



“The new horizons of the Economy of Communion”
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PANEL 6
“NOT ONLY ECONOMY. FOR A HUMANISM OF COMMUNION”
TOWARDS A CULTURE OF COMMUNION

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To speak of communion is to speak of unity, but of a unity that lives of distinction, a unity dynamically energized by a hidden but ever present force.

In fact, the history of human culture is the history of a continual tension between the forms in which it was given the image of the One, but in the absence of the reality of the One – of the way he is in truth – and the interventions through which the One gave himself throughout history, progressively revealing himself through his prophets. These “men of the One” in which a new passageway was always opened in order to pass “from non-being to being, from darkness to light, from death to immortality” (Brhadaranyaka Upanishad), opened passages of reality in unreality, of truth in untruth. They indicated spaces of freedom, different pathways to take: for example, the endeavor of the Buddha with regard to the hardened Hinduism of his time, or the powerful actions of the prophets of Israel with regard to the rigid rituals or the politicizing of sacred rites. But the unreal, the idol always ended up closing those clearings of light, re-introducing its fabric and seeking to incorporate in them, thereby emptying them, the words of truth of the “men of the One”.

For me, a Christian, the coming into history of the One in his truth, reaches its apex in that very special prophet of his, Jesus of Nazareth. The One is proclaimed no longer as an absolute apex which withdraws into his unreachable solitude: he is open, he reveals himself as the communion of those we call the divine Persons. And precisely in his revealing himself he becomes reachable because he himself is communion of persons, love; and he withdraws from the solitude in which the human person imagined he was: not solitary in himself, and therefore, not solitary with regard to all otherness.



It is in this One-communion that we find the root of the culture of communion which is, in spite of the intense shadows and harsh contradictions, the western form of culture.

Especially today, in these tormented and bitter times, there is a greater longing for communion: with greater intensity, the West is searching for its true self. In an anguish which is not always conscious, although always real, the journey of unity, of communion, calls upon us. A journey in which the very culture of Europe will need to be conducted beyond the old fortifications, the “old parapets” (to use the words of Rimbaud¹), and the other great cultures will need to be challenged.

We must pass – and we are already moving in this direction – from a culture which has privileged the substance, the *what?*, to a culture which focuses on the person in his or her being communion which surpasses individuality, the *who?*, without plunging, however, into the abyss of the nothingness that was. It is the great conclusive answer of modernity to the metaphysics of substance.

What, who, lies *beneath the substance*?

Being, answers the West. But what is being? How do we perceive it?

As nothingness, answered, answers in various ways, the East. But what is nothingness? How do we perceive it?

In both cases the mind enters into agony!

And then a great proposal: Love, the essence of the Christian Absolute, the Trinity, must become the basic foundation of the thought, the culture of the West. Love, not as sentiment, not as psychic reality, but as the profound structure of the real, of all that is real.

Love – this is the secret – which is the synthesis of being and non-being. In fact, what does it mean for me to love if not to give myself, and without reserve? Should I say: making myself nothingness? But isn't it really in this self-giving that love *is*? Then, through a unique alchemy, in self-giving = the non-being of love, love is. The true countenance of being is revealed!



And what is love when it becomes thought?

Being, at its absolute heights, leads to the solitude of the thinker, lost in the consuming embrace of this One-being. *Non-being*, in turn, aspires to the goal of thinking – and if it can wait for a further light, this is neither thinkable nor expressible.

Love, instead, is *communion*, because it is *giving oneself to someone*. And if this giving oneself becomes reciprocal in the free return of the gift, our thought breathes in the immense sea of life.

The categories of such thought, more than the *abstract* ones of the thought of being, and the *negative* ones of the thought of non-being, are the *concrete* thoughts, that is, of what is real inasmuch as lived in the communion which constitutes it and which the word leads to manifestation in this rapport, communion, understood within the communion-rapport among us human beings.

For this to be possible, the word must become as *light* as possible (I think, as a Christian, of the Word on the cross), in order to receive all the depth of love, and of love become transparent icon, and also, vehicle.

In this perspective, economy, only to give an example – let me dare to say – economy becomes the science of *the art of the gift*: that gift which, having love as its form, is all and only gratuitous. A gratuity which in reciprocity becomes economy. The consistency of goods, like that of words, must also become light, so as to become icon and vehicle of the love form of social communion.

So not the hard privacy of possession, which relapses into the ego and extends unhappiness, loneliness and anguish; nor investment as subject of the possession of a collective which is always less real than the subjects that make it up; but the personal communion of giving by receiving and of receiving by giving, in which the economic good becomes the countenance of the absolute Good, that Trinity of Persons which is exchange of Love.

¹. “Le bateau ivre”.