

*“Phase transition” between Confrontation
and Dialogue in the Light of the Concept
of the Unity Charism*

ABSTRACT

In the twenties of the last century the process of building a new type of philosophical culture began, based on the sensitivity towards another person, the recognition of values and dignity of the person and the search for platforms of dialogue and compromise between people. However, it did not gain a broad social resonance. The 20th Century became the scene of the triumph of totalitarisms, based on the idea of collectivism and marked by the contempt towards the individual, his rights and needs. In the post-war reality environments favouring the humanization of the culture of coexistence earned a voice, but they too did not manage to divert the tendency towards building a bureaucratic and technocratic order. In this kind of system, the person feels reduced to his instrumental functions, and the dialogue submerged in the world of humanistic values becomes a distant and unequalled dream. This text undertakes the problem of the conditions which must be met in order for the tendency towards dialogue and mutual respect to prevail over the hostile, confrontational approach, which characterizes many contemporary social environments. The author suggests that we refer to the analogy with the thermodynamics phenomenon, phase transition, and consider the notion of spiritual energy (the analogue of the physical term enthalpy) as an agent regulating the internal disposition of the individual to “freeze” or “thaw” relations with his fellow human beings. The key thesis is that the most important source of energy indispensable to move from confron-

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tation to dialogue lies in the resources of religious experience- the openness to the grace flowing from the transcendental reality, and the guides on the path to discovering this source are the witnesses of faith- among them the spiritual heirs of Chiara Lubich's charism.

KEYWORDS: dialogue, confrontation, phase transition, charism of unity.

Is the need for dialogue and unity a natural property, innate to the person? If we consult the philosophers of dialogue, as well as other intellectuals of similar currents, who published in the first half of the 20th Century, we will obtain an affirmative answer. This view was most clearly expressed by one of the most important authors of the philosophy of dialogue, Martin Buber, when he wrote: "The fundamental fact of human existence is neither the individual as such nor the aggregate as such. Each, considered by itself, is a mighty abstraction. The individual is a fact of existence in so far as he steps into a living relation with other individuals. The aggregate is a fact of existence in so far as it is built up of living units of relation. The fundamental fact of human existence is man with man. What is peculiarly characteristic of the human world is above all that something takes place between one being and another the like of which can be found nowhere in nature. [...] Man is made by it"¹. Other dialogians think similarly.² Their

¹ M. Buber, *Between Man and Man*. Transl. R. G. Smith. London: Kegan Paul 1947, p. 202-203.

² The fundamental theses of philosophy of dialogue, also known as "new thinking" (after Franz Rosenzweig) are presented in the following way by Bogdan Baran: "Discovering you [...] brings me to the consciousness of my "self", to my moral identification [...] the dialogical relation is based on speech, its primal character – also a significant moment of dialogics – is to be, what is precise [...]. New thinking [...] is speaking- thinking, this means thinking, which «needs the other». This need is in other words «trusting experience», for it is in experience that one meets the other". B. Baran, *Z historii „nowego myślenia”*, in: B. Baran et al. (red.), *Rozum i Słowo. Eseje dialogiczne*, Kraków 1987, p. 7-10 *passim*. Johannes Volkelt wrote about "the primal, intuitional certainty of the you realm" and the "material relation of the conviction about the existence of oneself with the

thought reaches back to the sources of European culture: to the Greek concept of “zoon politikon” and to the foundations of Judeochristianity, which underline the fundamental role of the word in the person’s life and the idea of religion as a person’s bond with God and with other people³. Let us attempt to look at this problem slightly differently, from the perspective of the contemporary cultural situation.

The contemporary person satisfies his natural need of „being together”⁴, confirming and acknowledging his self along with his project of being, by selecting an environment of people with whom he shares convictions and preferences. Simply membership

realm of you” (J. Volkelt, *Das ästhetische Bewusstsein: Prinzipienfragen der Ästhetik*, München 1920, p. 117), and Max Scheler claimed that “the a priori certainty of the conviction [...] that some kind of you exists and that one belongs to some kind of community has [...] defined grounds in eyewitnessing”, and [...] “initially the individual lives far more in the community than in himself”. M. Scheler, *Wesen und Formen der Sympathie*, Bonn 1926, p. 352, 372.

³ Józef Tischner wrote about the religious genesis of dialogue according to F. Rosenzweig: “What happens between God and the person is choosing: like the bridegroom chooses his bride, God chooses the person. The person responds to this choice, by choosing the one who chose him first. No one would find out about this choice, if it were not for the word of creed. [...] The choice must be manifested by the word of creed”. J. Tischner, Spór w królestwie metafor, in: B. Baran et al. (red.), *Rozum i Słowo...*, p. 62. Stéphane Mosès expresses this in a similar manner: “The manifestation cannot be explained differently than by forms of dialogue. [...] «I» is the answer which was demanded by the question: where are you?” S. Mosès, *Système et Révélation. La philosophie de Franz Rosenzweig*, Paris 1982, p. 120. Ferdinand Ebner wrote: “In that the I is a Thou – not becoming one by itself, through itself and for itself – it is something divine. But in the final analysis that means that it is the word and the love of God, which revealed themselves in the creation of man and the incarnation of God, which turn the I into the Thou. [...] If man «experiences» God, then he experiences Him in man; not in Himself as the mystic believes, but in the other in whom man experiences the true Thou of his I”. F. Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten*, Fragment 15. [<http://wfe.sbg.ac.at/exist/apps/ebner-online/index.html>, accessed 22.02.2017].

⁴ Cf. K. Löwith, *Das Individuum in der Rolle des Mitmenschen. Ein Beitrag zur anthropologischen Grundlegung der ethischen Probleme*, Freiburg-München 2013.

in this or that social group does not suffice, because- as Martin Buber explains- “this connection only means that all individual beings are enclosed in a group existence and encompassed by it. This does not mean that any personal relation exists between one and another person within the group”⁵. Only a conscious choice of friends and colleagues allows for an authentic experience of community. Meetings and conversations in this circle and the participation in common actions build his self-esteem, satisfy his need of belonging and sense, confirm the validity of his views and decisions. Do we need anything more? As Emmanuel Levinas would say, “here is the real life”⁶. But we live in a pluralist society, or even – as some diagnosticians claim – in a network society⁷, within which an immense amount of sub-networks coexist and penetrate each other; no other connections occur between them, besides purely instrumental ones. To the individual person – from the point of view of his social needs – it suffices to have one “social support group”, in which he finds self-confirmation for himself, and he himself provides it to others. As Charles Taylor writes, the identity of the self is born each time and is consolidated in dialogue with others⁸, but these “others” form (around the self) a close circle of “family and background [...] with whom I have an affinity [...], those conversation partners who were essential to

⁵ M. Buber, *Elemente des Zwischenmenschlichen*. In: Idem, *Das dialogische Prinzip*. Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider 1973. Transl. from Polish edition: M. Buber, *Ja i Ty. Wybór pism filozoficznych*, ed. by J. Doktor, Warszawa 1992, s. 138.

⁶ See E. Levinas, *Totalité et Infini, La Haye* 1961, p. 3.

⁷ See M. Castells, *The Rise of the Network Society*, Oxford 1996.

⁸ “One cannot be a self on one’s own. I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors [...] A self exists only within what I call «webs of interlocution». It is this original situation which gives its sense to our concept of «identity», offering an answer to the question of who I am through a definition of where I am speaking from and to whom. The full definition of someone’s identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community”. C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self. The Making of the Modern Identity*, Cambridge, Mass. 1994, p. 36.

my achieving self-definition [and] those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of languages of self-understanding”⁹. The more or less spontaneously emerging communities of mutual acceptance and understanding between people almost always undergo reinforcement and gain expressiveness thanks to their oppositional reference to other communities, which are perceived as distinct, foreign, competitive or hostile. José Ortega y Gasset writes, “we live together and in reciprocity with respect to something [...] I and the other do something and in doing it *we* are. [...] One of the things that we do, and that is the most typical reciprocity and *nostrity*, is a talk. And one of the things we talk about is *him* or *them* – that is, about others who are not in the relation «we» with you and with me [...] he or they are those who remain outside of this closeness that is our relation. [...] Now, our Spanish plural *nosotros* is exclusivistic. It means that we do not announce simply the pure community of the I and the you and perhaps other you’s, but a community between the two or more than two of us – I, you, and certain other you’s – a community in which you and I together form a particular collective unity, in contradistinction to, outside of, and in a way against, others. In our *nosotros*, while we do declare that we are very much united, we above all recognize that we are other than the Others, than They”¹⁰. From the point of view of the individual’s needs and interests, it is understandable that the individual builds his *modus vivendi* by effectuating a sharp differentiation between the relations “me” and “us” and “they”, which entails the fact that attitudes of dialogue and confrontation neighbour each other and complement each other mutually.

There exist many variations of relations between respective small communities within larger social organisms, such as nations

⁹ Ibidem, p. 35-36.

¹⁰ J. Ortega y Gasset, *Man and People*, transl. W. R. Trask, London 1957, p. 109-111.

or states. In the modern European tradition, a social model has consolidated, in which the basic and imperative model of social unity, integrating individuals and assigning them a determined identity formula, is the autonomous, sovereign state. In the internal politics of the modern state, the aim is to consolidate all citizens and social groups around a common ethic, set down and solidified by a number of community-creating factors: love of one's homeland, models of patriotism, official language, symbols of unity – the national emblem, the flag and the anthem, collective memory that generates a sense of community of fate of many generations etc. In external politics, by contrast, during long centuries, principles of peaceful coexistence and principles of confrontation, rivalry, sometimes aggression, conquest and subordination of weaker states to stronger ones governed simultaneously (the first or the latter were invoked depending on the situational needs). Only after the tragic experiences of two world wars, the decided strive towards elaborating lasting forms of peaceful coexistence between states and nations based on bi- or multilateral political agreements, as well as on spreading the cultural idea of general human solidarity, emerged.

However, one must remember that this is an artificial situation, elicited not by the liberation of the natural need for universal interpersonal unity from the stifling corset of oppressive political systems, but rather largely generated by the common fear of repeating the tragic events related to total war. As time passes, this fear weakens – proportionally to the loss of living memory of evil, elicited by warfare. Meanwhile, the next generations get to speak; they do not remember, nor can they even imagine the horror of war, which took its toll in such a dramatic way on previous generations. The collective oblivion is joined by a common lack of interest in the past, since the currently predominant model of life focuses on an intense experience of the present, without looking back on history and without an excessive concern for the

future¹¹. Another attribute of *Erlebnisgesellschaft*¹² is the enormous prevalence of interest in one's own fate and care for one's own life comfort over the concern for others. Although we live in a society of crapulence, overproduction and increased consumption of all possible goods, this does not urge us to share what we have with our needing fellow human beings.

Amongst many needs that we have learned to satisfy primarily for ourselves, the need for self-knowledge and self-acceptance exists. In order to live and function in internal harmony with oneself, one strives to obtain a satisfying answer to the age-old philosophical questions: Who am I? Where am I going? What am I living for? The natural environment for searching for answers to these questions is the philosophical culture of the times in which we live. Let us draw our attention to the characteristic evolution of ideas in this environment. In 20th Century philosophy, a wide and expressive current arose; its representatives grant the individual the right to independently constitute his own identity.

¹¹ “Life is no longer contained as a whole, as a whole which assumes choice and direction; it is experienced in subsequent episodes, not looking further than the end of one period and the beginning of another – if at all they are recognised”. John Paul II, in: A. Frossard, *Nie lekajcie się! Rozmowy z Janem Pawłem II*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana 1982, p. 244. Agata Bielik-Robson writes: “Modernity seems to be weary with history, memory and the dimension of time in general; it desires a lack of historicity, oblivion, at least an instantaneous escape from the time shackles of existence”. A. Bielik-Robson, *Inna nowoczesność. Pytania o współczesną formułę duchowości*, Kraków 1998, p. 64; “By creating himself, the person will not search for «paths which were already treaded by others», [...] but will courageously dive into the free waters of a new existential adventure”. *Ibid.* p. 24.

¹² “As a result of the transformation of a society of scarcity to a society of crapulence, the human mindset towards life thoroughly changed: from an “outward” orientation, directed at assuring life or survival thanks to work, social advance and securing one's old age, to an “inward” orientation: what will provide me with pleasure and entertainment? What will make my life beautiful and worth living?” M. Kehl, *Wohin geht die Kirche? Eine Zeitdiagnose*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien 1996, p. 39.

In this era, the substantial concept of the person¹³ is left behind in favour of the thesis that the person is not an entity, but only an existence, meaning that he “is” not, but “becomes”. These concepts are proclaimed by Martin Heidegger, Jean-Paul Sartre, José Ortega y Gasset, Jan Patočka, among others¹⁴. Philosophy

¹³ Max Scheler wrote: Of course the actualistic theory is correct to maintain that the person is not a “thing” or a “substance” which executes act in the sense of a substance-causality. [...] If an act can therefore never be an object, then the *person* who lives in the execution of acts can *a fortiori* never be an object”. M. Scheler, *Formalism in Ethics and Non-formal Ethics of Values*. Transl. by M. S. Frings, R. L. Funk. Evanston 1973, p. 384, 387. [„Sofern jene Aktualitätstheorie der Person negiert, Person sie ein «Ding» oder eine «Substanz», die Akte vollzieht. [...] Vielmehr ist es die Person selbst, die im jeden ihrer Akte lebend auch jeden voll mit ihrer Eigenart durchdringt“]. M. Scheler, *Der Formalismus in der Ethik und die materiale Wertethik*, hrsg. von Ch. Bermes, Hamburg 2014, p. 473, 476. Józef Tischner adds: “The substantial notion of the human person excludes the human person as the principle of the dialogical relation. [...] Substance cannot enter into creative reciprocity with another substance. In order to be oneself, one does not need anything more than oneself. The logical succession of the substantialization of the human person is monadology”. J. Tischner, *Filozofia człowieka. Od ontologii do metafizyki człowieka*, Kraków 1986, p. 67-69 *passim*.

¹⁴ “When one understands oneself projectively in an existentiell possibility, the future underlies this understanding, and it does so as a coming-toward-one-self from the actual possibility as which Da-sein always exists”. M. Heidegger, *Being and Time*. Transl. by J. Stambaugh, State University of New York Press 1996, p. 309. “To say that the for-itself has to be what it is, to say that it is what it is not while not being what it is, to say that in its existence precedes and conditions essence [...] is to say one and the same thing: to be aware that man is free”. J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*. Transl. by H. E. Barnes. New York, London, Toronto, Sydney: Washington Square Press 1984, p. 439. “[...] unlike all the other beings in the universe, is man never surely *man*; on the contrary, being *man* signifies precisely being always on the point of not being man, being a living problem, an absolute and hazardous adventure, or [...] being, in essence, drama!”. J. Ortega y Gasset, *Man and People...*, p. 25. “Man may not live in the obviousness of extra-human beings; man must fulfill his life, carry it, handle it, cope with it. It seems as though man always finds himself between equivalent possibilities – but that is not the case. There is no equivalence, [since] only one of the possible lives is the real life, the proper, irreplaceable life which can only be fulfilled by us”. [„L’homme ne peut être dans l’indifférence propre

is joined by the belles-lettres, creating a number of protagonists living according to this philosophical project (we can point to the protagonists of the “rebellious” American prose, from Jerome D. Salinger to Jack Kerouac) and pop-culture promoting the role models of idols and celebrities who realize the scenario of free auto-creation in their life.

By analyzing the attitudes and models of the protagonists of Polish epic prose of the late 20th Century, literary scientist Przemysław Czapliński observed what follows: the subject “having discovered the unpreparedness of the past, enters into an undefined history, in which he must make up himself yet again – not only backward, but also forward”¹⁵. Today, we live in “a reality in which each person builds his own place in tradition and effectuates his auto-emancipation in the future [...] In contemporary culture, each person must root himself into tradition”, and “today’s penetrator of the past, somewhat of a connoisseur, somewhat of a metal scrapper, pursuing his rummaging on the landfills of heritage, must [...] not only effectuate the act of rooting himself in tradition, but also auto-emancipation. He will make up himself the fuller in the past, the richer he narrates himself in the future”¹⁶. The Polish researcher’s observation not only pertains to the necessity of taking charge of the task of creating oneself, but to one more important contemporary phenomenon: the re-assessment of the attitude towards the past. In the past, it was

aux l’étants extra-humaines; il doit accomplir, porter sa vie, «s’expliquer avec elle». Il samblerait donc qu’il se trouve placé toujours entre deux possibilités équivalentes. Ce n’est pourtant pas le cas. L’aliénation signifie qu’il n’y a pas équivalence, mais que seule l’une des vies possibles est la «vraie», l’authentique, l’irremplaçable, effectuable par nous seuls”]. J. Patočka, *La civilisation technique est-elle une civilisation de déclin, et pourquoi?*, in: Idem, *Essais herétiques sur la philosophie de l’histoire*, trad. E. Abrams, Paris 1981, p. 108.

¹⁵ P. Czapliński, *Resztki nowoczesności. Dwa studia o literaturze i życiu*, Kraków 2011, p. 149.

¹⁶ Ibidem, p. 146.

believed that history can be objectified, by making it the subject of scientific research with sufficiently rigorous methodology¹⁷. Today, our ancestors' belief in the existence of pure historical facts and in their objective cognoscibility is considered to be more commonly naïve and utopian, and history ceases to be the collection of facts and documents, and increasingly becomes a narration, always conducted from a certain – more or less subjective – point of view, serving someone's more or less particular – interests¹⁸. This is why today, we speak of "historical politics" more often than of historical sciences, as well as the diffusion and intersection of many different kinds of collective memory in the public sphere, which produces essentially different models of the past¹⁹. This is

¹⁷ "The main current of the historical school [...] from the times of Niebuhr attempts to prop the objectivity of historical knowledge on the scientific nature of acquiring historical knowledge; that is on the method of examining certainty and criticizing sources". H. Schnädelbach, *Filozofia w Niemczech 1831-1933*, Warszawa 1992, p. 77.

¹⁸ "In the decades since World War II the old intellectual absolutisms have been dethroned: science, scientific history, and history in the service of nationalism. In their place [...] the postwar generation has constructed [...] histories based upon group or gender identities. [...] As members of that generation, we routinely, even angrily, ask: Whose history? Whose science? Whose interests are served by those ideas and those stories?", J. Appleby, L. Hunt, M. Jacob, *Telling the Truth About History*, New York-London 1995, p. 4.

¹⁹ "The way we perceive the past is changing. The positive history which is practised at universities and taught in schools, which builds, integrates and is state- or nation-creative (often written with this role in mind), showing mainly the victories or at least the so-called dominant currents, is in retreat today. Before our eyes, the old, good history seems to be falling apart, or maybe is rather being broken, swept away or devastated by the new social and intellectual currents which disavow the thus far applicable images of the past." J. Żakowski, *Rewanż pamięci*, Warszawa 2002, p. 13. According to the German researcher, Aleida Assmann, the new approach to historical research creates "possibilities of finding out how smaller or larger groups, for example, families, associations, companies, parties, regions, cities or even nations and religious communities «produce their own memory»" that "is reduced to a defined point of view, [...] it is not the domain of experts (historians, librarians or archivists), it requires in-

what Czaplński has in mind when he writes that the contemporary person must “create tradition”²⁰ himself, and then – by making it a point of reference – narrate himself for his use and that of others: to build a sense of individual identity, and at the same time become recognizable and understandable to others.

If the quoted diagnoses are accurate, it follows that the contemporary person faces the difficult task of self-definition, disposing – instead of a precise, univocal system of references, which in the former, traditional societies assigned each person a specific position, status and range of possibilities – of an unlimited multitude of offers, amongst which he must make an independent choice, guided by individual preferences and criteria. The multitude of offers – because also in the sphere of auto-creational actions, that is, choosing “a way of being oneself”, a process of marketization and commercialisation has been effectuated – which gives rise to the coexistence of many different paths of realisation of individual humanity within the same social macro-structure. People with similar preferences search for proximity and community with those, who share their views, sensitivity and lifestyle. Concurrently, they sense a deepening alienation in relation to those, who believe, feel and evaluate the world differently.

The experiences of the last years, replicated in more and more numerous societies in different parts of the world, show how short a distance separates multicultural pluralistic communities from antagonistic ones, in which representatives of respective communities treat each other with mistrust, in a hostile manner or downright aggressively. Are we witnesses of the dissolution of another myth, which up until now set the standards of thinking about the person as a being who is not only fundamentally

dividual attention, contemplation and acquisition”. A. Assmann, *Wprowadzenie: o krytyce, popularności i adekwatności terminu „pamięć”*, in: idem, *Między historią a pamięcią. Antologia*, Warszawa 2013, p. 10.

²⁰ P. Czaplński, *Resztki nowoczesności...*, p. 19.

rational, but also deeply sympathetic towards others, persistently striving to achieve the ideal of universal fraternity of humanity as one, big family?

Ortega y Gasset claimed that social life in a defined epoch focuses and is based on a system of collective convictions which form a common image of the world: "There is no human life which is not constituted by certain basic beliefs and which – so to speak – is not raised upon them. [...] Beliefs constitute the basis of our life, the terrain on which it is played out. It is they that face us with what is for us reality as such"²¹. In the progress of history, these systems of convictions undergo exchange every now and then. One of them, according to the Spanish thinker, took place in the epoch of the Renaissance and consisted in the fact that "in the fifteenth century Europe had lost its faith in God, in revelation, either because man had completely lost that faith or because it had ceased to be in him a living faith. Theologians make a very shrewd distinction, one capable of throwing light on not a few things of today, between a live and a sluggish faith"²². The second turn took place at the brink of the 20th Century, and its essence is as follows: "The generation that flourished about the year 1900 was the last of a very long cycle, a cycle which began towards the end of the sixteenth century and was characterised by the fact that men lived on their faith in reason". It is based on the conviction that "at last man is to know the truth about everything [...], he will find that his faculty of thought is *ratio*, reason, and that in reason he possesses the almost magic power of reducing everything to clarity, of turning what it is become self-evident"²³. This generation, whose rational conviction is characterized by

²¹ J. Ortega y Gasset, *Ideas y creencias*, p. 2, 6 [<http://www.omegalfa.es/> accessed 22.07.2016]

²² Idem, *History as a System and other essays toward a philosophy of history*, transl. H. Weyl, New York 1962, p. 171-172.

²³ Ibidem, p. 169-171 *passim*.

Ortega y Gasset has ceased to the next one, living now in a world illuminated by and subordinated to different convictions, specific to the times known as post-modern, post-secular, post-rational, or even post-humanistic. What kind of new ideas revive and animate social life today? This topic is too extensive in order to present it here completely. Let us focus on one property of the spiritual map of modern times: we live in a period of radical mistrust in great projects that arrange the world according to one and the same prescription²⁴. Instead of this, we consciously choose and create projects of small and medium range: we feel well in our “small homeland”, we cultivate and tend to regionalism (which sometimes develops into separatism), we surround ourselves with few, but very carefully selected friends, we work more willingly in small companies rather than in large corporations, we like to get involved in regional civic initiatives and so forth.

We can briefly track the process of rebuilding the system of community-creating ideas by examining the specific example of the Polish society over the period of the last hundred years. Nearly one hundred years ago, in November 1918, Poland reclaimed its independence after over a century of ongoing national subordination²⁵. The basic idea which inspired the first generation of citizens of the sovereign Republic was the idea of building a great, strong and united Poland, drawing on the best traditions of national and state past. However, the possibility of practically

²⁴ The reasons for doing away with dreams, programs and projects of building a better future according to the universal prescriptions for an ideal world order are explained by P. Czapliński, when he writes: “At the turn of the 80s and 90s [20th Century] ensued [...] a momentary end of history, [which] did not consist of the demise of history. [...] Because if [...] the historical order cannot be foreseen, then gaining control over its future shape is only possible on the path of terror towards the present society”. P. Czapliński, *Resztki nowoczesności...*, p. 150-151.

²⁵ When, as a result of the agreement between three neighbouring world powers – Russia, Austria-Hungary and Prussia – the Polish state was forced to renounce sovereignty and its territory was divided between three invaders.

realizing this ethic did not last long, because as a result of the armed aggression of two enemies – Nazi Germany on September 1st 1939 and Stalinist Russia on September 17th 1939 – Poland once again lost its independence. World War II ended in Europe with the unconditional capitulation of one of the invaders, who attacked Poland, but the second one – Stalinist Russia – ended the war in the camp of victors and Stalin had a deciding say in creating the new geopolitical situation of the world after 1945. As a result of the three so-called Conferences of the “Big Three”, which took place in Tehran, Yalta and Potsdam, Europe became radically polarised. Western countries regained peace, independence and went back to building democracy, social justice and prosperity, while the part of Europe left in Stalin’s power in exchange for his participation in defeating Hitler was pushed into a cruel system of terror, oppression, fear and contempt for the next half century. Generations of citizens were brought up in this atmosphere, growing up in the conviction that every person we encounter may be a dangerous, hidden enemy (some actually were). At the same time – arduously, slowly, in very difficult conditions of risk and sacrifice – a new ethos was born, built against the will of the authorities in opposition circles. Dress rehearsal for the effectiveness of this ethos was the “Solidarity” movement in Poland and the historic compromise between the communist authorities and the democratic opposition, made on August 31st 1980. The process of social reconciliation and bloodless decomunisation was, admittedly, interrupted for several years (by the introduction of the martial law by general Jaruzelski, dictated by the fear of military intervention from USSR), but since 1989 the process of building a sovereign state and democratic, civil society has continued in Poland.

The original project of the new social order was thus firmly based on the ethos of “Solidarity”, shaped by the inspiration taken from the thought of the greatest moral authorities of those days: Pope John Paul II, Primate Stefan Wyszyński and the chaplain

of the “Solidarity” trade union, Józef Tischner. Soon, however, it turned out that a significant section of the society was not morally or mentally up to the high demands of the community “of love and social justice.” The mistake committed by intellectual elites, aspiring to spiritual (not necessarily directly political) leadership of the nation, resided in making the naive assumption that it was enough to create geopolitical conditions for a truly self-governing state to see the spontaneous coming into existence of a perfect model for the coexistence of its citizens, based on the evangelical ideals of common brotherhood, love and reconciliation. In fact, the moral wounds which had been inflicted on people for too long were still too fresh and painful. The history of the Polish transformation shows that abolishing the artificial barriers of political and economic development released enormous social energy, which, however, was by and large utilized in service of building individual prosperity and looking after personal careers. The common drive to compulsively satisfy needs from the lower levels of “Maslow’s pyramid” blinded people to higher values. A natural division of the population into those less and more gifted and enterprising led to a quick economic stratification – division into the wealthy, those who have achieved success and the poor, who have failed. This state initiated an escalation of negative emotions, such as envy, jaundice, bitterness, sense of injustice, sense of threat, mental discomfort. A contrast thus grows between the emotional hell of those who are left behind and the egoistic self-satisfaction of the successful ones. This atmosphere is not conducive to attitudes of benevolent interest in the fate of our neighbour. Our perception of the world becomes ever more narrow, reduced and polarised – either to the experiencing of our own injuries and nurturing negative emotions, or to the selfish contemplation of the fruits of our success. Along with the polarization, the space for the possible understanding and dialogue shrinks, while attitudes of entitlement and confrontation triumph.

This condition is an inescapable consequence of the fact that along with political and economic transformation, the Polish society found itself – in the spiritual dimension – in the sphere of influences of the “liquid modernity” in the sense of Bauman²⁶. In particular, this means parting with – maybe forever, and certainly for many long years – the monopolistic model of national unity, built on the appropriation by this or that environment of the idea of “Polishness” as a universal prescription, assigning exactly one, and refusing all other, alternative ways of realizing this idea. However, not everyone is pleased with this “liquid”, pluralistic condition of social consciousness with reference to the issue of collective identity and the way of understanding duties towards the community and national tradition, which it generates. In the parliamentary elections of 2015 a right-wing, conservative party with explicit, radical views on Polishness ideals and models of patriotic attitudes of citizens, who identify themselves with Polishness obtained absolute majority, thereby the possibility to independently govern. Almost from the very first moment of taking over power in the state, the leading politicians of this party have been using a language that excludes any sort of dialogue. Concurrently, today in Poland no significant power can be seen – neither among political families, nor communities having moral authority – that would strive to turn back on the road of confrontation and build a large platform of nationwide dialogue in favour of overcoming divisions, urging people who think differently to reach an agreement and working out a commonly acceptable model of “unity in diversity”. On the contrary; a striking example of a lack of willingness for dialogue and searching for an agreement is the statement given by the leader of the largest opposition party, who declared the willingness to build a “total opposition”²⁷.

²⁶ See Z. Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*, Cambridge 2000.

²⁷ Grzegorz Schetyna’s statement during the deliberations of the National Council of the Civic Platform on February 26th 2016.

In this situation, an important question arises: what conditions must be met in order for the tendency towards dialogue and mutual respect to prevail once again (like it did in 1980 and 1989) over the hostile, confrontational approach. The problem is indeed not an easy one, since today's arena of public communication in Poland is more than ever dominated by the language of conflict and miscommunication, and bad models – permanently present in public and media discourse – become consolidated and take root also at the micro-social level, exerting their destructive influence on acquaintances and families²⁸.

I wish to suggest a metaphor: the dialogic potential of Polish society has been “frozen” due to a drastic drop in the “temperature” of trust, mutual respect, and standards of behaviour, exhibited in following the convention of civilised relations with other people. Every day new limits of insolence and vulgarity of language are crossed. Observation shows that the structure of relations between social groups (on many levels) as well as relations between individuals are fixed on a high level of verbal aggression – which is partially spontaneous, but is to a large extent caused by leaders of political parties – and people live permanently in a state of exhausting, unnatural mental tension. It is therefore an urgent task for social sciences to find the minimal boundary conditions which, when met, will initiate a “phase transition” process, analogous to the one in the thermodynamics of physical materials and will lead to the “defrosting” of dialogue. In a paper as short as this one, I am unable to give a detailed conception of

²⁸ Psychologist Ewa Wilk writes: “The divide between «us» and «them», «nation» and «rebels» is so strong that it begins to go beyond the merely political conflict [...]. It has become part of the collective psyche. [...] Is it not that one begins to avoid family and social meetings if someone was to be there [from the opposite option]? Are political topics not given a wide berth, when the possibility that an aunt, neighbour, old pal are from «those others» occurs? [...] Are Poles still capable of talking?” E. Wilk, *Na granicy nerwicy*, Dwutygodnik „Polityka” 2016 nr 24 (3063), p. 15.

my research for this discovery, but I will briefly present the essence of my idea.

In search of a solution, I will firstly refer to the notions and categories elaborated in the first part of this text, in order to reflect in this context on the idea of returning to certain solutions of the philosophy of dialogue. The authors of this current- in even more difficult conditions than today, caused by the dramatic consequences of the just terminated Great War of 1914-1918, which brought about immense material and moral losses, as well as a drastic decline in mutual trust between people- were capable of rediscovering an encouraging vision of the revival of the human community on the foundation of the "spiritual reality of life"²⁹. Owing to endless resources of spiritual energy – as claims Ferdinand Ebner – it is possible to repudiate contaminated ideologies (for example those which Martin Buber warned about, by postulating to follow the "third way" between individualism and collectivism³⁰) and regaining "the proper I", rediscovering at the same time the spiritual closeness of "you". Ebner writes: „What is the case with the real I? The matter is very simple: its existence does not lie in its being related to itself, but rather (and this is the fact on which all gravity falls) in its relation to the Thou. [...] And outside this relation there is no I at all"³¹. Furthermore, following in the footsteps of Ebner's thought, we encounter an evident indication, where the source of strength is rooted, which is capable of overcoming the crisis of trust and its socially negative consequences. In the first and fifth *Fragment* of the work we find the following thoughts: „But what is by far the most important and significant [...] is this: in the form of this relation, the relationship

²⁹ See: F. Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten* [<http://wfe.sbg.ac.at/exist/apps/ebner-online/index.html>, accessed 22.02.2017].

³⁰ See: M. Buber, *Das Problem des Menschen*, Heidelberg 1982, s. 160.

³¹ F. Ebner, *Das Wort und die geistigen Realitäten*, Fragment 1 [<http://wfe.sbg.ac.at/exist/apps/ebner-online/index.html>, accessed 22.02.2017].

of man to God finds its expression. It is the basis and archetype of the relation to God which, precisely because it is, and must be, a “personal” one, it can be nothing other than the relation of the I to the Thou. In the ultimate ground of our spiritual life God is the true–Thou of the true I in man [...] the real I, which comes to expression in the fact that I am and that I can say that of myself³². [...] „Since the mystery of the spiritual life conceals and reveals itself in the mystery of the “word,” pneumatology is therefore, as far as it is possible at all, word–knowledge [...] in the deepest knowledge which is possible of the essence of the word, [one] will discern that it is from God [...] and above all from which his word draws power to stand against the whole world and its powers and principalities³³.

Following the inspiration of searching for an exit from the crisis of humanistic values by building upon the spiritual realities which are rooted in the person, let us refer to the historical example from before two thousand years: to the events of the day of Pentecost, when “the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leader” (J 20: 19) and they were suddenly filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2: 4). Let us take this situation as the archetype of “phase transition” that we are after. For 50 days after the events of the Passover, the apostles lived in a state of spiritual freezing and paralysis of will, in a mortal fear and hermetic enclosure. The descent of the Holy Spirit causes a violent and radical transformation: fear and terror abate, the will to act returns – and action comes immediately: the opening of the closed door, going out boldly towards people to testify with words and lives. Opening to the Holy Spirit causes a radical re-evaluation of the image of the world: the apostles know now that they have received a great value which they must not keep to themselves, but which they must share with everyone. At the same time they

³² Ibidem, Fragment 1.

³³ Ibidem, Fragment 5.

know that this value is “not of this world” (J 18: 36), that it belongs to the transcendental order, so it is fundamentally incomparable to any of the values of the natural order. This means that all temporal values are subjugated to the transcendental order, which is relativized. Each value heretofore recognised as such (life, happiness, wellbeing, wealth etc.) loses its absolute dimension and so in a potential situation of choice, it will no longer come first. In the name of preaching the Good News everything is worth sacrificing – and apostles do make the sacrifice, giving up their lives (they will die as martyrs) and their freedom (they will be imprisoned more than once). Their unwavering attitude as witnesses of the truth, taking its power from limitless trust in God’s mercy, will clash with two opposing attitudes: (1) indifference and cynicism of people such as Pilate, thinking myopically about their own short-term profit; (2) fanatic, dogmatic and formalised faith of the Pharisees, who believe themselves to be the perfect executors of the will of God, since they obey the letter of the Law. For whom among the members of those two categories is it possible to convert and follow the teaching of the apostles? Only for those in whose souls the “phase transition” takes place: for those who find enough power in themselves to defrost the ice barrier separating them from the Truth. With all certainty these are the people (but I trust, not only these), that Buber describes as “full of faith”, when he writes: “My rationality, my thought function is however only a part, a partial function of my being; where – in this or that way – I believe, my entire being participates in this process [...], what is more: this process is only possible due to the fact that this relation of faith is a relation of my entire being”³⁴.

A key notion in understanding the mechanism of this spiritual transformation is the fact that the spiritual energy indispensable for the transformation of the mind does not come – as Ebner notes – from the immanent resources of the subject. Its value

³⁴ M. Buber, *Zwei Glaubensweisen*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus 1994, s. 17.

(measure) would be too low to effectively remodel the spiritual structure and open the way to conversion and consequently – to the stance of love for our neighbour, of understanding and dialogue. A necessary condition of internal metamorphosis is the gesture of opening to the operation of grace coming from above. This readiness to entrust renders the person capable of radically changing his perspective (*metanoia*). Buber explains: “Jesus’ call to return to the approaching Kingdom of God engendered the work of conversion: the conversion to faith. The person who is in need of salvation, living in times of despair is offered salvation, if only he believes, that it was accomplished and was accomplished in that way. It is not about lasting, but rather about the opposite, about a certain turn. The demand and recommendation to believe in something that does not constitute a continuation, but [...] a certain «leap»”³⁵. Only then does something we might call a “spiritual energy balance” change its characteristics fundamentally. A man who has experienced an encounter with the source of grace, and who makes the decision to “jump”, is filled with a power allowing him to break through barriers of prejudice, egoism, hostility, sense of hurt and the like.

Finally, we might ask the same question that Nicodemus the Pharisee has posed: “How can these things be?” (J 3: 9). Only God knows the full answer. But it is within the range of human possibility to testify with one’s words and one’s life constantly, patiently and mercifully, once one has experienced and opened up to grace. This is how we can give God a chance to enter the cold, frozen hearts of those who initiate conflicts. And we may give a chance for those people to – if they choose to – see and believe that love is stronger than hate. This program remains in a close spiritual relation with Chiara Lubich’s charism and the Focolare Movement founded by her. In a conversation with Franka Zambonini, the founder of the Movement said: „the internal impulse,

³⁵ Ibidem, s. 20.

which drives us from the beginning, the specific objective of the Movement is and will always remain contributing to the implementation of Jesus' testament: "Father, may everyone constitute unity". [...] It seems to me, that the real, great problem, as well as the real and deep desire of all people is unity, is love. If we lack love, the cement connecting people, groups, and nations dissolves. Hence wars, famine, misery and anguish, which are nothing but the face of a *lack of unity*. Therefore, how to bring about unity? Pope Paul VI spoke of a certain indispensable tool to realize this goal, which was used by the Movement from the very beginning, accordingly to its style: of dialogue"³⁶.

However, where the will of dialogue has been paralysed, one must begin with enduring work on reinstating the conditions that will enable the return to discourse inspired by the will to reach an agreement, and not – what happens too often today – to discredit or degrade the interlocutor. Waldemar Chrostowski notices that dialogue can only be born in a favourable atmosphere, assuming first and foremost a spiritual opening of the potential participants, but also complying with three preconditions: "Openness is a spiritual attitude, from which one must begin. But openness is the minimum. Dialogue is also not the maximum yet, but with all certainty considerably more than openness. In so far as openness assumes the will to recognize and respect the presence of other people and other religious communities, that is, the will to accept them as they are, dialogue must fulfill three

³⁶ La spinta che ci muove fin dall'inizio, lo scopo specifico del Movimento, è e rimane sempre il concorrere a realizzare il Testamento di Gesù: «Padre, che tutti siano una cosa sola». [...] A me sembra chi il vero, grande problema, come la vera, profonda aspirazione di tutti gli uomini, sia l'unità, l'amore. Se manca l'amore, si frantuma il cemento coesivo fra persone, gruppi, nazioni. E di qui guerra, fame, miserie e dolori: che non sono altro che il volto della disunità. Come portare dunque l'unità? Paolo VI ha parlato di uno strumento indispensabile a questo scopo, che anche il Movimento, fin dai suoi inizi, ha adoperato secondo il suo stile: il dialogo". C. Lubich, *L'Avventura dell'unità*, intervista di Franca Zambonini, Roma 1991, p. 116.

premises. The first – is getting to know the partner of dialogue, like he understands himself. This is a very difficult process for both sides. If we want to get to know another person, we must assume that he truly wants to unveil himself, and he in turn, must believe that this knowledge we acquired will not be used against him. Therefore, mutual trust must arise and deepen. [...] The second premise of dialogue – is respect for another person and his identity. This means accepting him with his entire baggage, also prejudices regarding me or my religious community. This may be very painful for me, and I may not even know about many prejudices. The more my partner unveils himself, the more we find out how much divides us. And finally, the third platform of dialogue is the reciprocal will to cooperate in those fields, in which it is possible³⁷

How can we cause people who increasingly get stuck in reciprocal claims and accusations, as well as in continuous brooding about one's own anguish and grievances, to begin to see again, how severely their soul is wounded by a lack of love and trust towards another, respect and willingness to understand attitudes distinct from one's own, readiness to forgive and reconcile with those, who cause their sense of spiritual pain? “With man this is impossible”, we could repeat after the gospel of St. Mark (Mk 10, 27). In this situation, only one thing remains for a Christian: turn to God, in order to (from the meeting with Him) draw strength to change the world and human hearts in the direction, shown so beautifully by the paradigm of unity built on the model of Chiara Lubich's tireless actions and the movement created by her. In order to walk onto this path and follow it persistently, we need – just like Chiara – “an honest and full of love, an entirely transparent opening to the light of God, which manifests itself in

³⁷ W. Chrostowski, *O dialogu międzyreligijnym*, w: *Kościół XX wieku. Rozmowy Ewy Czaczkowskiej*, Katowice 1999, p. 57-58.

the truth, good and beauty of the surrounding world”³⁸, but combined with the readiness to accept painful, maybe even terrible experiences of rejection, contempt, hatred: “Only the one will be able to make of *ut unum sint* the ideal of his life, who with faith in love, which conquers all, is ready to experience with Jesus and in Jesus a terrible and from the human point of view impossible to overcome trial of abandonment which meets the human life in thousands of forms and figures. Owing to Abandoned Jesus, recognized and accepted as the only good, unity ceases to be a mere utopia, but becomes a captivating and real history of humanity”³⁹.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, if we ask about the social conditions of the possibility to transfer between confrontation and dialogue, then the only answer that seems to create real (if only from the perspective of faith) chances to resolve the problem, is indicating the constant presence and tireless activity of people, who live the life “not of this world”, and who go out to their fellow human beings, giving testimony to faith, hope and love. Because “if we are surrounded by a world confirmed in passions, in the pursuit of careers, devoid of ideals, of justice and hope- let us not feel despondent. When the One, who conquered death, is with us, it is possible to have hope

³⁸ “Un’ apertura sincera e innamorata, del tutto trasparente, alla luce di Dio che s’annuncia nella verità, bontà e bellezza del mondo che la circonda”. P. Coda, *Un carisma e un’ opera di Dio*, In: Chiara Lubich, *La dottrina spirituale*, a cura di Michele Vandeleene, Milano: Mondadori 2001, p. 18.

³⁹ “Solo chi, con Gesù e in lui, è pronto a vivere nella fede dell’amore che tutto vince la formidabile e spesso umanamente impossibile prova dell’abbandono, nelle mille forme e nelle mille volti in cui essa si fa incontro all’umana esistenza, solo costui potrà fare *dell’ut unum sint* l’ideale della sua esistenza. Grazie a Gesù abbandonato, riconosciuto e accolto come unico bene, l’unità non è più un’utopia: diventa storia entusiasmante e concreta dell’umanità”. *Ibidem*, p. 18-19.

despite all hope” (“se un mondo, come quello politico o sociale, incallito da passioni, da carriereismi, svilito di ideali, di giustizia e di speranza, ci circonda, non sentiamoci soffocare. Dobbiamo confidare e non abbandonare soprattutto il nostro posto impegno: con Uno che ha vinto sulla morte si può sperate contro ogni speranza”)⁴⁰.

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⁴⁰ C. Lubich, *Pensieri*, Roma 1995, p. 37. “Se un mondo, come quello politico o sociale, incallito da passioni, da carriereismi, svilito di ideali, di giustizia e di speranza, ci circonda, non sentiamoci soffocare. Dobbiamo confidare e non abbandonare soprattutto il nostro posto impegno: con Uno che ha vinto sulla morte si può sperate contro ogni speranza”. C. Lubich, *Pensieri*, Roma 1995, p. 37.

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