.

It may seem paradoxical, but nowadays a certain way of defining and legitimising social voluntary work puts pressure on categories of reciprocity and economic exchange and not on deeper meaning of voluntary work, as social capacity of organising experience of proximity, gift, fraternity. It might seem, that the new ways of being a society are sought in reverting back to extreme reasons, (liberalistic and the more liberal) in a creed, in which the individual becomes norm to himself.

Even Lucifer, may have reasoned so when he condemned himself to thinking alternatively, to his well - being, cutting himself from the tree of fraternity and life.

The research, made on fraternity, nowadays in the services to others as concentrated upon its ties, relations, solid networks (reti solidali), collaboration among diverse backgrounds. In certain cases, it has been treated as re-editing of functionalism in modern ways (subject networks and of responsibility).

The tendency, is always that of privileging the dynamic and functional problems, rather than of new foundations, necessary for a meeting of responsibility, capable of going beyond exchange. Thus making of the gift, that is bearing fruit, a new social value, considering the positive in meanings of grafting to be able to bear fruit.

The culture of rights solicits, without declaring it, the utopia of unlimited development, that of social living. It is the same house, which to our brother appears large, beautiful and better to live in and which, instead, to our non-brothers appears inevitably narrow and scarce, to "free oneself from", but also with the consequences that we know so well.

CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED IN FRATERNITY

Giulia Paola Di Nicola[*]

Introduction

First of all allow me to thank Tommaso Sorgi, the friend and professor of Sociology with whom I have worked for many years in the beginning of my university engagement. To him they owe the only monographic paths in Italy on Sorokin, when Citta' Nuova in 1974 took the task of translating and publishing *Storia delle teorie sociologiche* in two volumes. Sociology was not only a teaching job but also an enjoyment to the intellect and the soul, in search of truth and in fruitful dialogue, united me with my husband Attilo Danese, although belonging to another discipline. It was not without thought that the topics discussed and the method of teaching used attracted a large number of students.

When this community pilot project was interrupted because of Professor Sorgi's transfer, the structure of teaching and some institutes of Italian sociology were seen to be trapped far away from that happy island. In this discipline, as in others, not few experience running into an academic world which is based on theoretical assumptions, hierarchies, and oversight, if not at times contradicting, to the individual.

For these reasons it seems that the Congress organized by the Focolare Movement is a real and true answer, at a distance in time, to our aspirations and an academy in the original sense, like a community of communal life and research, in open confrontation between teachers and disciples. Our small world of the University of Teramo was only a first prophecy interrupted by, at a certain time, what the Convention of sociologists is carrying out, consenting to meet on new and interesting paths. It is rekindling, therefore, the hope of thinking together and building a small "world-Citadel", where sociology can be placed on a pillar of interpersonal reciprocity.

For this rekindling of hope, I thank Vera Araujo and all those who have organized a Congress which I have followed with great attention and gathered reflections and stimuli which I here wish to share with you.

1. Innovative aspects of the Congress

The Congress has shown the possibility of practicing sociology in a brotherly and constructive atmosphere.

I would like to point out some of the salient peculiarities:

- *The reasonable organization* and 'human' aspect of times, which has led us to come to know eachother and confront eachother on the topics discussed while meeting in the corridors, at the bar, in the meeting hall.

- *The union between art and speech.* The musical intervals and dance manifestations and singing are very rare in University Congresses. But there still existed continuity and a reciprocal

fruitfulness between art and reflection that benefits the assimilation of the content and the participation of the person as a whole (not only intellectually).

- *The union between theory and standard procedure*. The value of listening to stories from real life, experiences shared and the Report on Africa all put question-marks to the sociologist and induce him to confront himself with everyday life beyond text books, leaving him to question them.

- *The continuity that discontinues between science and spirituality*. I believe that in the academic field, especially for believers, they are not few who feel that they need to put back in order these two spheres although respecting their methodological differences and content. Maybe in Italy this demand is felt even more, because, since we find here the central seat of Catholicism, in reality there is still a clear separation between theology, studied in the Universita' Pontifice or in diocesan institutes, and the 'scientific disciplines', studied in the state universities. Theology is considered as a science in itself, a discipline reserved for those who are preparing for priesthood or religious life, or to teach religion and catechism. It is a separation, which is not useful for the "lay" person who risks on staying on empirical superficiality without a sense of orientation and not even theology itself, which can remain closed in its 'golden ghetto' without noticing how much he owes to the critical requests of the lay world. Simplifying slightly the speech, it happens that those who have faith have to take into account their surroundings in which it is more productive to hide talking on faith if they want to be in line with prevailing indifference and agnosticism. God is banished from scientific areas and so culture remains impoverished.

2.   Which Type of Sociology

Vincenzo Zani, in his opening paper, has stated that one of the tasks of sociology with a Christian inspiration has to be that of being observant in what is developing in this discipline and intercepting the positive ideas actually laid out, collecting the best, putting them in prominence, sharing and looking in depth. This positive attitude of selective openness reveals a cooperative will that already on its own, supercedes the old conflicting ideologies and favour a spirit of collaboration.

All this integrated with the capacity of laying down new themes, in order to avoid that the catholic world goes in tow, maybe ten years too late, the main themes that others consider permanent in sociology, at a disadvantage to those more coherent with the real projects. In fact, the objective of the discipline varies according to how it is applied in the study, in relation to times and different contexts (that we can say that sociology of Comte confronts the same topics as those of Habermas?).

It is noted that huge sums of money are granted by boards to study themes, which for us can result secondary in relation to objectives that we propose and that have primarily to do with the well-being of the human person and society. Even in this possibility of launching proper themes and not only relaunching those others imply a force that we do not have at present, it is not excluded.

The force is dated by the fact that one does not remain isolated in the wide 'market' of ideas. I would add, a pilot group of sociologists who also have the task of creating a network. Lubino's colleague spoke of Kuln. This scholar has underlined the importance of creating a real and proper scientific community in which the themes are shared and the language is a common one. It is a privileged way to promote the exchange of a science and of giving importance to themes which otherwise would be automatically discarded. The community selects the themes, discusses them, shares them and launches them. This goes beyond the particularity of a single 'genius' in search of talents and self-celebrity, and at the same time, gives consent to each scholar to speak knowing that there is someone who listens and so his views do not fall onto alienated cultures.

The congress has justifiably placed to the sociologist's attention how the object-subject is the person. Vera Araujo has spoken clearly giving it the *way* and all of us have justifiably found it. The person is the common reference of how we want to study society not as a system of self-regulation, aseptic and often inhuman, but as a network of reports that make the person their head, conditioned both by different cultures as well as by institutions, contests in which they live but fundamentally free and responsible[1]. They retain, but, that a person on his own, or even two or three, that support new ideas in the academic sphere is not enough. Returning to Tommaso Sorgi's experience, he confirms the necessity of maintaining a scientific community that can change, in a manner that the seed falling on fertile ground can mature.

The effect before this change of recomposition between culture and ethic must come to light, not only as theoretical speech, that is exploited, but like the credibility of actors of culture, of persons who make sociology. The inconsistency removes confidence in the persons involved, and as a consequence, to all the discipline. If sociology is going through a period of discredit and a state of disciplinary crisis, probably it is also because there aren't persons who are culturally, ethically and humanly capable of attracting confident investments. It happens like a bank that does not attract its investors' confidence and so the investors withdraw their capital and the bank goes bankrupt. The challenge of a new sociology that this congress is launching is this: The Focolare Movement through the culture of unity creates new persons and through these it can start to try and build a new scientific community open to those who are sensitive to these themes.

3.   The Theme of Fraternity

The theme proposed in the Congress is that of brotherhood. One is not limited to an invitation *omiletico* but it is founded on the themes as a privileged object of social study and possibly germinate a friendly society (one thinks of the relationships of Gennaro Iorio and the presentation of *The Power of Love* by Sorokin, in the part of Michele Colasanto). Brotherhood is a guide, a frame of referral or a horizion in a positive sense, that reveals the propulsive force of society, a stimulant for all the social sciences. We cannot but hide from the possible traps in this vocabulary, precious but easily manipulated and confused with "false idols".

One of the tasks of sociology is that of "falsifying" a concept, of passing it through a purifying fire of their drifts and their denials. The negative reveals the limitations and unmasks their idols. It means asking by name what would make us feel as brothers.

For example:

• We need to exclude brotherhood that identifies with blood relations. The catastrophic consequences of fraternal quarrels would be too evident like that of Abel and Cain who have marked the story of humanity. The fight between Polinice and Eteocle is a fundamental referral in Greek culture with its correlated myth of Edipo and Antigone. The image of fratricidal brotherhood had become a topic in world literature.

• In the name of class? Even in this case the traditional dichotomy of friends-enemies is seen. Marxism, that has staked all on its theory of a flexible and vindictive justice, making incompatible pardon and justice, has fed hatred for the middle class and built relationships of "solidarity" only in the proletarian class. Restricted fraternity is easily transferred into an instrument of oppression and injustice.

• In the name of *oligarchy* of power? This will be brotherhood in aristocracy, of the *elite* as counter opposed to the people that find themselves in high positions, showing sympathy to those who defend their privileges, letting a few into the centre of their inarguable judgment so that they then close again the doors of brotherhood.

• In the name of power? This kind of brotherhood coincides with the so-called temporary political transversality instrumental in reaching determined objectives. This happens

when individuals appertaining to different parties join to defend peace or to obtain a determined law, like that against violence to women. In the positive sense, the transversality represents the surpassing of political divisions and ideologies, in the light of reaching good values considered as priorities, such as aiming at a common "universal" goal. It is through the overwhelming power of the secretaries of parties that political debates are unable to have a peaceful confrontation, spoilt by partisan positions, with a tendency to reduce communication to rhetoric and quarrels. The pacifist movements and ecological-ambientalists are examples of transversal gatherings, that converge on universal requests and overtook their differences. The multiplication of transversality overtakes the ideologies and certain pragmatism prevails. The alliances are able to dissolve and reconstruct new ventures with other followers tackle new problems. The transversality is not in itself beneficial or detrimental. Many times it serves to resolidify an ethical and political inspired majority, which is succumbed in parties. But it would be naïve interpreting it only as a movement of brotherhood, although many times it is only a search for strength to build the power of the group to the detriment of those who are left out. There aren't an infinity of values, but pure opportunistic circulation of the consensus.

•	In different groups appertaining to the mafia, transversality represents a 'clique' between entrepreneurs, politicians, university graduates, banks, financial operators, speculators and many of them have interests to defend. At local and national levels, in the work places and in politics, powerful groups solidify, with a vertical internal structure, aimed at gaining power, to gather complicity, alliances, adhesions. A temporary brotherhood like this is more like "a band of rascals".

•	In different work places, membership groups are easily created that build an internal genealogy and make it easier for reliable persons to make a career. The criterion of "reliability" is ambiguous and finishes by meaning unconditional adhesion with consolidation group gerarchy at the detriment of competence and ethics of the person's human worth. The criteria of selection of the leading classes is overturned: the result being "reliable", therefore worthy of trust, those who are easily manipulated and the choice of persons of quality is substituted, like Chateaubriand said from the choice of persons who renounce the job to keep their good qualities. Similar informal organization, that are clubs, or "schools" are a wound in the social and political body, that tends to extend and increase the power to infiltrate, reproducing in administrative, financial and judicial environments and in political institutions, substituting the parties with the logic of pure power, with intrasystematic and current criteria and hide the best part of society.

One can easily see that the idea of brotherhood can be confusing with a membership that divides the world in two, the brothers and the outsiders, the members and the marginalized persons.

In unmasking the false concepts of brotherhood, sociology gives a hand to believers' conviction of being brothers in the name of God, and therefore, sons and daughters of the same Father. Faith is the hidden precious spring in their search, that many times allows a growth in respect, which many lack.

Faith cannot be relegated into a private corner of the conscience and taken out only on Sunday or on the demise of daddy. In sociology, it is the sentinel that keeps guard from false idols presented as the ultimate horizon of knowledge. But it cannot overflow from its place and lay down the law to sociology. In contemporary pluralism of culture it is necessary to adopt a double register. We can consider it as a squint, as with this it is not intended a pathology but a healthy and mature attitude of a person capable of maintaining his bearings in life orientated towards the other, towards the Ideal he intends to reach, towards God. On the other hand, it is necessary to know how to face problems in society even *etui Deus non datetur,* as though God does not exist, because otherwise God can become the stopgap, the preconcepted explanation, the recipe and the sociologists would be right to reproach us because of cutting short problems and resolving them in an artificial way. It is not easy to learn to use the double register in reading your own marital and social personal story: that horizontal, with all the psychological motivations, social, economical and supernatural. As G. Danneels wrote when referring to spouses, all carry with them the lamp of fraternity and human

love, like the virgins in the parable. But it happens that the oil of grace, that makes the lamp burn with divine charity, is capable of loving even when one is not loved oil is scarce in our times, that it is easily contented by solidarity and responsibility. Only wise persons, like the virgins have oil to spare and so are able to light the flow of reciprocal love. The lamp of good will and the oil of divine grace make a mysterious combination, a cocktail that generates true brotherhood: <<One can compare it with the sound of the pianoforte. Two hands are necessary: the left for accompaniment, the right to play the melody. This is the rule. Playing with one hand is possible, but the music played in this way is very poor and incomplete. Likewise for forgiveness, it is played with two hands, that of God and that of man … we play the accompaniment. God plays the melody. And it is this last that determines the character of the whole piece>>[2]. We ask ourselves how it is possible nowadays to practice "Sociology of the supernatural: as Sturzu has done, that in the optic squint which we have spoken about can help us to maintain our compass directed towards God?

4.   **Some Challenges**

I would like to point out some challenges faced in brotherhood so that we can avoid falling into above-mentioned traps and in new products of technological brotherhood.

Regarding confusion between the virtual and the reality of personal relationships: one of the most dangerous aspects of diffusing communication technology is the risk of confusing the direct relationship between persons with that virtual and think that the person can be lit, manipulated, switched off to the other's desire. When we are on the phone, in front of the computer or the TV we can interrupt the relationship with the other if there are any problems easily. In real relationships we cannot treat the other as though he is only there for our enjoyment and conversation. The other worries us, makes us uneasy and involves us in his problems, tires us but is real. The virtual facility is in opposition to the labour of building significant relationships vis-à-vis every day life. We need o learn this difference and not lie down in the comfort of this technological instrument.

We need to avoid excessive realism, representing reality to confirm and approve it, avoiding therefore any judgment that given an ethical orientation to the development of social and cultural processes. We need to avoid excessive idealism, which tends to underestimate and hide reality to build another one to our size, in which we feel at ease, protected and sublime. A new sociology will be credible if it maintains a known equilibrium between spirituality and science.

In the third place, we need to avoid excessive *irenismo* and conflict. This is another tension to maintain alive, because pacifism at all costs is denied by facts. Sociology cannot get out of observing and studying the reasons of interests that orient social behaviour, which are in opposition and that good and bad, involve everyone, from villain to saint. One cannot confuse society inspired by the model of the Trinitarian relationship with the reality that such a model can be reached in time with hard work. The conflict is not demonized but can result in something that can offer precious answers to social problems.

The conviction that fraternity cannot be bought at a discount was conveyed to us. When Chiara Lubich speaks of "Gesu Abbandonato" she does not only express a good intention, a sermon, a spiritual way of life leading to sanctification. It seems to me that it is about a key in relation to the realism we have spoken about: we will deceive ourselves and others if we present a reconciled vision of life and of Christianity. To build fraternity, one must pay a price just like to generate one must give birth. Sociology of love does not speak the truth if by it one understands it as a simple *embrace us*, a beneficial, peaceful feeling. Thus saying that those who build fraternity pay a price, we place the person together with his liberty and responsibility in the centre. This principle applies to all and is relevant even on a scientific and secular level.

In the fourth place, I would like to pick on the theme of rights, already mentioned by Tiziano Vecchiato. I prefer to connect it with one's obligations and use this word instead of "duties", which give an impression of rigidity. This is a time when rights are being multiplied, of charters of rights

reclaimed by every category and reavenged in unilateral pretenses. The rights of a single person or of a category, but, are easily confused with those of others and fraternity becomes closed off. Only when one compares his own requests to the conditions of other people's life come true if it deals with reavenging a privilege. Here because it is the commodity the place of distribution of resources according to the criteria of equality and of corresponding to the exingicies of each person.

One cannot act in "small worlds" (as Tommaso Sorgi called them in his book with the same title[3]), applying to them the criteria of an idyllic community, primary relationships, affectionate, solid and counter imposing to the coldness of some institutions in a dicotomic manner. It can happen in fact when thinking of the community as a clean world with a micro-social solidarity and close, and to the institutions as a corrupt world full of oppression, bureaucracy, with a crystallized macro-society. Based on this one tends to be happy in remaining closed in a ghetto in his own small world. I believe that in this direction it is important to take up the subject of Paul Ricoeur that by the way of management, elaborate an ethic tripod centred on the management of oneself, on the promptness towards the other and on the management of institutions. Even these last mentioned are fragile and need from our part an investment of resources, because they are most tangible persons who represent criteria of justice in what regards channeling and distribution of resources. It is through the institutions in fact that we do not only love our brothers, but even "everyone" who we will never know, who can never become our friend, but who is equally worthy of our love for him. The institution is that neutral and universal channel which thanks to it we can reach everyone.

In this sociology field I feel it is important on one part to feed the conscience with belonging and a sense of constructive communal fraternity, through the institutions (even scientific academies) try- where it is possible – to put into practice a high quality of sociology and applied social sciences, in a way that all can benefit from the work that they are doing.

Creating fraternity actually means: multiplying through significant channels of amplification of which those institutional, the good that can be done at micro level. It deals with two different levels, although both fundamental, which originate from the same ethical roots.

Note

[1] For a more profound theory on this subject permit me to suggest my book *Per un'ecologia della società*, Dehoniane, Roma 1994 (sp. Cap. 1 and 2)

[2] G. Danneels, *Pardonner. Effort de l'homme – don de Dieu* SPA, Mechelen 1998, p. 16.

[3] T. SORGI, *Costruire il sociale. La persona e I suoi "piccoli mondi",* Città Nuova, Roma 1991.

New currents of research on altruism and the ethics of love

*Armando Catemario**

I am a cultural anthropologist, and so I am interested in cultural phenomena of all people.

In recent years, I have considered mostly the western culture, that is our own, particularly intellectual cultures, rather than customs or mass culture, with the objective of discovering the ideology hidden in the western thought, in the philosophical and scientific disciplines of the west.

Through this talk I will seek to provide information on research relating to love and altruism that, even if hardly noticed, has developed in the last century in the west. What is traditonally known about man is in contradiction, and emanates from a negative and pessimistic vision, due to famous philosophers, some theologians, and also to social scientists who study human behavior.

In recent studies, published in the nineties, the subject of altruism appears to be often preceded by a critical examination of western thinking on human nature. The thinking is negative and pessimistic, as underlined above and, without any proof, takes for granted that man is egoistic, violent, seeks only his own interests, and, if not threatened or does not receive a special grace, is incapable of profound love. There is, for example, a work of Batson, who is an American social psychologist, which examines the position of altruism in this tradition.

I wish to go back in time, to the nineteen fifties, when Sorokin, who published his principal work, as has been mentioned here, founded the Centre for studies on altruism at Harvar University, in the United States, where he taught. Sorokin was isolated and very badly viewed by colleagues in Sociology, but his weight was different when it came to intellectual knowledge in general. In the fifties, for example, Fromm wrote "The art of love". In Great Britain, Morris Ginsberg, a student of Hobhouse, was a great scientist and philosopher (his works were, unfortunately never translated in Italy), and wrote a monumental work at the beginning of the twentieth Century on ethics in evolution (*Morals in evolution).* In its various editions up to the fifties, oriental sources (Chinese and Indian) were used for the first time in a text on ethics in evolution.   This aimed at discovering the development and evolution of universal love, with abundant reference to texts from taoism, confucianism, Buddhism, gianism, that were not known in the West from this perspective. Hobhouse had already followed the "forgotten" vocation of sociologists, considering that the word and concept of "altruism are owed to Comte, the founder of sociology". He coined the term "altruism" and gave impulse and a headstart to the discipline. Hobhouse simply followed the indication of Comte, and Ginsberg in turn followed his master. Cultural anthropologist at university La Sapienza in Rome

In the fifties, another notable fact occurred in Germany. Karl Jaspers, an esistentialist philosopher, when studying the history of humanity discovered an epoch, called the "Asian epoch", from the 8th to the 2nd, century B.C., in which, for the first time in the history of humanity, love and universality was discovered. The climax of this development was the 6th Century, in which, surprisingly, we see the contemporary birth of Buddha, Vardhamana Mahavira, founder of Gianism in India, Confucius, Lao Tse (and Mo Tsu, less known, but a great writer on love) in China. The comparative historian Arnold Toymbee brought to the fore this discovery of Jaspers, and developed it, adopting the formula of the "Asian epoch".

It was only in the seventies that the negative and pessimistic view of human nature, which we mentioned earlier on, was subject to criticism; and we saw the contemporary birth of branches of research open to love in various disciplines (psychology, economics, political, science, psychopedagogy, moral philosophy).

Social psychology, for example, has given a formidable contribution to research with the discovery that the child, far from being the perverse polimorphy of Freudian memory, is rather the good Samaritan: at the age of one day, the child cries if it hears another child cry, while any imitation of the sound via computer leaves it indifferent; at the age of two, it caresses and offers toys to suffering persons. I will indicate here some sources of this research: Waxler and Yarrow[1] who studied pre-adults for many years, discovered that altruism is a human dimension, a human ability, founded on empathy, that is innate and is later mortified by the development of culture oriented mainly towards competitive individualism, to the extent that it buries those altruistic tendencies present within the child, as recorded in the psychology of pre-social behavior of the seventies.

In the eighties, the psychology of moral development became more consistent, and was greatly advanced by Kohlberg. Psychology grew in six fixed stages, culminating in a seventh stage, that of love, and saw the experiment of Just Communities, in order to promote justice, in various schools in the U.SA. Then there is the development or transpersonal psychology that studies all that is divine in man, of which we have spoken in connection with Sorokin, that is the divine dimension in the human personality, linking itself, at a scientific level, to what is called the psychology of tradition, that is psychological forms that are mainly oriental or of Christian-Judaic mysticism (and also Islamic, as well as of Sufism). The most beautiful experience of this transpersonal psychology is the institution of a group of discussion and dialogue of Buddhists and other religions and human scientist, called "Mind and Life" that has set and continues to meet (luckily some of the articles are translated into Italian) with important contributions by the Dalai lama, who considers these studies an important part of his commitment in the construction of universal and inter-religious ethics, to which he has dedicated himself also in other works. Important themes are destructive emotions and healing emotions. Emotions, which are an important part of our behavior, are often reduced, at least in recent years, to sex and aggresivity, and this is due not only to psycho-analysis. Now these emotions are being rediscovered, through the philosophical and religious eastern as well as western doctrines, as emotions of infantile origin. The visions of the world, precisely that vision emerging from Christianity, is the one that has laid most emphasis on the return to childhood, to that age in which emotions are discovered that lead to spirituality. I shall stop here, but I hope to have another opportunity to talk about this again[1].

NON-VIOLENCE AS A WAY OF COMBATTING INJUSTICE
THE FOUNDATION OF A SOCIETY BASED ON FRATERNITY

Alberto L'Abate[*]

I am a sociologist and I teach "Sociology of Conflicts and Peace Resolution" at the University of Florence. This is a new course leading to a degree in "Peace Operations, Management and Mediation of Conflicts". Two hundred students are currently registered in this course. I am also National President for IPRI (Italian Peace Research Institute) which forms part of IPRA (International Peace Research Association) which is made up of the main researchers on World Peace. The Italian counterpart has recently merged with the Civil Peace Protection which groups several organisations which act non-violently in conflict situations even abroad, to prevent an outbreak of war, to interrupt the use of arms and find non-violent solutions and to reconcile both sides after a conflict. I do not form part of the Focolare Movement but I have come into contact with Loppiano (Incisa – Val D'Arno, Florence) through friends who are members of *Servas* or *"Open Doors for Peace"*. This is an organisation inspired by Gandhian principles in which hundreds of thousands of people from all over the world offer hospitality for a few days to members from other countries who wish to exchange visits and to get to know people sharing the same interests. *Gandhigra,* a village in the South of India, in Tamilnadu, is also inspired from these ideas of Gandhi, and has a University which is twinned with the University where I teach.

The work done by the Focolare Movement around the world – which we have briefly seen during these days – is marvellous and must certainly be encouraged and extended. It is a work which in the theory of non-violence is defined as the "constructive project" which is one of the two pillars of non-violence. But to attain a brotherly society as referred to in the title of this congress, there is a need of the other pillar of non-violence, which in Gandhi's terms is defined as *Satyagraha* and which a friend of ours, a priest from Viareggio who died a few years ago, Don Sirio Politi, defined as *"Fight to Love" ("Lotta come Amore").* I do not want to sound critical towards the work done by the Focolare Movement but I define their work as a "non-violent addition", as Capitini puts it. Capitini used to lecture me and my wife on non-violence, and was first in making Gandhi known in Italy. He spoke of non-violence even during the Fascist period, and ended up in prison for his antifascist ideas.

Why do I deem it essential to bind the non-violent fight against injustice to the constructive project? I do so because the world is full of injustices and abuse. There is an increasingly wealthy North, and the South can only imitate the North and become its accomplice, otherwise it would become increasingly poorer. The same occurs between different social classes, where some become always richer while others grow poorer. War becomes a "normal" tool to defend the privileges of the rich and powerful against the rest. A fraternal society instead needs egalitarian relationships, relationships between equals and not imbalanced relationships like that of master and slave, or rich (even if one practises charity) and poor. At the moment we are immersed in what Bush and his collaborators define as the "never-ending war" against terrorism. The war in Iraq and that which is being prepared against other countries called "rogue states" like Iran, Syria, etc., instead of fighting terrorism is in reality rekindling and reactivating it, so much so that the citizens of rich states are becoming ever more insecure as a result of possible terrorist attacks. For this reason, in my opinion, if we want to lead to "a rejection of war", which Zani mentioned on the first day of this Congress, we must study and put into practice the second pillar of non-violence, that is *Satyagraha.*

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Let us take a better look at this problem. To promote rejection of war, besides talking about the work of the Focolarini which - as we have already seen, may be defined as creating awareness and building an alternative society based on fraternal relationships - Zani also speaks of the need for a single international body which substitutes single states, in search of a world without war. This is what the United Nations' preamble states too. At the end of the beautiful writing about the ways of war and peace written by Norberto Bobbio, who has called himself a student of Capitini, three possible forms of pacifism are mentioned: 1) institutional; 2) instrumental; 3) finalistic. Zani speaks of two of the forms of pacifism identified by Bobbio: the <u>finalistic</u> form (whereby peace is achieved by changing the person and making him a pacifist) and the <u>institutional</u> form (giving rise to an organisation which is above national level to resolve conflicts before these get out of control). Bobbio identifies also a third form of pacifism which he defines as <u>instrumental</u>, that is where peace is sought by struggling to reduce the instruments of war, for example, reducing the construction and the selling of arms or demilitarising society. Not only did Zani not speak of this form, but he also criticised pacifism as being inadequate. However, if we take a look at the United Nations Organisation today and evaluate its work, we cannot but see that its preamble is an old record and that the truth is that it is paralysed by a restricted council of security made up of five nations, with the right to veto. These five nations are moreover the biggest manufacturers and traders of arms in the world (of over 85% of heavy arms). How can we hope to arrive at a society, which is not so much fraternal but at least more pacific, when all decisions about the making or unmaking of wars are in the hands of a body controlled by countries which are "arms vendors"? Without a great movement for peace and without strong pressure from below from all populations who have become more conscious about the importance of peace and who work and struggle concretely to reach it, even if we were to have a democratic reform of the UNO, we will not have that body above national level which Zani talks about and there will be even more wars. But Zani is right in criticising the peace movement because very often it is only reactive (it is not an action for peace but a fight against war, and very often it does not fight against all wars but only some chosen ones). Oftentimes the peace movement does not understand the reasoning and methodology of non-violence, which combines the struggle for peace to constructive work to obtain a varied and a more equal society than that of today.

Another aspect, which echoes what has already been said by the environmental expert at this Congress, comes from the Gandhian Movement which identifies three levels of non-violence and peace. Narayan Desai – our Indian friend, son of Gandhi's secretary (who died in the English prisons where he was imprisoned together with Mahatma), brought up by Gandhi himself in the community where he lived with his family, and collaborator of two principal successors of Gandhi, Vinoba and Yahaprakash Narayan – comments that during Hindu prayers, *Shanti* (peace) is repeated three times. He says that the first peace refers to inner peace (if we have no peace inside of us we cannot bring peace to the world); the second peace is that with others of any religion, race, class, nation, etc.; the third peace refers to that with nature around us.

But as has already been referred to earlier, the fundamental problem lies with the fight against injustices: if we remember the prophecy of Isaiah there will not be peace until justice is made. How can one fight against the many injustices which afflict the world without increasing hatred and unfriendliness which are two fundamental elements which impede Man to feel part of the same unity, (to use a term used by Chiara Lubich)? How is it possible to reconcile brotherhood with the non-violent fight against injustices? Gandhi has an answer even for this question: distinguishing between sin and sinner. One needs to love the sinner and to try and convert him and not kill him or look down on him, but one needs to fight using the Satyagraha, that is fight using the force of truth, against his sin.

It is only when one unites the two pillars of non-violence, the "fight to love" of Don Sirio, and the constructive project, like that of the Focolare Movement, that one may hope to obtain a better society, based on egalitarian and brotherly relationships, and in which war is a memory of bygone times.

But before arriving to the conclusion I would like to show you a concrete example about the need for a non-violent fight against injustice taken from the recent seaquake of South East Asia, which took place while my wife and I and our two daughters were in India, one of the countries hit by this terrible tragedy which killed more than 250,000 people. This example came to mind because in the beautiful hotel in which my wife and I are staying these days, there is a prawn meal mentioned in tomorrow's menu. While I was talking to the hotel owner I realised that neither him nor the others who will be eating these prawns know that most of the deaths which occurred were caused by multinational companies which have set up fish farms in the countries hit by the seaquake. To breed these prawns pools are built which are a metre-deep and hundreds of square metres wide. In these pools, seawater and fresh water is pumped. The newborn prawns are put in these pools, they are then fed with chemicals (which probably, will soon – if we think of mad cows – will give us mad prawns which instead of walking backwards will walk forward). In a few months time these prawns will grow and will be sold in the markets of rich countries, even in ours. The profits derived by multinational companies from this type of rearing are extremely high and this explains the rush to find new places where to build these pools. However the damage inflicted on the local population and the environment are even higher. The fresh water needed for everyday life by the local population is no longer fit for drinking due to the fact that saltwater seeps in the terrain. Women who used to work in rice pads, which in these regions usually produce 3 harvests a year, are losing their jobs as they are being substituted by other workers whose job is simply to feed the prawns and collect them when they are ready to be sold; fishermen risk their lives as they may be sucked in by huge pumps which take in seawater to be put in the pools. Besides these notable damages done to the population, even greater damage is done to the environment, damage which has eradicated a natural immunity which the population had before. In order to build these pools, very often forests of mangrove trees where eradicated (the natives call these trees "lifesavers"); they have also removed dunes off the beaches, and even these used to be a protection against the phenomenon of seaquakes. To top it all, after a few years these pools become desert land, and the whole area becomes useless, and cannot even be employed for the continuation of the cultivation of prawns, so that industries have to find another place to destroy. These problems have clearly emerged from studies done about seaquakes, showing that the destruction of mangroves and sand dunes were the main cause of the death of many people, who would have been saved had these not been removed. In fact the tribal populations who lived in the forests were saved thanks to the presence of these trees, even in the Adamane Islands which were at the centre of the seaquake and where the number of victims was high. Currently the owners of these fish farms, who are perhaps not even aware of having contributed to the death of so many people, are asking to be reimbursed for the damage suffered by the seaquake. Some of our Gandhian friends have been protesting non-violently against these industries for years, highlighting the negative effects on the population and the environment. Particularly, women have for many years made non-violent boycotts so that these pools would not be built. An appeal to the Supreme Indian Court has also been made which has admitted that they were right and a decree was issued which impedes the fresh construction of such pools. But often, thanks to the corrupt local authority and the police, this rearing continues to be promoted. So the fight is on everyday. Now these Gandhian friends are asking that instead of giving money to the prawn factories, the local authorities should utilise funds to rebuild the environmental protection which was lost so as to protect the local populations from other possible disasters[54].

One may think: what was the purpose of these fights if notwithstanding the favourable judgement given by the Supreme Court, these industries are still in operation? I believe that this way of thinking is wrong. We must think of how many more people would have died in the seaquake had there been no opposition from the local population, who fought non-violently against

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[54] To be able to view this problem in greater depth see three Italian writers: Laura Coppo, *Terra, Gamberi, Contadini ed Eroi,* Editrice Missionaria Italian, 2002, Bologna (recently translated and published in English and presented by Vandana Shiva, with the tile *The Color of Freedom*, Common Courage Press, Monroe, Maine, USA); and the role play for enviornmental education in schools, of Elena Camino and Laura Colucci, *Gamberetti a Tavola: un problema globale,* EGA, Torino, 2nd edition, 2000.

these systems, rendering more difficult further construction in these areas. For this reason, in my opinion, the non-violent fight served the purpose of preventing the death of more people. The same goes for war: the non-violent fight may reduce injustices in the world, rendering ineffective the use of arms in fighting against the same injustices. The problem is that if only in a few places and few people are ready to use non-violent fight against injustice, the breeders of industrial prawns and arms producers, when face with this fight will move to other places where people are not ready to fight against them, and thus end up being the winners. So it is necessary that this ability to fight with non-violence is extended to all parts of the world. This calls for a big commitment and a big effort.

To conclude: your foundress Chiara Lubich speaks of her movement as a "revolution of love". Yesterday an Italian translation of a book written by my favourite author was launched, whom I consider to be one of my teachers: P. Sorokin, *The Power of Love*, Citta Nuova, Rome, 2005, which highlights the fact that the power of love is the greatest power of all. Our Gandhian friends speak of the need of "a complete revolution": a revolution of the heart, the mind, of social relationships, of culture, of economy, and of social structure. I believe that a revolution of love is fundamental for this complete revolution, and it precedes it. Howevere it cannot be limited to interpersonal relationships between human beings, but it should be extended to all other aspects.

There are four commitments which, according to the Gandhians, form part of this complete revolution:

1) creating awareness in people (and here we remember the lesson of Freire, the greatest South American pedagogue);

2) the organisation of the population, above all of the poorest and those who are marginalised, who suffer the major part of injustice, often passively and without reacting;

3) the non-violent fight against injustice, that which Don Sirio calls the "fight to love", because it fights injustice and frees not only the person who is its victim, but also those who perpetuate it, often without knowing;

4) a constructive project and an alternative project which is directed towards a more just and fraternal society, like the one the Gandhians and the Focolare Movement are trying to create.

If the Focolarini accept this non-violent "addition", over and above the constructive project which they already promote in a very valid way, they will prepare themselves and also educate others to use the non-violent fight against injustice. This road could lead towards a society based upon fraternity, a more just society, one without war. Even if the road is long and difficult, it could be faster and can lead to success.

A new "place" for sociology[*]

Emanuel Matos[**]

Together with the organisers of this Congress we had already dreamt of moments like these many years ago. This is, therefore, a moment of great joy.

At the end of this meeting I cannot add many more things as a sociologist since much has already been said. However, given my past experience, especially while working in Brazil amongst ecclesiastic communities, with workers' unions and as a lecturer at different universities, I feel that I am living the dawn of a new period.

I cannot forget, however, that one of my worries and of our nation is the lack of answers, always promised by governing authorities, but which have not been given yet; another worry is that certain things still need to be put in their right place. An example is the environmental issue, which does not only arise due to lack of technology. The United States, for example, have all the necessary technology but the Colorado River is still in the condition we all know. The problem of my country is poverty rather than lack of technology.

When we meet on occasions like this, we can see that, apart from the contradictions brought by the colonisation process, apart from the many sufferings, many good things have emerged from Europe. And here, in this meeting, we also experience the joy of being able to share the fantastic achievements of Europe.

In the light of this I would like to say a few words as a sociologist: I believe that what we are doing here is putting sociology at great risk. We have started an experience regarding which sociology has the responsibility of offering an explanation. That is, we have started an experience where love creates an objective reality which sociology must explain. I think that this is our first challenge: to explain love, to explain the presence of Jesus in our midst, to explain fraternity as a concrete object, as a sociological object, especially in respect of the results it brings about.

Another challenge is that of explaining the possibility of a new epistemological experience, considering what Chiara Lubich says. I will explain myself better: Chiara Lubich offers us a "place" from where to look at the world: no longer in view of social classes, neither in view of individuals about whom sociologists have to think and make mathematical calculations, statistics, social physics, etc. She offers us a different "place" which is no longer that of science in the way we have understood it until now, but of science as is perhaps seen by poets rather than sociologists. I remember T.S. Eliot who had wisdom, which we have today lost due to knowledge; he had knowledge which we have lost due to information. Therefore, I think that Chiara is taking us back to a "place", to a real "epistemological place", which is looking at all things from the eyes of Wisdom, of Jesus in our midst[1]. This is, therefore, our second challenge: to find a way, to say, to show that Jesus in our midst is a "place" that can create a new understanding, a new knowledge. [55]

And finally, a thought, an intuition that I think is something which goes beyond any sociological contribution: we are not in front of a science, a philosophy, a social science, but in front of a new knowledge … *Claritas*[56], maybe.

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[*] Written draft is from a taped presentation; not edited by the author.
[**] Sociologist, instructor of sociology at Belem university (Brazil).
[55] "Jesus in our midst" means the presence of Jesus amongst those who are united in His name (see *Mt* 18,20). In the spirituality of the focolare this is an experienced reality which is reflected upon which has an effect on life and on the way of thinking. *(Editor's note)*
[56] The word *Claritas* is used to denote light that comes from on High – from the Holy Spirit – and that sheds light on all human realities and knowledge.

Liberty, Equality, Fraternity: the complexity of a triad

*Pietro Cavara**

On reaffirming the notion of the revolutionary triad, there is a risk that this might become a rhetorical exercise. More than two hundred years of history, (from the time of their celebration during the French Revolution) show the incompatibility of those terms with the violent and demystifying present and past. However, when taken together, they delineate a model of perfection, and the aspiration for universality and peace in mankind, an aspiration that has not become a reality. Each one, on its own, expresses – depending on one's personal point of view and interpretation – concrete historical facts which are very remote from the realization of the Promised land, and besides, utopia is not concerned with specific historical notions in which one wants to observe the manifestation of each principle, but the synthesis of the actual panorama in which these principles did not materialize.

One, can therefore, affirm that liberty, equality and fraternity, are still waiting to become a reality or are, in my humble opinion, either an aspiration for a world that is an expression or, at least a critical point of reference, for the unity which it implies. In fact, the analysis of their historical past can only deal with their fragmentary realization or with the realization of one or two principles at the expense of the others or of the remaining one, but never of all three.

Liberty has been sacrificed for equality, or vice versa. Or else, both have been understood, as is evident in the scenario of democracy, to the detriment of fraternity. Of the three terms, the latter remains the great absentee up to the present day. The hypothesis put forward here is that the absence of fraternity is not only at the origin of this lost synthesis of thought and of the reality of today's world, but that, in reality, there cannot be liberty and equality as a measure of human dignity in its absence. Fraternity is the keyword to rediscover the meaning of unity, the principle that can make room for the re-interpretation of the triad in all its complexity, thereby, promoting hope for the future. Its absence could explain the 'ferocity' of the world, the idea that liberty and equality are not sufficient for the progress of mankind, neither when taken singularly nor when taken in their 'democratic' synthesis. A mention has already appeared in an article by Stefano Rodota' (La Repubblica 15.02.2005). In fact, it is from this article that I have begun to consider this triad and its role in fraternity.

When one considers liberty in its modern sense, as expressed in modern revolutions, and speaks solely of liberty, one can observe its prevalent 'negative' nature. If one regards liberty as an achievement that can be generated for oneself and for others, one automatically deviates from the required notion of liberty. The 'negative' aspect, in fact, includes the non-external obligation as the positive aspect of liberty conditions the behavior of others, and changes, in turn, the perception of a reality in which one finds oneself alone to act without any coercions, of any kind. In these terms, liberty is meaningless. However, when one begins to conceive it as a principle of conservation, in respect of a positive liberty that redefines the role of persons in society, it thereby becomes fully understood as its alleged opposite, namely, positive liberty. On the outside, one finds the political sphere, the kingdom of possibilities; on the inside one finds the private sphere with which the 'negative' meaning of liberty is linked. Also, if the 'positive' component includes maintaining social rights in which this same liberty, in its entirety, is expressed, then the negative component, very often, includes that which one does not want to renounce to, to be able to change a presumably natural order in which one is always free to act, individually, privately, and exclusively. Liberty, in isolation, can be nothing but 'negative' because the 'positive' meaning can get contaminated by equality and thus, it becomes a complex liberty. The sphere of social rights widens the chances of liberty, requires greater equality for the disadvantaged – the equality that allows one to be able to exercise a new liberty, or one that exists only for others. This requires that in order to be free one

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has to achieve equality to be able to express one's talents, income and prerogatives without reducing one's possibility to be free. It is not true that liberty is not conditioned, or that one can remain 'free' even without possessing those means which equality permits, as even if one is free without having any possessions, this is not the only type of liberty with which one is concerned (in this sense 'positive' liberty combines itself with equality in respect of antiliberal and conservative positions). On the other hand, equality, as a means for the exercise of liberty otherwise precluded, calls for the re-organization of pre-existent liberties, of the democratic balance, of positive coercion as an equivalent aspect of natural law, confirming action taken liberally. In other words, equality calls for the compromise of the model of negative liberty with the component of equality, in terms of rights and options.

When confronting these two models of liberty and each one respectively with equality, the idealogical scenario of liberty becomes clearer than its falsely prescribed component, its 'negativity'. The latter is evident in the false theories (particularly of Hayek), and consequently, one notices the parallel confrontation with the historic context in which it occurred: England in the second half of the 17th Century, the 18th Century, the time of Thatcherism, liberal imperialism and, in recent times, the reality of today.

It is now, evident that 'negative' liberty cannot be relied upon in order to bring about the realization of the synthesis of the remaining principles. It can, very easily, do without the other two. However, neither can equality nor liberty, as far as equality modifies the significance of liberty itself (or does not include also and above all, the 'positive' aspect) come out in defense of a unitary vision. If the link with equality weakens and thereby transforms liberty, its new identity moves to a 'positive' level. If it becomes liberty for oneself and for others, it is a responsible liberty. Equality becomes totally another thing if fraternity is taken as its sister: responsible liberty, ethically addressed. Responsible liberty recognizes the importance of institutions and the role of laws, and not only prescribed law. When liberty is conceived in this way one's ideals are widened and kept within limits in relation to others who should not or must not be tormented or have their rights and liberty suppressed (hence the growth of the democratic union of liberty and equality). Responsible liberty, when morally assumed, comprises the synthesis of body and soul, in which the individual acts responsibly and 'conventionally'; and the individual's desire to love oneself and others. Liberty that includes equality and fraternity is in radical antithesis to negative liberty as seen in modern, English, American and constituent French Revolutions, and which, in its absolute western centrality, visibly appears as the deformation of a vast project of civilization and of humanity.

However, the fact remains that liberty does not build itself in a multifaceted way in relation to the other two terms, but fraternity does so. The case of criminal law is emblematic. In order to be able to preserve the liberty to punish (even extreme punishment), equality justifies the principle that punishment is the consequence of crime and can cause the death of the assassin. Fraternity, on the other hand, leads one to respect the liberty of the other, and to respect the sentiment of equality, thereby suppressing the pride of the victim and the arrogance of the judge and of the law. Fraternity is the just means, and not a rhetorical infatuation.

The appeal for clemency to prisoners, expressed by the Pope in the year of the Jubilee 2000, must not therefore be interpreted only as a request for an exceptional and necessary measure. It is rather, an appeal to grasp the profound sense of human dignity, in a world that is globally dehumanized. It is an invitation to reflect on the essence of the nature of fraternity, as equality and liberty alone are not sufficient to promote dignity. On their own, they can 'inflict suffering'; produce cruelty and horrors in full conflict with the original intention of arriving at a just and enlightened society.

THE UNCERTAIN FRATERNITY, OPAQUENESS AND DETERMINATION OF A CONCEPT BETWEEN "POLITICS OF FRIENDSHIP", "POLITICS OF ANIMOSITY" AND THE CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE

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It is very difficult to imagine a theoretic formulation according to Hobbe's theory, which does not consider politics as that human reality - historically determinative and essentially built on animosity. It is, actually, a known fact that it was Thomas Hobbes himself, the first spokesperson of that profound and significant transportation of modern Europe, immediately after the "peace of Westfalia", who prepared the way to the consolidation of a reality problematically assembled; the nation states are, in fact, the various "Leviatans" hosted in this "new", intrinsically and extremely heterogeneous assembly, still lacerated, as a result of the conflicts of the past. It is actually this scenario to suggest the idea that politics should become solely the instrument 'par excellence', with which to proceed towards what we could define as a "perpetual armistice", as each state, in order to ward off the invasion of the other states, strategically seeks to make alliances with the more powerful states. This vision of politics, - which, in spite of its innovative character, includes some residue of the old *pax romana*[57], even though subtle, continues to survive inside the diverse interpretations in the field of modern thought; both in Locke and in Kant, the problem of the latent conflictuality between the European states remains unchanged.[58]

In the 1900's, this same theme, came up again inside new theoretic perspectives like those of Carl Schmitt, who - without avoiding to resort to arguments of a philological nature, in force of which, it is possible to maintain that there is a close link between the notions of a city (*pol*-is), politics (*pol*-itikos) and war (*pol*-emos), in force of the affinity with the identical root (*pol*-) comes to form a political-juridical theory which recognises, in an *ex nihilo* decision, to establish a social order (that originates from that normative void), the basis and even the *arché* of every expression of positive law in today's world.

Jacques Derride was in antithesis to this approach when, in the second half of the same century, he provided a new key of interpretation of the word *politics*, starting mainly from the assumption of an indomitable relativism of the ideal sphere of association and of ideology. Such relativism, from this French philosopher's point of view, has an immediate corollary, that the idea of building a new framework of encounter–confrontation is based on close agreement, on dialogue marked with the search of and the codification of *alterity.*

It is necessary to note that, if the intellectual tradition that emanates as a result of the assumptions of Hobbes and of Schmitt, establishes the contractual and decisive dimension of politics - thereby giving way to the notion of a "firm foundation" (a perspective that conceals characteristics peculiar to a real "negation of fraternity") - the direction of Derride's assumptions leads to and even promotes the breaking down of the notion of philosophy and reflection taken *in toto*, as a vision of politics being closely correlated to the presentation and the outcome of an "non-founding thought". In other words, if for Hobbes and Schmitt politics is "the feat of the enemy", for Derride politics is the "building" of order, departing from differences, moving on to the breaking

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1 The Leviatan State, in fact, is well distinct from the empire established by the *pax romana* due to its exquisitely lay characteristics – totally free from all references to the transcendental and to relationships with "gods". Yet both have in common an attitude of "dominion over that other person". Being an expression of *the stronger State* (no longer an Empire but a Monarchic State)*,* it is still able to impose its hegemony on the international state of equilibrium.

2 As Lia Formigari states, there are several interpretations emerging from Hobbes, Locke and Kant which show a significant theoretical continuity at the foundation of understanding lay middle class law, a continuity which takes into account the "contractual-conflicting" character from which such law inevitably originates (ref. L. Formigari, Introduction to J. Locke, *Trattato sul governo* by L. Formigari, Editori Riuniti, Rome, 1992, p.XIII).

down and criticism of tradition (or rather the theoretical basis for a prospect of agreement)[59]. In order to attempt to further clarify this point, even risking to banalise the prospective, we can say that in Derride European cultural tradition is marked by progressive logo-centric sedimentation, to which corresponds, almost inevitably an irremediable ethnocentrism. Both contribute to crystallize some conceptual traditional opposites, such as speech and writing, nature and culture, slavery and liberty. The persistence of these opposites - present mainly in Rousseau and Levi-Strauss, according to Derrida gives rise to the inflexibility of a "metaphysics in its original sense", a metaphysics that has, as a corollary, the vision of a "society, pure and indistinct at its core"[60]. It is however the "difference" which gives an added value to writings, to thought, in relation to the 'other' and in relation at all social levels, from the moment that, as the 'sign' begins to be conceived in its material incidence and in its difference and contiguity, in respect of other signs; an incidence that forks out from a possible meaning and from its historical original instance.[61] The specific political, cultural and ethnic reality should also be read in this perspective of continuing to relate oneself with other realities.

In our opinion, however, it is appropriate to say, that the two positions an outline of which has just been presented, even though in conflict with each other, implicitly spring from a proposition of an identical basis, or rather, from the notion that an 'origin *ex nihilo* of politics' can be found. In fact, even in Derrida, notwithstanding that there is an explicit non-fundamental inclination one paradoxically comes to a "strong" position. In fact, as soon as there is the decline of schemes orientated towards closely linked ties, and the vision of political-juridical regulations firmly built on a normative framework, the nullification of the determinative historical framework in which the state and politics find their right of citizenship is created - everything is redirected instead to an extra-temporal and de-temporal hermeneutic circle.

Therefore, both "politics of friendship"[62] of Derrida and the "resoluteness" of Schmitt present themselves as "Absolute".

In our opinion, it is legitimate to believe that even a concept like that of "fraternity" - which, in *lato sensu*, could be very closely related to the concept of a "politics of friendship" - seems even more void when it finds its riverbed in which to germinate, and develop in the aridity of an absolute thought.

Together with the general concept of "good" and "evil"- concepts that have been elaborated in the tracks of metaphysical tradition -, the concept of ""fraternity"" becomes sterile if embalmed in a vision which continues to qualify it is a basis of thought that cannot be renounced, as already destined not to develop and to create problems for knowledge and to give in again, uncritically. If, however, a similar concept is placed against a background of historical-social significance, then, probably, it could revitalize itself, and it could assume its meaningfulness with reference to a concrete relationship with "another resolute", and not with the abstract problem of *alterity*. If one keeps to the same context, then "fraternity" assumes the characteristics of a concept of a historic nature, and this could –hopefully - create the premise for an interpretation and understanding of defined individual problems. In order to support this, it is necessary to start from a basic unavoidable consideration, that although philosophically interesting, it is useless to prepare the ground towards agreement and *inter*-pretation, towards a specified *inter*-est, in other words, of a

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3 A prospect which, when seen from a considerably different point of view such as that of Juergen Habermas, becomes a discursive rationality (ref. *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, 2 voll., Suhrkamp, Frankfurt; It. Tr., *Teoria dell'agire comunicativo*, 2 voll., Il Mulino,Bologna, 1986).

4 One here particularly remembers the "myth of the good primitive" which permeates all the works of Rousseau, and which finds its most meaningful corollary in *Le Contrat Social* (in *Oeuvres complètes,* Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Paris, 1923; It. tr., *Il contratto sociale* in *Scritti politici*, Utet, Torino, 1970), when dealing with the image of man seeking to improve his condition in his environment and with others through "a contract", attempting to "retrieve" the original level of purity and goodness which were in place before the establishment of private property.

5 Ref. F. Papi, *Filosofie e società*, vol.III, Zanichelli, Bologna, 1975, p.711.

[62] Refers to the volume that in a direct way has to do with the subject at hand, that is, the text *Politiche dell'amicizia*, Cortina, Milan 1994.

specific existing framework giving a historical sense and an *inter*-subjective public plan, towards dialogue among people, representative of distinct cultures, social realities or religions. In other words, in the perspective of Derrida there further is - in our opinion - the networking of a "romantic 18th Century idealism". A perspective that - even though springing from non-metaphysical intentions – hypothesizes that the process of interpretation needs different subjects *a priori* (both active and passive).

At this stage, we are faced with the problem of determining the criteria to define 'difference'. Both in the Christian and lay point of view, the process of defining 'difference', being social, ethnic and cultural (and having a psychological and personal affinity), merits to be qualified as problematic - methodically and ontologically - given that it requires us to ask which are, if any, the conditions 'hic et nunc', inscribed in life, on which to identify the parameters of an alleged discontinuity or continuity (material, cultural, religious etc.) between two or more nations, for example, or between two different social groups. Moreover, to depart from this problematic premise means to seek, not without difficulty, the 'path of direction', if one may say so, that experience suggests, knowing that acknowledging difference, or differences, may not be *sic et simpliciter* because of a pre-constituted dualism.

It is only by moving from this premise, we believe, that the stages of agreement, of dialogue and even of fraternity can become practicable on condition that this does not become a 'simple' concept, corrupted in an all comprehensive definition. Instead, having understood the premise of the value and the adhesion to the proposed dogma of the Christian perspective, like the 'koinonia of the Risen Christ', this becomes the nucleus from which irradiates a plan of ecumenical, and non-unilateral approach (and not, therefore, as a result of an enforcement of one's own definition). On the other hand, in doing this, one cannot elude the "diplomatic-interpretative" attitude which aims to cautiously search for every possible person in order to recognize possible and reliable paths towards friendship[63] given that, in an authentic Christian spirit, fraternity, as well as mercy, can in no way be imposed. In these parameters, fraternity, especially because it presupposes the sociological acknowledgement of differences and the ethical-religious inter-est in them, is destined to become an opaque concept and subject to a continuos historical-biographical re-definition. Nevertheless, although this opaqueness brings with it a constant stimulus which, notwithstanding the uncertainty that it can become reality within diversified and complex contexts, does not discourage, but rather, involves the scholar and the wise (Christian or lay, whoever he may be).

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[63] Paradoxically, a more congruent approach would be a diplomatic-interpretive one, inspired by Hobbes (one of cautious trust, we could say), rather than the one that draws, for example, from H.G. Gadamer, that author, who much like Derrida, developed the idea that had a Pauline flavor, the idea of "a hermeunetical charity" towards "another undetermined and unspecific person" (see H.G. Gadamer, *Kleine Shcriften I. Philosophie. Herneneutik*, Mohr, Tuebingen, 1967; tr.it.parz., *Ermenuetica e metodica universale*, Marietti, Genova 1973)