

FRATERNITY AS A (COSMO)POLITICAL CATEGORY

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Is fraternity an exclusively ethical and religious category or can it also play a relevant role in political theory and practice? This is the question/challenge posed by Antonio Maria Baggio in his collective book: *The Forgotten Principle. Fraternity in contemporary political reflection*¹. In this short essay, we have tried to take up the challenge by proposing some initial reflections on the subject as part of a broader debate that Prof. Baggio and his interlocutors are conducting².

The central hypothesis is to define the concepts of fraternity starting from the capacity to promote greater social solidarity, as concentric rings that tend to widen to the idea of a tendentially universal fraternity. We will develop our theme by proposing a dialogue between the evangelical reading of fraternity and Max Weber's sociological reading.

¹ A.M. Baggio (ed.), *Il principio dimenticato. La fraternità nella riflessione politica contemporanea*, Città Nuova, Roma 2007. See the Brazilian edition enlarged with other interventions: A.M. Baggio, (ed.), *O princípio Esquecido/1. A fraternidade na reflexão atual das ciências políticas*, Cidade Nova, São Paulo 2008; Id. (ed.), *O princípio Esquecido/2. Exigências, recursos e definições da fraternidade na política*, Cidade Nova, São Paulo 2009.

² This essay thoroughly revises the one that appeared in Portuguese: G. Tosi, *A fraternidade es uma categoria política?*, in A.M. Baggio (ed.), *O princípio Esquecido/2*, cit., pp. 43-64.

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FRATERNITY AS A BOND OF BLOOD, PARENTHOOD AND NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the most original sense of the term, fraternity is understood as a blood bond, as a feeling of belonging to a family, to a clan (extended family) or to a village, neighbourhood, small and circumscribed group of neighbours. This is the primary meaning of the word 'neighbour', who is at my side, close to me. Max Weber defines this first concept of fraternity as

"community of proximity": the neighbour is the typical lender of help and proximity is therefore the bearer of "fraternity", albeit in a sense "stripped of all sentimentalism, predominantly ethical-economic" of the word, "and this as a product of the original fundamental principle of the little sentimental ethics of the people throughout the world: "as you to me, so I to you"³. The neighbour helps the neighbour because one day he too may need the neighbour's help⁴.

This original fraternity is part of the common experience of every human being as a member of a family and a community of people who are close to him, and we can define it as the simultaneously essential and minimal content of the concept. Essential because the family community provides the basic identity on which personality is built. Despite all the criticism of the family and community as archaic and outdated forms of social coexistence, the family endures even in modern industrial and advanced urban societies, albeit in different forms. So much so that without an adequate acceptance of the family and community, the consequences for the development of the individual are always very serious and often irreversible.

But if we look at the family and community from the perspective of its capacity to express social solidarity, we see that it is a sociality limited by two factors, one internal and the other external.

³ M. Weber, *Economia e Società*. Edizioni di Comunità, Milan 1995, vol. II: The Economy in Relation to Systems and Social Forces, pp. 59-60.

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 264-265.

A first question relates to the logic of proximity: despite the strength of blood ties, there is no 'natural instinct' to guarantee that these ties are fraternal in the sense of solidarity: how many infightings takes place within families, how much violence takes place within the domestic walls, how many episodes of disunity are recorded in what should be the 'cell of society'. It is not by chance that the Bible records, as the first act in human history after the fall, a fratricide: Cain kills his brother Abel! And when he is asked by JHWH: "Where is Abel, your brother?", he replies: "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" (*Gen 4:9-10*). Cain was brother in the carnal sense, but not brotherly because he did not feel responsible for the other.

Another difficulty is external to the family and community. Despite enmities, violence and tensions, in the family and neighbourhood group there is normally a certain solidarity and reciprocity between those 'within' it, as Max Weber observes. However, externally, towards the other, the outsider, the stranger, the different, those who do not belong to the community, distrust prevails, when not open hostility. This is a constant in human history, which can be verified from primitive communities to complex modern societies: it is the eternal struggle between 'us' and the 'others'⁵. Recent phenomena of intolerance against immigrants, in various European countries, show the topicality of this attitude of group solidarity, which in the name of 'ancestral' values, linked to the territory, the community, the sacred myths of 'land and blood', or paradoxically referring to Christian identity, discriminate against the different, the other, the foreigner.

⁵ Cf. T. Todorov, *La Conquista dell'America. Il problema dell'altro*, Einaudi, Turin 1984; Id., *Noi e gli altri. La riflessione francese sulla diversità umana*, Einaudi, Turin 1991; S. Landucci, *I filosofi e i selvaggi (1580-1780)*, Laterza, Bari 1972.

FRATERNITY AS AN ETHICAL PRINCIPLE

Jesus Christ, who lived at a time when family ties and community ties were very strong, proposes instead a fraternity no longer bound by blood, kinship, but by common ethical-religious values, thus introducing one of the great 'good news' in relation to the Judaic tradition. The Gospel reports this episode:

While he was still speaking to the crowd, behold, his mother and his brothers (*adelphoi*) stood outside and tried to speak to him. Someone said to him, "Behold, your mother and your brothers stand outside and try to talk to you. And he, answering those who spoke to him, said: "Who is my mother and who are my brothers?". Then, stretching out his hand towards his disciples, he said, "Behold my mother and my brothers! For whoever does the will of my Father who is in heaven is my brother, my sister, my mother" (*Mt 12:46-50*).

Jesus Christ said that his brothers were those who were willing to follow him, thus releasing the sense of fraternity from proximity to ever broader and tendentially universal bonds. In this sense, fraternity is understood as something that opens up to a broad ethical-religious community, which inspires all those experiences of fraternal coexistence that succeeded each other over the long centuries of Christianity, founded on the con- division of a common ideal that is transformed into a way of life and which are one of its most precious characteristics: think of the communities of the early Church, monastic communities, religious congregations, Christian apostolate movements, etc. These are experiences of fraternity that create a sense of fraternity that is not only a way of life, but also a way of life. They are experiences of fraternity that create in the participants a sense of belonging to a broader project of personal and social transformation, which offers a profound meaning to one's life in all its aspects, and which constitute a foretaste of the Christian utopia of the Kingdom of God. Did Jesus Christ does not say that "the kingdom of God is in your midst!"? (*Lk 17:21*).

But, again, Max Weber, with his realist language and scepticism towards utopias, alerts us that this form of fraternity can only be an enlarged form of the fraternity of neighbourhood:

To the ties of the parental group, blood brothers and lineage, community religiosity also adds members of the community as the object of the duty to help. Or rather, it puts them in the place of the members of the parental group: whoever is not prepared to abandon father and mother cannot be a disciple of Jesus ... ⁶.

The fraternity is enlarged, but the logic remains the same, it includes all those who belong to the same congregation and participate in the same religion or belief, but excludes those outside it:

This then gave rise to the imperative of 'fraternity', which is specific to community religiosity [...] because it pushes the emancipation of the political group to the extreme. Even in early Christianity, e.g. in Clement of Alexandria, fraternity is only of full value within the circle of those associated with the faith, and not outside it⁷.

Weber shows that this type of fraternity, typical of congregational religiosity, is not universal because it maintains the distinction between 'us' and 'others', between those who accept the message of Christ and those who reject it, between the faithful and the unfaithful, thus reintroducing a dialectic that tends to exacerbate conflicts, confrontation, intolerance and wars, as the history of religions unfortunately shows *ad abundantiam*. In this case, Weber states: 'the universalism of love', which congregational religions preach, is in trouble because it must face competition from other congregational religions, which also claim that their god is the only true one⁸.

⁶ M. Weber, *Economia e Società*, cit., vol. II, p. 264.

⁷ *Ibid.*

According to Weber, it is only in some very special cases that this fraternity opens up to something more universal: "Only the well-known intermingling of political and ethnic communities, and the detachment from the political group of gods, conceived as universal powers, leads to the possibility of universalism in matters of love"⁹. The religious ethics of fraternity universalises the basic principle of the ethics of proximity, which thus becomes the famous 'rule of thumb' common to various religions: 'do unto others as you would have them do unto you', seen no longer in a cultural context of proximity, but in the universal context of the Gospel commandment: 'Love your neighbour as yourself'.

But here we are entering another concept of fraternity co-me political category in an even broader sense.

FRATERNITY AS A (COSMO)POLITICAL CATEGORY

To exemplify this sense of fraternity, we will start from an interpretation of the parable of the Good Samaritan (*Lk* 10:25- 37)¹⁰. Luke, Mark and Matthew report the episode of a man of the law (*legisperitus*) who asks Jesus what to do to possess eternal life; to which Jesus replies to seek what is written in the Law. The man then quotes two capital passages of the Law:
"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your

⁸ M. Weber, *Economia e Società*. cit., p. 265. Exemplary in this respect is the debate on the conquest of America. Let me quote on this subject: G. Tosi, "Veri domini" or "servi a natura"? *La teoria della schiavitù naturale nel dibattito sul nuovo mondo* (1510-1573), Edizioni Studio Domenicano, Bologna 2003 .

⁹ M. Weber, *Economia e Società*, cit., vol. II, p. 265.

¹⁰ This reading owes much to: L.F. Barzotto, *Pessoa, Fraternidade e Direito*, in W. G. Di Lorenzo (ed.), *Anais do I Congresso Sul-Americano de Filosofia do Direito*, PUCRS, Porto Alegre 2005.

soul, with all your strength and with all your mind¹¹, and your neighbour as yourself¹² " (*Lk* 10:27-28).

The other two evangelists interrupt the dialogue on this point, but Luke tells us how the man of law, who had asked the question to 'test Jesus', did not feel satisfied and took advantage of the situation to ask the *rabbi* a controversial question for the Jewish community of the time (and also for ours): who is my neighbour?

Jesus responds with the parable of the Good Samaritan. A man is found fallen to the ground on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho, abandoned there 'half dead' (*semivivivus*) by the thieves who had robbed him and beaten him. A priest and a Levite, who were passing along the same road, saw him but "passed by" (vv. 31-32). Barzotto comments:

The fallen man has no qualifications. It is not known whether he is a Jew or a foreigner, a pagan or a proselyte, a Serean or a Pharisee. By avoiding approaching to determine whether or not the fallen man is a neighbour, according to conventional criteria, the commandment loses any content, even a narrow one. How to identify the neighbour in the fallen man without approaching him? The priest and the Levite, two people who know the Law, do not approach the wounded man. For them there will be no neighbour, in any sense, which means that *hic et nunc* there is no obligation, no commandment, no Law. They saw but did not recognise. If the recognition of one's neighbour is necessary to give content to the commandment of love for one's neighbour, one finds that only he who comes close, who approaches¹³ knows who his neighbour is.

If the priest and the Levite had approached and recognised the fallen man as one of 'their own', they would probably have stopped, or felt the need to stop, but not the one who had fallen.

¹¹ *Deut.* 6, 5.

¹² *Lev.* 19, 18.

¹³ L.F. Barzotto, *Pessoa, Fraternidade e Direito*, cit. (author's translation).

wanted to have anything to do with that fallen man, who thus remained someone totally unrelated in his indeterminacy.

A Samaritan, who belonged to a social group that was politically and religiously hostile to the Jews, passes by on the road. Jesus relates that "passing by him, he saw and had compassion on him" (v. 33). Barzotto comments:

As a stranger, the Samaritan cannot be guided in his actions by a particularist ethic of fraternity. No one in Judea is his neighbour, to no one he owes reciprocity. In this way he does not behave according to a code of hospitality that governs relations between members of the group and strangers. He is the stranger. The Samaritan has every reason to consider that the fallen man is his enemy, since he is in Judea¹⁴.

However, the Samaritan 'approaches', and does not 'pass over'. This is the first attitude of welcoming the other as a person, the first act of the recognition process: to transcend oneself to walk towards the other; and thus 'see' the other. But not as the priest and the Levite saw him, who turned their backs, approximating himself, the Samaritan sees the other in his entirety: he does not see a Jew or a stranger, but a 'person'.

"And he had compassion on them": the Samaritan sees the suffering of the other, he sees his vulnerability and identifies with the other, he feels the other's vulnerability as his own. The same thing could happen to him, he too is on a dangerous path. But it is not just a 'small' logic of solidarity of proximity, of *quid pro quo*, it is something more universal. Its solidarity stems from the recognition of common human frailty, from the emotion of reproducing in oneself what the other feels. And it is significant that this vulnerability refers to the human body, to physical suffering, to pain, to proximity to death (*semivivivus*, the Gospel says). He does not think of himself as a superior being who helps another inferior being. The other is a person like himself, who shares the

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, (author's translation).

of the same shortcomings and needs: to recognise the other is to have a passion for him or her, that is, to identify with a person who is the same as the one looking on. This is the profound and original meaning of fraternity that can be experienced by every human being.

But the parable tells us something more: the Samaritan's compassion is not sterile, it is active. He offers help to the injured man, transports him to a hotel, takes care of him, leaves his chores to take care of the other, spends his money. The parable does not tell us whether in approaching the Samaritan recognised in the fallen man a co-religionist or an enemy, another Samaritan or a Jew: Jesus purposely leaves this question in the shadows, co-meaning that the Samaritan was able to recognise the other as a "person", in his generality, without determination¹⁵.

At the end, Jesus asks the man of law a question that can only be rhetorical at this point: 'Which of these three **d o** you think has been a neighbour to you? And he answered: 'He who had compassion on him'. In doing so, Jesus points to a fraternity so broad that it includes all human beings: "without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national or social origin, whether by fortune, birth or any other status", as Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proclaimed by the UN in 1948 states.

A fraternity that we could call political or cosmopolitical in a broad sense, reminiscent of the Stoic Greek cosmopolitanism, albeit in a more radical form because the universalism of love goes so far as to propose love for the enemy (*Mt* 5:43-48).

¹⁵ As Norberto Bobbio states, one of the criticisms levelled at human rights, both from the left and the right, is their abstractness and indeterminacy: they speak of man and humanity in a general sense that do not exist except in their declarations. Marxists reproach them for thus hiding the interests of the bourgeoisie behind the facade of universalism; anti-revolutionaries like De Maistre for not considering the ineliminable natural and historical differences between men. But it will be precisely this abstractness and generality of the concept that will allow countless individuals and social groups to recognise themselves in human rights precisely through struggles for recognition. Cf. N. Bobbio, *L'età dei diritti*, Einaudi, Turin 1992, pp. 110-120.

REALIST CRITIQUES OF FRATERNITY AS A POLITICAL CATEGORY

In the course of our journey, we have identified three concepts of fraternity: a more original 'economic' one, which is manifested in the family and in neighbourhood groups¹⁶; a more ample 'ethical' one, which goes beyond the narrow family ties by virtue of belonging to a religion, an ideology, a worldview, which overcomes the barriers of blood and proximity and broadens the concept of neighbour; and finally, an even broader fraternity, which we have defined as cosmo-political because of its universality.

There is a certain consensus on the first two concepts of fraternity: fraternity plays an important role in the family and neighbourhood community as an economic concept, which is governed by the principle of reciprocity, or in the more universalist ethics, which are governed by the 'golden rule', which is nothing but an extension of this primordial logic. As for fraternity as a political category, on the other hand, there are more doubts than consensus; hence, as Baggio states, it is a *forgotten principle*, compared to the other two concepts of the revolutionary triad, freedom and equality.

We can now reformulate our initial question: how can we make fraternity as an ethical-political value tendentially universal, something that can serve to organise the political world of men, something that has historical efficacy? This is where the main difficulty of fraternity as a political category lies: an ethics of fraternity is an ethics, but not a political one, i.e. it is a value that is 'realistically' more difficult to realise in the political world dominated by individual or collective interests, relations of force, conflicts, and violence in all its forms. Here it is a matter of making a more demanding leap that faces various objections and, in fact, most

¹⁶ But perhaps one should distinguish more than Weber does between the solidarity within the family, which does not necessarily follow an economic logic, but one of gratuitousness and affection, and an economic ethic of the neighbourhood group.

part of modern political doctrines has difficulty recognising fraternity as a political principle.

An Enlightenment figure such as Kant would see fraternity as a 'paternalistic' concept, which wounds the principle of the autonomy of the subject, insofar as in order to recognise us all as brothers, we would have to recognise a Father, God, and therefore a higher authority. The figure of the father still remains anchored to an anthropo- morphic way of conceiving God that does not suit a religion that must respect the limits imposed on it by a reason that has reached its majority¹⁷.

On the other hand, however, Kant is the modern philosopher par excellence of cosmopolitanism, which can be seen as a secularisation of Christian universalism in the recognition of humanity as one. For Kant, the distinction between morality and law, and between ethics and politics, does not mean a 'discordance' or 'incompatibility', but a 'possible agreement according to the transcendental concept of public law', which indicates, in the regulating idea of achieving 'perpetual peace' through the creation of a World Federation of states governed by cosmopolitan law, a 'moral progress' of humanity¹⁸.

A Marxist would define fraternity as a concept that camouflages/hides the irreducible divisions between the opposing classes, so that at best it would be an illusion (as was any religion for Marx), at worst a deception to cushion social conflicts. From this point of view, the Samaritan made a nice gesture, but it remained an end in itself, a 'welfare' gesture that did not eliminate the structural in-justices of the society of his time: Jews and Samaritans continued to be enemies, and both continued to be exploited by Roman imperialism. There is no possibility of fraternity between antagonistic classes, although Marxism admits

¹⁷ Cf. I. Kant, *Risposta alla questione: Cosa é l'Illuminismo?* (1784), in I. Kant, *Scritti di storia, politica e diritto*, edited by F. Gonnelli, Laterza, Roma-Bari 2007, pp. 45-52.

¹⁸ Cf. I. Kant *Ida di una Storia Universale dal punto di vista cosmopolita* (1784); *Per la Pace perpetua* (1795), in I. Kant, *Scritti di Storia, Politica e Diritto*, cit. pp. 29-44 and 163-208.

a space for fraternity, but only between 'comrades' who share the same condition of the exploited and oppressed class, or in the future communist society, when the structural contradictions of capitalism will have been overcome and the conditions for a more solidary and fraternal society will have been created, where there will no longer even be a need for the state, but everything will be self-regulated by freely associated producers.

If in Marx fraternity is admitted, albeit with reservations and projected into a utopian horizon of revolutionary transformation of society, in a political realist like Schmitt there is no place at all for a universal fraternity, but only for a type of fraternity that maintains the irreducible differences between 'us' and 'others', because without this distinction the very concept of the 'political' itself falls. For Schmitt, fraternity is a typically 'apolitical' concept, which does not recognise the 'category of the political' par excellence, i.e. the reality of friend/foe relations that is inherent to politics. To envisage a fraternity without limits, or whose limits coincide with the whole of humanity, is to imagine the possibility of a world without 'the political', where there would be no room for friend/foe conflict: '*Humanity* as such cannot conduct any war, since it has no enemies, at least not on this planet. The concept of humanity *excludes* that of enemy'¹⁹. Universal brotherhood is not only a totally utopian idea that does not recognise human nature, but also a deception that conceals unconfessable claims, i.e. the ideological justification of war in the name of humanity. That is why Schmitt, paraphrasing Proudhon, says: 'he who speaks of humanity, wants to deceive you'²⁰ and adds:

Proclaiming the concept of humanity, referring to humanity, monopolising this word: all this could only manifest the terrible demand that the enemy be taken away from the

¹⁹ C. Schmitt. *Le categoria del politico*, il Mulino, Bologna 1972, p. 139.

²⁰ *Ibid.* For a development of Schmitt's analysis of international relations in the age of globalisation: D. Zolo, *Chi dice umanità*. Guerra, Diritto e Ordine globale. Einaudi, Turin 2000.

quality of man, that it must be declared *hors-la-loi* and *hors-l'humanité* and therefore that war must be taken to the extreme inhumanity²¹.

But in addition to this *ad personam* argument, what is important to note is that politics is thought of so inseparably from war that for Schmitt, the end of war would also mean the end of the state:

If a 'world state' were to encompass the whole world and the whole of humanity, it would no longer be a political unit and could only be called a state in a manner of speaking. [...] It [such a society] would know neither state nor kingdom nor empire, neither republic nor monarchy, neither aristocracy nor democracy, neither protection nor obedience, but would have completely lost all political character²².

In this way, Schmitt mocks the utopia of self-organisation of associated producers that Marx inherited from anarchism, but also the Kantian cosmopolitan project of perpetual peace.

This radically anti-cosmopolitan vision is consistent with its assumptions, but if we withdraw the concept of the political from its indissoluble association with the friend/neighbour relationship, we can imagine a world society (albeit as a regulating ideal), governed by a world government²³ that can still retain its political form (for Kant, it had to be republican), where the state continues to exist and administer the conflicts, tensions and violence that continue to exist, but where it will be much more difficult to promote the political system.

²¹ C. Schmitt, *The Categories of the Political*, cit., p. 139.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

²³ Kant had initially proposed a Universal People's State (*Völkerstaat*) as a World Republic (*Weltrepublik*), which he then replaced with a Federation of States governed by a cosmopolitan constitution and a pact against war. Cf. I. Kant, *Of the Relationship of Theory to Practice in the Law of Peoples*, in I. Kant, *Writings on History, Politics and Law*, cit., pp. 153-161.

war, because every war will be considered a civil war²⁴.

Max Weber, in addition to the critical remarks on fraternity that we have quoted above, would also add that fraternity cannot become a political category because in the world of politics, an ethics of responsibility (*Verantwortungsetisch*) realistically dominates, which is incompatible with an ethics of conviction (*Gesinnungsethisch*), which would be proper to fraternity. For Weber, the world would be much worse if the great religious prophets did not exist with their messages of an ethics of conviction, of which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is perhaps the highest expression; but with the absolute ethics of the *Sermon on the Mount*, nations are not governed²⁵. Politics, on the other hand, inevitably must deal with force, 'force is the decisive means', and must be guided by an ethics of conviction that measures the foreseeable consequences of one's actions. This is the dilemma of the relationship between ethics and politics, which, according to Weber, has not found and can never find a satisfactory solution in theory and practice.

But the *aut aut* that Weber poses between the two ethics, although very suggestive, hides an ambiguity: the moment Weber states that the ethics of conviction must be 'really taken seriously' and that it demands 'all or nothing', he does a double-take that invalidates both morality (because it reduces ethics to the Kantian version of *fiat justitia, pereat mundus*), as well as any ethical applicability to politics, which remains dominated by force.

²⁴ For a critical view of cosmopolitanism: D. Zolo, *Cosmopolis. La prospettiva del governo mondiale*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1995. For a more favourable view: D. Archibugi - R. Falk - D. Held - M. Kaldor, *Cosmopolis. È possibile una democrazia sopranazionale?* Manifestolibri, Rome 1993.

²⁵ Cf. M. Weber, *La politica come professione*, Armando Editore, Rome 1997, pp. 99-116. Weber's maxim recalls that of Machiavelli, who, quoting Cosimo de' Medici, had said that with *pater noster* one does not administer peoples.

FRATERNITY AND POLITICS

Proposing fraternity as a political category, on the contrary, means believing that it is possible to go beyond this unsolved alternative between ethics and politics, and to indicate, if not answers, then lines of research that can show the efficacy and political value of fraternity.

Politics as a service

Continuing our 'political' reading of the Gospel, we find valuable insights into the relationship between fraternity and politics. The position of Jesus Christ towards politics is complex. It is true that Jesus looked at the world of politics with distrust, as if it were a minefield, a dangerous terrain that was better avoided. In fact, he sends a message to Herod calling him 'that fox' (*Lk* 13:32), tries to separate (to protect him) the religious and political spheres: 'render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's' (*Mt* 22:21-23), and acknowledges before Pilate that 'My kingdom is not of this world' (*Jn* 18:36). Hence his refusal to be regarded as a revolutionary political leader as some of the more radical Jewish groups of his time wanted (and as some of his disciples may have hoped), who incited him to rebellion against the Roman Empire. As we know, the ongoing conflict between Rome and the Jews would lead to the terrible Roman destruction of Jerusalem by the armies of Titus in 70 A.D. and the diaspora. If Christ had chosen this path, his message would probably have disappeared, as various Jewish sects of his time perished.

But we cannot reduce Jesus' attitude to meek realism and political prudence; Jesus understood very well that the roots of evil and violence that dominated politics were much deeper and that only an ethical and religious message could eradicate them from the hearts of men, but for this there was a need for a radical reform of one's own religion, which took on the same logic of power and strength as politics. But if this is true, if the message of Jesus remains fundamentally ethical-religious, it is also true that the Gospel is not indifferent to the world of politics and does not shy away from intervening in it.

In fact, paradoxically (but not too paradoxically), Christ was condemned to death by the very political powers towards which he was refractory, because his message and figure were perceived as politically dangerous, both by political and religious powers. And the Gospel provides some keys to interpreting the political world precisely in the light of frailty. In two passages that are more radical and significant for our theme, we read:

You know that the rulers of the nations rule over them and that the leaders oppress them. Among you it shall not be so, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant (*mini-ster/diákonos*), and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave (*servus/doulos*) (Mt 20:25-28).

But you, do not be called 'rabbi', for one is your Master and you are all brothers. And do not call any of you on earth "father," for one is your Father, the heavenly Father. And do not let yourselves be called "guides" because only one is your Guide, the Christ. He who is greater among you shall be your servant (*minister/diákonos*); and he who exalts himself shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself shall be exalted (Mt 23:8-12).

Here we have three very strong (in)political ideas: a) an egalitarian conception of human relations in the name of God's greatness: God alone is father, teacher, doctor; before the immeasurable divine greatness, the differences between men become insignificant; b) a distrust of established power, be it political or religious, when it is exercised to dominate, oppress and exploit others; c) a recovery of politics when it is exercised not as domination but as service (*ministerium/diakonia*).

These are orientations that, if they do not provide the elements for a political theology²⁶, indicate the possibility of exercising politics in an ethical key, as a service to one's neighbour that makes it possible to overcome the gulf that Weber had placed between the two dimensions.

Fraternity and otherness

If we place fraternity in reference to the other two values of the famous triad of the French revolution, we could say that, from a certain point of view, the experience of fraternity is more universal and widespread than that of freedom and equality, because it is primordial. There may be today, and there certainly were in the past, societies where equality and freedom are absent, or restricted to a small group, but it is much more difficult to imagine a human society where some kind of fraternity and solidarity, albeit limited, is not experienced. According to the ancient Aristotelian view, man is a naturally social and political animal, and this primordial sociality of his can serve as a basis and experience for broader forms, depending on historical and social conditions. For this to happen, it is therefore necessary to reformulate the initial experience of the fraternity of proximity in the light of a revision of the identity/alterity dialectic.

Every human being is born in a specific geographical and social context, from which he assimilates a culture, a language, a way of being in the world, which makes him become a man: in fact, from this point of view, one is not born a man, but becomes one through a process of humanisation that is a process of socialisation and formation. It is impossible to renounce this original identity that is a constitutive part of our human condition, as beings not totally determined by nature, but by that 'second nature' that is culture. Identity is therefore necessarily constructed in an inter-subjective confrontation between an 'I' and an 'other'.

²⁶ See for example the beautiful book by Merio Scattola (*Teologia politica*, il Mulino, Bologna 2007), which begins the history of the concept with the Apostle Paul, the first to elaborate a political theology and a theology of history.

"us" and the "others". As the mediaeval scholastics used to say: '*Omnis determinatio est negatio*', every determination is at the same time negation: the 'I' defines itself as such in relation to a 'non-me', the one who is different from me, who becomes my enemy, the adversary, the one who is hostile to me and whom I must distrust. But this negation, at the same time logical and ethical, can remain limited to the negative moment or go beyond it, recognising what is common in the diversity of the other, that is, an identity that is the common human condition.

This dialectic, which is an integral part of the process of personal and social reorganisation²⁷, applies as much in relations between individuals in everyday life as in relations between groups, classes, peoples, states, civilisations. Violence arises from the disqualification of the other, from the act of withdrawing from the other his human characteristics, dehumanising him and reducing him to his negative aspects. This process can go to the extremes of annihilating the other, the different, the different when it is seen as an absolute enemy, as in the case of the final solution implemented by Nazism against the Jews and all other groups and peoples considered inferior²⁸.

But it can be used to read the whole of human history. For example, realist theorists of the *clash of civilisations* defend the inevitability of confrontation between West and East. In the media-fuelled Western imaginary, non-Western civilisations, especially Islam, are not only different, but dangerous and enemies and must be fought: every Islamic person is seen as a dangerous terrorist. In the real war that is fought in the Brazilian suburbs and *favelas* between the traffickers, the police and the defenseless population, all the stereotypes of the de-qualification of the other are reproduced. To kill

²⁷ For the theory of recognition see: C. Taylor, *Radici dell'io*, Feltrinelli, Milan 1993; C. Taylor - J. Habermas, *Multiculturalismo. Lotte per il riconoscimento*, Feltrinelli, Milan 2001; A. Honneth, *La lotta per il riconoscimento*. Il Saggiatore, Milan 2002.

²⁸ The most tragic, dramatic and at the same time lucid testimony of how far 'absolute evil', as Hannah Arendt put it, can go is to be found in P. Levi, *Se questo è un Uomo, La Tregua*. Einaudi, Turin 1989.

To kill, torture, mistreat the other is to first kill him symbolically in one's own mind, withdrawing from him the human characteristics that make him equal and accentuating the characteristics that make him not only different but inferior. In our daily relationships, we often resort, consciously or unconsciously, to very common mechanisms of disqualifying and dehumanising the other: 'this is an animal, a pig, he does not deserve to live, etc.', which sometimes result in real blood feuds.

As is well known, man is one of the few living beings that has developed a very high degree of intraspecific aggression, almost unheard of in the natural world, albeit one dominated by a ruthless struggle for survival, which is generally determined by vital needs and exercised towards those outside the species. On the contrary, man possesses a high degree of aggression against his fellow man. Just as there are no 'natural' mechanisms that inhibit this aggression, there are no natural mechanisms that foster it either: for instinctual aggression to turn into social violence, it needs the mediation of society and culture.

This is where the role of education in a broad sense comes in: the overcoming of the negative dialectic of otherness will only come about by promoting in society as a whole the conditions for the other to be recognised not simply as a 'non-self', but as an 'other self'²⁹. Recognising the other as myself means recognising that we all belong to the same human condition: we all suffer the same pains, we all have the same body, we all feel the same feelings, we all need individual and social, affective and cognitive recognition, to be recognised in our identity and diversity. This is the 'golden rule' of all religions, expressed in the commandment to love one's neighbour as oneself, which 'brings together all the Law and the prophets' and is the fruit of the wisdom of peoples throughout the ages.

²⁹ Paul Ricoeur goes further by proposing a dual recognition: not only to recognise the other as myself, but myself as another: P. Ricoeur, *Soi-meme comme un autre*, Seuil, Paris 1990.

Fraternity and responsibility

In the second half of the 20th century, since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, there has been a growing and tendentially unlimited list of 'generations' of rights, which have led to an uncontrolled proliferation of the 'demand for rights': multiplication, specification, universalisation, promotion are processes that have led to an increase in the 'quantity and quality' of rights in the name of the utopian principle 'all rights for all' and 'everyone is entitled to have rights'. This proliferation can not only create great practical frustration, because in fact the increase in the list and generations of rights corresponds to the equally vertiginous increase in the lack of respect for them, but also theoretical frustration.

In raising the question of the other, fraternity challenges the individualistic framework of human rights. In emphasising freedom and equality to the detriment of fraternity, modernity has accentuated the individualistic and selfish aspects of human rights, forgetting the social and solidarity-based character of rights, which are not simply those of the individual, groups or classes, but of the other, the weaker, the less well-off, those excluded from the system, but also of nature or future generations. If freedom refers to the individual in his or her singularity and equality opens him or her up to a social dimension that remains, however, within the identity of a group or class, fraternity recalls the idea of another towards whom I have not only rights to oppose, but also responsibilities to share.

This calls into question the individualist and subjectivist foundation of rights, the illusion that there are no 'objective' limits to the 'accumulation' of rights, hides the fact that the set of rights is not harmonious, but that there are conflicts between often irreconcilable classes of rights³⁰. For example, the environmental issue and the emergence of ecological rights show the existence of 'natural limits' to the indefinite realisation of economic growth, limits that are co

³⁰ Cf. N. Bobbio, *Sul fondamento dei diritti dell'uomo*, in Id., *L'età dei diritti*, Einaudi, Turin 1992, pp. 5-16.

so strict that if not respected, they can endanger the very survival of the human species. The debate on bioethics has highlighted the existence of 'ethical limits' to biological research: not everything we can do technically, we must do. The debates on the right to development have highlighted the 'social limits' to development if it is to be truly a socially just and income redistributing human development, and not merely economic growth. This leads one to think that an ethics of rights with only an individualist foundation is insufficient and must be complemented by an ethics of responsibility that considers the other³¹.

This seems to be the great challenge that the idea of fraternity poses to human rights in the 21st century, in an increasingly globalised world: the overcoming of a purely identity-based logic through the recognition of otherness, diversity and reciprocity within an ethics of responsibility.

CONCLUSION

A realist like Weber would again call us back to the question: where are the historical, sociological, economic and real political conditions for these proposals to find actual ground for realisation and not just be projects in the air, good intentions? Here we would have to develop a whole other research not on fraternity as a political category, but on the type of politics capable of implementing fraternity, which was not the objective of this short essay³². We shall limit ourselves here to some very brief considerations.

³¹ Cf. H. Jonas, *Il Principio Responsabilità. Un'etica per la civiltà tecnologica*, Einaudi, Torino 1990; M.A. de Oliveira, *Os direitos humanos na ótica da filosofia e da teologia latino-americana da libertação*, in "Teologia e Pastoral", Loyola, São Paulo 2002, pp. 59-81.

³² Valuable indications in this regard can be found in the essays in the two volumes edited by Antonio Maria Baggio on fraternity as a forgotten principle, footnote 1, p. 231.

All indications are that the globalisation process itself is creating the conditions for the realisation of these proposals insofar as it creates such a close interdependence between all parts of the world that it necessarily forces a collective solution or collective downfall. The idea of universal fraternity and solidarity in this context can play a political role and find a broad consensus in an era of globalisation characterised as a risk society (*Risikogesellschaft*), when the very survival of humanity is at stake³³.

From the point of view of international relations, there are many indications that there is an increasingly clear need for the transition from the international law of sovereign states to some form of cosmopolitan law, which takes care of issues of the environment, development, peace and war, i.e. issues that transcend the borders of states and require a move beyond the purely individualistic logic of interest in persons, groups, classes or states.

In the society in which we live (but also in the societies that preceded us), politics has always been realistically governed by personal and group interests, but it is precisely the urgency and seriousness of the issues at stake that can 'realistically' drive the need for a different solution. Faced with the dangers that threaten the survival of mankind, we can envisage opposing scenarios: pessimistically or realistically, the 'struggle of all against all' of the Hobbesian state of nature, or the realisation that we are all in the same boat and that we must find collective exits that can save everyone, and thus the formation of a new global social pact to get out of the state of nature that exists between states and establish a civilised state.

Human history does not authorise us to bet on the success of the second proposition, but neither does it authorise us to remain in hierarchy. As Norberto Bobbio wrote, quoting Kant: "Those who claim that the world will always go as it has gone so far

³³ Cf. U. Beck. *Lo sguardo cosmopolita*, Carocci, Roma 2005.

contribute to making their prediction come true³⁴. For one to be able to speak in Kantian terms of the 'moral progress' of mankind, it is important not only to have an orthodoxy, but also an orthopraxis of all those people, groups and institutions that aim to realise the regulating ideal of the Kingdom of God, of which the Gospels speak, or the Kingdom of the Ends as Kant put it in his secularised language.

We must persevere on this path, with the optimism of the will and the realism of the intelligence, aware that the reality is much more complex and tough than our desires.

SUMMARY

The author begins with an affirmation of the religious roots of fraternity, a category which is present in various religions, and indeed fundamental in Judaism and Christianity. He examines three concepts of fraternity: as consanguinity, as an ethical principle, and as a cosmopolitical category. He shows the historical impact of fraternity and analyses some "realist" criticisms. He suggests some areas for further study and for the development of the idea of fraternity: exploring the dialectic of identity and otherness, a dialectic of intersubjectivity, and its application to international solidarity. In this way, the idea of fraternity can assume a measure of importance in intercultural and international relations, because it develops Bar-tolomeo de Las Casas' guiding idea that 'humanity is one'.

³⁴ N. Bobbio, *Kant e la Rivoluzione Francese*, in Id., *L'età dei diritti*, Einaudi, Turin 1992, p. 155.