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*Living The Threshold. The Kairos of World  
Person and New Perspective for Hospitality*

The time will come  
when, with elation  
you will greet yourself arriving  
at your own door, in your own mirror  
and each will smile at the other's welcome.  
And say, sit here. Eat.  
You will love again the stranger who was your self.  
Give wine. Give bread. Give back your heart  
to itself, to the stranger who has loved you  
(Walcott, 1986)

ABSTRACT

Starting from the analysis of a phenomenological reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan and arriving at the idea of the World Person in Chiara Lubich, this article will discuss two topics: union in difference and the model of the neighbor in the Gospel.

For Christians this is the confirmation that the meeting with the stranger is possible. Christ founded a community that co-exists with the stranger. It is within this path that the intuition the figure of the World Person in Chiara Lubich arises. In the tension between interpretation and Truth, Lubich puts the question: was there anyone that went through the trial of doubt about the Truth, but has been able to create a new world? She says that was Jesus Forsaken, who opens up the possibility of differentiation without exclusion.

*KEYWORDS: phenomenology, extraneous, world person, Chiara Lubich*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Starting from the analysis of a phenomenological reading of the parable of the Good Samaritan and of some dynamics presented by the Apostle Paul the article arrives to establish preliminaries elements for the intuition of Chiara Lubich, with the two important topics: the union in difference and the model of the neighbor in the Gospel. The parable of the Good Samaritan exposes the inability to define the neighbor simply on the basis of ethnic affiliation. Moreover, exposes a second important feature: being close also means being distant in the sense of maintaining the diversity, with no intention of assimilation. *Agape* is able to create the relationship between asymmetric terms knowing that there is a fracture that cannot be filled.

For Christians, this is the confirmation that the meeting with the stranger is possible. The Letter to the Ephesians presents Christ as space where ethnic barriers are overcome. He founded a community that *co-exists* with the stranger, a community that is the new man. A new man able to live in himself and to welcome every person because it has eliminated in itself the factors that could be the cause of separation, segregation. This community is Christ, and like Him in His highest expression when he was abandoned on the cross, Christians are called to live their lives in a similar way.

This path arises from the intuition of Chiara Lubich, on the figure of the World Person. Within a context of new meetings between East and West (an example of the 70s, and today the examples could be between North and South, Europe and Africa ...), between different forms of thinking and cultures, they cannot be confused with the Truth, but at the same time do not deny the possibility of the Truth and the various means to achieve it. Was there one that went through the trial of doubt about the Truth, but has been able to create a new world? This is the question of

Lubich. She finds an answer in Jesus Forsaken<sup>1</sup>. In front of His limited humanness, he continued to preserve in himself the unlimited: the Kingdom of God.

## 2. IMPORTANCE OF THE DEBATE AND BRIEF REFLECTION ON THE LIMIT

The importance of the debate that this article brings can be inserted into various themes on the process of immigration and refuge that are particularly relevant in the world today. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in its latest report about refugees, highlights the large number of human groups that are in this situation. In 2014, exactly 59.5 million people were forced to leave their homelands. Of these, 19.5 million were refugees, 38.2 million internally displaced persons and 1.8 million applicants for asylum. Only in 2014, there was an increase of, in relation to the year 2013, 13.9 million people forcibly displaced by conflict and persecution (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> As Chiara Lubich explains the origin of the importance of Jesus Forsaken: “One day we heard a priest, speaking on the suffering of Christ, say that perhaps the moment when Jesus suffered most was on Calvary when he cried out: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

Commenting on these words when we got home we decided, in our desire to live well the one life we had, to choose Jesus forsaken – as we called him in his suffering – as our Model.[...] We too, like everybody else, at times experienced spiritual states of affliction that might be described as darkness, aridity, a sense of failure, loneliness, the heaviness of our own human nature, of our sins. [...] Doing this, our spiritual darkness, the sense of failure, aridity, all these disappeared, and we began to understand how dynamically divine is the Christian life, which knows nothing of emptiness, or the cross, or suffering, except as things that pass, and which enables us to experience the fullness of life, meaning resurrection and light and hope, even in the midst of tribulations. [...] For all of us, then, Jesus forsaken was the key that invariably opened the way to union with God.

The figure of the immigrant and refugee gains different connotations in modern times. One of the main features of the current international system is the presence of borders as a line of separation and distinction between the space of the proper<sup>2</sup> and the alien. The emergence of these is a consequence of the development of the State as one of the actors in this system.

For some realistic theorists of International Relations<sup>3</sup> the State is the central actor and one of its features is defined by the demarcation made by the border. However, the boundary which may be a sign of division, can also serve as a relation signal; It may mark the threshold but also the desire to overcome it.

The border is an element present from the earliest times. In ancient Egypt, for example, it was necessary to mark the land boundaries with stones so that the rising of the Nile did not disappear with the demarcation of land used for the harvests. The border to the ancients was not seen as a linear element, but as a region. In the late medieval and early modern, this idea of boundary/border will change. The challenge in this historic time is the fragmentation of the old imperial orders and the formation of sovereign states. The formula *rex in regno suo est imperator* is the exemplification of the legal demarcation of the modern State. In the contemporary world, a new idea for the concept of border arises. It is no longer seen as a line of defense or delimitation of space conquest, but as a division element. It is the presence of a boundary that turns a human being a foreign being<sup>4</sup>. As a sign

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<sup>2</sup> Etymology from Latin *proprius* one's own.

<sup>3</sup> Classic examples of realistic theorists are: Carr, E.H., *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: an Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, London: Macmillan, 1939; Morgenthau, H., *Politics Among Nations. The Struggle for Power and Peace*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1948; and *In Defense of the National Interest*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1951; Waltz, K.N., *Theory of International Politics*. Illinois: Waveland Press, 1979.

<sup>4</sup> To deepen the aspect of building boundaries and a new International Relations model in the aspect of dialogue between different cultures the article suggest: (Ferrara, 2011).

of division, we can count several walls that now separate the borders, some examples are: between Hungary and Serbia, Kingdom of Morocco and the Polisario Front, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, Israel and Palestine, the United States and Mexico, Greece and Turkey Spain and Morocco, India and Bangladesh. How we can see in the history, the borders continues their existence, the difference is how they are drawn.

There are two boundaries: *limen* and *limes* (Cacciari, 2000). The first is the threshold that is input or output an area; the second is the line that encircles the area terminating the shape. Another characteristic of the border, which is important to note, is that it is not always *limen* or *limes* exclusively. In addition, this border, we must not forget, it is the *topos* of encounter between two areas: it is *cum-finis*. After thinking about the problem of the border (in its international political boundaries, even briefly) with the purpose to understand the importance of the debate that we can discuss, the article follows an anthropological reflection path continuing the theme of limit.

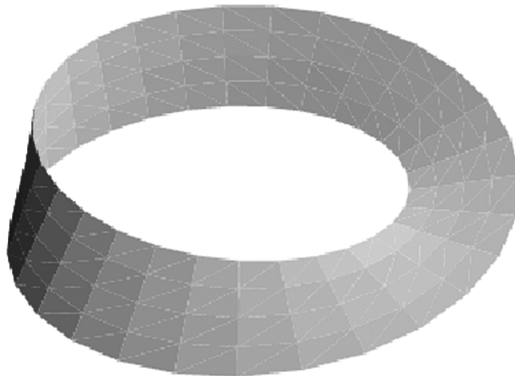
According Gomarasca (2009) in his interesting article at the time of specifying an identity is necessary to resend a different characteristic. Gomarasca is indicating incompleteness / inadequacy of the autonomous construction of the individual and his identity wanting to demonstrate a tension that brings the "limit." The "question from outside" is connected with the "intimate question," the proper has at its center a strange question to itself. This is why the term *com-munitas* indicates in *munus* a gift to give, expresses the experience of the subject to go beyond self-preservation limit.

When *limes* is thought without *limen* it presents the case of the construction of a border that have pathological consequences. It is arises a domain where the "inside" is safe and orderly, and the "outside" is indistinct. Thus is explained the control to enter and elimination because what comes out is unknown, and can be the

enemy. This dynamic of elimination is fueled by the intention of im-munitas, of cleaning for purification (Gomasasca, 2009, p. 160).

The danger is also thinking about the *limen* without *limes*, where limits or boundaries are not present and the space is indifferently open with continuous remixing. So the man becomes nomadic, becomes a transient person (without origin) without a *topos* defined what concerns your identity. It is not a matter of authentic identity, but of cultural performace (Gomasasca, 2009, p. 163). There are presented identity shocks by the simple fact that individuals do not have an identity to defend: individuals do not feel the need to be someone because they are afraid of being equal, individuality reaches a degree of absolutism.

Already thinking *limes* with *limen* brings another boundary figure. Gomasasca proposes the geometry of the Möbius strip (Gomasasca, 2009, p. 158). With this option continues to have two dimensions, one outside and one inside; But the principal distinction is that the two dimensions belong to the same face. The outer face is both part of the inner face. Quoting Michel Serres, Gomasasca, says that the man of that border dynamics is a weaver as the one that connects, creates bridges between different spaces.



Möbius strip (Weisstein, 2001)

It demonstrates that the culture, in fact, is always looking for an interlocutor because it knows it cannot complete its cycle of progress Merleau-Ponty called wilderness.

Now the article initiates to reflect that proposes Chiara Lubich. The article will continue to reflect on the theme of the limit on the prospective that indicates Lubich: the evangelical prospective and the figure of Jesus Forsaken. The article tries to show the new ideas that can emerge in this the news idea can emerge in this prospective.

### 3. JESUS FORSAKEN: THE WORLD PERSON INTUITION OF CHIARA LUBICH

In July of 1972, Chiara Lubich (1978) gave a speech to an audience of young people she calls Gen (New Generation). The speech is short, but contains a strong intuition. It is an intuition, and is not explained systematically. At one point, a dynamic is described that helps face the problems and challenges that Lubich had been watching at that time. In addition, this dynamic is based on a real figure, one person at a time of his life: Jesus in his abandonment.

Lubich, in points out the positive side of the greater integration between people and nation and how powerful the media is that put the persons out of their cultural vision sphere opening the eyes to a horizon of new truths. However, Lubich directs her attention to the risk of the ideologies. Although there is a greater knowledge, these truths remain only as parts of truths a lack of deep communion among peoples<sup>5</sup>. One consequence is that peo-

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<sup>5</sup> Here it is necessary to distinguish that is not only the knowledge that makes reaching the Truth, but also the deep communion between people, the shared life. Similar case could be indicated in the Seventh Letter of Plato: [314b] And I am even told that later on he himself wrote a treatise on the subjects in which I then instructed him, composing it as though it were something of his own invention and quite different from what he had heard; but of all this

ple are not prepared for the meeting with the strange because they are uncertain about the values that it brings with it there have been attempts to resolve the tension that exists between interpretation and truth. Some of these, for example, use the syncretism to create a kind of subjectivism or relativism. Here Lubich makes it clear that cultural thought forms should not be confused with Truth, and it is necessary to distinguish them. The interpretation of truth that can be variegated should not be confused with the Truth itself.

With Jesus Forsaken – the World Person – emerges the possibility of a new negation<sup>6</sup> that does not exclude. The dynamics of the *kenosis*<sup>7</sup> emerge, a very difficult step to Western thought that makes the connection between not being and exclusion (just

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I know nothing. I know indeed that certain others have written about these same subjects; but what manner of men they are not even themselves know. But thus much I can certainly declare [341c] concerning all these writers, or prospective writers, who claim to know the subjects which I seriously study, whether as hearers of mine or of other teachers, or from their own discoveries; it is impossible, in my judgement at least, that these men should understand anything about this subject. There does not exist, nor will there ever exist, any treatise of mine dealing therewith. For it does not at all admit of verbal expression like other studies, but, as a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith, it is brought to birth in the soul on a sudden, as light that is kindled [341d] by a leaping spark, and thereafter it nourishes itself. Notwithstanding, of thus much I am certain, that the best statement of these doctrines in writing or in speech would be my own statement; and further, that if they should be badly stated in writing, it is I who would be the person most deeply pained.” (Plato, 1966).

<sup>6</sup> Negation is understood when to assume an identity is constructed opposite identities (the negation of own identity).

<sup>7</sup> It is necessary to make an observation. Famous phrases like Speculative Good Friday by Hegel, the leap of faith by Kierkegaard, the suspension of assent or judgment by Husserl or the metaphysical ecstasy nothingness by Sartre indicate an image of reason as an instrument of knowledge that can achieve its object only if overtake beyond itself, in a sort of self-negation can be help to understand this principle of *kenosis*, notwithstanding we can define differences between these.



see the philosophical tradition inaugurated by Parmenides and intensified with the advent of modernity), thinking the identification by distinction, consequently by exclusion. The model of being/identity of Jesus is a paradox when faced with this Western thought. This event also serves as a point of reflection not only for the encounter between individuals singularly but also between cultures, between peoples.

When the logic of the relationship that Jesus promotes is analyzed, the binary categories of friend/enemy, inside/outside, self/foreign find a new dynamic: distinction with exclusion. The news is that while remaining these categories, these do not carry within themselves a necessary exclusion. This serves as a necessary reminder of the many episodes Jesus did not put barriers up to joining His family furthermore, He respects the distance between Him<sup>8</sup>, and with His love builds a bridge. In some cases, Jesus is surprised with the answers of the foreigners and these open a new world to Jesus, like the answer of the Syrian –Phoenician woman<sup>9</sup>.

The article does not have sufficient time to go to the each specific passage in the Gospel which Jesus had a relation with the foreigners. The article focuses on some of these, as has been exemplified. But it is important to point out Two difficulties that we can find when we start to analyse all of these passages First the Gospel already has in it the idea that the message of Jesus is universal because experiences of meeting with people who were not Jews had already been made when they were written. In addition, the second difficulty is the historical situation in which Jesus lived and who was declared foreign at that historic moment by Israel (Manicardi, 1996). Enzo Bianchi (2009) notes that at the historical time of Jesus, though a Jewish faith united in one God, that religion was articulated in various movements and groups, each having a different idea about foreign.

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<sup>8</sup> See Mathew 8, 5-10; 15, 21-28 or Luke 7, 6-9.

<sup>9</sup> See Mark 7, 24-30.

The article invites to take a path running through some elements to better understand this intuition of Lubich. The article starts with the parable of the Good Samaritan and the Letter to the Ephesians and concludes with a few lines trying to trace an anthropological profile of the World Person. At the end of this analysis, the article will develop two themes of extreme importance: the unity in difference and the evangelical proximity model.

#### 4. THE UNITY IN DIFFERENCE AND THE EVANGELICAL PROXIMITY MODEL

«<sup>29</sup>But because he wished to justify himself, he said to Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”<sup>30</sup>Jesus replied, “A man fell victim to robbers as he went down from Jerusalem to Jericho. They stripped and beat him and went off leaving him half-dead.<sup>31</sup> A priest happened to be going down that road, but when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.<sup>32</sup>Likewise a Levite came to the place, and when he saw him, he passed by on the opposite side.<sup>33</sup>But a Samaritan traveler who came upon him was moved with compassion at the sight.<sup>34</sup>He approached the victim, poured oil and wine over his wounds and bandaged them. Then he lifted him up on his own animal, took him to an inn and cared for him.<sup>35</sup>The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper with the instruction, “Take care of him. If you spend more than what I have given you, I shall repay you on my way back.”<sup>36</sup>Which of these three, in your opinion, was neighbor to the robbers’ victim?”<sup>37</sup>He answered, “The one who treated him with mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise. » (“The new American bible – IntraText,” n.d.)

The question is: "Who is my neighbor?" (Luke 10.29). Jesus responds with a parable. The article uses this parable of Jesus to expose the inability to define who is the neighbor simply on the basis of ethnic affiliation; safeguarding the many other senses that this parable can be read. What constitutes one as a neighbor of another is one's ability to show mercy (Ermenegildo, 1996).

To be neighbor to someone does not necessary depend on the nation, but on an attitude, a *praksis*. The word that Jesus uses is mercy. In languages that have Latin origin, mercy comes from the union of the words misery and heart, that is, to love the misery of others. The Samaritan is not indifferent to the needs that appear to him. The pain is no stranger to the Samaritan, because the Samaritan opens himself to the suffering of others. However, the event of the encounter with the stranger has an internal tension that is very important not to be neglected. The tension rises when the neighbor is a stranger and can be an enemy. Of this tension, nobody can escape. There is a risk when the encounter with the unknown occurred. Fear and despair may take control of the reactions. Consequently, assimilation is seen as a solution. Moreover, here another challenge rolled out by the parable answering with the *praksis* of mercy.

The parable does not concentrate on the neighbor as the object of love but who is the subject of the action (Bianchi, 2011), whom the subject of the action directs his act of love. The neighbor is the one who is near, who approaches. Love is an act of responsibility as a high form of love (Natoli, 2008). The meeting is a risk, but it is up to the individual to choose to find or refute; in the meeting we discovered that we have a radical original communion: humanity, death, being finite.

Another aspect of the story of the Samaritan is that he continues on his road (Luke 10:35). To be near also includes the maximal distance (Cacciari, 2011). Here there is another element of be near without taking the risk of assimilation. This distance does not mean indifference, but after being affected by the need of the

strange, the Samaritan remains himself (also responsible for his acts) and the strange remains himself too. The Samaritan did not want to change (at terms of assimilation) the man who he find fallen on the road. The terms of the relationship: Samaritan and the wounded man are each one clearly defined. Go to the air a compensatory or retributive scheme because it is a love like the love of God who loves every single human being, each particular man.

Here the dynamic is to unite those who are absolutely distinct and asymmetrical, keeping the tension between opposites, keeping an unsurpassable fracture. Massimo Cacciari writes:

«The *idem* of the Lord is made by its own do-exodus to other, but a do-exodus that is, at the same time, perfect sharing of the suffering of the person to whom it is turned to, the one for whom it is *ab-solve*. The *agapic* unity between Father and Son in which the disciples are called to love *invocem*, is not only the one-of-two, the One who is (One at singular), but the One of opposites, Glory and the Cross » (Cacciari, 2011, p. 104)

This is the image with which is called to live the Christian. Evangelical *philia* is tragic, dramatic. This evangelical Unum is not an abstract and absolute identity. It is the revelation of a God who is neighbor, not cancelling the *thauma* that accompanying the event of the appearance of the other. It is a call to impossible, is an invitation to go beyond any border. Here is the tension: be distant and neighbor concomitantly.

Paul in the Letter to the Ephesians (2, 11-18<sup>10</sup>) describes reconciliation in Jesus and how the situation of strangeness and

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<sup>10</sup> « Therefore, remember that at one time you, Gentiles in the flesh, called the uncircumcision by those called the circumcision, which is done in the flesh by human hands,<sup>12</sup>were at that time without Christ, alienated from the community of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world.<sup>13</sup>But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off

distance gained a new dynamic with Jesus. In verse 14 the author develops the theme of a «we» which is the community formed by pagans and Jews. Jesus does not only communicate peace, but He is the peace because He is what He communicates manifested as union between the different peoples (pagans and Jews) has a social-political effect in the public dimension (Rossé, 2012). Jesus knocks down the wall. In addition, this new reality created, in verse 15, is specified as a new man. The new man is the community characterized by unity. Gerard Rossé writes:

«The New Man is a creation that, in its origin, is already One, has in it the face of Christ; and His love for each one is a constant source of unity for all. The New Man is the Church as a unit characterized by the overcoming of the Law, that is, the overcoming of all those requirements that create separation and division; a New Man is able to welcome everyone because ended the factors that are the reasons of the separation » (2012, pp. 46-47)

This reflection is important not only for the analysis of the encounter in the interpersonal level, but this analysis brings a providential suggestion to think the dialogue between religions and cultures. The vocation of every culture is access to open itself to the plurality that only exists because of this diversity. It is an operation where differences converge while the elements remain different.

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have become near by the blood of Christ.<sup>14</sup>For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh,<sup>15</sup>abolishing the law with its commandments and legal claims, that he might create in himself one new person in place of the two, thus establishing peace,<sup>16</sup>and might reconcile both with God, in one body, through the cross, putting that enmity to death by it.<sup>17</sup>He came and preached peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near,<sup>18</sup>for through him we both have access in one Spirit to the Father. » (The New American Bible, 2002).

The reading of the Letter to the Ephesians leads us to the idea of unity in difference based on this truth that also comes into view only when the other appears, when the foreign causes the shock of surprise. You must be surprised to be true (Sequeri, 2010). The foreigner is necessary For the Christian community because it represents a “beyond”: the God that they proclaim is beyond the concepts that the Christian community understands. The non-being (in the sense of the experience of kenotic being) is the way in working out the communion made within the agapic dynamics – is a non-being for love – establishing a community that respects differences. The fear of the meeting will always exist, it is natural of human experience, but it is love that responds with new creative pathways to form relationships with foreigners.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The last effort that the article would make in the figure of Jesus Forsaken is trying to imagine a step forward to the issue of that the article just has reflected based on the evangelical dynamic we just have seen. Jesus Forsaken invites us to live like him. He opens a path: leaves the camp, and walks in the direction of the risk, to the unexplored. It is an invitation for exodal identity, out of a consolidated and comforting experience; and we should be with open eyes to let us be surprised. There is a loss of identity because that manifests itself in the ability to love each other to the point of welcoming it as it is.

The action of Jesus is always confidence towards His Father. In addition, the Father’s answer is silence, at first. It may seem a refute the question that Jesus throws, but this silence is the time in which the Father lets the Son express himself in his highest filial form. Have a welcome equal to the Father we can give a creative response, a response that *re-creates*. However, this creativity is not only directed to foreigners; it is also directed to the person who

pronounces the answer. A re-creating response is important for all the problem that this article presented because it leaves open space for the foreigner can expressed itself in the dimension of gift, and in the total diversity that involves – going beyond the first stupor that it causes.

For this reason a World Person as one capable of receiving, become neighbor to the most distant, able to be a foreigner to foreigners; and creates a *topos* in which to be creative, that welcomes all differences without cancelling them.

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