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I *Quaderni del CSA* ospitano articoli e studi che riflettano su alcuni fenomeni religiosi, socio-economici, politici, culturali e missionari delle Regioni Saveriane presenti in Asia. Essi si propongono anche di far conoscere eventi o esperienze che possano arricchire ed essere di aiuto ad altri missionari coinvolti nelle stesse attività.

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Estetica transumanista

TIZIANO TOSOLINI

I recenti dibattiti sul Transumanesimo (inteso come stadio di transizione intermedio dall'umano al post-umano) sono in gran parte incentrati sul tema della prossima mutazione a cui andrà incontro l'umanità. Il tecno-positivismo e l'ideologia perfezionista portate agli estremi dai transumanisti è già parte dei programmi più avanzati della biomedicina contemporanea, come ad esempio la clonazione, l'ibernazione, la manipolazione genetica, la nanotecnologia, la chirurgia estetica e protesica. Il Transumanesimo, così, al contrario di coloro che si applicano per potenziare artificialmente il corpo umano semplicemente innestando o sostituendo organi mal funzionanti con quelli cibernetici (trasformando l'essere umano in un cyborg), intende massimizzare l'apporto delle scienze e della tecnologia per modificare radicalmente la corporeità umana e cercare di estendere in maniera illimitata la durata della vita.

Che il progetto post-umano sia già stato avviato, e che l'umanità sia ormai giunta a un punto di non-ritorno, lo si può dedurre non solo dall'insistenza con cui esperti di bioetica e tecno-visionari (soprattutto in America) hanno iniziato a mettere in discussione definizioni che parevano fino a quel momento scontate (come quelle di identità, uguaglianza, moralità, invecchiamento, mortalità...), ma anche dalla nascita e dallo sviluppo di quella che viene chiamata «arte transumanista», o «trans-art», cioè di quella esplorazione e utilizzo delle nuove scoperte scientifiche al fine di implementare i sensi e sviluppare realtà alternative.

Natasha Vita-More (1950- , al secolo Nancie Clark), una delle icone principali di questa particolare corrente di pensiero, in un suo recentissimo articolo dal titolo di «Aesthetics. Bringing the Arts and Design into Discussion of Transhumanism» apparso su *The Transhumanist Reader* così scriveva: «L'arte transumanista sorge quando combiniamo il biodesign con il nanodesign, le tecnologie dell'informazione e le scienze neurocognitive per il prolungamento della vita, e facciamo convergere la nanotecnologia, la biotecnologia, l'informatica e l'intelligenza artificiale al fine di fornire a una piattaforma interdisciplinare gli elementi per investigare la continuazione dell'esistenza attraverso il miglioramento, l'estensione e la rigenerazione della vita nelle sue forme biologiche, sintetiche e cibernetiche».

Questa definizione, che a prima vista appare troppo densa nella sua formulazione, ha però il pregio di indicare subito, e con una certa precisione, ciò che i transumanisti intendono per «arte», e cioè non tanto una «produzione» di opere adeguate ai canoni estetici del bello, quanto piuttosto una visione della vita considerata come un processo nel quale si danno delle risoluzioni concrete a domande quali: Che futuro desideriamo? Come ce lo immaginiamo? Che cosa vogliamo diventare, e perché? Quali saranno i sensi che vorremmo potenziare nel corpo umano? La bellezza o il bello di cui parlano i transumanisti non corrisponde a una qualità che connota positivamente il senso estetico di persone o cose, quanto piuttosto è un modo di intendere il futuro e di determinare il proprio destino migliorando l'umanità e dando spazio a quelle intuizioni che rimodellino la realtà e la corporeità del soggetto liberandolo dalle sue intrinseche limitazioni e imperfezioni.

Se dunque la vita è considerata un processo, l'estetica transumanista non è altro che questo stesso processo destinato ad aprirsi a scenari futuri tutti da modellare e costruire con l'ausilio delle più recenti e innovative tecnologie scientifiche. Come afferma lo *Statuto dell'arte transumanista*, scritto dalla stessa Natasha Vita-More nel 1982 (e rivisto poi nel 2003): «Le arti transumaniste rappresentano la cultura estetica e creativa del Transumanesimo... La nostre estetiche e le nostre espressioni si fondono con la scienza e la tecnologia disegnando esperienze sensoriali potenziate. I transumanisti vogliono migliorare e estendere la vita. Noi stiamo progettando le tecnologie per migliorare e estendere la vita. Le emozioni sono parte integrante dei nostri sensi e della nostra intelligenza. Noi stiamo progettando le tecnologie per migliorare i nostri sensi e la nostra intelligenza... Se la nostra arte rappresenta chi siamo, allora scegliamo di essere transumanisti non solo nella nostra corporeità, ma anche nei nostri valori... E come le arti transumaniste diventano sempre più nitide, come gli strumenti e le idee della nostra arte continuano a evolversi, così anche noi diventiamo sempre più chiari a noi stessi e sempre più evoluti».

Il tono delle parole usate nello *Statuto* può certamente dare l'impressione di essere ambizioso e temerario, ma non potrebbe essere altrimenti dato che le due influenze maggiori da cui trae ispirazione questa nuova teoria estetica — oltre a qualche idea tratta dall'Espressionismo astratto degli anni '40-'50, dall'arte concettuale degli anni '60-'70 (in cui si affermava che l'atto del pensare è già una forma d'arte), dalla Performance e High-Tech art degli anni '70, e dalla recente Bio-art degli anni '90 — sono il Futurismo (1905) e il Dadaismo (1915). Questo perché se il Futurismo rinnegava la tradizione e glorificava il contemporaneo enfatizzando la macchina (la tecnologia) e la velocità (il movimento) abbracciando così la fusione di arte e scienza, il Dadaismo, grazie al suo fervore rivoluzionario, si faceva portatore di nuovi valori estetici e promotore di una radicale trasformazione dell'esistente.

Tuttavia, la differenza tra tutti questi generi e il canone estetico transumanista deve essere ricercata sia negli *strumenti* che quest'ultimo utilizza per produrre la propria arte, che nelle *ragioni* addotte per realizzare le sue aspirazioni. Per la prima volta nella storia dell'umanità, infatti, gli artisti transumanisti vogliono vivere per sempre, cercano di potenziare la loro intelligenza, desiderano diventare più attraenti, più intelligenti e più creativi. O, come ben ci rivela il *Manifesto estropico delle arti transumaniste* del 1997 (rivisto nel 2003, firmato da vari artisti transumanisti e situato a bordo della sonda Cassini Huygen in rotta verso Saturno): «Io sono l'architetto della mia vita. La mia arte riflette le mie visioni e rappresenta i miei valori. Essa descrive la vera essenza del mio essere, combinando immaginazione e intuizione, sfidando qualsiasi limite... Il movimento delle arti transumaniste e i suoi vari generi considera l'arte molto più di un artefatto. L'arte influenza i cambiamenti sociali e culturali, il chi siamo e come viviamo... Noi siamo partecipi attivi della nostra evoluzione dall'umano al post-umano. Noi diamo forma all'immagine — al disegno e all'essenza — di ciò che stiamo diventando».

Ebbene, e traendo spunto dalle ultime affermazioni del *Manifesto*, potremmo subito chiederci: Quale forma ha l'immagine o il disegno a cui si ispira l'estetica transumanista? Quale essenza stanno cercando di plasmare questi artisti tanto da rivendicare — con il ricercatore e futurista svedese Anders Sandberg (1972–) — perfino il «diritto alla libertà morfologica», cioè il diritto di usare la tecnologia per autodefinirsi e plasmare il corpo (inteso come possesso inviolabile del soggetto) assecondando il proprio estro e la propria creatività? C'è qualche esempio che potrebbe aiutarci a tracciare almeno un profilo di chi saremo in futuro?

A queste domande ci viene in aiuto ancora una volta Natasha Vita-More con il suo *Primo post-human 2005*, il prototipo grafico di un essere umano che, sebbene l'artista lo paragoni niente di meno che a un'idea degna di un Frank Lloyd Wright o di un Le Corbusier, è ancora in attesa che lo sviluppo tecnologico progredisca a tal punto da realizzarlo. Il *Primo post-human*, infatti, sarà rivestito da un polimero di nano particelle, una sorta di pelle morbida e resistente allo stesso tempo, mentre le strutture interne saranno di gomma e di nanomateriali porosi. Avrà un meta-cervello con memoria e sensi avanzatissimi, e l'aspetto umano si potrà personalizzare. Sarà dotato di capacità intellettuali superiori e in controllo del proprio stato psico-emotivo, superiormente disposto al piacere, all'amore, all'apprezzamento artistico, e in grado di sperimentare stati di consapevolezza a noi finora sconosciuti. Il suo uso, in un prossimo futuro, pare essere duplice: esso potrebbe essere utilizzato da un individuo che ritorna in vita dopo esser stato sottoposto a un trattamento crionico o di ibernazione, oppure potrebbe essere impiegato come un corpo

alternativo, semi- o non-biologico, da chiunque lo desiderasse. E tutto questo, come ci informa la stessa autrice, senza aver la minima intenzione di mancare di rispetto al corpo umano, alla sua armonia, alla sua funzionalità. Tuttavia, con la realizzazione del *Primo post-human* l'uomo sarà costretto ad ammettere che il corpo biologico non è che uno dei mezzi mediante i quali l'uomo sopravvive come specie, e che è giunto il momento di sperimentare nuovi corpi inossidabili e «indossabili» per vivere più a lungo e in maniera più intensa la propria esistenza.

Natasha Vita-More è in ogni caso convinta che il soggetto post-umano — al contrario di coloro che si limitano a teorizzare come la mente debba essere trasferita in un computer (come ad esempio Hans Moravec) — non potrà fare a meno di un corpo. E questo per la semplice ragione che le sensazioni e le percezioni sono parte fondamentale della nostra soggettività, oltre che funzioni indispensabili per interagire in «un» ambiente (qualunque esso sia in avvenire). È con il corpo che formo, sviluppo e sostengo la mia identità, ed è con il corpo che non solo custodisco la mia personalità, ma che in futuro potrò anche sperimentare quelle infinite gradazioni di benessere che deriveranno dal suo perfezionamento e dalla sua raggiunta immortalità.

Eppure, nonostante tutti i vantaggi e i benefici che il corpo post-umano potrebbe un giorno possedere, e nonostante il discorso estetico transumanista consideri il corpo come una semplice estensione della moda, ci potremmo senz'altro domandare, parafrasando una celebre frase di Fëdor Dostoevskij, se questa è davvero quella «bellezza che salverà il mondo», o se non si stia invece consumando quella triste profezia del filosofo Walter Benjamin secondo la quale «l'autoalienazione raggiungerà il punto in cui l'uomo potrà sperimentare la propria distruzione come un piacere di prim'ordine».

Infatti, l'arte — intesa qui come ciò che disegna e dà forma all'auto-trasformazione e auto-modificazione dell'uomo, come ciò che muta il soggetto in un impasto indistinguibile di sinapsi e microchip, come ciò che considera il corpo nella sua interezza come un'elaborata protesi che si può e si deve manipolare secondo canoni estetici trasversali (in cui si compenetrano visioni futuristiche e progressi tecnologici) — non si riduce forse ad un immenso e pericoloso impasto di narcisismo e di solipsismo? Se l'arte, di sua natura, tende ad esprimere il bello, cioè a lasciarsi abbagliare da ciò che il soggetto si trova a ricevere come dono e in una situazione di radicale passività, l'estetica transumanista (che invece considera l'uomo misura di tutte le cose) non si riduce forse ad essere un riflesso sulla superficie dello stagno tecnologico in cui non vi è traccia o ombra di una qualsivoglia alterità? Se così fosse, avrebbe ancora senso parlare di «ispirazione», di «intuizione», di «genio»? Infatti, come papa Giovanni Paolo II scriveva agli artisti nel lontano 1999: «Ogni

autentica ispirazione... racchiude in sé qualche fremito di quel “soffio” con cui lo Spirito creatore pervadeva sin dall’inizio l’opera della creazione. Presiedendo alle misteriose leggi che governano l’universo, il divino soffio dello Spirito creatore s’incontra con il genio dell’uomo e ne stimola la capacità creativa. Lo raggiunge con una sorta di illuminazione interiore, che unisce insieme l’indicazione del bene e del bello, e risveglia in lui le energie della mente e del cuore rendendolo atto a concepire l’idea e a darle forma nell’opera d’arte. Si parla allora giustamente, se pure analogicamente, di “momenti di grazia”, perché l’essere umano ha la possibilità di fare una qualche esperienza dell’Assoluto che lo trascende».

E che quanto stiamo affermando non si riduca una semplice divergenza di vedute artistiche o estetiche, ma coinvolga invece qualcosa di estremamente decisivo per l’uomo, lo rivela quel passaggio della citazione nella quale si ribadisce che l’ispirazione unisce insieme l’«indicazione del bene e del bello», parole queste che ricordano il famoso detto di Platone secondo il quale «la potenza del Bene si è rifugiata nella natura del Bello» (*Filebo*, 65a). La bellezza, cioè, non si esaurirebbe nella seppur indispensabile rivelazione di un’alterità che «viene all’uomo» (mentre i transumanisti la considerano alla stregua di un possesso o una creazione umana), ma questa stessa alterità si trasformerebbe anche in fonte di bontà, di grazia e di salvezza. E se le visioni degli artisti transumanisti si aggrappano ad un’unica idea di liberazione (quella che prevede la sconfitta della loro finitudine), come non accorgersi che in mezzo a noi già rifulge la gloria di quella suprema consegna dell’amore che si realizza sulla Croce? È lì, infatti, che il «più bello tra i figli dell’uomo» (*Sal* 44,3) si offre (nel segno paradossale del suo contrario) come «uomo dei dolori... davanti al quale ci si copre la faccia» (*Is* 53,3). «La Bellezza» — come afferma Carlo Maria Martini — «è l’Amore crocifisso, rivelazione del cuore divino che ama: del Padre sorgente di ogni dono, del Figlio consegnato alla morte per amore nostro, dello Spirito che unisce Padre e Figlio e viene effuso sugli uomini per condurre i lontani da Dio negli abissi della carità divina».

Non è forse questa Bellezza-Amore che la missione deve testimoniare e manifestare a ogni uomo che l’attende e la desidera, tanto da indurlo a esclamare con il profeta: «Come sono *belli* sui monti i piedi del messaggero di lieti annunci che annunzia la pace, messaggero di bene che annunzia la salvezza, che dice a Sion: “Regna il tuo Dio”» (*Is* 52,7), e con l’apostolo Pietro durante l’episodio della Trasfigurazione: «Maestro, è *bello*, per noi stare qui» (*Lc* 9,33)? L’Amore: una bellezza così assente dalle disquisizioni estetiche degli artisti transumanisti, eppure così vicina al cuore di tutti coloro che si perdono nel suo fascino, che si lasciano abbagliare dal suo splendore, che si inginocchiano con riverenza e stupore davanti al bene che salva...

Religioni e missione



Spiritual Renewal Movements
Commonalities Across Religious Traditions

ROBERTO CATALANO

Inner Peace, Peace among the Peoples
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MARIA DE GIORGI

Rediscovering the Beauty of the Human Body
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Spiritual Renewal Movements

Commonalities Across Religious Traditions

ROBERTO CATALANO

The present paper proposes some reflections on the contribution offered, in recent years, by renewal religious movements which have become vehicles for interfaith dialogue. For the Catholic Church the phenomenon started in the years before the Second Vatican Council and developed in the last forty years and remains very much alive and still growing today. This paper attempts to reflect on how similar processes are taking place within other religions, showing similarities to the one happening within the Christian fold.

Among the countless and horrible cruelties of the last century, we have also witnessed a sharp change of direction as far as relationship among members of religions are concerned. Almost unexpected changes happened in the Catholic Church. They were prepared and fostered by theological reflection before, during and after the Second Vatican Council, by messages, documents, and prophetic gestures by the popes, from Pope John XXIII to Pope Francis, and by official statements and concrete initiatives and projects proposed and organised by the Church in the last fifty years. Much has been reflected upon and written about these happenings.

Moreover, in the course of the past half a century, many others have been protagonists in continuing the enterprise of dialogue among people who hold different beliefs and also with people who have no beliefs. Apart from theologians and witnesses (Raimundo Pannikar, Thomas Merton, and Bede Griffith to mention names that are widely known and acknowledged), there have also been institutions and international bodies born in the last few decades that promote dialogue.

For example: *Religions for Peace* (previously known as *World Conference of Religions for Peace*), the *Parliament of the World's Religions*, the *Interreligious Coordinating Council of Israel* (ICCI), and the recently established *King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue* (KAICIID). There are still other actors in interreligious dialogue which, at times, tend not to be given the attention they deserve. These movements make up an interesting phenomenon taking place within different religions and appears to be of historical importance. This is the subject on which

the present paper wishes to concentrate with the awareness that these phenomena deserve to be studied more carefully.

Renewal Movements in Different Religious Contexts

Catholic Church: An Unforeseen Council and Post-Council Phenomenon

In the central and final decades of last century there had been the appearance of «*new catholic movements*», usually rooted in and endowed with a strong spiritual dimension. They were born and grew up within the Catholic Church, are active in different parts of the world, and often are defined as new vanguards of Christianity. This phenomenon is often defined as a «Pentecost of the laity.»

A good number of the new movements were born by a re-awakening of laymen and, more often, laywomen.¹ Secondly, a few of them made their appearance before the Council while many emerged later. In general, they are all presented and identified as «fruits» of the Council or, probably more accurately, as «fruits of the post-Second Vatican Council»². Whatever the perspective may be,³ these movements have enriched the

1. All this is not something new in the Church. But we cannot ignore a significant novelty. In the past the laity used to receive a spirituality from the monasteries or the communities of consecrated people. Today, the contrary is happening. The spirituality of these movements is often shared by priests and consecrated women and men. Often religious life of some communities has been renewed and animated by spiritualities animated by laity. Cf. J. Castellano Cervera, «Tratti caratteristici dei Movimenti Ecclesiali contemporanei,» in *Rivista di Vita Spirituale*, 1985/39: 561–64.

2. M. Faggioli, *Nello Spirito del Concilio. Movimenti ecclesiali e ricezione del Vaticano II* (Cinesello Balsamo-Milano, 2013). These movements have lived a post-Council phase in a different way from the one experienced, especially by the laity which was not associated to any of the new emerging associating realities. On one side, people outside these organisations lived a less complicated experience without the search common to the Movements of an adequate a recognition by the Church. On the other side, laypeople who were part of the Movements suffered much less from the main problems experienced by the Catholic Church after the Council. In front of the progressive failure of the authority of bishops, clergy, and Church in general, they had the reassuring figure of their charismatic leaders and their communities. Secondly, the pastoral *impasses* experienced by parishes and dioceses after the 60's were unknown to the growing realities of the new movements. *Ibid.*, 67.

3. Some scholars today tend to see the Second Vatican Council not directly linked to the *new Movements*, but somehow connected with a series of Movements which developed in the first half of last century, like the *liturgical movement*, the *biblical movement* and the *ecumenical movement*. For sure, some of the instances taken by these pre-Council movements have been decisive for the drafting of some of the main documents of the Council. In a way, they contributed to the renewal of different aspects of Catholic theology, but in the end they were absorbed into Vatican II. The vitality they showed for decades and their protagonism were taken and transformed—or lost according to others—into the Council and the reforms it brought about (*Ibid.*, 103). On the other side, the bishops could not directly deepen the development of the *new Movements*, as many of them were not yet born. The Council discussed the theme of the laity and its role in the Church, as it appears in some of the documents: *Lumen Gentium* (chapter IV), *Apostolicam actuositatem* (n. 15–22),

modernity of the Catholic Church, taking as their priorities some of the great social and ecclesiological issues, and at the same time ignoring or downplaying other aspects which were considered more central in the past.⁴

These «new Catholic Movements» present a variety of characteristics that often make them rather different one from the other. Nevertheless, they all carry certain distinguishing marks that can be considered as common denominators. In fact, practically all of them are constituted by groups of Catholics, in large majority laypeople, following a charismatic leader. They propose a radical commitment in living the whole gospel: but at the same time they identify their charism with a specific aspect of the evangelical message. Moreover, they ensure a formation to their members, focussing on the spirituality born by their charismatic founder.

Finally, they have an ecclesiological perspective which often seems to downplay the local realities (especially parishes) in favour of the more specifically universal dimension of the Church (dioceses and, above all, the pope). Apart from the above mentioned aspects, they present a rich variety of patterns which makes them a true galaxy within the Catholic Church. This justifies the mosaic of definitions they have been given and categorizations they have been divided into by different scholars and observers.⁵

This variety suggests the need for a great amount of flexibility as these new Movements tend to resist rigid formulas and always hide a complexity which can not be easily defined into categories offered by the present structure of the Catholic Church. Often, some of these new ecclesial actors tend to describe themselves as a modern equivalent (or something very close to it) of the great mendicant movements (Franciscans, Dominicans etc.) or of the counter-reform role played by the Jesuits.⁶ This may sound pretentious, and for sure it is too soon to fully agree with this reading. Nevertheless, some observers of these phenomena agree that the spiritual movements born in a given period of time and

Gaudium et spes (n.43) and *Presbyterorum ordinis* (n.8). *Ibid.*, 17–8.

4. *Ibid.*, 140.

5. They have been distinguished in «reform,» «mobilization,» and «Church-movements» (A. Melloni, «Movimenti. De significatione verbo rum,» in A. Melloni, «I movimenti nella Chiesa», *Concilium*, 2003/3: 13–35); in «lay,» «spiritual» and «ecclesial» movements (J. Beyer, «De motu ecclesiali quaesita et dubia,» in *Periodica de re morali canonica liturgica*, 1989/78: 437–452). An interesting description is the one offered by Vanzan, who in 2002 in the context of a study promoted by the Italian group of teachers of Canon Law, came to a two-fold distinction of the *new Movements* in the Catholic Church: «Movements with an intra-ecclesial spiritual and apostolic commitment» and «movements of Christian animation of worldly realities» (P. Vanzan, «Elementi comuni e identificativi dell'attuale fenomeno movimentista intraecclesiale con cenni a rischi e speranze,» in Gruppo Italiano di Docenti di Diritto Canonico (ed. by), *Fedeli Associazioni Movimenti* (Milano: Glossa, 2002), 187–206.

6. M. Faggioli, *Nello Spirito del Concilio. Movimenti ecclesiali e ricezione del Vaticano II*, op. cit., 140.

the spiritual currents pervading it are an integral, if not an essential, part of each spiritual historic era. When historians of the twenty-first century ponder the religious contribution of the twentieth century in order to define our contemporary history, they will have to refer to the present spiritual Movements as much as we look at movements that defined the Middle Ages and at the Renaissance to describe the modern epoch.⁷

These Movements were born in different cultural and geographical areas of the Church: initially mainly in Europe, but later in Asia, South America, Africa, and North America. A good number of them have shown and continue to show great mobility and remarkable capability of spreading to different geographical parts of the world where they are often successful in taking roots in the respective cultural and religious contexts.⁸

In these often new found situations, and in a relatively short span of time of their young history—fifty to seventy years of life—they developed a remarkable capability to establish bridges among followers of different religions. It is, in a certain sense, something surprising and in no way pre-planned. Two examples are the Sant’Egidio Community and the Focolare Movement. They pursued a sort of a *practical theology*, which enabled them to meet the growing quest for ecumenical and interfaith dialogue, addressing growing issues like justice, world peace, religious freedom, and social integration in a world recently facing unprecedented migration waves.

Similar Phenomenon in Other Religions and Cultures

It may be surprising to see that also within the folds of other religions there has been a similar phenomenon. Among those that are particularly active in the field of interfaith dialogue we can mention the Mahayana Buddhist Movement Rishō Kōsei Kai, the followers of the Imam W.D. Mohammed within the Afro-American Muslims, and in Turkey the *Hizmet*, which takes inspiration from Said Nursi and Fetullah Gülen.

In the same way, we can not ignore the Swadyay Movement in India, and several groups and NGO’s from the Gandhian Movement that not only moved India towards independence but offered a new approach to Hinduism. There is a great variety of these organisations being born in different geographical, cultural, and religious contexts.

All this hails a new phase, which some scholars have dared to compare to what

7. M. De Pablo, «Movimientos Modernos de espiritualidad,» in *Revista de Espiritualidad*, 1971/30: 385.

8. This seems to confirm the fact that these Movements are *universal* and *catholic*. They spread all over the world with an extraordinary rapidity. This is an important factor to appreciate their *catholicity* and capability of being part, along with the local Church, of different situations and cultures. Cf. J. Castellano Cervera, «Tratti caratteristici dei Movimenti Ecclesiali contemporanei,» op. cit., 571.

Jaspers defined as «axial periods» in humanity's history.⁹ For some observers it is probably an overstatement, the phenomenon being too recent to be already tagged in this way. Nevertheless, it deserves due attention. In this brief analysis, it will not be possible to address all communities and groups involved in this process.

We will concentrate on some of them, with special attention to the *Focolare Movement*, *Risshō Kōsei Kai*, *Gülen Movement* and occasional references to *Sant'Egidio Community*, followers of Imam W.D. Mohammed and *Gandhian Movement*.¹⁰ They are all widely acknowledged for being on the fore-front in the interfaith venture and we will try to concentrate only on some of the points shared in common.

Religious Movements as Transnational Phenomenon

Many of these organisations have become trans- and cross-national phenomena where interfaith and intercultural dialogue are oriented *ad extra*, rather than *ad intra* as for many religious organisations. Such an attitude makes them capable to work for peace-building and for promotion of individuals, communities, and society at large.¹¹ All this offers an explanation for the growing interest shown towards these socio-religious movements by social analysts, political scientists, and actors in diplomatic relations.¹² They appear to be actively present in the recent and ongoing process of «rethinking religion in

9. P. Coda, «Prossimità e convivenza dei cristiani con uomini di altre fedi,» in *Nel Suo nome. Conflitti, riconoscimento, convivenza delle religioni* (Bologna: EDB, 2005), 75. Coda is convinced that today it seems that we are witnessing something new which in future could be considered as the starting point of a new era. In fact, today—Coda observes—religious identities come in to contact with each other, passing from the exclusive concept to a rather shy but clear relational approach.

10. Gandhi wrote a very interesting commentary to the *Gita*, expressing a clear personal perspective of the tradition of *Sanatana Dharma*. His approach has touched many aspects of the religiosity in India, with a special and careful attention to the social and political dimension. He is considered one of the last reformers who have contributed to what is known as *Neo-Hinduism* or *Renewal of Hinduism*, a phenomenon which started around the first decades of the 19th century, extending up to the second half of the last century.

11. W. Krause, «Civility in Islamic Activism: Towards a Better Understanding of Shared Values for Civil Society Development,» in P. Weller, and I. Yilmaz (ed. by), *European Muslims, Civility and Public Life. Perspectives On and From the Gülen Movement* (London and New York: Continuum, 2012), 57.

12. They, in fact, appear to be actively present, in the recent and ongoing process of «returning to God» or of «rethinking religion in world affairs,» where they impact societies at the social and religious level and in international relationships. It is a phenomenon which is carefully monitored, studied and deepened by experts in this field. A number of them agree on the fact that these Movements have an important role in the new phase religion is playing in public life and in the relations among nations. For further discussion of this aspect, see G. Kepel, *La revanche de Dieu: chrétiens, juifs et musulman à la reconquête du monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1991); J. Micklethwait and A. Wooldridge, *God is Back* (New York: Peguins, 2010); D. Philpott, «The Religious Roots of Modern International Relations,» in *World Politics*, 2000, 52/1: 206–245; O. Roy, «Religious Revivals as a Product and Tool of Globalisation,» in *ISPI—Quaderni di Relazioni Internazionali*, 2000, 12; T. Scott, «Religions and Global Security,» in *ISPI—Quaderni di Relazioni Internazionali*, 2000, 12.

world affairs,» where they impact societies at the social and religious level as well as in international relationships. Moreover, their inclusive models of behaviour and networking expertise though in a variety of ways represent a new approach to socio-religious critical situations. This makes these movements and groups vehicles of peace and dialogue not only among individuals but also among communities. All these phenomena being born towards the middle of twentieth century or in the later part of it, carry elements helpful to facing today's critical problems.

It is in this context that they show a deep religious foundation and a remarkable capability of playing an important and, at times, decisive role in peace-building processes, in conflict resolution or, more in general in favouring encounters among cultures and followers of different religious traditions. Their members are deeply motivated by long-term religious commitments with deep spiritual roots, which enable them to facilitate constructive rapports and social relations among different groups.¹³ These Movements become, therefore, transnational actors and play an important role in helping religion to gain again centre-stage even in Europe where for several centuries it was relegated to the private sphere of life.

The presence of transnational religious actors is a rather new phenomenon and not restricted to these kinds of religious movements. Traditionally, religious actors were considered alien to international problems and relations.¹⁴ In recent decades while these renewal movements were born and developed, other religious organisations started having a noticeable international relevance.

Within the Christian context, the Catholic Church was a clear protagonist, as was Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism. In the Muslim world, organisations coming from a variety of contexts—Shia and Sunni—started having a transnational impact. The transnational impact of religious organisations is often considered a *soft-power* and well apart from political and economic influences.¹⁵ But today that analysis has changed.

13. J. L. Esposito and İ. Yılmaz, *Islam and Peace Building. Gülen Movement Initiatives* (New York, 2010), 4. This perspective is shared by other scholars. See G. Stassen, *Just Peacemaking: Transforming Initiatives for Justice and Peace* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992); S. Thislethwaite and G. S. Stassen, *Abrahamic Alternatives to War* (Washington: USIP Publication, 2008); C. Sampson and J. P. Lederach, eds, *From the Ground Up: Mennonite Contribution to International Peace building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); M. Gopin, «Religion, Violence and Conflict resolution» in *Peace and Change*, 1991, 22/1: 1–31.

14. J. Haynes, *Religion, Politics and International Relations. Selected Essays* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), 177.

15. L. Ozzano, «Gli attori transnazionali e il caso del Vaticano,» in V. Coralluzzo e L. Ozzano (ed. by), *Religioni tra pace e guerra. Il Sacro nelle relazioni internazionali del xx secolo* (Torino: Utet, 2012), 86–7.

Protagonists and Vehicles of Dialogue

Chiara Lubich and the Focolare Movement

As already mentioned, within the Catholic world the Sant'Egidio Community and the Focolare Movement have offered a contribution to the cause of dialogue. Sant'Egidio, among its many other activities, had the merit of continuing the commitment to the *Prayer for Peace* called by Pope John Paul II in 1986.¹⁶ The Focolare, has been active on different fronts basing its experience of dialogue on its vital spiritual dimension of unity that develops into different types of collaboration and finally reaching promising academic level conferences.

Chiara Lubich, foundress of the Focolare Movement, played a prophetic role in this process. In 1977 in London, she received the Templeton Award for the Progress in Religion. She considered that experience as the starting point of her opening up to interfaith dialogue and collaboration. Since the early eighties she met with Mahayana Buddhists in Japan, and later with Theravada monks and nuns in Thailand. In the nineties she spoke to Afro-American Muslims in their Harlem mosque (New York City) and to the Jewish community of Buenos Aires (Argentina). Finally, at the dawn of the new millennium, she had several close and deep contacts with hundreds of Hindus in south India and Mumbai (India). While summarizing the engagement of the Focolare in interfaith dialogue, she has never shied away from acknowledging her surprise of this unexpected development. We could very well define her experience of dialogue as more of a prophecy than a project.¹⁷ The secret of the success of Lubich's experience in the pilgrimage of dialogue «lies in... a spirituality which is both personal and collective... which generates a new lifestyle. This spirituality is not the monopoly of our movement. It is the fruit of a charism, a gift of God, and by nature a charism is always destined to all those who want to receive it».¹⁸

16. The Community convenes, on a regular annual basis, meetings with religious leaders, which are held every fall in a different part of the world.

17. "We are always surprised to see that God has led us along a spiritual pathway that intersects with all the other spiritual ways of Christians, but also of the faithful of other religions. In practice, we become partners along the journey of brotherhood and peace. While maintaining our own identity, it enables us to meet and come to a mutual understanding with all the great religious traditions of humanity" (C. Lubich, «Can Religions be Partners in Peace Building?». Paper presented at the Assembly of «Initiatives of Change (Moral Re-armament), Caux (Svizzera), 29.07.2003 (from an unpublished text).

18. C. Lubich, «What is the Future of a Multicultural, Multiethnic and Multireligious Society?». Paper presented in London, June 2004 (from an unpublished text). "Working with many brothers and sisters of the major religions and the brotherhood we experience with them has convinced us that the idea of religious pluralism can shed its connotation of division and conflict, and emerge to represent for millions of men and

Dialogue, Friendship and Family life: Focolare and Risshō Kōsei Kai

At the end of her first visit to Asia in 1981, Nikkyo Niwano, founder of the Risshō Kōsei kai, introduced her to thousands of Buddhist followers of his movement. The Italian religious leader noted that although the two associations were of different religions, nationalities, and cultures, they had significant commonalities.¹⁹ «Diversity,» she said, «has made us understand that the points we share in common are not the result of human effort or of a project... Rather, they come from a supernatural action of God, and carry a goal that He Himself must have thought. Something which has not yet been revealed to us».²⁰

In the course of a second visit in Japan in 1985, Lubich came back to the same point. «We are convinced,» Lubich confided to Niwano, «that there is something supernatural, something which is above us. Probably our meeting is planned by God because we can not find a human explanation to it».²¹ The Buddhists themselves realised the novelty of the encounter and its transcendent dimension. In a note written in 1993, Nikkyo Niwano and his son Nichiko, future president of the organisation, acknowledged that «only through the grace of God and Lord Buddha's benevolence» they have come to the awareness of being engaged in «the same mission of working for the salvation of the whole mankind».²² Lubich, commenting on the developments of the friendship between the two Movements came to express the «hope that there may be other movements which have come to life for this very goal. We have to discover them».²³

Time proved the foundress of the Focolare right. It was not only a hope. There were Movements with these characteristics. The experience lived by the foundress of the Focolare and by the members of the Movement with this Buddhist organisation was only the starting point of the phenomenon we have mentioned. Much more was to be discovered and many other contacts to be established.

A Muslim Dialogue Oriented Organisation: Hizmet

In the vast context of interfaith dialogue, there has been experiences which originated in specific contexts with characteristics not necessarily oriented to dialogue. Only in the

women, the challenge of recomposing the unity of the human family, so that the Holy Spirit may in some way be present and active in all religions, not only in the individual members but also in the inner workings of each religious tradition,» in C. Lubich, «Can Religions be Partners in Peace Building?», op. cit.

19. Lubich was interviewed by a journalist of *Kōsei Shinbum*, a magazine run by *Risshō Kōsei kai*. Text available in part in C. Bosquet, *Incontrarsi nell'amore* (Roma: Città Nuova, 2009), 206.

20. C. Lubich, «Can Religions be Partners in Peace Building?», op. cit.

21. C. Bosquet, *Incontrarsi nell'Amore*, op. cit.

22. *Ibid.*, 228.

23. *Ivi.*

course of time did they became active in building bridges among communities and individuals of different faiths and cultures.

In the Muslim context is the one initiated and animated by Fethullah Gülen, an outstanding Turkish imam and religious leader who proposed a new reading of the Qu'ran with a special attention to education and formation of young generations to peace, mutual understanding, and world harmony. *Hizmet* (service)—this is the name that probably can best define this Movement—draws its inspiration from the teaching and the life of Said Nursi.²⁴ Originally born with a marked nationalist and Islamic character²⁵ the renewal proposed by Gülen has changed remarkably, opening up towards other faiths and cultures too. With different names, through independent groups and communities and in a variety of operating modalities, this Turkish born Muslim renewal organisation is fast spreading all over the world, starting from the Turkish republics of the former Soviet block. This paper will limit its focus to the commitment to interfaith dialogue, without entering in the merit of the involvement in Turkish political issues.

The Gülen's inspired organisations offer an interesting and modern example of the possibility of harmonising, within the framework of Islam, modernity and tradition, spirit and reason. Until recently, its features were apolitical and communitarian, but 2013 events in Turkey have drawn the Gülen's organisation closer to political involvement and affiliation. As like the other Movements (Focolare, Sant'Egidio, Risshō Kōsei Kai) it

24. For more information on Said Nursi See <<http://www.nur.gen.tr/it.html#leftmenu=Home&maincontent=makale&id=19>> or see T. Michel, *Reflections on Said Nursi's Views on Muslims-Christian Understanding* (Istanbul: Söz Basım Yayın, 2003); T. Michel, *Said Nursi's Views on Muslims-Christian Understanding* (Istanbul: Söz Basım Yayın, 2003). «Gülen's community is based on a complex web of business networks and controls a large media empire. It owns *Sizinti* (a scientific monthly), *Ekoloji* (an environment-related magazine), *Yeni Omit* (a theological journal), *Aksyon* (a weekly magazine), *Zaman* (a daily newspaper), *The Fountain* (English language religious publication), *Samanyolu TV*, and *Burc FM*. In addition to these media outlets, the community controls one of the fastest growing financial institutions, Asya Finans, which is backed by sixteen partners and has over half a billion US dollars in capital. Moreover, a powerful association of businessmen, İSHAD (is Hayatı Dayanışma Derneği), which includes over 2000 businessmen and merchants, supports Gülen's educational activities. This infrastructure also includes universities and colleges, high schools, dormitories, summer camps, and over 100 foundations. Day-to-day activities are organized by a hierarchical management based on the tenets of trust, obedience and duty to the community. This structure is composed of businessmen, teachers, journalists, and students» in M. H. Yavuz, «Towards an Islamic Liberalism? The Nurcu Movement and Fethullah Gülen,» in *Middle East Journal*, 1999, 53/4: 584–605.

25. We can observe a clear evolution in Gülen's thinking. In origin his approach was clearly rooted in Turkish nationalism, in the Islamic religion and in the patrimony inherited from the Ottoman Empire. This three-fold perspective has been summed up by analysts in three key words: Turkish Muslim identity. Until the eighties, Gülen's reading of reality tended to look at other countries, especially the West, as a real threat for Turkey. In the course of the following decades there has been, Gülen himself acknowledged it, a progressive change of mentality (B. Agai, «The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethic of Education,» in M. H. Yavuz and J. L. Esposito, *Turkish Islam and the Secular State: The Gülen Movement* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 63.

is almost impossible to know the number of persons involved in the Hizmet Movement. However, notwithstanding the lack of a marked and defined identity, the international spreading of recent years has made the organisation a transnational and cross-cultural, ensuring that this Turkish renewal religious Movement has a remarkable relevance at the global and social level.

Commonalities Among Renewal Movements

Anthropological Approach

It is striking to consider some of the commonalities among these renewal movements. A first element that deserves attention is the common approach to the person that the founders of these different socio-religious realities propose. Though rooted in the respective traditions and cultures, as well as in the scriptures of the different religions, nevertheless, they share a common vision of the human being, paving the way towards an awareness of the universal human family and of the brotherhood and sisterhood of all men and women. All men and women are seen as an image of God or an expression of Ultimate Reality (Buddhism) and somehow they carry a spiritual presence within. Chiara Lubich wrote to some young friends in 1947:

Always fix your gaze on the one Father of many children. Then you must see all as children of the same Father. In mind and in heart we must always go beyond the bounds imposed on us by human life alone and create the habit of constantly opening ourselves to the reality of being one human family in one Father: God.²⁶

This represents the first intuition of what later will become the foundation of Lubich's perspective in interreligious dialogue. In fact, all men and women are considered to be candidates for building a relationship of fraternity and unity. In the course of time, Lubich proposed a technique to make this possible: *the art of loving*. It is a methodology that the foundress of the Focolare suggested to people of all cultures, religions and social background, taking the Golden Rule as foundational paradigm, a principle that is present in all Sacred Texts. The *art of loving* consists of few points which can be summed up in the following way. First of all *to love everyone*, which means not to allow any discrimination as we can recognize *the «image of God»* in everyone. Secondly, *to love always* and *to take*

26. C. Lubich, *The Art of Loving* (New York: New City Press, 2005), 29.

the initiative, without expecting to be loved in return. Finally, *to love the other as ourselves*, that is to truly enter into the others, to live in the skin of those who are different from us, up to the point of feeling their sufferings and joys as our own in order to understand them and help them concretely and efficiently.

The same year that young Lubich wrote this passage, Mahatma Gandhi, wrote in the journal *Harijans* the following just a few months before being killed: «Consciousness of the living presence of God within one is undoubtedly the first requisite [of non-violence].»²⁷ Fetullah Gülen often quotes a line from Yunus Emre, a famous Turkish mystic and poet, who lived in the thirteenth century: «We love the created for the sake of the Creator.»²⁸ In the Buddhist context, one of the key-points of Niwano's philosophy of life drawn from the *Lotus Sūtra* is the teaching that: «All human beings are a manifestation of the Vital Force of the universe and therefore are equally important and carry the same value. Here is the crucial element for justifying the potential harmony of the universe among human creatures and among man, nature and cosmos.»²⁹ It is from this perspective that Niwano develops an anthropological vision of the world, which will justify his commitment to peace and harmony and, therefore, to dialogue. In fact, all creatures of the whole universe are equal, when gathered in the great assembly listening to the Buddha's preaching: not only the *bodhisattva*, but also monks and nuns, people from the upper society (kings, ministers and princes) and members of the public at large.³⁰ Here lies what can be defined as the equalitarian anthropology of the *Lotus Sūtra*.

This shared anthropological perspective is just the basis of similarities in the philosophies of those who have inspired and initiated these movements. But they go far beyond this preliminary, though foundational, aspect. Circumstances, at times unexpected, have put members or even the founders of these organisations in contact with each other. From this, projects of cooperation, and mutual friendship have developed. This process of dialogue, which initially was rather scattered due to the spontaneity with which encounters happened, little by little has taken more and more formal shape, creating a wide network of relationships across geopolitical areas, cultural and religious boundaries.

27. M. K. Gandhi, *Harijans*, 26–9–1947, 209.

28. F. Gülen, *Pritzma*, Vol. 3 (İzmir, 1994) in B. Agai, «The Gülen Movement's Islamic Ethic of Education,» op. cit., 65.

29. N. Niwano, *A Guide to the Threefold Lotus Sūtra* (Tokyo: Kōsei, 1981), 9–10.

30. Here we can fully grasp the real spirit of limitless benevolence and compassion. In fact, all beings, expressions of the same reality, though absolutely different in their respective appearances, are equal as far as the essence of the existence. Cf. T. Alessandrini, *Giappone nuovo e antico: studio fenomenologico del Movimento Risshō Kōsei Kai* (Roma: Pontificia Università Gregoriana, 2007), 241–42.

Lay Founders and Lay Leadership

A second aspect which characterizes all these Movements is the fact that most of them have been founded by laypeople, keep a lay leadership with a large majority of lay membership.³¹ What matters the most is the fact that the lay character of these organisations is not seen in contraposition to the tradition or clerical domain of the respective religions³². It is rather a precious way to actualize religious values and teaching among people in today's social context. The Focolare Movement's President, according to the Statutes³³, will always be a woman. This will ensure that the leadership will maintain a lay character.³⁴ The Gülen inspired organisations around the world have lay names and are formed and presided over by laypeople, often professionals or teachers. The Risshō Kōsei kai has already appointed the next President to be in Mrs. Kosho Niwano, daughter of the present leader of the Movement and grand-daughter of the Founder, giving a clear sign to the continuation of the lay leadership.³⁵ —END OF PART ONE

*The second part of the article
will appear on the next issue of Quaderni del CSA*

31. This is obvious in the Catholic renewal Movements—with Andrea Riccardi founder of the *Sant'Egidio Community* and Chiara Lubich and the *Focolare Movement*—but also Nikkyo Niwano, who gave birth to the Risshō Kōsei Kai, was a layman and so is his son Nichiko, the present President. Gandhi was a lay person. W.D. Mohammad and Fetullal Gülen, though imams, have been involved in lay work and activities and they are not considered being part of the clergy within Islam.

32. This does not imply the absence of tensions in the course of the developments of these new realities. There have been misunderstandings and difficult situations between lay reformers and clergy of the respective religions. But this never led to a fracture or a breakaway. On the contrary has often resulted in a positive influence on the part of the new streams of spirituality and traditional religious thinking and structure.

33. See *Statutes of the Work of Mary*, art. 2.

34. At the side of the President the Statutes of the Focolare place a co-President who has to be a man and a priest. (See *Statutes of the Work of Mary*, art. 95).

35. A further confirmation, if needed, is that the physiognomy of the Risshō Kōsei kai is today meaningfully expressed on their website with the following opening words: «Risshō Kōsei kai... *combines the wisdom of both the Lotus Sutra and the foundational teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha. Its purpose is to bring these transformative teachings to the modern world,*» at <<http://www.rk-world.org/>>. Also a brochure on the organisation, printed in 2004, underlines the main characteristics of the Japanese Movement highlighting its lay profile and its commitment in the world. It reads: «We members of the Risshō Kōsei kai, take refuge in the Eternal Buddha Śākyamuni and we recognize in Buddhism the true way of salvation, under the guidance of our founder Nikkyō Niwano. In the spirit of lay Buddhists, we vow to perfect ourselves through personal discipline and leading others and by improving our knowledge and practice of faith, we pledge ourselves to follow the bodhisattva way to bring peace to our families, communities and countries and to the world,» in *Risshō Kōsei kai. Buddhism for Today*, 2004: 4.

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Inner Peace, Peace among the Peoples

Values for Building a Peaceful Society: The Christian Approach

MARIA DE GIORGI

Having left behind the terrible heritage of the twentieth century, which was tragically scarred by two world wars, genocide and every kind of violence that inflicted unspeakable suffering on the human family, the twenty-first century seemed to open with renewed hope for peace, but this has been dramatically belied in the first decade of the new millennium. New hotbeds of tension, terrorism and various forms of fundamentalism and fanaticism all threaten the integrity of the human family and the peaceful coexistence of individuals and nations. In spite of this, peace remains the insuppressible longing of all human beings and the inviolable aspiration of every nation.

The topic of this Colloquium, *Inner Peace, Peace Among the Peoples* rightly reminds us that peace is both an individual and collective responsibility, and that there can be no true peace among the peoples unless it flows from peaceful and reconciled hearts that live in solidarity and fraternity. Therefore, in an attempt to identify, from a Christian perspective, the most suitable values for building a peaceful society, my contribution will bear in mind the dimensions of inner experience and collective responsibility.

«Inner Peace»

In the New Testament, inner peace is always the fruit of a right relationship with God and, consequently, with one's neighbor. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, not only declares «blessed» those who work for peace, but also calls them «sons of God» (cf. *Mt* 5:9), because it is only by recognizing ourselves as «sons of God» that we can accept each other as «brothers and sisters,» and build together a world of justice and peace based upon the recognition of the sole paternity of God, who «causes his sun to rise on bad men as well as good, and his rain to fall on honest and dishonest men alike» (cf. *Mt* 5:45). Christian «fraternity» cannot be reduced to a mere relationship of reciprocity, but it must overflow in love:

You have learnt how it was said: you must love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say this to you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you (*Mt* 5:43).

It is precisely this overabundance that is the condition of true peace. In this sense, it is important that Jesus, in John's Gospel, gives his peace in the context of the last supper and Judas' betrayal. Jesus knows that he is about to be handed over to death by one of his disciples, and that he will be abandoned by all the others. Yet it is precisely in this situation of betrayal that Jesus says to them: «Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you. A peace the world cannot give, this is my gift to you » (*Jn 14:27*).

The peace Jesus gives is in sharp contrast with the «peace» of the world. The peace that Jesus offers and teaches us is not the use of tactics, mere Irenicism or pacifism. It is a transforming power that is born of the victory of good over evil, love over hatred and forgiveness over death; it is an invigorating energy that heals the scourges and the wounds of the world by taking them upon itself for the sake of love. It is no coincidence that, in the same context, Jesus conveys his testament with these words: «I give you a new commandment: love one another; just as I have loved you, you also must love one another. By this love you have for one another, everyone will know that you are my disciples» (*Jn 13:34*).

Peace is Rooted in Love

The peace that Jesus left to the Twelve, and the disciples of all times, flows from this fraternal love whose model is Christ. It is bestowed upon the heart through the gift of the Holy Spirit, which is the gift of love. A love that is born of self-giving, detachment and self-emptying, in open contrast with the recurring human tendency to possession and selfishness:

If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. For anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake will find it (*Mt 16:24*).

I believe it is important to remember here how the Christian experience is especially close to the Buddhist experience in this journey of detachment, inner purification and emptying of the selfish ego. For Buddhism, in fact, the enlightened man is an equitable person who has achieved inner freedom at the cost of his own selfish ego and attachment to things; he is a compassionate person who cherishes the good and the salvation of others as if it were his own; he is the *bodhisattva*, the being whose essence is all compassion and altruism and, therefore, a force for peace. In both the Christian and Buddhist journeys, therefore, inner freedom, purification of the heart, compassion and the gift of self are the essential conditions, not only for the inner peace of the individual, but for social peace too.

At the Origin of Christian Love: the Encounter with Christ

The crucial element in Christian experience is the personal encounter with the crucified and risen Jesus, who gave his life for the salvation of all and established the Kingdom of God as the historical realm of justice and peace. A realm that is always given and must always be recreated because the human journey is always perfectible. The *Acts of the Apostles* bear witness to how the first Christian communities, beginning from their encounter with the risen Christ and embracing his command of mutual love, tried to live the new harmonious and peaceful way of living in society by holding everything in common (cf. *Acts* 4:32) and examining themselves against the external obstacles and the selfishness that always emerges within the Christian community too (cf. *Acts* 5:1ff; 6:1ff).

In the unraveling of human history, which is always marked by conflict, striving for the fulfillment of one human family (cf. *Nostra Aetate*, 1) in justice and in peace remains, for the Christian community of all times, an unavoidable and never finished task that challenges the believers of every generation.

«Peace Among the Nations»

Today, peace among the peoples seems to be constantly in danger from new and old threats; from the never satisfied hunger for power of the few over the many, economic and political interests, the hoarding of vital resources, but also by what is often defined today as the «clash of civilizations»¹.

The enormous migration we have witnessed in recent decades, both in Europe and the other Continents, has changed the social, cultural and religious geography in many countries, where peaceful coexistence and mutual integration can neither be predicted or taken for granted. We must add to this the current digital revolution, which has brought together worlds that until now were distant strangers and who can now interact in real time, transmitting messages, life models, values and world visions that are often in contrast with each other. If we are not to surrender to the recurring temptation of some to overpower the others, and to the risk of wasting ethnic, cultural and religious patrimonies that belong to the entire human family, it is vitally urgent that we create dialogical mentalities that are capable of positive interaction and recognizing in differences and divergences, not elements of contrast but of common growth and peace. Vatican II realistically reminds us that «peace is never attained once and for all, but must be built up ceaselessly (*Gaudium et Spes*, 78).

1. S. P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York, Simon & Schuster, 1996).

In this never completed building of peace, history hands down precious milestones for us today. In the third century BC, the emperor Ashoka, who converted to Buddhism after carrying out atrocious acts of slaughter and violence, had these words carved on rock for posterity: «We exalt our own religion when we honor the religion of others,» thereby recognizing in religion and the respect of legitimate differences a fundamental path to peace and coexistence among the peoples.

Let us also remember the great lesson that Augustine of Hippo left us in his *De Civitate Dei*, which he wrote after the terrible events of the fifth century that saw the fall of Rome into the hands of the Visigoths of Alaric and marked the traumatic end of a seemingly eternal world and civilization. Those dramatic events became an opportunity for Augustine to investigate the turbulent human history with eyes enlightened by faith:

And thus it has come to pass, that though there are very many and great nations all over the earth, whose rites and customs, speech, arms, and dress, are distinguished by marked differences, yet there are no more than two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities, according to the language of our Scriptures. The one consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the spirit (*De Civ. Dei*, XIV, 1).

«The city of men» and «the city of God» are the symbol of spiritual conditions that affect the individual and society and which cannot be completely untangled. They exist together, with alternating periods of one dominating the other:

Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former, in a word, glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. In the one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the subjects serve one another in love, the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all (*De Civ. Dei*, XIV, 28).

It is the task of man to shoulder the responsibility of making a conscious choice. Throughout history, the «two cities» are interspersed, as if every man and every people lived in one and the other simultaneously. Without distinction, all are called to choose between these two «cities» and live accordingly. Each individual can understand to what city he belongs only by examining himself.

It is on this basis that, unlike those who believed it necessary to avoid mixing with the invaders, Augustine perceived the opportunity of a fruitful coexistence with them. The anthropology proposed by the great bishop of Hippo in these pages not only opened the possibility of a dialogue of coexistence with the «barbarian» world of the fifth century,

but with the peoples of all times. In various ways, the current historical scenario is similar to the one in Augustine's time. In the alleged «clash of civilizations» the challenge, today as before, is not to welcome or reject the «barbarian» peoples, but to build together the «heavenly city» based on love, service, order and justice.

The Teaching and Work of the Church

The lesson of Augustine has come down to us through the centuries and, with different emphases, it has permeated the Church's social teaching until our own days. In the aftermath of the second World War, Pope Pius XII, recalling Augustine, began his Encyclical Letter *Optatissima Pax*², with the words: «Peace, longed for so hopefully, which should signify the tranquility of order and serene liberty...». Pius XII often repeated that the star of peace appears and shines more brightly when men build their social, economic and political relationships according to the principles of truth, social justice and charity. These ideas were taken up again systematically by John XXIII in his Encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, which was published on 11, April 1963, in a historical moment of profound international crisis that once again seriously threatened world peace.

The Peace Magisterium of John XXIII

Addressed to all men of good will, the Encyclical *Pacem in Terris* had an immediate and vast resonance all over the world. In a Catholic context, the document undoubtedly represents a fundamental stage of the ethical-theological reflection on peace that also exerted an important influence on the Conciliar reflection, which came together, above all, in the Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*.

John XXIII addresses all men of good will, believers and non-believers, telling them that «peace is possible,» that it depends on all and on each individual because it is the result of human relations based on truth, justice, love and freedom. Thus, *Pacem in Terris* reasserts that peace is not possible without attention to the development of the entire human race based on the criteria of solidarity and love; that there can be no justice, or true and lasting peace, if political authorities do not strive for the common and universal good as an essential moral value in the direction of social life.

It is starting from this fundamental interaction that *Pacem in Terris* also demon-

2. Pius XII, Encyclical Letter, *Optatissima Pax*, 18 December 1947, no. 1

strates the importance of interdependence between the peoples, hoping for a world community capable of desiring and building the common and universal good, resolutely rejecting the order of war as something «irrational and illogical» («*alienum est a ratione*») (*Pacem in Terris*, 67). Hence the insistence of John xxiii in calling for the institution of an impartial international body with universal moral authority, to serve as guarantor of the world's resources and the nonviolent solution of international conflicts.

Vatican II: The Constitution *Gaudium et Spes*

The reflection on peace that was set in motion by *Pacem in Terris* merged in Vatican II and, especially, in *Gaudium et Spes*, the Constitution on the Contemporary Church (nos. 77–90). In respect to *Pacem in Terris*, *Gaudium et Spes* offers guidelines that are more concrete and normative in nature, but, as in *Pacem in Terris*, it places the recognition of the human dignity of each person and each people as the essential condition for building peace. Emphasizing the biblical-theological roots of peace and its intrinsic relationship to Christ (nos. 77–78), *Gaudium et Spes* deals with more specific questions (nos. 79–80): the necessity of avoiding war, legitimate defense, conscientious objection and the total condemnation of war understood as a «crime against God» and a «crime against humanity».

Finally, in the last paragraph (no. 82), *Gaudium et Spes* proposes disarmament and calls for the foundation of an International Authority—an idea already proposed in *Pacem in Terris*—with real powers to guarantee the peaceful resolution of international conflicts and legitimized by the quest for universal good. This quest cannot exclude the pursuit of the good of each individual. Peace is the work of persons who build bridges between individuals, peoples, cultures and religions. Hence the powerful invitation to dialogue and collaboration among all men of good will:

For our part, the desire for such dialogue, which can lead to truth through love alone, excludes no one, though an appropriate measure of prudence must undoubtedly be exercised... Since God the Father is the origin and purpose of all men, we are all called to be brothers. Therefore, if we have been summoned to the same destiny, human and divine, we can and we should work together without violence and deceit in order to build up the world in genuine peace (n. 92).

The Peace Magisterium of Paul VI

Paul VI on 6, January 1967 established the Pontifical Commission *Iustitia et Pax*, and on 8, December of the same year, he introduced the *World Day of Peace* to be celebrated each

year on 1, January. In the mind of Paul VI and his successors, the annual *World Peace Day* aims to promote, not only the formation of the Catholic faithful to peace, but also to favor the collaboration of all men of good will who cherish the common good.

In the messages that Paul VI and his successors have given to the world since 1968, the reflection on peace has always kept in mind the historical contingencies of each period. Thus, for example, in 1969, recalling the Encyclical *Pacem in terris* of John XXIII and the Council document *Gaudium et Spes*, Paul VI reasserted the importance of respect for human rights as the foundation of a peaceful coexistence between individuals and among the peoples. In 1974, amidst the increasing awareness of public opinion, he reasserted the responsibility of all, and of each individual, in the building of peace with the topic «Peace depends also on you.»

Similarly, John Paul II and Benedict XVI, in their respective messages (1979–2005 and 2006–2013) proposed topics that constantly remind us of the necessity of inner peace and personal commitment as the essential condition of social peace: «From a new heart, peace is born» (1984); «If you want peace, respect the conscience of every person!» (1991); «From the justice of each comes peace for all!» (1998); «The human person, the heart of peace» (2007); «Religious freedom, the path to peace» (2011) «Blessed are the peacemakers» (2013) etc. Both the peace magisterium of John Paul II and Benedict XVI deserve further in-depth study. For obvious limitations of time, I will limit myself to their fundamental principles.

John Paul II asserted that human rights, above all the freedom of conscience and religious freedom, are the key to building peace. In his programmatic Encyclical, *Redemptor hominis*, he stated:

After all, peace comes down to respect for man's inviolable rights—*Opus iustitiae pax*—while war springs from the violation of these rights and brings with it still graver violations of them (RH, 17).

No less rich and articulate is the magisterium of Benedict XVI, for whom peace is a messianic gift and human endeavor at the same time. In his encyclicals, *Deus caritas est* (2005) and *Caritas in veritate* (2009), but also in his numerous interventions and messages, Benedict XVI never tired of repeating, with different emphases, that it is the love of God, bestowed upon us by Christ through the Holy Spirit, that creates the dispositions, the resolve and the experience of that inner peace which, shared with others, becomes the foundation of human fraternity, social justice and peace.

Conclusion

I wish to end these brief reflections on the Christian approach to peace by highlighting, once again, the profound and keen sense of closeness to the Buddhist world, which seeks inner peace through self-emptying and from this brings forth «compassion» for all beings as a condition of peaceful coexistence among individuals and the peoples.

Both the Christian and Buddhist commitment to peace are rooted in a profound religious experience. Both yearn for a «beyond» which, even though perceived in a different way, transcends contingency and visible reality. It is this longing that can, and must, unite us in the commitment to build a world of justice and peace, in fidelity to the original aspiration of our respective religious traditions.

And, just as we already collaborate in various contexts—we only have to remember the many initiatives of the *World Conference of Religions for Peace*, or the prayer meetings for peace after the event at Assisi in 1986 which are kept alive by the St. Egidio community in Europe, and by the Tendai School of Buddhism at Monte Hiei in Japan—so we can and must continue to collaborate on behalf of religious freedom, which is both a right and the essential condition for guaranteeing a common and shared religious foundation, in the commitment to peace that is so crucial for the survival of all the peoples.³

3. This article first appeared on the Journal *Pro Dialogo*, 2013/1: 55–8.

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Rediscovering the Beauty of the Human Body as Image of God

YUSTINUS HIBUR

The growing problem of pornography and prostitution nowadays not only reveals a growing misunderstanding of human sexuality, but also a growing misunderstanding of the whole human body. The body is seen as an object that can be bought whenever desired or sold whenever one finds himself or herself under economic constraints. The body has become one of the most advertised objects in the internet and finances are usually the main reason why someone sells it. The pornographic industry is certainly not a small entrepreneurship.

In answering to these problems I would like to underline some implications of our Christian understanding that the human person is made in the image of God. The relational interpretation on *Imago Dei* offers some insights that can help us to understand who we are and what we are called to be. The view of St. John Paul II through his teaching on the theology of the body invites us to go back to «the beginning» where God created Adam and Eve. In other words, to understand our identity as human persons created in the image of God means to know God's plan since the beginning.

Thus, the purpose of this paper is to offer some insights from the concept of *Imago Dei* that has been developed in Christian theology.

Imago Dei: The Relational Interpretation

The concept of «Image of God» has its foundation on biblical creation. The story of creation tells us that at the summit of creation stands woman and man, made in God's image (*Gen 1:26–27*). To say that human person is the image of God means something about the relation between God and us which has implication for what it means to be human.

According to Richard M. Gula, the further implications of the image of God in human relationship can be drawn out of elaborations of the central symbols for God in the Christian faith. For example, the root symbol of God is «God is love.»¹ As images of God

1. R. M. Gula, *Reason Informed by Faith: Foundations of Catholic Morality* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 65.

human persons are called to form a communion of love as God's will. In other words, «the Trinitarian doctrine implies a communitarian understanding of being human. The Trinitarian vision sees that no one exists by oneself, but only through relationship to others.»²

The Trinitarian vision of God in its implications for humanity underscores very clearly the relational dimension of being human. Created in the image of God, human persons are called to build a communion with God and others. Cardinal Ratzinger describes this beautifully, «Created in the image of God, human beings are by nature bodily and spiritual, men and women made for one another, persons oriented towards communion with God and with one another...»³ In other words, «to be human person is to be essentially directed toward others. Personal existence, then, can never be seen as an “I” in isolation, but always “I” and “you” in relationship.»⁴

Imago Dei: Critical Review of Tradition

As we can see in the relational interpretation on *Imago Dei*, our relationship with God and others has its deepest foundation in God's nature as a communion of Persons. God creates human beings to reflect this communion in our daily life. God wants us to experience his love in our relationship both with him and with our fellow human beings. Furthermore, as created in God's image and likeness we are invited to enter into the intimate relationship with God and others with our soul and body.

However, in the history of Christianity we find out that our understanding of the relationship to God and others is more in a spiritual than a bodily aspect. For instance, «the Church fathers' interpretation of the *Imago Dei* was intimately linked to their understanding of the soul and spirituality. The image was most fully realized in the act of contemplation of God.»⁵ In other words, the Church fathers contend that *Imago Dei* is a dimension of the human soul and mind. Consequently, the body does not reflect the image.

The negative view of human body can be seen in the teaching of St. Augustine. He argues that the image does not reside in the body. According to St. Augustine «the true man is the soul and the body is its instrument. The soul is superior to body because it alone bears the image and knowledge of God. The body tends to direct the soul from

2. Ibid., 65.

3. J. Ratzinger, «Communion and Stewardship: Human Persons Created in the Image of God,» at <<http://www.bringyou.to/apolegetics/p80.htm>>.

4. R. M. Gula, *Reason Informed By Faith*, op. cit., 67.

5. M. A. Gonzales, *Created in God's Image: An Introduction to Feminist Theological Anthropology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007), 27.

spiritual things and to tempt it with sinful desire.»⁶ Furthermore, the reduction of the image to the soul alone can be found in Augustine's vision about women. As Kari Elizabeth Borreson points out,

As a regard the *homo interior*, woman possesses the quality of the image of God through her soul, which is identical with that of a man, for soul has no sex. But, as regards the *homo exterior*, woman is distinguished from man, formed as she was in second place and taken from the side of man.... While woman possesses the image in her rational role, on a bodily level she does not reflect the image.⁷

The negative view on woman's inferiority to man can be found as well in the opinion of St. Thomas. He states that God's image is found in a man in a way it is not found in a woman, «for man is the beginning and end of woman, just as God is the beginning and end of all creation.»⁸ In addition, for Thomas, «the distinction of the sexes signifies that woman is different from man. The manner in which the female body was formed is interpreted in this sense of subordination.»⁹

As we can see in the vision of St. Augustine and Thomas, the true relationship with God and others only can be realized in spiritual matter. In other words, our body has nothing to do in our relationship with God.

The question is: does our body reveal God's image? Why does God create our body if God does not like it? These questions, on the one hand, seem to be strange if we look at the creation story. It says that the human being is created in God's image and likeness (see *Gen 1:26–27*). But, on the other hand, these are important questions to open our horizon in understanding who we are and what we are called to be. These questions also invite us to go back to «the beginning» when God created Adam and Eve.

Imago Dei: Reimagining Human Body as Image of God¹⁰

The Human Persons (Soul and Body) as Images of God

From the relational interpretation of *Imago Dei*, we can see that the relationship among the Persons (Trinity) has grounded our relationship with God, with others and non-hu-

6. J. W. Cooper, *Body, Soul, and Life Everlasting: Biblical Anthropology and the Monism-Dualism Debate* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), 10–1.

7. M. A. Gonzales, *Created in God's Image*, op. cit., 41.

8. M. C. Hilkert, «Cry Beloved Image: Rethinking the Image of God,» in *In the Embrace of God: Feminist Approaches to Theological Anthropology*, ed. A. O'Hara Graff (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 193.

9. M. A. Gonzales, *Created in God's Image*, op. cit., 44.

10. The big portion of this sub-topic is some insights of John Paul II's teaching on theology of the body.

man beings. The existence of God who is self-giving in love invites us to make this relationship become reality. As image of God human persons are called to mirror God's love in our encounter with others. In the same line, Cardinal Ratzinger, in his view about the relationship between body and soul points out that, «human beings, created in the image of God, are persons called to enjoy communion and to exercise stewardship in a physical universe.»¹¹

To put in another way, John Paul II explains that human persons reflect God in the world. Because when man was created, God said, «And now we will make human beings; they will be like us and resemble us (*Gen* 1:26).» Seeing human persons as an image of God is the core of John Paul II's teaching. As an image of God, human persons have mind and spirit because God Himself is the Being who exists with mind and spirit. Therefore, man has free-will to choose and to act as persons.¹²

However, man is not an angel. Man has body in which he can express himself physically. John Paul II also insists that as human persons we are called to love as God loves and to express that love in and through our bodies. We express ourselves as the image of God through our bodies. John Paul II says, «the body, and it alone, is capable of making visible what is invisible: the spiritual and divine. It was created to transfer into the visible reality of the world the mystery hidden since time immemorial God.»¹³

Adam and Eve: The Body and Three Original Human Experiences

The view of John Paul II about human persons can be further explained by looking at the three original experiences of Adam and Eve: solitude, unity, and nakedness.

a. Original Solitude

The first experience of the first man is solitude. In this solitude experience, «man is alone with God and enjoys a unique relationship with God: only man is able to talk and to listen to God.»¹⁴ John Paul II also explains that after Adam names the animals around him, he feels loneliness because he does not find in the body of the animals the expression of a person like him. He wants to love but he cannot express it. He needs another person with whom he can express his love.

11. J. Ratzinger, «Communion and Stewardship,» op. cit., 6.

12. M. Healy, *Men & Women Are from Eden: A Study Guide to John Paul II's Theology of the Body* (Cincinnati: Servants Books, 2005), 13.

13. Ibid., 17.

14. J. C. Sorra, *Crumbs III «From Beginning»: In the Light of Pope John Paul II's Theology of the Body* (Philippine: Inkwell Publishing Co., Inc., 2010), 9.

Furthermore, the solitude experience has a significant influence through which Adam realizes his uniqueness. This awareness of uniqueness helps Adam in two ways. First, his body links him to the other bodies in creation and makes him conscious of his longing to the visible world. Second, his body also sets him apart from all other bodies by virtue of the fact that it alone differs from them significantly.¹⁵ Shortly, in solitude experience Adam is aware that something is missing and God knows what Adam is longing for.

b. Original Unity

The solitude experience ends when God created another person. God said, «It is not good for the man to live alone. I will make a suitable companion to help him» (*Gen 2:18*). God knows what Adam needs. When Adam sees the woman, he rejoices and says, «At last, here is one of my own kind—bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh» (*Gen 2:23*). In this unity experience, Adam knows himself as a person when he sees another person. He can express his love to Eve because love is only possible for two human beings (Adam and Eve) who express themselves. Both Adam and Eve experience the great joy in spirit and body.

In other words, «beyond a common human nature, which is realized through embodied existence, the other aspect of unity is related to the duality of sexual difference. Unity and duality in this manner both witness to a fundamental sense of complementary or correspondence between man and woman.»¹⁶ Besides, such a visible unity in duality, the narrative refers to an even deeper unity with the words, «and the two will be one flesh» (*Gen. 2:24*). John Paul II defines this unity as a *communio personarum* or the communion of persons.¹⁷

c. Original Nakedness

The third experience of Adam and Eve is nakedness. Genesis reports that, «The man and his wife were both naked, but they were not embarrassed» (*Gen 2:25*). Nakedness experience shows the total-giving of love in and through the body. They were not ashamed because they saw each other as a person, as a subject. In other words, «they saw each other as God sees.»¹⁸ In nakedness, they express their love freely, totally, and fully.

15. B. Toth, *Love between Embodiment and Spirituality: Jean-Luc Marion and John Paul II on Erotic Love* (London: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2012), 36.

16. M. Healy, *Men & Women Are from Eden*, op. cit., 24.

17. *Ibid.*, 17.

18. *Ibid.*, 27.

The Nuptial Meaning of the Body

In the nakedness experience, Adam and Eve express their joy as a male and a female. John Paul II affirms that the significant confrontation of Adam and Eve in their nakedness is about revelation and discovery of the nuptial meaning of the body. The nuptial meaning of the body speaks of man's and woman's conscious experience of their bodies as a gift and symbol of God's love and at the same time their calling to share this love with one another in and through their bodies, their masculinity and femininity. In other words, nakedness without shame shows both Adam and Eve expressing their love in full freedom from any constraint of body and sex.¹⁹

Furthermore John Paul II insists that the nuptial meaning of the body can be understood only in the context of the person. The body has the nuptial meaning because the human person is the creature that God willed for his own sake. To put this in another way, because of the nuptial meaning of the body, man, male and female, realize that they can fulfill themselves as persons only by self-giving in love. In and through the sincere gift of self, they realize that their vocation is to love.

Fallen Humanity and the Redemption of the Body

Fallen Humanity

In the third experience, Adam and Eve were naked but felt unashamed. They can celebrate their love faithfully and totally. They were joined in a blissful union of open communication and selfless reciprocal love. However, this beautiful experience ceased when they fall into sin. Tempted by the serpent, Adam and Eve fall into a dangerous situation in their lives. Rather than trust in their loving Creator, they decided to determine for themselves what was good and what was evil.

We might ask, why did God put in the garden a tree from which he did not want them to eat? In answering this question, Ratzinger explains it by underlining that:

Created in the image of God to share in the communion of Trinitarian life, human beings are persons who are constituted as to be able to freely embrace this communion. Freedom is the divine gift that enables human persons to choose the communion which the triune God offers to them as their ultimate good. But with freedom comes the possibility of the failure of freedom.... Sin is precisely this failure of freedom, this turning away from the divine invitation to communion.²⁰

19. J. C. Sorra, *Crumbs III «From Beginning»* op. cit., 18.

20. *Ibid.*, 10.

The fall experience has brought some negative impacts to human beings. According to John Paul II, the impact of this sin is that Adam and Eve lived no longer in unity but disunity. They live in disharmony with God and even within the human being, between spirit and body.²¹ The first experience after the fall was that they were ashamed. Genesis report: «then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves» (*Gen 3:7*). «This shame is deeper than embarrassment. It is a profound distress at the awareness of something contrary to their dignity as persons.»²²

The second result of the sin was that Adam and Eve were afraid of God. They saw God as a distant lawgiver and harsh judged.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, «Where are you?» And he said, «I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.» He said, «Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?» (*Gen 3:8-11*).

In other words, as Healey underlines, humanity has been hiding from God ever since, though God never hid from man. He never ceases to call out to us, «where are you?»²³

Another impact that Adam and Eve experienced after fall into sin was a disharmonic relationship between them. Adam blames Eve as the cause why they ate the forbidden fruit. The man said, «“The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me the fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the Lord God said to the woman, What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate”» (*Gen 3:12-13*).

Shortly, the experience of sin created a huge conflict between man and God and among human being. This fundamental alienation from God also affects his physical existence, bringing suffering, illness and death. However, «the impact of sin did not destroy human’s identity as *Imago Dei*. Catholic tradition has always insisted that, while *Imago Dei* is impaired or disfigured, it cannot be destroyed by sin.»²⁴

Jesus: The Redemption of the Body

Jesus Christ is the perfect image of God. The Second Vatican Council underlines this

21. M. Healy, *Men & Women Are from Eden*, op. cit., 33.

22. *Ibid.*, 34.

23. *Ibid.*, 35.

24. J. Ratzinger, «Communion and Stewardship,» op. cit., 10.

truth by saying that Christ «fully reveals man to himself» (GS 22). John Paul II argues that «Christ as the New Adam reveals (and empowers by his spirit) a new way of being humanity, and hence, the way to be truly free.»²⁵

Henry J.M. Nouwen describes beautifully the mystery of Jesus redemption and its impact by stating that «the greatest mystery of the Christian faith is that God came to us in the body, suffered with us in the body, rose in the body, and gave us his body as food.»²⁶ Through Jesus birth, life, death and resurrection the human body has become part of the life of God. Jesus Christ restores the human body that was corrupted by sin. Indeed, Jesus is the perfect image of God for in and through him God revealed his love to humanity. John Paul II re-emphasizes this truth through his document *Redemptor Hominis*, which states:

Man cannot live without love. He remains a being that is incomprehensible for himself, his life is senseless, if love is not revealed to him, if he does not encounter love, if he does not experience it and make it his own, if he does not participate intimately in it. This, as has already been said, is why Christ the Redeemer «fully reveals man to himself» (RH 10).

In sum, Echeverria underscores that God's grace in Christ restores all life to its fullness, penetrating and perfecting and transforming the fallen creation from within its own order, bringing creation into conformity with His will and purpose.²⁷ In and through Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection, the human body has acquired a greater honor than it had even before the fall. In other words, the origins of man are to be found in Christ: for he is created «through him and in him» (Col 1:26). The Church's teaching also underlines that «by his passion Christ delivered us from Satan and from sin. He merited for us the new life in the Holy Spirit. His grace restores what sin had damage in us» (CCC, n. 1708).

Conclusion

The concept of *Imago Dei* is at the heart of Christian understanding of the human person and it reveals something about humanity as created and about our creator. This concept is about our relationship with God who creates us in his image and likeness. He reveals himself as a Father who loves us. In the Christian doctrine on Trinity we come to understand that the nature of God is love and he wants us to mirror this love in our daily life.

25. M. Bellafiore, «Paul on the Human Body and the Bodily Resurrection,» in *John Paul II on the Body: Human, Eucharistic, Ecclesial*, edited by J. M. McDermatt and J. Gavin (Philadelphia: Saint Joseph's University Press, 2007), 307.

26. H. Nouwen, *Modern Spiritual Masters Series*, New York: Orbis Books, 1998), 92–3.

27. E. J. Echeverria, «*In the beginning...*» *A Theology of the Body*, (Oregon: PICKWIK Publications, 2011), 213.

He created Adam from and to love. However, we have limitations in grasping God's love. In Christian tradition we can see that our understanding of relationship was reduced to a spiritual matter. Influenced by philosophical concepts in history, both St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas reduced God's image in human beings into a spiritual matter or soul.

Blessed John Paul II invites us to go back to «the beginning» in order to know who we are as persons and what God's plan is for us. Through his teaching on the theology of the body he leads us to understand the beauty of our body. God creates the human person with body and soul in order to reveal God's love in the world. Our body makes visible what is invisible. In the beginning Adam (man) and Eve (woman) express their love in spirit and body. They saw each other as persons created by the same God. They were naked but they were not ashamed because they could see each other as a gift in total conformity with God's will. Indeed, Jesus is the perfect image of God, for in and through him God revealed his love to humanity.

The more people acquire this understanding of their purpose and identity, the more chances are that the industry of human body exploitation may collapse; more are the chances that we live fully²⁸.

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Cultura e società



Uno sguardo alla «generazione satori»

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In Giappone si osservano due calendari: quello gregoriano (simile a quello in vigore in Occidente), e quello che ha inizio con la salita al trono di un Imperatore, data questa che determina l'avvento di un nuovo periodo storico (il cui nome verrà anch'esso scelto dall'Imperatore). Attualmente stiamo vivendo nell'anno 26mo nell'epoca Heisei (termine che significa «raggiungimento della pace»), epoca questa che è iniziata l'8 gennaio 1989 con l'ascesa al trono dell'Imperatore Akihito, il quale successe al padre Hirohito (l'Imperatore del periodo Shōwa). Il termine «giovani *heisei*» indica quei giovani nati nella prima decade degli anni novanta e che si sono laureati verso gli anni 2010, un ventennio, questo, che a livello nazionale è stato testimone di grandi innovazioni economiche e sociali. In maniera schematica potremmo indicare i seguenti cambiamenti:

a) inizi anni '90: avvento e diffusione del computer (a partire da Windows 95) e con esso il diffondersi di nuove modalità di comunicazione (e-mail) e di interazione. In questo periodo, inoltre, scoppia la cosiddetta bolla economica causata dalla crescita vertiginosa del valore dei beni immobili;

b) 17 gennaio 1995: un violentissimo terremoto nella zona di Kobe provoca danni incalcolabili e la morte di più di seimila persone. Persino le sofisticate infrastrutture antisismiche non sono riuscite a resistere al catastrofico impatto del sisma;

c) nel 2000 lo Stato introduce il sistema educativo *yutori* con l'intento di controbattere l'asfissiante atmosfera agonistica e competitiva (cui erano sottoposti anche i bambini in tenera età) che affiorava soprattutto durante il periodo degli esami di ammissione. Il nuovo sistema, che offriva maggiori opportunità di tempo libero al di fuori del mondo scolastico, introdusse la vacanza al sabato, ridusse l'incredibile numero delle nozioni che gli alunni dovevano studiare e memorizzare, e divenne meno esigente nei confronti della media scolastica richiesta per progredire negli studi. Questo sistema rimase in vigore per circa dieci anni, e fu poi smantellato con la sola eccezione della vacanza di fine settimana;

d) nel 2003 si registra l'inizio della recessione economica. Il posto di lavoro, fino ad allora garantito a vita, non è più una certezza. Si avvia un processo di ristrutturazione del personale lavorativo, e i primi ad essere licenziati sono i dipendenti tra i 50 e 60 anni

dando così inizio ad un vertiginoso aumento del fenomeno dei *freeter* e dei *neet*, del part-time e dei lavoratori a giornata;

e) nel 2008 esplose la crisi economica mondiale scaturita dal Liman Schock. Divenne sempre più difficile trovare un posto da operaio o da impiegato a tempo pieno;

f) l'11 marzo 2011 uno spaventoso *tsunami* si abbatte sulla costa nord occidentale del Giappone causando, tra morti e dispersi, oltre ventimila vittime. Il maremoto provoca danni gravissimi anche ai reattori della centrale nucleare di Fukushima causando la fuoriuscita di radiazioni.

Tutti gli elementi ora accennati, se considerati nella loro complessità e totalità, ci permettono di avvicinarci alla visione di mondo e al modo di agire dei «giovani *heisei*», sia nei confronti dei beni di consumo che delle relazioni sociali.

Il concetto socioculturale di «generazione satori» e la sua descrizione

L'espressione *satori sedai* («generazione *satori*») è nata all'interno dell'ambiente virtuale di internet, e precisamente sulla lavagna digitale. La scelta del nome, usato in seguito per distinguersi dalle generazioni precedenti, è stata effettuata dagli stessi giovani. Sebbene non esista una definizione generalmente condivisa del termine, si può tuttavia affermare che l'espressione includa i seguenti elementi: a) non si nutre alcun interesse nel possedere un'auto di marca o degli oggetti griffati, e non si prova alcun desiderio di viaggiare all'estero; b) la brama di guadagnare denaro è quasi del tutto assente; c) si prediligono i piccoli centri o le località di appartenenza (anziché spostarsi a vivere in grandi città o metropoli); d) non si prova alcun interesse nei confronti di relazioni amorose; e) la rete e l'Internet sono ritenute le principali fonti di informazione; f) la lettura e il sapere sono tenuti in grande considerazione; g) si presta più attenzione al risultato che al processo.

Nel dicembre 2009 fu pubblicato un libro di Yamaoka Taku dall'accattivante titolo di *Hoshigaranai wakamonotachi* («Giovani che non desiderano nulla») i cui l'autore analizzava alcuni oggetti di consumo e con l'aiuto di alcune valutazioni statistiche affermava che, al contrario dei loro predecessori, i giovani di oggi (cioè le persone al disotto dei 30 anni) non consideravano quegli oggetti né importanti né necessari per la vita di ogni giorno.

Giovani che non guidano e non posseggono un'auto

Nel Giappone odierno, le ragioni per cui dei consumatori acquistano dei prodotti sembrano ridursi a tre: vi sono coloro che comperano dei beni essenziali per la vita di ogni

giorno (dal cibo al vestiario); coloro che spendono i loro soldi per raggiungere uno stile di vita sempre più confortevole; e infine coloro che acquistano dei beni superflui con il solo scopo di distinguersi dagli altri e ostentare la propria condizione sociale ed economica.

Circa questa catalogazione, si può senza dubbio affermare che i giovani di oggi non si sentono in alcun modo motivati a comperare dei prodotti con lo scopo di dare sfoggio del proprio status sociale. Anzi, essi ritengono che alcuni beni di consumo da molti considerati irrinunciabili, siano invece secondari, se non proprio del tutto inutili.

A riprova di un simile cambiamento culturale e sociale, basti qui prendere in considerazione i dati forniti dall'industria automobilistica giapponese secondo i quali le vendite di automobili negli ultimi vent'anni hanno subito una drastica diminuzione. Da questi dati si rileva che se nel 1993 il 20% degli automobilisti era costituito da giovani (tra 18 e 29 anni), nel 2003 la percentuale risultava quasi dimezzata, ed essa scendeva addirittura sotto il 10% se confrontata con i dati del 2007.

Le ragioni offerte dai giovani per non possedere o per acquistare una vettura sono le seguenti (in ordine): a) l'eccessivo costo del parcheggio e della benzina; b) l'inutilità di quel veicolo per la vita quotidiana; c) la quasi totale mancanza di interesse per le automobili in genere.

Dall'analisi sembra quindi risultare il fatto che se nel passato l'automobile era considerata un simbolo del raggiunto status sociale dell'individuo, ora questo stesso bene di consumo è ritenuto dai giovani d'oggi superfluo e insignificante.

Di fronte a questo vistoso calo di interesse, le industrie automobilistiche hanno cercato di adottare diverse contromisure, tra le quali quella in cui si presenta una vettura non tanto come un mezzo di spostamento, quanto piuttosto come uno strumento di divertimento. Il modello *Cube* della casa automobilistica *Nissan*, ad esempio, è stato più volte rimodellato tenendo presente il nuovo atteggiamento tenuto dei giovani nei confronti dell'automobile. Di un certo interesse risulta il fatto che al nome del modello si sia aggiunto l'espressione *My room* («la mia stanza»). Nei vari sketch pubblicitari l'auto viene presentata non come un prodotto per muoversi velocemente (non vi sono scene in cui la macchina viaggia in completa solitudine tra strade e veicoli), ma come uno «spazio» in cui stare spensieratamente rilassati in compagnia degli amici (le scene si dilugano sull'interno dell'auto in cui si sente della musica di sottofondo e l'autista è circondato da passeggeri simpatici e sorridenti). E questa trasformazione generazionale nell'uso e nell'acquisto dei prodotti non si limita alla sola automobile, ma coinvolge anche altri beni di consumo (sci, scooter, oggetti griffati, ecc.), cioè quei prodotti che i genitori dei giovani di oggi ritenevano simboli del raggiunto livello di benessere e di prosperità.

Giovani che non bevono alcolici

In Giappone, uno dei molti riti di iniziazione al mondo lavorativo è quello di recarsi al bar a bere qualcosa con i propri colleghi. Questo rito sociale non si limita al consueto venerdì sera, ma si svolge durante tutti i giorni della settimana: dopo il lavoro, nel nome di una maggiore comunicazione e socializzazione tra colleghi, ci si ritrova insieme creando così anche un ambiente per scaricare ansie e stress accumulati durante la giornata bevendo, cantando, e ubriacandosi.

Nel settembre 2007 venne effettuato un sondaggio chiamato «Dopo le cinque» (cioè dopo la fine dell'orario lavorativo). I soggetti intervistati erano per la maggior parte persone che svolgevano la loro attività lavorativa presso ditte o aziende, e la loro età variava dai 20 ai 60 anni. Ebbene, uno dei risultati più significativi emersi dal sondaggio fu che le persone ventenni non erano affatto coinvolte in questa specie di rituale sociale: solo l'8% dei ventenni partecipava più di due volte al mese a questi ritrovi al bar, mentre il 70% manifestava l'intenzione di rincasare presto. In un sondaggio condotto nel 2009 riguardante la percentuale di coloro che non bevono alcolici, poi, la percentuale più alta coinvolgeva proprio quella dei maschi ventenni. E se nel caso delle donne la percentuale di coloro che non bevono bevande alcoliche variava a seconda delle diverse fasce di età (tra il 34 e il 41%), nel caso dei maschi, invece, la percentuale più alta riguardava i ventenni (37%), seguiti in ordine dai sessantenni (26%) e infine dai cinquantenni (14%).

Giovani che non vanno all'estero e non si spostano troppo

Nel 2000 il numero dei giapponesi che si sono recati all'estero è stato di quasi 18 milioni, il 23% dei quali era costituito da giovani (circa 4 milioni). Nel 2008, invece, il numero di visitatori all'estero era sceso fino a 16 milioni (di cui 2 milioni e mezzo circa di giovani, cifra questa che se relazionata ai 4 milioni del 2000, vede una diminuzione del 40%).

Questa tendenza dei giovani a non spostarsi, non si limita solo ai viaggi all'estero, ma anche al loro modo di trascorrere il periodo di vacanza. In una statistica del 2007, alla domanda «Come trascorri i giorni di vacanza?», il 43% dei giovani ha risposto «a casa», o «la maggior parte del tempo a casa». Tra le varie percentuali sono diminuite quelle riguardanti le voci «fare compere» o «fare un giro in macchina», mentre sono aumentate quelle concernenti i «lavori di casa» (compreso il bucato e le pulizie domestiche).

Riflettendo su questa scarsità di mobilità giovanile, non si deve in ogni caso sottovalutare la diffusione e l'uso che di recente ha avuto Internet: infatti una giovane, pur rimanendo nella propria stanza, è in grado di visitare le isole del Polo Nord o la Patagonia

in Sudamerica e di ammirare gli stessi paesaggi di coloro che vi si sono recati di persona. In tal modo egli è in grado di gustare la stessa gradevole sensazione del viaggio e dell'avventura pur non avendoli vissuti realmente.

Giovani che danno poca importanza ai rapporti affettivi (innamoramento)

Il centro di studio che ha il compito di monitorare i problemi della popolazione e della previdenza sociale in Giappone, è anche incaricato di effettuare delle ricerche quinquennali che coinvolgono vari aspetti della vita sociale. In un'inchiesta condotta nel 2010 concernente la situazione dei giovani, alla domanda se gli intervistati avessero al momento un partner dell'altro sesso, il 61,4% dei giovani maschi non sposati risposero negativamente (52,2% nel 2005, con una crescita negativa del 10%), mentre delle giovani donne non sposate hanno risposto negativamente il 49,5% (44,7% nel 2005).

Ogni anno in Giappone viene selezionata la parola più alla moda dell'anno. Nel 2009 la parola scelta fu *soshoku danshi*, «maschio erbivoro». A che cosa questo termine si riferisca con precisione è difficile da capire, anche se una possibile spiegazione potrebbe essere la seguente: il «maschio erbivoro» sarebbe colui che non è ossessionato dalla ricerca di un partner o non si preoccupa se non si innamora, ma domina la propria mascolinità, è gentile nei modi, è più un uomo da faccende di casa. Questa interpretazione non ci pare del tutto errata se, tradizionalmente, il maschio viene invece descritto o considerato come «cacciatore» (*nikushoku danshi*).

Così come abbiamo notato per la diminuzione della vendita di auto, anche nel campo sentimentale l'attitudine di distacco e disinteresse sta mettendo in crisi il mercato che circonda questo elemento della vita (i regali, i ristoranti, l'abbigliamento, i pacchetti di soggiorno per coppie, ecc.). I giovani di oggi, ad esempio, quando fissano un appuntamento con il *partner*, non spendono soldi per regali costosi, non prediligono luoghi di lusso e non comprano abiti da indossare per l'occasione. In breve, essi ritengono che spendere soldi per un appuntamento amoroso sia uno spreco. Il luogo preferito d'incontro, invece, sembra essere la casa di uno dei due partner, e questo perché vi ci si può stare a lungo e non ci si impiega troppo tempo per raggiungerla.

Ciò che questi giovani cercano, dunque, non sono stimoli speciali o eventi eccezionali, quanto piuttosto il sentirsi a proprio agio nell'ambiente quotidiano senza dover fare fatica nell'inventarsi un incontro e senza spendere troppo tempo o soldi per renderlo unico.

Verso una visione comprensiva

Visione diacronica

Da un punto di vista storico, potremmo affermare che tre sono le generazioni che si sono succedute dal dopoguerra ad oggi. Vi sono innanzitutto i protagonisti della ricostruzione economica e sociale del Giappone (la generazione *dankai*, o anche la generazione sorta dal fenomeno del *baby boom* di quegli anni) che sono nati nell'immediato dopoguerra. Il simbolo di questa ricostruzione e rinascita post-bellica potrebbe essere individuato nel *boom economico* degli anni Sessanta, anni questi che vedono il Giappone ospitare le Olimpiadi a Tokyo nel 1964, un evento che ha avuto luogo solo 19 anni dopo la fine della guerra.

La generazione successiva è composta da coloro che sono nati negli anni Sessanta e che hanno goduto di tutti i benefici del *boom economico* di quel periodo (sono questi i figli che per primi hanno posseduto un'automobile, una televisione, una lavatrice e un frigorifero). Tuttavia, questo sfrenato sviluppo economico ha anche prodotto una perdita dei valori tradizionali e umani. Basti qui pensare all'«inferno degli esami» (*jūken jikoku*) che i bambini devono affrontare per essere ammessi nelle scuole migliori; oppure al ritmo lavorativo che ha portato gli adulti a trasformarsi in semi-schiavi di una macchina economica che non permette riposo, oppure al fatto che a causa del lavoro e della scuola (oltre che del doposcuola e delle attività di club) il centro della famiglia non è più la casa, ma le strutture esterne.

Infine, verso gli anni Ottanta, prende avvio la terza generazione post-bellica giapponese caratterizzata da una profonda reazione nei confronti di tutti quei modelli e «valori» che venivano presentati (oltre che imposti) dalla società. Queste reazioni non coinvolgono tanto il gruppo ma gli individui, non sono violente o rumorose, ma moderate e quasi impercettibili. Tuttavia, esse rivelano tutta la rigidità e inflessibilità di un sistema sociale che non presta sufficiente attenzione a coloro che falliscono (*hikikomori*), che elimina i punti deboli del sistema economico, e che è noncurante dell'aumento dei disadattati sociali. Basti qui solo pensare ai fenomeni del disagio giovanile e della dispersione scolastica che si inaspriscono di anno in anno. A queste problematiche si devono poi aggiungere quelle che riguardano l'aumento di persone che soffrono di depressione, di coloro che scelgono di suicidarsi (per 14 anni di seguito, dalla fine degli anni Novanta, in Giappone si sono suicidate circa 30.000 persone l'anno), quelle che coinvolgono gli individui affetti da disturbi mentali e da difficoltà di adattamento all'ambiente sociale (il cui esempio più emblematico è la figura della principessa Masako, che agli inizi del 2004 le fu diagnosti-

cato un «disturbo di adattamento» che la costrinse ad annullare molte visite diplomatiche all'estero e, in seguito, a ridurre drasticamente le apparizioni nazionali).

Altri sintomi di questo malumore sociale sono gli *hikikomori*¹ (cioè quei giovani che in seguito al bullismo a scuola, oppure agli insuccessi sul lavoro, rifiutano ogni contatto sociale e si rifugiano nella loro stanza restandovi confinati per anni); le cosiddette donne di carriera quarantenni (chiamato anche il fenomeno delle *around forty*² in cui le donne affermano che «non è necessario sposarsi e metter su famiglia, si può fare carriera come gli uomini ed essere libere e indipendenti»); e infine il fenomeno degli *otaku*³, cioè di quelle persone che pur non contestando il sistema si sono creati un mondo parallelo (mediante l'utilizzo dell'Internet e la partecipazione a gruppi che condividono gli stessi interessi) che diventa il loro vero mondo, nel quale si sentono liberi di interagire con persone che hanno gli stessi hobby e passioni.

Visione sincronica

La «generazione *satori*» è formata dalle persone nate negli anni sessanta e cresciute in un ambiente saturo di benessere, educata all'interno del sistema scolastico *yutori*, e abituate a vivere in un mondo virtuale che abolisce ogni limite e ogni spazio e che rende accessibile, tramite Internet, un'immensa quantità di informazioni.

Tuttavia, gli individui della generazione *satori* sono cresciuti anche in un clima di recessione economica e di instabilità produttiva che ha contribuito a infrangere il sogno dell'inarrestabile progresso sociale coltivato negli anni sessanta. Il Giappone del dopoguerra si era infatti creato una sua *grande narrativa* fondata principalmente sul mito dello sviluppo socioeconomico, mito di cui faceva parte, ad esempio, l'idea che essere ammessi nelle migliori università del Paese garantiva l'immediata e stabile occupazione in una ditta di prestigio. Il mito della sicurezza e dell'infallibilità della scienza si è poi stato definitivamente sbriciolato con la tragedia dello *tsunami* (un evento che ha «superato ogni previsione») e con il conseguente incidente nucleare di Fukushima.

Gli «ideali edonistici» che la società ha continuato a propugnare sin dal dopoguerra (dalla televisione al climatizzatore, dall'automobile al computer, dal golf agli oggetti grifati) si materializzavano in oggetti il cui possesso diventava subito indicatore del successo e dell'elevato status sociale raggiunto. Se la generazione *satori* viene valutata secondo que-

1. A questo riguardo si veda il mio: «Eclissi giovanile nel Sol Levante. Hikikomori e il suo contesto sociale», in *Quaderni del CSA*, 2010/2: 47–56.

2. Si veda il mio «Figli e figlie di un sole minore», in *Quaderni del CSA*, 2013/2: 93–100.

3. Anche in questo caso rimando al mio «All'ombra del Sol Levante. Gli otaku», in *Quaderni del CSA*, 2012/2: 93–9.

sto standard assiologico, non dovrebbe destare sorpresa il fatto che essa venga considerata in maniera molto negativa — dato che questi giovani non aspirano agli stessi ideali e allo stesso stile di vita dei loro parenti. Ma se invece proviamo a riflettere sulle loro scelte, ci accorgiamo che questa nuova generazione non solo si rifiuta di conformarsi al modello di vita sociale precedente, ma essa sta anche proponendo (forse in maniera inconscia) un diverso sistema di valori.

Consideriamo, ad esempio, (e senza dimenticare che questi giovani dispongono di mezzi sconosciuti alla generazione precedente che influiscono sulla loro formazione umana) come essi percepiscono e vivono le relazioni sociali facendo uso di Internet. Certo, affermare che i giovani d'oggi sono introversi perché escono di rado o evitano le relazioni sociali sul lavoro o nel dopolavoro, rivela immediatamente la parzialità di vedute che caratterizza lo stile di vita della società precedente, cioè un giudizio formulato da chi considera che le relazioni sociali si possano costruire e mantenere solamente all'interno del contesto lavorativo. Di fatto, si deve notare che non sono tanto diminuite le relazioni sociali, quanto piuttosto è mutato l'ambiente in cui esse accadono. Anzi, potremmo perfino affermare che grazie a Internet e agli altri *social network* i contesti in cui si vivono le relazioni sociali si sono addirittura moltiplicati.

Le relazioni create dai giovani sono numerose: basti pensare ai vari gruppi a cui uno può appartenere in maniera simultanea (grazie a Facebook o all'uso di più *social network* come *line*, *blog*, *twitter*, ecc.), e a tutti quegli strumenti (come lo *smart phone*) che permettono contatti e scambi di informazioni rimanendo a casa o mentre si è in attesa del treno. Così, mentre in passato i luoghi in cui si svolgevano le relazioni era limitato ai soli ambienti scolastici o lavorativi, oggi il mondo delle relazioni sociali dei giovani *satori* è molto più dinamico, diffuso e vario delle generazioni precedenti.

Un altro esempio che si potrebbe portare oltre a quello dell'Internet è quello della diversa concezione del concetto di «regalo». Per i giovani d'oggi ciò che è importante è la relazione e il ricordo che viene a crearsi attraverso il regalo: l'attenzione non è più rivolta esclusivamente verso l'oggetto regalato (il suo valore, la sua bellezza o utilità), ma verso il donatore del regalo. I giovani *heisei* si affeziono al regalo non tanto per il suo valore economico (spesso modesto) quanto piuttosto per la persona che ha fatto tale dono (l'amico, il genitore, ecc.).

D'altro canto si potrebbe anche leggere in questa nuova tendenza un certo distacco dalla tradizione sociale che prevede il dovere (tacito) di scambiarsi regali due volte l'anno: a luglio e a fine anno, infatti, la gente si scambia dei regali in segno di apprezzamento e di ringraziamento per l'aiuto ricevuto (o che stanno ancora ricevendo). È questo un giro di

affari di una portata non indifferente, dato che i negozi mettono a disposizione i loro articoli a seconda di quanto uno desidera spendere, così che non solo chi offre, ma anche chi riceve il regalo può accorgersi del valore economico del dono. Per i giovani *heisei*, invece, un semplice oggetto avuto in regalo da un amico ha un valore molto più profondo di un regalo fatto per puro dovere sociale: il senso di soddisfazione che esso suscita, non risiede tanto nel regalo in sé, quanto piuttosto in ciò che regalo esprime o evoca (ad esempio un'esperienza particolare con quella persona). Il regalo rappresentato dall'oggetto, quindi, non è che una semplice espressione materiale di quella profonda relazione umana che accomuna il donatore e il ricevente.

Per i giovani *heisei* fare acquisti o possedere cose non è fonte di alcun piacere. Ciò che lo procura, invece, è l'esperienza di fare acquisti in compagnia condividendo i propri gusti e scambiandosi dei pareri o delle valutazioni sulla merce con degli amici. La gioia provata nell'acquisto, dunque, non risiede nell'oggetto in sé, ma nell'interazione con i propri amici o con la persona con cui si fanno le compere. Questo risulta evidente, ad esempio, nel rapporto madre-figlia: ricevendo un *feedback* positivo dalla madre, aumenta il senso di soddisfazione per l'acquisto nella figlia.

Si potrebbe quindi concludere affermando che i giovani *heisei* posseggono una sensibilità delicata, sono molto attenti a coltivare relazioni profonde, e sono particolarmente abili nella comunicazione con i propri coetanei. Essi non partecipano passivamente, come in passato, all'anonimo dinamismo della produzione economica, ma considerano la vicinanza e la relazione con le persone care il luogo principale e indispensabile della propria esistenza⁴.

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Church and State in China

UMBERTO BRESCIANI

Christians (Catholic and Protestants) involved in the work of evangelization of China have been vexed for many years by stubborn government control on the activities of their churches. Every word and deed, no matter how minute, has been watched and at times has caused government heavy-handed intervention, even when in a Western context the religious issue in question would not have drawn the least bit of attention.

This situation of watchful control is no longer the result of a Marxist regime bent on destroying religion, «the opium of the people.» It is rather a normal situation of a regime careful about its survival and therefore watchful on everything that is—or is just perceived it possibly could become—a source of danger to its existence. This condition is after all not unlike any government anywhere. In Western history we have had Gallicanism, Febronianism, Cesaropapism, and the like, all being expressions of the *logic of power*, where the regime in power deems that no area of social life should be exempt from its jurisdiction, not even the religious life of the people.

However, in a Chinese cultural context, the above mentioned *logic of power* is just one source. There is another important source: the traditional Confucian heritage. Therefore, in an eventual future change of regime, it is very unlikely that the central government in China will ever lift its control of religious life in society.

To explain this point, we need to go back to history. The issue of the relationship of Church and State has troubled Western nations for almost twenty centuries. In China the problem never existed, for the simple reason that the State has always kept to itself the power to control religion in all its expressions. Therefore, we may classify the millenarian political system of China as «the State dominating the Church.» In the Muslim world, religion is above politics and totally dominates it. In the Western world, presently there exists a relative peace between Church and State; but the present peace could also be seen as a temporary *modus vivendi*, a truce, rather than as a final solution to the problem. In China the State dominated the various religions. Some historians even find instances of subtle tactics by the rulers aiming to hinder religious bodies from organizing on a large scale (and become more influential).

As one may imagine, the *logic of power* was at work. But, as I mentioned, there was

another factor in place, the element coming from the ingrained Confucian heritage. It is a fact that for thousands of years, various religions, sometimes even holding opposite life-views, lived together under one roof. The roof was the Confucian ideology. Even though the ruling emperor might be a firm believer in Daoism or Buddhism, his ministers (Confucian scholars chosen through examinations) never allowed religious figures to get hold of political power. If looking at China's history in general, it is true that the State had a total domination of the Church. However, it is also true that most of the time the various religions lived freely and prospered for so many centuries. How to explain this?

The limit set by the Confucian rulers was the basic ethics according to Confucianism, the so-called *five relationships* (father-son; citizen-ruler; elder brother-younger brother; husband-wife; friend-friend). A local magistrate, or even the central government, would (or at least he was supposed to) intervene when they felt that some cult or religious sect was doing something damaging the basics of social life, i.e. the five relationships.

Despite such a forbearing attitude among the Confucian mandarins toward China's multifarious religious activities, the duty was always felt to keep a watchful eye on religious activities. It was a necessity imposed upon them by their Confucian ideology. A basic axiom of the Confucian political thought is that the ruler is supposed to be a model of moral behavior (a sage), as well as to be responsible for the moral upbringing of his people. The foremost task of a ruler is moral self-cultivation and moral instruction of the people entrusted to him by Heaven. Confucius used to say that "to rule is to rectify" (the ruler should rectify both himself and his people). This is what the opening page of the *Great Learning* (Daxue) stated:

The ancients who wished to illuminate their «illuminating virtue» to all under Heaven first governed their States. Wishing to govern their States, they first regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their personal lives. Wishing to cultivate their personal lives, they first rectified their hearts and minds. Wishing to rectify their hearts and minds, they first authenticated their intentions. Wishing to authenticate their intentions, they first refined their knowledge. The refinement of knowledge lay in the study of things. For only when things are studied is knowledge refined; only when knowledge is refined are intentions authentic; only when intentions are authentic are hearts and minds rectified; only when hearts and minds are rectified are personal lives cultivated; only when personal lives are cultivated, are families regulated; only when families are regulated are States governed; only when States are governed is there peace all under Heaven. Therefore, from the Son of Heaven to the common people, all, without exception, must take self-cultivation as their root.

The Confucian literati holding executive power in the State took for granted that it was their job and exclusive responsibility that of preserving the basic structure of social moral-

ity (the five relationships). They never thought of delegating this power and responsibility to other people, such as to religious leaders. As for any personal search for cosmic truth, for the meaning of life, or for the afterlife, all this was considered belonging to a private realm outside the responsibility of the government. This activity therefore was left totally free for any individual person to pursue. That is why in China for long centuries religions such as Buddhism or Daoism could develop without obstacles, provided that they did not blatantly meddle with the above mentioned ethical foundation of society. Thus, religions in China used to enjoy ample freedom, always under the Confucian cap. The State would intervene only in serious cases of violation of social ethics, or else when a religious sect started to become a real menace to the existence of the State.

This explains also the almost two centuries of persecution against the Catholic Church in China. In certain moments other factors might have played some part—such as fear of intrusion of some foreign powers (Catholic missionaries viewed as fifth column of foreign powers). But the constantly declared main reason for the persecution was that ancestor-and-Confucius worship was the very foundation of Chinese society, and the Catholic Church condemned it.

When describing the Chinese religious tradition, often scholars talk about religious syncretism. Syncretism existed and exists in China, but it is a consequence of the traditional structure of Chinese culture: once a citizen accepts the Confucian structural view of society and respects its basic ethical relationships, the State will leave to him total freedom to indulge in a variety of religious experiences. This also explains why certain religions such as Buddhism and Daoism, which originally because of their ideological principles should draw people to abstain from social life, in time they gradually became similar to Confucianism, and inculcate into their followers the usual teachings the five relationships.

It would have been inconceivable for the Confucian rulers to organize society in another way, such as the way of Europe, with the dual reality of Church and State, where the Church demands to be listened to in public matters. According to Confucius' principle that «to rule means to rectify,» if they left to the Church a role in social and political life it would have meant for them to delegate to other entities (organized religion) the primary task of the ruler: that of rectifying people, teaching them the Way (Dao). The Confucian rulers took care of the people's livelihood, but only as a precondition for moral education (a starving person is not in the condition of listening to moral teachings). Mencius too explained this:

It is the way of human beings that when they have sufficient food, warm clothing, and comfortable dwellings, but are without education, they become little more than birds and beasts. It was the part of the sage (Shun) to grieve anxiously over this. He appointed Xie minister of education in order to teach people about human relations: that between parents and children there is affection; between ruler and minister, rightness; between husband and wife, separate functions; between older and younger, proper order; and between friends, faithfulness. The great and sage ruler Yao said: «Encourage them, lead them, reform them, correct them, assist them, give them wings, let them get it for themselves. Then follow by inspiring them to Virtue» (3 A, 4).

Even though presently the Chinese government is not Confucian, this way of thinking has some degree of influence even today. No doubt, regarding the relationship between the government and religious organizations—local or originating from abroad—this frame of mind will have influence also in the future¹.

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In
margine



Vita insieme con Dio
YOSHIKO HASE

Vita insieme con Dio

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Finalmente a questo punto della mia vita mi pare di riuscire a capire chiaramente il cammino che mi ha portata all'incontro con Dio. In alcuni periodi la luce di Dio (sicura guida di vita) si era come offuscata e velata, ma grazie alla vicinanza e all'aiuto di tante persone e di Qualcuno che non vedevo, ma che mi era vicino, tutto ora è diventato nitido e chiaro.

I primi anni di vita e il primo incontro con Dio

Dopo la nascita di un fratello e di una sorella, sono nata io per ultima, coccolata dai miei genitori fin da piccolina. Forse anche per quello, come carattere ero piuttosto introversa e sono cresciuta affrontando le situazioni in modo passivo.

Può darsi che i miei genitori stessi facessero fatica a trovare il modo per educarmi, ma ero l'ultima e profusero su di me abbondantemente il loro affetto, trovando certamente gioia in questo loro amore per me. Sentivano forse una certa apprensione per il mio futuro inserimento nella società, visto che ero piuttosto introversa. Nel desiderio di aiutarmi a diventare una persona adulta e affidabile, decisero di farmi frequentare le medie e le superiori presso una scuola cattolica non molto lontana da casa, perché è risaputo che le scuole cattoliche sono serie e danno importanza alla disciplina. E così l'educazione ricevuta in questa scuola divenne per me la prima occasione di incontro con Dio.

Per quanto riguarda la mia idea sulla religione a quel tempo, ricordo che mi chiedevo talvolta come mai i miei genitori, cresciuti nella religione buddhista come da lunga tradizione delle loro rispettive famiglie, avessero deciso di farmi frequentare una scuola cattolica. Comunque sia, potei seguire i corsi di religione con interesse e volentieri, sia perché tale materia non era come le altre solite materie, sia perché c'era la preghiera quotidiana e cantavamo inni sacri così nuovi per noi.

Questi anni di studio furono ricchi per me. Tuttavia, per quanto riguarda lo studio della religione, poiché fin dall'inizio la mia idea sulla fede era assai povera, sento il rammarico di aver concluso le superiori senza aver trovato una risposta alla domanda su ciò che costituisce l'essenza della fede.

Tre fede e realtà della vita

Finite le superiori fui impiegata in una ditta, a 22 anni mi sposai ed ebbi la fortuna di avere due figlie. Pensando a quel periodo, mi pare di poter dire con un po' di orgoglio che, pur con il mio temperamento introverso e passivo, nel prendermi a cuore la crescita delle due figlie, io stessa sono cresciuta con loro in forza e vigore. Nonostante ciò, per affrontare la realtà di una società complessa, con le preoccupazioni e apprensioni dovute agli impegni di famiglia e di educazione delle figlie, sentivo che era necessaria una notevole energia. Ci sono stati momenti in cui credevo che il cuore non reggesse.

Normalmente, è proprio in situazioni come queste che ci si rivolge a Dio e si sente la necessità del suo aiuto. A me pare però che, con la scusa di essere troppo indaffarata, stavo perdendo momentaneamente il ricordo della presenza di Dio.

L'addio alla mamma

Un giorno ricevetti una telefonata dai miei genitori ormai anziani. Esprimevano il desiderio di potersi trasferire vicino a me e chiedevano il mio parere. Invece di rivolgersi a mio fratello o a mia sorella maggiore, desideravano venire vicino a me e appoggiarsi a me. Sentivo quanto pesante fosse la responsabilità nei confronti dei miei genitori anziani, ma al tempo stesso ero felice in fondo al cuore, perché avevano scelto me invece dei miei fratelli. Ne parlai con mio marito per conoscere il suo pensiero e provai profonda gratitudine nei suoi confronti perché accolse volentieri la proposta. Rimasi colpita anche dalle mie due figlie che si dimostrarono subito molto contente.

Circa un anno dopo il trasferimento, la mamma fu colpita da infarto e dopo breve tempo il Signore la chiamò a sé. Ai funerali della mamma, pensando alla solitudine in cui restava il papà, in una città dove non aveva molte conoscenze, ero addolorata tanto profondamente che non riuscivo neppure a piangere. Questo ricordo si è ben impresso nella mia memoria.

La presenza del papà e l'approfondimento della fede

Mi sforzai tuttavia di fare del mio meglio. Senza risparmiarmi, mi impegnai con tutto il cuore nel prendermi cura della famiglia e del papà, pulizia delle due case, bucato e preparazione dei pasti.

Due anni dopo la morte della mamma, il papà fu colpito da un lieve infarto. In quel periodo, dovendo suddividere il tempo tra famiglia e cura del papà, soffrivo sia perché

facevo fatica ad accettare la realtà del papà che stava invecchiando inesorabilmente, sia per la consapevolezza sofferta che non avrei mai potuto sostituire la mamma per quanto riguarda la cura che lei avrebbe avuto per il papà.

Fu in quel periodo che trovai un giorno nella cassetta delle lettere un opuscolo di natura religiosa. Leggendolo, trovai alcune parole che suscitarono in me una forte emozione. «Venite a me voi tutti che siete affaticati e oppressi, e io vi ristorerò» (*Mt 11,28*), parole pronunciate da Gesù. Attratta da quelle parole, mi trovai un giorno a bussare alla porta della chiesa che aveva distribuito quell'opuscolo. Era una chiesa protestante. Da allora ascoltai spesso le spiegazioni della Bibbia, fatte dal Pastore con tanto fervore. Dopo un anno circa, il 26 novembre del 1993, a quarantadue anni, ricevetti il Battesimo. Fu così che la presenza del papà divenne l'occasione per ricordare l'esperienza fatta quando ero alle superiori e le sensazioni che allora avevo gustato.

Ma ecco che, improvvisamente, mi accorsi di aver perduto quasi del tutto l'udito all'orecchio destro. La diagnosi fu di sordità fulminea all'orecchio destro dovuta a stanchezza per le cure prestate al papà e mi venne imposto un mese di ospedale. Nel frattempo mi vidi costretta a cercare una casa per anziani cui affidare il papà.

Purtroppo, benché fosse iniziata la primavera, ci fu un periodo piuttosto freddo e il papà si prese un brutto raffreddore che in seguito degenerò in polmonite. Poco dopo la mia dimissione dall'ospedale, quasi avesse voluto aspettare il mio ritorno, a ottantatré anni il papà andò a raggiungere la mamma. Questo avvenne dopo cinque anni dalla morte della mamma.

Stile di vita illuminato dalla fede

Pur avendo ricevuto il Battesimo nella chiesa protestante, dopo la morte del papà sentivo come un vuoto dentro di me, vuoto che non riuscivo a riempire. Mi sentivo come inebetita dal dolore. Piano piano mi allontanai dalla chiesa protestante.

La mia fede mancava di fermezza, era povera e immatura, tanto che a quel tempo non sapevo neanche in che cosa consistesse la differenza tra protestanti e cattolici. Fin da quando, in ansia per il papà, mi prodigavo per dargli le cure necessarie, la mia fede aveva cominciato a tentennare, benché avessi già ricevuto il Battesimo. Fu allora che, quasi per caso, mi capitò di passare vicino alla chiesa cattolica di Hamadera. Quando la domenica partecipai alla Messa, sentii qualcosa che mi toccava in profondità e riscaldava il mio cuore. L'atmosfera stessa di questa chiesa mi fece riandare con nostalgia alla commozione provata quando frequentavo la scuola cattolica.

Rievocando il passato, mi pare che il Signore abbia guidato i miei genitori a farmi frequentare la scuola cattolica affinché poi io potessi prendermi cura di loro con cuore pieno di quell'amore che avevo imparato a scuola, con tanta tenerezza e pazienza, assistendoli fino alla fine. Durante quel periodo il Signore volle mettere alla prova la fermezza della mia fede. Io però non solo non me ne rendevo conto, ma data la mia fede fragile e debole, dimenticai Dio per un certo tempo. Il Signore però non mi ha abbandonato, anzi mi ha dato la possibilità di incontrare la chiesa cattolica. Fu ancora Lui che ha preparato il passaggio dalla chiesa protestante alla chiesa cattolica. Dopo un cammino talvolta tortuoso, non posso non riconoscere il piano amorevole del Signore in tutto quello che è avvenuto.

Ho incontrato le Missionarie di Maria Saveriane e, dopo circa un anno di studio insieme con mio marito, nella Pasqua del 2013, fui accolta nella chiesa cattolica di Izumi (Osaka) e ricevetti il sacramento della Cresima e l'Eucarestia. Nello stesso giorno, anche mio marito ricevette il sacramento del Battesimo: non avrei mai sognato che questo evento potesse avvenire e non posso dire la gioia che ho provato!

Quanto al futuro, desidero proseguire con fermezza insieme con mio marito il cammino che ora si è fatto nitido e chiaro, con cuore grato per l'abbondanza di grazia che il Signore ci dona giorno per giorno¹.

1. Questa storia di conversione è stata raccolta e tradotta da Luisa Gori MM, che ringraziamo per la sua collaborazione.

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