

The Economy of **Communion**

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LIFE AND CULTURE

Alberto Ferrucci

At the opening of the 2007 EoC International Convention, where we were to verify the proposal of “working in communion”, Chiara Lubich gave us the gift of a precious new message (p.4). In it she looked at an EoC business from the perspective of the “colors” of the Charism and at how to apply the tools of the Focolare Movement to the businesses in order to maintain and increase the communion among its members. It was a message that, for all of us of the EoC project, represents a challenge for the years to come, a commitment for our lives and for our mind to delineate new practices and maybe new structures, more responsive to our work in communion.

To work in Communion is a high objective, a challenge to the prevalent culture that imposes the myth of marathons, in which many participate but only one wins. It is a challenge that proposes instead to give up our personal prevalence to achieve fraternity even on the job; to help one another, out of love, to work better in our jobs (p. 6) so that we will attract the presence of the divine into our factories; and, finally, make “a liturgy” of our work, according to Iginio Giordani’s words (p.8).

One objective, which is in agreement with trying harder to fight against material poverty and misery, is to discover new poverties even more painful for the human being than the lack of material goods: precariousness, impotence, abandonment, isolation, the lack of relationships suffered by many marginal people. Many also suffer in their work relationships or because they do not have a job or because they just lost it.

These are poverties to conquer and in this fight what matters is our proximity. That is when the material help is needed, we have to be close to the people in need, and we must create relationships of equal dignity with them. We have to believe and operate so that those in need may learn to do their part to get out of their condition themselves (p. 21 and 27).

This year 54 new businesses were added to the EoC project, and, for the first time in 16 years of the EoC’s existence, the profits shared by the EoC enterprises, in combination with the extraordinary help for the poor given by the Focolare members over and above their normal sharing of goods, were more than the requests for help (p. 16), thus showing that the culture of proximity is spreading in the EoC. This surplus of available funds over need requests occurred not because the needs diminished but because Focolare members worldwide, even in the poor nations, worked with greater focus to increase the local communion of goods through proximity. The result was a reduction of the number of people needing to be helped through the EoC at the International level from 5000 to 3788.

This re-thinking of the project message is a vital

turn, tied to our cultural reflections, born not to satisfy the needs of the poor on an ongoing basis but to help them free themselves from the many diverse poverties that they suffer along with many other people.

There is above all a poverty of relationships, based on the fear of choosing the gospel which means opening up to others through the gift of self without expecting anything in return. It is a reasonable fear because while a new relationship may be born from opening up and may produce happiness, fullness, human blooming, such a relationship remains fragile because it depends on the freedom of the other, who may hurt us instead of reciprocating (p 18).

From this cultural thinking and from the experiences of those who work every day in the EoC culture, a strong need arose: that of finding ways to organize work differently (p 20). To accomplish this transformation, business efficiency must be united with a responsible management capable of overcoming a hierarchical order (p 12), of inventing new structures based on a fraternity that frees everyone’s creativity, and of avoiding the temptations to create assemblies or to generate anarchy. These new structures must be founded on love, mutual respect of each other’s competencies, responsibilities and dignity (p 7).

Finally then, besides the news of ten new theses on the EoC, the most beautiful flower of this issue is the announcement of the birth, with the EoC project’s contribution, of the Sophia University that defines itself as an “academic laboratory of training and formation, study and research based on relationships” (p 17). It will have its first center in the little city of Loppiano, next to the Lionello Business Park, precisely because “it joins study and experiences within a community of life and of thought, in which *the relationship among people is at the base of the relationship among the disciplines.*” In this University, research, interdisciplinary study and life are put together for the first time and students can apply what they have learned. It is very meaningful that from now on almost half of the resources for the teaching are the fruit of the profits of the EoC businesses who will sustain this University!

It is a sign of the common conviction that the most concrete way we can work today for the future of our children and grandchildren is to form and train leaders for tomorrow’s world, capable of spreading the culture of universal fraternity in the various sectors in which they will work and operate, in the various countries of the world. Such leaders will be able to conceive projects and solutions utilizing the fraternity paradigm, the only one capable of making the world, today more and more interdependent and conflictual, evolve towards a sustainable future of peace. 3



MESSAGE FOR THE WORK CONVENTION

Chiara
Lubich

Dear entrepreneurs, workers, professors, students and all those involved in the project for the Economy of Communion and in New Humanity's World of Economy and Work.

We have come to the third international convention of the Economy of Communion, "Working in Communion: Many Challenges, One Proposal." In 2004 I had outlined work as the topic to reflect on for the following three years. Therefore, I must congratulate you for having dedicated this convention precisely to work. In fact, work is going through a new stage today, a painful and difficult one, but also filled with opportunities.

"Working in Communion," the title you chose for this Convention, shows that the hope I expressed at the conclusion of my talk in 2004: that is, that mutual love would lead those active in the Economy of Communion "to find together new models of organization, participation and management," has found fertile ground in you.

The communion lived within a firm enables business roles and functions to become forms of service, responsible management of activities entrusted to each one, without any hierarchical attitudes.



The culture of communion not only changes the individual's disposition towards work but it also gives life to "structures of communion," which facilitate relationships of mutual love in the firm.

I would like to share some thought on this very aspect.

The Economy of Communion is rooted in the Focolare Movement. It was born in 1991 in Brazil, fruit of almost fifty years of practicing the communion of goods, a life of reciprocity, of mutual love in our communities. If today we wish to understand the "structures of communion" within the business enterprises modeled on the Economy of Communion, we must necessarily turn to the charisma of unity's spirituality of communion and its lifestyle, as suggested to us through the years by the Holy Spirit.

In this regard, one of the main suggestions for organizing our life together has been the so-called "aspects". Back in the fifties, God made us understand that just as there is one single light, which is however reflected into seven colors, similarly, the life of Gospel-based mutual love is one, but also articulated into different aspects, as in a rainbow. The whole Focolare Movement has been ordered according to the seven colors, from economy (the red), to communication (the violet). Mutual love thus becomes defined and organized.

In 1997 the New Humanity's international Bureau of Economy and Work, together with the Economy of Communion, documented the first application of the seven colors: "Guidelines for Managing an EoC Business Enterprise," a document that had an influence, in some measure, on the life of the EoC business enterprises.

I believe, however, that the Economy of Communion Movement today has reached such a maturity that it can attempt to take a new step, to make the colors become a real inspiring force for the life of the firms.

The colors, however, do not fully exhaust the organizational and structural innovations of the charism of unity. In fact, the Holy Spirit has also given us some characteristic “instruments” of our spirituality, practices that allow the communities of the Movement to live according to the specific novelty of a spirituality of communion. These instruments also include sharing experiences of life and the so-called “moment of truth,” thanks to which we periodically take stock of our situation: we highlight the positive in a person and also where he or she may need to improve, with sincerity and love, by understanding and encouraging one another.

Certainly, each business has its own specific circumstances: the colors and instruments of the collective spirituality cannot simply be applied in a uniform way to productive organizations. But the Economy of Communion will not reach full maturation unless the “new wine” of the Charisma of unity finds suitable “new skins.”

Finally, I would like to address my last consideration to the poor. Today we are speaking and reflecting on work, but our heart and soul must hear the voice of those who are unemployed. The Economy of Communion was born also for these brothers and sisters, to give them the opportunity to work, which is always the most effective means of overcoming every form of poverty.

My wish is that your days here together will be “very fruitful”. Each of our international conventions has opened new perspectives and horizons on the Economy of Communion. I am confident that also “Working in Communion” will mark a fundamental point in our journey towards a world where, as for the first Christians of Jerusalem, “there was no needy person among them” (Acts 4:34).

Chiara Lubich

Castelgandolfo, November 30th, 2007

TO WORK OUT OF LOVE

Luigino
Bruni



Work is really work when it is lived as a gift. Work is of course more than this. Yet without donation to others there is no work, at least in the perspective of the Ideal of Unity.

In the Economy of Communion however there is the need for something more specific. In order to be able to work in communion, there is a co-essential necessity for reciprocity, -“to love and to be loved”- . And this is all the beauty and the greatness of the Charism of Unity, all its advantages but also, as Chiara says, all “its disadvantages” .

Communion is, in particular and at the same time, human flowering and human suffering. In the culture of unity it is not enough to work “for” others, we also need to work “with” others and “thanks to” others. There is no communion if there is no reciprocity and without living as each other. Communion if the common good par excellence and, therefore, to reach it, I need others, whose answer is however always free and uncertain. Tied to communion, thus, there is also a specific form of suffering, about which I will now speak.

First of all there is a form of suffering that is typical of those who want to live work as love, and live it as a matter of fact as love, in the sense we described it above. It is the suffering experienced by those who on the job open up to others and see

that their love and their actions not only do not bring fruit, but also they are exploited by others and may even become objects of sarcasm or irony. They are moments when we have the impression we are going through the experience of Sisifo of Greek mythology, of expending effort without results. But we are not yet at the suffering typical of communion.

There is in fact a suffering that is even more typical of work in communion. It is the pain we feel when the answer does not come from those with whom we are bonded by the same experience of communion, by the same culture.

This is the most typical suffering of the EoC businesses and also of the “environmental cells” within work places, where in addition to the suffering of the world of work itself, we have the lack of reciprocity precisely from those with whom we share the same Ideal life.

Reciprocity has in fact more than one shape. It varies from the contract to the exchange of free gifts. The reciprocity of contracts is not sufficient in an EoC business. We said this several times, even in this newsletter.

For the EoC it takes the reciprocity of friendship and even more, the mutuality of Agape, of the free and gratuitous gift. And, in these two forms of reciprocity, we are never sure that the others will do their part, we can be sure only of ours.

At the same time, our happiness is not complete if the other’s part is lacking, especially in the medium and long term. This lack of reciprocity may be due to the fact that someone, among the members of the business, experiences a crisis and does not live the ideal spirit of communion any longer. The lack of reciprocity could also be due not to someone who is in a crisis, but to a lack of rapport among or between the people who live, individually, a culture of giving and of communion.

This suffering can come, for example, from different views on how a business of communion should be. Maybe the entrepreneur has a more hierarchical and less participative culture and one of the workers has an exactly opposite view. Or we suffer because the organization and the governance are not yet as we would like them to be, too similar to those of the capitalistic enterprises, etc.

It is this type of suffering that is harder to understand and to overcome in the EoC businesses.

Why? Because we do not recognize it as such. We do not understand it as suffering, and we therefore interpret it, assuming that the other is not living reciprocity toward us and has stopped living the Ideal of Unity. We may think the other is not in his best attitude of communion, as he was back in “better times”.





If we do not recognize the possibility that this is a suffering due to lack of reciprocity, not among “old men” (in the language of Saint Paul) but among “new men”, then a chain of judgments and gossip may result. This can and has led to the end of the EoC experience in an enterprise.

It could be an end of the experience of communion, even when we continue donating the profits.

The suffering the other person causes in me may come from objective differences (of sensitivity, of culture, of vision...) that themselves cause us to suffer, without it meaning the other is not loving.

We have to learn to accept these painful differences and to know that from this exercise of diversity-communion, come the vital and spiritual energy of many EoC businesses.

What shall we do in these cases? There are no easy answers. Personally I’m convinced, based on what I see, that the EoC worldwide thrived in these last 16 years and continues to grow, because there are people who, out of personal “inner vocation”, are capable of loving even without reciprocity. They believe that the other could be out of communion with them, but could be in the same disposition of love that they have toward him.

They continue to believe in the other person even when outward signs indicate the end of

the relationship and of hope. They keep on believing in others even when they would not believe in themselves.

When we begin losing the trust that someone is sincerely loving even though he makes me suffer, we start losing our simple and pure eye and we become cynical and pessimistic.

Believing in others is good, first of all for me, because it keeps me pure of heart: “blessed”, happy, “are the pure of heart”.

With time, we learn that in every person we meet in life, in every colleague, there is a hidden desire and a vocation to communion that has to awaken and be revived, as many of our experiences through the years attest.

There is still one last question that we need to face: how do we offset the lack of reciprocity and the responsibilities of an entrepreneur or a manager for example? Can they wait for reciprocity, putting at risk the work of many other people?

I believe that one of the tasks of an EoC entrepreneur is to understand, in a dialogue with his or her conscience and with other members of the enterprise, how long they should wait for the answer.

Once we have accepted the diversity of others without judgment, then for the good of the enterprise and its members, we can decide to terminate some work relationships or to modify some things within

the business. But all this has to be at the end of a process of communion. Only then a separation or a cessation of a relationship can be an expression of love and an experience of communion.

In conclusion I do not believe there exists a happiness and a human flowering greater than what we experience when reciprocity blooms among people who have believed in others beyond all odds and have hoped beyond all hopes.

These are rare moments, but of an infinite value, that give meaning to and redeem years of difficulties and suffering. I believe there can’t be, in fact, a true human flowering in our work in communion without these dynamics, made up of trust, esteem and mutual hope.

The great patrimony of the EoC is the presence of many such people. The entire Focolare Movement (but also many other works in the Church and many people of good will) would have experienced long ago a mortal crisis without these people who see things through “different eyes”. These people are capable of seeing and finding in themselves, in others and in God, the resources to get up every morning, and start again: start again to live the art of communion and of unity in their businesses. People who are able to find new answers to the question that always comes, sooner or later: “Who is making me do it”?

IGINO GIORDANI: THOSE WHO LOVE, ACT

Alberto
Lo Presti

Igino Giordani (1894-1980) wrote and spoke a lot about the theme of work. Reading over those writings of his today we can't avoid noticing, with pleasant surprise, how what he wrote is way ahead of the times of the propositions offered by the Christian Social Doctrine of the Church, in later productions, offered to the entire world, like the *Laborem Exercens* (1981) and the *Centesimus Annus* (1991).

Giordani was interested in the concept of work mainly in three directions, first of all within the production relating to the social message of Christianity. Let us remember that Giordani is mentioned among the pioneers of Christian social thinking. He discovered from its original meaning that is from the events themselves inherent to the life of Jesus. He completed his intellectual itinerary with the social teaching of the apostles and the fathers of the Church¹. In each volume Giordani included a chapter on the Christian concept of work.

In his second direction Giordani faced work as a process qualifying the human person, in his or her inalienable human dignity, flowing from their being woman and man, made in the image and resemblance of the laborious Creator².

Giordani lived the salient phases of the ideological collision that saw - most of all in the middle of the 20th century - the socialist forces invoke truth over action and the destiny of the working masses. Also in this he could refute it, with a very famous parliamentary speech³ offering the Christian vision of work. He highlighted clearly the radicalness on which he was founding the relationships among the workers based on justice, equity and solidarity.

Overall Giordani was convinced that the Gospel assigned the highest value to the dignity of human work. The Jews, observed Giordani, were persecuting Jesus because he was working on a

Sabbath. But Jesus answered them «My Father works all the time and I too, work» (John 5, 17). Our work therefore is tightly connected with God's work and this makes work sacred, elevating it to a mission of specific cooperation with divine creation.

This is why Giordani could write «our day becomes a religious operation: our walking, talking, working a religious ceremony. We are always in a Cathedral, always in front of God, to give Him honor. In a direct manner we place bricks, we fix shoes, we dig the soil, we write words or numbers, but indirectly - and even more realistically - we give witness to God, in the presence of our conscience and in front of society's conscience, and in Heaven in the presence of angels and the community of Saints»⁴.

The work of people therefore is that doing that places us in real harmony with God's *doing*: «those who love, act» Giordani observed in his writings and not by chance Saint Paul talks of «laborious charity». And thus, as the apostles worked in the fields or were fishermen and then they were called to work for the Lord's harvest or to become fishermen of men, for Giordani there is not fracture between meditation («nourishment of the soul») and daily work («nourishment of the body»).

Giordani can then conclude that «a Christian is one who works in the Father's vineyard at one of the tasks there called for. The earth is the vineyard placed by the Eternal Father-Boss at the disposal of all people and everyone must work in it because everyone must live. If it happens that some eat two portions and others fast, he says the thieves came in and God's plan is violated»⁵.

Giordani moves from these bases to support the primacy of the Christian concept of work vis-à-vis the insurgence of socialist and communist projects of defense of the working masses. According to Giordani, unem-



ployment is a theological and moral problem before being an economic and social one. «Not to let men and women work (...) is the beginning of a homicide»⁶, in the same way that voluntary idleness must be considered an injustice - «an insurgence against God's laws».

The life and work of Giordani were constantly directed toward a harmonious re-composition between heaven and earth and between eternity and historical time. Work is included in this wonderful plan: «Wherever we are, either at home or in the workshop, in the streets or in the fields we are always in the house of the Father and with our brothers and sisters we are always in our family»⁷. This is why, for Giordani, work is a form of prayer, a vital impulse that, in its conception, prefigures surpassing the form of prayer of the monks «Ora et Labora», reaching the configuration of the new «Ara ora»: «not only to plow and pray but to plow is to pray»⁸.

¹ These Writings have been now published by I. GIORDANI, *The Social Message of Christianity*, Città Nuova, Roma, 2001

² Consult especially the following: *Dishumanesim and the Two Cities*, Città Nuova, Roma, 2007 (original 1949); *The two Cities*, Città Nuova, Roma, 1961.

³ I. GIORDANI, «About the Atlantic Pact», Speech delivered in the Chamber of Deputies in Italy on the 16th of March 1949, (printed by the Igino Giordani Center (2007).

⁴ I. GIORDANI, *The Our Father: a social prayer*, Morcelliana, Brescia, 1946, p. 38

⁵ I. GIORDANI, *Dishumanesim*, cit., pp. 102-103

⁶ Ibidem, p. 104.

⁷ I. GIORDANI, *The Our Father: a social prayer*, cit., p. 81

⁸ I. GIORDANI, *The two Cities*, cit., p. 442.



Notes from the presentation on Work

THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND SPIRITUAL DIMENSION OF WORK

Vera
Araujo

Work in the Bible

The teaching of the Book of Genesis offers us, in the part that talks about man's creation, the anthropological dimension of work. It says: «Then the Lord God shaped man with dust from the earth and blew in his nostrils a breath of life and man became a living being» (*Gen 2,7*). It goes on to say: « he took him and placed him in the garden of Eden so that he would cultivate it and guard it» (*Gen 2,15*).

Let us look at the first consideration: work is an integral part of man, of the truth of his being a man. So then work is not a consequence of sin. It precedes sin. Here is now a second consideration: if it is true, as it is true, that work is part of the ontological status of man, it is even truer that man's being is defined by him being an interlocutor of God and a receiver of God's action, of being the "you" of God.

In Chapter 3 we have the short story of how God's project is mysteriously disrupted by man's rebellion and the consequent social and cosmic effects: «Dammed be the soil because of you! With pain will you draw food for all the days of your life».

From then on work became also pain and fatigue. Creation resists man at this point and man starts looking at creation with different eyes, in terms of conquest. It was a profound change that only with the Redemption brought by the Word of God incarnated will find hope. The pledge toward unity, also the fruit of this profound change, is to be found here at some moments in time and in its fullness in the new heavens and the new earth.

A Theology of Work

The theological reflection about human beings as an image of God is at the basis of the theology of the earthly realities and of work.

Human beings as an image of God means image of the Trinity, one and triune, in its profound being and in its external manifestations. Therefore it is necessary to place the work of man in relationship with the three divine Persons.

God the Father created the world but creation as it comes out of God's hands is unfinished because God chose to give it to man as a gift but also as a task.. Human beings become responsible for the world before God, therefore they are co-creators with God.

Saint Paul's and Saint John's writings highlight the role of the incarnated Word in the doctrine of creation: « Everything was made through Him and nothing of what exists was made without Him» (*Jn 1,3*).

The presence of the Word guarantees rationality, order, intelligibility to creation. By means of the Word, creation is not chaos but order, law, cosmos, all of which human beings will have to discover and govern with their intelligence and their work.

Work finally has to be carried out under the action of the Holy Spirit. We know well that the action of the Spirit expresses itself in the donation of gifts or Charisms. These gifts and Charisms are grafted onto our natural abilities; they illumine them, purify them, make them more robust in order to be able to accomplish a certain task.

Work, sanctity, and mystic theology

The worker is called to live his union with God, his life of grace, and charity in all its forms in his space which is the world of work.

We have therefore to build Sanctity that does not exclude the time we spend working in favor of the time we dedicate to worship, the family, our social commitments, and our private life. We have to be saints on the

job and through our work.

We need to understand that our intimate life with the persons of the Trinity is built by doing only and always the will of God, like Jesus did ("My food is to do the will of my Father").

Also in the contrasts, conflicts, oppressions, discomforts and uneasiness which pervade the world of work, the Charism of Unity helps us encounter and embrace the countenance of Jesus Crucified and Forsaken.

But there is another aspect that the communitarian spirituality of Chiara Lubich offers us. It is possible and desirable to bring Jesus Himself back into our places of work, where two or more workers unite in His name. Chiara commented: «His spiritual yet real presence, will be there among the laborers in workshops, in factories, in shipyards, among miners; he will be with the farmers in the fields; we will find Him among shopkeepers and janitors, in every job milieu»¹.

To work with Jesus in our midst means to be in a intimate and fruitful unity with God, and this is mystic life, the mystic life for our times.

Work and rest: for a culture of celebration

The Bible teaches us an original and unique message: our time to work finds its most comprehensive meaning in our time of rest. Work finds its completion in rest. God the creator, at the end of His work, rested (*Gen 1,2-3*).

The Sabbath (Saturday) is a time for rest in two senses: a time to praise God and to recover from our work fatigue.

¹ C. Lubich, *Economy and Work in the New Humanity Movement*, Proceedings of the New Humanity International Convention on work and today's economy in the Christian view, Città Nuova, Rome 1984, pages 18 and 19.



“TAKING CARE” AT THE LIONELLO BUSINESS PARK

Cecilia Mannucci



The Expo held from the 25th to the 30th of last October 2007, in the new structure of the Lionello Park next to our little city of Loppiano, was more than an exposition of products and services. We could define it as a vast collection of workshops in which, in an encounter among ideality, professionalism and possibilities of synergies, the theme of “*taking care*” was highlighted in its many different facets.

This was the first expo hosted at the Lionello Park, after a year from its inauguration. But in 2003, the little city of Loppiano had already hosted the “polarization” of seventy two Italian businesses adhering to the EoC project. They had chosen to introduce themselves and their products as a prophecy of a business Park that, back then, was still a dream.

The expo had been built by the Lionello Park’s entrepreneurs themselves and they called economic partners, institutions, associations and banks with whom they had established relationships during the year, to participate in it. The expo was “colored” with plants offered by a florist in Ischia and beautified by works of art by the artists Kwok Hung Lau, Ciro e Angelo Falmi.

The attendees were about 3,000 all together and the five days of the exhibition were laboratories of dialogue and creativity for economic operators in a wide sense; and not only entrepreneurs or managers, but also workers, homemakers, consumers and chil-

dren. They offered over twenty seminars, presentations of products and services, technical in depth studies, launches of new initiatives (like “let us polarize” www.polarizziamoci.it.) All this helped to make new ideas and projects at the service of people, emerge.

Among the main themes presented at the Expo, as points of departure, we discussed how to recover a more just balance between the needs of the market and the personal and communitarian growth. The title was “Growth, Business potentials, Real needs”

Growth, Business Potentials, Real Needs.

With the participation of the Italian Undersecretary of the Education Ministry Letizia De Torre and the regional councillor of Tuscany, for Social; Policy, Gianni Salvadori we tackled, from the point of view of the *new generation’s growth*, the theme of the relationship between school and learning, about service and enterprise.

On the theme about *growth on the territory*, solutions for energy savings based on alternative energies were proposed.

Sunday morning was reserved for *childhood*, a delicate and decisive time of the human person whose first task is *to grow*. That day, cheered by the presence of the show by the clown Gigiolino, it was literally overrun by families and children.

Talking now about the Business Potentials, during the Expo, there was a window open for free consultations for busines-

ses. In the various workshops techniques for redesigning the enterprise starting from management were analyzed as points of strength for the development of such potential techniques. Other areas analyzed were the possibility of technological innovations, new techniques of marketing of the Internet era, strategies for security and a better utilization of the business’s information. We also talked about the current problem of safety on the job.

The group of the health care providers who came from the Association “HI! Health to share.” ONLUS (organization for non profit) presented a project of training and they also announced the opening of a *Multi Service Health Center* as the answer to real needs in the territory that will improve remarkably the availability of health care services.

Two new arrivals at the Park were welcome: the commercial office of the business *Leone* and the bookstore *Rainbow Valdarno*, with the introduction of three new books on themes of management. Present at the opening were the authors, Andrea Rosa, of the civil economy; from the economy of communion, Stefano Zamagni and Luigino Bruni; and from the University of Florence Prof. Niccolò Bellanca. In his speech Dr. Bellanca asked very pertinent and interesting questions coming from the research carried out by a department of the same University which is doing a study of the Lionello Business Park.



PEOPLE SAID



19/10/2007 • **Matteo Renzi**, *President of the Florence Province* – Press Conference. “Friday morning I took part in the press conference for the presentation of the “lets us come together (see www.polarizziamoci.it or www.polarizziamoci.eu) Expo 2007”, a laboratory of dialogue, creativity, innovations toward an Economy of Communion. It is the first gathering of businesses who welcomed the challenge of the Economy of Communion project. The matter is put together market and solidarity. The Economy of Communion is an extraordinary opportunity to reflect on the productive and entrepreneurial processes that surround us, a way to run an enterprise not looking exclusively at profits. As President I express my satisfaction for having the Lionello Bonfanti Business Park in the Florence Province and I express my will to support concretely this very important reality!”.

25/10/2007 • **Massimo Toschi**, *Regional Councillor for Tuscany* – from his speech at the opening of the Expo: “I have to tell my impression. First of all they went from 13 to 20 businesses, an increase of 50% in a year. A jump. Not a gradual passage but a big jump. Therefore it means that, here, there is something that allows such a jump. Obviously there will be economic problems, problems of space-placing, all things you know better than I do but this was a big jump, a very important passage. Why does this happen? Not only because everyone thinks that work is an important thing, that the businesses are important

things in which everyone is entitled to his or her job and so on... but it is the idea of participating in a big collective adventure. (...) This game is a difficult, tiring game. The seed has to die, but if this takes place, if we risk our lives, on this, a new fertility will be found.

In this game we are truly at your side. I can say this because you are very close to President Martini; I say more, it is a true friendship, but also because there is a profound agreement and therefore it is something original born in Tuscany. We acknowledge this and allow me also to say that we are proud of all this. Thank you”.

27/10/2007 • “I was struck by three things”, said **Stefano Zamagni**, *Professor of Political Economy at the University of Bologna*, at the conclusion of the afternoon. “First, by the large attendance which I was not expecting and this is already a meaningful indicator. Second, there was a passionate and emotional participation. We can see when people are set in motion either by intelligence or by the heart. Here I saw hearts united with intelligence. Third, I saw a renewed interest in the initiative of the Economy of Communion that is already going beyond those who dedicate themselves to it professionally”. “This allows us to have hope,” concluded Zamagni, “because the project of the Economy of Communion cannot flourish and develop further, if it can’t count on a surrounding cultural context formed by people who are not entrepreneurs but who share the goals that animate the entrepreneurs”.

Summarizing the conclusions of the week, in order to give continuity during this year, until the 2008 Expo, our desire is to carry forward the theme “*Taking Care*”. It was defined as “*that something between cognition and passion that, followed by a certain doing, concludes with an action. To take care of something means to pay attention to it, to be concerned about it, and at the same time, to be ready to act, to move to action*”.

This should be the guiding principle that besides being a link that unites the Park’s businesses and helps them compare notes, also becomes the bond on which it is possible to work to keep connected all those organizations and people known in these days as well as through the Web site www.polarizziamoci.eu.

Meanwhile we keep receiving positive feedback of the meetings we held. There is another business planning to move to the Park and a few other entrepreneurs wishing to start going along with us in the Economy of Communion.

Luigino Bruni defines the Lionello Park as: “... *A laboratory that welcomes the challenge of a radical communion that can help that indispensable life grow, so that the design for which it was envisioned can become true*”.

It seems to us that the Expo is a step in the right direction: it made us realize that also with “two loaves of breads and three fish” it is possible to set in motion something valid: because “*God works always*”!



Matteo Renzi



Massimo Toschi



Stefano Zamagni

WHEN COMMUNION CHANGES THE WORK STRUCTURE

Luca Crivelli

The Economy of Communion, in its sixteen years of life in which economic reality had to face the problems caused by globalization, the liberalization of the markets has been a witness that economic and entrepreneurial action inspired by Christianity is possible, in full freedom and recognizing legitimate space for fraternity in the market area.

The first level on which the EoC is achieved is the personal vocation, that makes the people involved strive for being fully coherent with the Gospel values, finding unusual spaces to "place love" into the gears of the economy, still carrying out roles at times difficult such as that of an entrepreneur, of a business manager, of a free lance professional.

But there is another perspective: we can't stop at the personal integrity level. We need to achieve the principles of fraternity and the communitarian aspect, also inside the inner dynamics of EoC businesses. To achieve fraternity inside a business means to transform the enterprise into a place of fraternal encounters and in management structures based on those principles.

Chiara, in her talk at our EoC Congress of 2004, exhorted all of us very strongly to experience together new organizational forms of work, participation and management.

Although we have been feeling this as a need for quite some time now in our EoC world (think of the guidelines on how to lead an enterprise, already, back in 1997) I feel like saying that the goal has still to be attained and it is far away. I'm not surprised in this sense for the rather harsh critique raised toward our project by the French economist and sociologist Serge Latouche in a book of 2003. This is what he wrote: "*The Economy of Communion is an experience that does not truly question the economy in its productive heart. The evangelical morals or the lay solidarity come in only after, in a perspective of communion, the moment of the sharing of*

the profits. The result is a gospel message that does not question the functioning of the market in its deep logic"¹.

I'm convinced that the judgment by Latouche is founded on a limited knowledge of EoC businesses. However his critique can be a stimulus to re-launch the active participation of the employees of EoC enterprises, in managerial choices and in the final goals of the project. There exists a deep contradiction between the humanism of the market and the capitalist enterprise. The market was born in the 17th Century to help modern people free themselves from hierarchical and vertical relationships of the feudal society. However it is the capitalist enterprise that affirms itself on hierarchical principles.

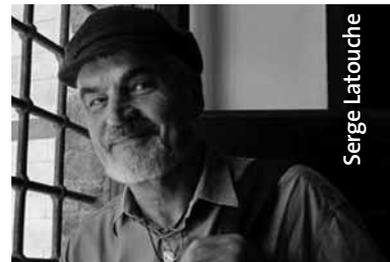
Already since the 1800's one of the great fathers of economics John Stuart Mills (1869), had underlined this contradiction and from this he had a strong appreciation of the co-op movement that he saw as a social and cultural process necessary to make the productive organizations fraternal and equal.

In summary: if on one hand the fathers of economics pointed to the market relationships as places of a horizontal, free and symmetrical rapport, on the other hand we saw the capitalist enterprise establishing itself on a hierarchical principle.

In reality, besides the apparent dichotomy, there is something that the two, the market and enterprise, have in common. Both are instruments of mediation, that allow the modern person to make himself or herself immune from "the risk that the other may hurt us"².

Every face to face encounter, every horizontal relationship, every cooperation among equals that is asked directly of us, not only gives flavor and perfume to our lives but it brings along the risk of us being wounded, the possibility that the other whom we trust, at the end may hurt us and betray us.

The market and the hierarchical enterprise allow people to meet



Serge Latouche

without looking in each others' eyes and they allow cooperation without any sacrifice. To establish a mutually beneficial exchange, it is sufficient in fact to have the egoism of the people and an effective competition.

At the same time the hierarchy and the control of the enterprise are presented as powerful tools of mediation of conflicts that, born inside an organization, allowing an effective resolution.

Yet there is a second perspective: we can't stop at the personal integrity dynamic. We must mostly achieve, even in internal dynamics of EoC businesses, the principle of fraternity and the communitarian dimension. To set fraternity in motion within a business means to transform the enterprise into a place of fraternal encounters and management structures inspired by these principles.

We must give life to organizational forms not guided by the hierarchical-functional principle but based on principles of fraternity. We have to re-think the enterprise's form of governing in order to experience at least in our Productive Parks models of a "communion governance": the challenge is too important to be ignored.

We need the strength of a Charism to assume, with full awareness, the risk to render fragile one of the structures of our productive organizations. We need new eyes in order to look at communion and participation not as costs of transitions, but as a blessing.

¹ Latouche, S. (2003), *Justice sans limites*, Fayard, pp. 81-87

² This thesis is supported and developed in a convincing way in Bruni (2007) *The wound of the other*, Trento, The Margin



A “school-business” of communion and sustainable entrepreneurial activity

THE FLORICULTURE BUD

Jenijunio dos Santos

In 1998, the association of social cooperation “Nucleus of Communitarian Action” (NAC), born at the mouth of the Amazon River in Belem, was started by members of the Focolare. It offered a course on floriculture and gardening to 30 young people of the poorest areas near the small city of the Focolare Gloria, in the town of Benevides, under the auspices of the “Supportive Community” program of the Federal Government.

This course, followed by many others, was very much appreciated by the local community for its attention to more than just the technical aspects. In fact it also offered training of the young, to help them become active citizens, with dignity capable of avoiding being dependent and needing assistance.

Thanks to the project, sponsored and managed by Action for a United World, together with the Brazilian Service of Support to Enterprises (SEBRAE), in 2004, NAC received resources sufficient to purchase a piece of land with the building needed for the training activities and for buying and selling flowers, produced during classes. The land is near the little city Gloria.

The project started within the NCA from the desire to meet the needs of the town of Benevides with 40 thousand inhabitants. Being close to Belem, the Capital City of the State of Parana, Benevides had become a “dormitory” town, lived in by a growing number of young people deprived of professional qualifications and work, easy prey to the microdelinquency of drugs.

Benevides, however, had a natural vocation for cultivation of flowers, even if they were of the least wanted kinds and hence with a low commercial value. NAC decided to go in the direction of cultivating flowers, choosing precious flowers like bromeliads, helicônias and orchids, based on the increasing market for flowers and ornamental plants, on the income that would be generated without requiring either a large piece of land or a great investment, and, above all, on the requirement of a remarkable work force, at least 15 people per hectare.

Young people between the ages of 17 and 25, coming from families with low incomes and with at least an elementary education, were admitted to the 8 month course. The course

was composed of a basic curriculum with subjects on gardening, human formation and civic education, and a more specific curriculum with field activities directed toward the practice of floriculture. The course also included elements of landscaping, ornamental decorating and participation in fairs and floral shows. In the final phase of the course, they planned internships in the business sector.

The educational team was composed of a pedagogical coordinator, five technical specialists and one overall administrator. SEBRAE, for its part, took care of the financial management, marketing, etc..

During the internship stage many young people were hired by the businesses that had welcomed them as students; as many as 60% found employment. Meanwhile, some of the youth discovered an entrepreneurial calling and they started small businesses, which in turn employed other young people.

In 2007, NAC developed the idea to begin a new social enterprise of the Economy of Communion, capable of producing profits, employing the entrepreneurial experience of Gilvan Souza, who for years had



UNIBEN: FINANCING ON TRUST

Mariella Francischinelli

Uniben was formed in the Spartaco Industrial Park in 1998 by several entrepreneurs who wanted to find a way to help EoC small businesses in various phases of start up or development. At the present time three of us work for Uniben.

Our company specializes in factoring, purchasing and collecting accounts receivable and advancing cash on the basis of accounts receivable. Our focus is to support small growing businesses in the manner most helpful to them, which is particularly important because of the high risk of failure in these kinds of companies.

A motto of the Franciscan Movement, since the beginning of the market economy, is "charity helps one to survive but not to live, because to live means to produce and charity does not help one to produce". On the other hand our experience is to help these companies grow, to help them meet payroll, pay their utility bills, acquire raw materials; in short to thrive and create jobs. It is a professional way to *love our neighbor's business as our own*.

Because ours is a high risk product, the analysis of the risk and the definition of the terms of credit are essential in every case. Risk is one of the elements we have to keep in mind in determining the interest rate, but when we work with EoC companies there is one big difference: *trust*.

When trust grows risk diminishes and so trust takes on an economic value. Thus, we are able to charge these businesses below-market interest rates.

For example a new business asked us for a loan. After analyzing the risk and finding it modest, we offered them the

loan at a lower rate and when we gave them our proposal, the company, accustomed to market conditions, asked us: "What's in it for you?"

Another business, despite their marketable products, had lost their line of credit in an effort to avoid bankruptcy and had to adhere to a credit agreement bordering on usury. Our loan committee chose to give them the possibility to raise themselves back up, granting them credit and enabling them to overcome their difficulties. They succeeded in paying off their debt in just two years and today they have 28 employees and operate both in Brazil and abroad.

When at times our client companies have difficulty paying back their loans we have seen that the best approach is to come to an agreement with them: it is a profound experience for both parties because when an entrepreneur is given the possibilities to take control of his business finances, his dignity is also restored.

Together with another EoC business we also offer all kinds of insurance throughout Brazil. For us it is very important to feel and count on the trust and support of other EoC businesses, members of the Movement and our friends who come to us. We offer them our services with utmost professionalism, timeliness and competence, trying to find the best solutions for each one of them.

been the main animator of all those projects. Chiara suggested the name "bud" for this new business.

At the same time at Mariapolis Gloria they were planning the construction of their Productive Park. Chiara gave it the name of François Neveux.

The floriculture business is already on the grounds of the Mariapolis, assigned for the Productive Park François Neveux. Next to it there is another Business called "Made for Us". It produces sweets.

The flower business produced, back then, two thousand flowers a month distributed all over that region and is part of a consortium started for exporting flowers worldwide, and it was chosen for the wrapping and packing of all flowers to export.

They are now planning a new business that is also a school that will cooperate with NAC. It will aim at forming young people to the new economic culture, fully oriented toward each person, to show that it is possible to live a sustainable economy, open to the protection of the environment and to universal fraternity.

Bruno Moraes, an officer at SEBRAE, expert in rural marketing who cooperates with NAC said: "In my viewpoint this is more than a simple professional school in floriculture. Here, in this part of the country so poor both institutionally and economically, you give young people the chance to be formed as good citizens, and ethically good professionals. This is why your students are so appreciated and sought after in the work market. To volunteer for NAC is a civic duty, an answer we must give to the community since we have the privilege of experience and culture. This is why I feel proud to be part of this family".

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THE OVEN OF THE DANCES



**Joseph
Yong Jin e
Amata Mi
Kim**

Joseph: In Korea, in Daejeon, 200 kilometers from Seoul, my wife Amata and I manage an industrial oven for a catering service for restaurants, that today employs 100 people.

The oven has been managed for fifty years by our family and since the time I met the Ideal of Unity I was 20 we tried to manage it according to God will. We do not consider ourselves to be the owner of the business. Our only task is to manage it openly and transparently.

Amata: Last January, leaving my Church after Mass I saw a column of black smoke covering the sky in the direction of our factory; I was alone, my husband was at a spiritual meeting in Seoul and, despite my fear of that moment, I remembered I often gave God my difficulties and suffering and I understood that that was the time to keep my promises.

Our bakery was on fire and I could not do anything. I remembered the early times of the Movement with Chiara and her companions, when everything was collapsing and only God remained. I ran back into the Church and in front of the tabernacle I shouted to Jesus: "You, Lord, are my only eternal treasure".

In my heart, I was again calm and I found the strength to go back to the fire and call my daughter and my husband. Also, Joseph accepted as from God's love that sudden cross called "fire". Assuring everyone there that he would continue to believe in God's love, he returned home immediately.

Joseph: Everything looked destroyed. Seeing our peace, our employees already the next day put up a sign that read: "We will resurrect our business from its ashes" and they began to work as if the factory

were theirs, in an atmosphere of true mutual love.

With buckets of water, they started cleaning and washing all the machinery that had been exposed to the fire. After a week we were already able to produce a small quantity of bread. Holding it in our hands we were moved; thanks to the fire we had all become a family.

At the time when we had to define the amount of the insurance against fires, the technicians stated that the fire originated from the home of my neighbor. He was able, however, to use people capable of frightening others and he found out that the appraisal from the National Study Center would be modified so that the responsibility of the fire was ours so that we even had to reimburse his damages and he even made that amount larger. I was accused of starting the fire and I was asked to pay a reimbursement of two million dollars.

People around us called us silly because we had not tried to find some illegal way to avoid such results. But my wife and I told ourselves that it was a good way to be witnesses of our Christian life.

And so we entrusted everything to God, only trying to live the present moment. Last May 15th we found out justice had absolved us of all accusations.

Amata: In our country during the year many national competitions are held where oven workers present their breads and cookies. Before the fire, they did not like to participate in them; but after it, our workers, even working all night after their shift, chose to prepare some products. Those with more experience were helping those with less, in a very beautiful atmosphere of mutual help.

We fixed dinner for them and mutual love grew even more. They were proud that their business would help them, while elsewhere everyone had to do everything by himself or herself. The prizes our workers obtained were making their self esteem and their love for the business grow. One day a group of them told us that as long as the

economic situation did not improve, they would pay in advance the cost of uniforms and they would wash them at home.

Joseph: We had to build a new factory and a new store and we decided all together how to go about it. It was wonderful to see what very open and beautiful ideas were coming from the people who were not professionals in the sector. That's how last July we were able to re-open the factory and the store.

A new spirit animated also the workers in charge of the development sector, now striving to find ways to improve the quality, visiting other businesses. When I was able to calculate that our sales proceeds had grown 30%, I was happy to inform everyone of this result and share part of the profit with them.

Amata: The most important change took place directly in the relationships among the workers. Before, those in charge of production did not have any interest in sales, for example. On the Day of the Children we had a lot of special sales and we had to hire part time workers. This year, on the other hand, the production workers chose to collaborate and the atmosphere was very beautiful; we were able to save money and we made a record sale.

The new atmosphere among all made it possible, following the suggestion of one of the workers, to reserve a moment during work for the dance. It is called the World Dance Cup. And those who took part in this were not only the young but also the 60 year olds. Suspended their work to dance. Everyone laughed a lot. Also the customers had lots of fun seeing these life scenes and they began taking photos of the dancers. Love among everyone kept growing.

Joseph: Lately many people who have a bakery come to our place to visit us from all over Korea to discover the secret of our growth in the last year. We welcome them happily but we do not consider them competitors because we see and love Jesus in them.

REPORT ON THE MANAGEMENT OF THE EoC FUNDS

Leo Andringa

At the conclusion of the meeting that took place in October with those who are responsible for the Focolare Movement, at the international level, it was possible to make an annual report of the EoC project's activities, for the year 2006/2007. We listed the number of businesses, the shared profits, the number of indigents for whom a contribution was asked and the development projects in which the poor are.

Business Profits and extraordinary contribution for indigents we help

The amount of the profits shared by the businesses at the EoC Center, plus those given directly to the nations where there are indigents to help, plus those given by the businesses themselves to the EoC local projects of Action for a United World (AMU), was 721,507.42 Euros. The total amount above and beyond the ordinary gift shared by the Focolare members was 884,000 Euros. Keeping in mind that 50% of the profits goes to the indigents and 50% goes for the structures of training and formation, the amount available for the indigents was: $883,999.82 + 721,507.42/2 = 1,244,753.52$ Euros and the amount for centers of formation was: $721,507.42/2 = 370,753.71$ Euros.

The indigents

This year the number of indigents for whom there was a request for contributions diminished from the previous 5000 to 3788. This does not mean there were fewer needs in the world zones that have the largest number of poor. It means, rather, that those zones reduced the amount requested counting on larger contributions by their local communities. This shows the concrete and positive effects of the re-launching of the communion of goods carried out in all the zones all over the world.

The total amount requested by the zones was, as a consequence, 1,143,058 Euros which, for the first time since the launch of the project, was 101,695.52 Euros less than the amounts available. That amount

was set aside for emergency situations that may arise during the year.

EoC – AMU Projects

Some businesses share their profits directly with Action for a United World for assistance and development projects in favor of persons with special and particular needs, chosen in common agreement with the AMU and the EoC Central Commission. AMU manages the disbursement of the money assuring that the local Focolare members have the necessary guidance. Often those resources given directly are contributions in food, medical care, home repairs and study completion for young people. Other times they are funds for the remodeling and restructuring of Centers for meetings, where people are offered an integral formation. Often those businesses support the start up cost for new productive activities so that the people benefiting from this can have a dignified life for themselves and for their families. For the period 2006/2007 the total amount assigned in this direction was 293,855.05 Euros. Many projects are still in the formulation phase but they have already been defined for a total of 120,296.83 Euros. These projects include:

- four projects in Brazil (Recife, Belem, Brasilia, and Sao Paulo) for which it is requested from local organizations 42,400.00 Euros to cover from 30 to 45 % of the cost for schooling 77 young people,
- a project for 10,077.60 Euros for food integration for 26 families near San Paolo,
- two projects for 17,269.23 Euros for the restructuring of the homes of seven families for a total of 40 people,
- a project for 27,820.00 Euros for medical treatment and food in Serbia
- three projects for 11,450.00 Euros for food and medical care in Bulgaria, for 4,800.00 Euros for medical care for 5 people in Brasilia and for 6,480.00 Euros for schooling, medical care and living quarters in Macedonia.

The Enterprises

During the year, the local people responsible for the EoC project in the different zones had been invited to do an accurate and severe checking of the real number of businesses adhering to the EoC project parameters and we were expecting a reduction in the total number. Instead the number was confirmed at 754, even if, in the counting, a few businesses were excluded, because they were too small or were discontinued. We also became aware of 54 new enterprises added to the Project.

The Structures of formation and training

Thanks to the generosity of the enterprises, it was possible to respond positively to all the requests for financing the structures of formation received by the different Zones of the world. We also were able to finance the development of a video on the Economy of Communion accomplished by Charism Productions and Città Nuova, conceived as a tool for formation into the culture of communion.

But the great news this year is the fact that the EoC is assigning 200,000 Euros to the Sophia University (see next page) that will begin its activities in October 2008. It will have its base in Loppiano. This contribution will be continued also in the future years, considering the culture that this new university will be able to give to our young people who will attend the two years of a Master's Degree after college. It is a real strategic investment at the world level for the culture of communion and of universal fraternity of which the humanity of the 3rd Millennium has an urgent need.



For a culture of Unity THE SOPHIA UNIVERSITY

Piero Coda The Sophia University Institute is an academic formation laboratory of study and research with a strong relational system... Its objective is to train young people so that they are *prepared to face the complexity of the present day world*. It uses an integrated approach that frames each specialization in a much broader perspective than looking at it only for its individual fields of knowledge. The approach is also open to dialogue with others and there is an expectation this will be reflected in the spiritual and intellectual growth of each person.

The Institute, promoted by Chiara Lubich and an international group of professors, is located in the small city of Loppiano, Italy, where the 900 residents of 70 different nations will offer the students an opportunity for meeting and dialoguing among cultures. The Institute is endowed with a library, smart classrooms, sports activities, lodging and cafeteria. Near Loppiano, at the Lionello Business Park, there are twenty three EoC businesses that will offer work and training to the students.

The courses

With the participation of fifty students, the Institute will offer, starting in 2008, a two year Master's degree and the corresponding Doctorate in "Fundamentals and Perspectives of a Culture of Unity".

In the first year the anticipated courses are *Theology, Philosophy, Logical-Scientific Reasoning, and Science of Social Living*. In the second year there will be courses in *Philosophy-Theology or in Economics-Politics*, and other courses that address in depth all other areas of knowledge.

The Methodology

"It is a study based on another concept of culture and man, a unified man, whose worth is neither for what he has nor for

what he knows, but for what he is." (P. Foresi).

The Institute plans to bring all fields of knowledge into a relationship with each other, without negating their autonomy. It plans to capture the common roots and purposes of each. The cycle of studies, along with classes, anticipates moments of sharing and dialogue in the common pursuit of divine wisdom. Students and teachers commit themselves to make a pact of mutual warm welcome, both in the spiritual and intellectual sphere, placing it at the base of all educational and formational activities. They also commit to living a Word of Life taken from Scripture, given periodically to all, and to communicate the experiences from putting the Word into practice. They will then verify together, regularly, each one's growth, with all becoming aware of it through everyone's contribution.

Studies, research and lessons aim at establishing a constant dialogue among professors as well as among students and professors. This will result in teaching with the voices of many professors, at the same time, and an active and personal contribution on the part of students toward common research.

Studying and living

Theoretical lessons are integrated with exercises, guided visits, meetings with experienced witnesses and periods of in-service training, especially in places where cultural and social professionals are committed to a "Culture of Unity"; as, for example, the EoC businesses.

Meetings with civil and ecclesiastical persons, communities of different Christian traditions, exponents of various religions and representatives of the multi-form expressions of the contemporary culture, are also planned. The method of research and study of the Institute has been for years an experimentation

and an experience in the Abba School. Founded by Chiara Lubich in 1989, it has about thirty university professors from different cultures who meet regularly. They are experts in the fields of theology, philosophy, ethics, law, political science, economics, sociology, medicine, psychology, the natural sciences, mathematics, communication, art, linguistics, literature, ecumenism and dialogue among religions.

What of the future?

The Master's degree offers a solid cultural competence of a humanistic and anthropological character. Formerly acquired university knowledge will be given high consideration through its integration with new and specific areas of knowledge of interdisciplinary, intercultural and relational natures.

Such competencies add a precise value to their former specialty, offering them ample possibilities for employment and application in their professional field.

This prolonged and diversified experience of learning through dialogue and communion, equips the student with extra tools and frames of reference. They will be able to organize group work and to coordinate research groups among them. They will manage interpersonal conflict situations, channeling them towards constructive solutions. They will open themselves to cultural diversity, understanding the specific identities and acquiring the basic tools of the method for cultural mediation: profound listening, empathy, dialogue and communication.

Tomorrow's world, always becoming more and more globalized, interdependent and conflictual, will have a great need for persons with these abilities. People like this will be needed in the realms of culture, education, research, public administration, mass media, management, ecology, health, law, economics and politics. 17



THE “I” AND THE “YOU”: FROM ECONOMICS TO LIFE

Pier Luigi
Porta

Recently Luigino Bruni has become a basic point of reference in the field of human relations economics. His books – from *Economics, happiness and other people* to *The Price of gratuitousness to Reciprocity*, together with his other books more exquisitely scientific for experts in the field – are by now best sellers.

He is well known author whose *saliency* stands out above the negativism of the majority. He is someone who has something to say.

“Salient” is a term I like very much because we recognize it as having a relationship with the salt of the Gospel.

The field of *relationships* especially, in full development today, has caught many, mostly contemporary economists, by surprise.

As Bruni writes in a recent essay, *these are lions*, interpersonal relationships are the true unexplored territory of political economy.

The book by Bruni, *The Wound of the other: Economics and Human Relationships*, was published (The Margin 2007, 212 pages) last Fall. It contains the most effective synthesis of his thought and the conceptual framework for a vivacious debate on the subject.

The economy, it is often said, has to do with competition and today we live in an era that exalts the merits of competition; that is, the benefits of competing and of the free market. Today they have become almost obsessively pervasive and Bruni’s book certainly does not negate their value. The problem, if there is one, is something else all together. Is there a space in today’s economics for forms of cooperation? Must competition exclude cooperation?

The issue now moves from the processes of economic rela-

tionships *to the motivations of actions* and thus the problem becomes understanding what types of motivations are accepted by our present day economy. The concept of *reciprocity* enters the picture as a conceptual framework in which to place the many possible dynamics present in today’s economy. In effect, the economic system can be viewed as the arena in which a whole series of cooperative dynamics can be applied.

If this way of looking at things appears strange to us, it is because a long tradition of economic thinking taught us the idea that the economy is based *solely* on self-serving motivations; in other words, on *self-interest* which is really egoism. What needs to happen first is the development of the concept of reciprocity which is the basis of what Bruni, together with Stefano Zamagni, called *civil economics*, in a book published a few years ago.

According to Bruni’s frame of reference, the idea of reciprocity is like a large container embracing a plurality of motivations to acting. They go from self-interest to other-interest and everything in between.

On the other hand, a varied number of motivations to human intervention has always belonged to the economic thought’s tradition.

Our re-reading of Adam Smith’s texts, for example, turned completely upside down the public image of Smith’s economics as a celebration of the necessary symbiosis between the competitive market and self-interested motivation.

For Smith, in fact, what connects an economic system and allows it to function is, as everyone knows by now, the idea of *simpatia* (Italian word), that is the capacity to share and to

relate. *Simpatia* also furnishes the anthropological support to explain the marvelous fate of the commercial society. All this, however, has been obliterated by a reductionist and partial reading of the economic phenomenon that came about, above all, with Ricardo.

It is easy to understand, about this point, that the examples that can be drawn from the tradition of economic thought are very many. It is sufficient to do a historically founded reading and not just proleptic.

Bruni has a special predilection, not unfounded, for Antonio Genovesi whom he considers the father of civil economy. Bruni is not wrong in following the footsteps of Genovesi, searching for academic fortune, because Genovesi was a man of great humanist, scientific and philosophical culture. He was the soul and the intellectual guide of the reform-renewal of the Neapolitan Enlightenment of the 1600s. He expressed a vitality and creativity of which Bruni feels he is a pupil. Genovesi was also the first in the world who held a chair in economics at a university, using the name of *civil economics* for his course.

Together with some of the major scholars of the economy of relationships, *the first* being Robert Sugden and Benedetto Guy, Bruni contributed internationally to spread the very new reading he gave to Genovesi’s thinking.

The fundamental dimension of Bruni’s thinking and writing is, however, the part he dedicates to the philosophy of economics. In his chapter on eros, filia and agape he shows clearly how human motivations are read through the various semantic natures of the word “love”. The progression eros, filia and agape marks the pas-



sage from the contract, friendship, and giving.

In this light, economics can be viewed from the opposite end, opposite in regard to what we are used to, i.e., as the science of gratuitousness, with a definitely provocative and scandalous inversion for all the liberal tradition as for the Marxist one, since both welcome the idea that gratuitousness is the opposite of doing economics.

The Wound of the Other, carries, on the front cover, the famous painting by Rembrandt that represents the fight of Jacob with the Angel. Bruni develops the symbolic meaning of the Bible story (Chapter 32 of *Genesis*) and also the specific interpretation that the Flemish painter gives in his painting. Modern philosophy marks, certainly, an important progress in its individualistic accents and warranty tones. But these accents and tones also bring immense burdens that the current culture hides and refuses to study; from the Marxist radicality (maybe ignored too lightly) to the Philosophical radicalness discussed by the great scholar, Elie Halèvi.

The true problem of political economy, in the last two centuries, is the negation of the “you”, the refusal of the other’s face, the need to study the system’s functioning under a veil of ignorance. We are *afraid* of the other (just think of the *homo homini lupus* by Thomas Hobbes): this is the wound of the other. We have to sterilize him in order not to be infected. Bruni draws energy and inspiration from his favorite philosophers from whom he quotes, such as Giuseppe Zanghi and Piero Coda.

It is clear that, at this point, Bruni’s writing faces the theme of the dynamics of a society which is pluralistic



because it is multiethnic, in a dangerously provocative manner, to be completely created. This a theme also discussed in the recent contribution by Amartya Sen on identity and violence to which Bruni’s work stands side by side.

To a society in which the right worry about the elimination of privileges and of “unearned incomes” is not always accompanied by an adequate awareness of the challenges waiting for us, above all in the ecological field, Bruni brings a strongly prophetic word that can’t leave people indifferent.

The study of economics, here, became a new adventure. I also want to add that, in

doing so, he also takes in the new category of economic goods invented by a few scholars, that is the *relational goods*. It is an idea, with a double edge in reality, that may bring the risk of weakening precisely the most innovative aspects of the research on reciprocity and more in general on “relationality”.

Bruni’s book is an important contribution that has to be included among the readings for people who have, at heart, the future of social economics in their different forms. But it is also for those who are ready to be confronted and to reconsider the foundations of nowadays’ economic rationality.

THE ASSOCIATION “FOR EVERYONE”

Silvano Gianti

The 13th of last November (2007), the Association of Social Enterprises of the Economy of Communion “For Everyone” was founded at the headquarters of the Industrial Association of Ascoli Piceno (Italy).

Those who signed the establishing act were the Tassano Consortium, the Consortium “The Woodpecker”, the Cooperatives Angelo Boni, Spring 83 and Formap with a total of 76 coops where over 2000 worker members work. They are from Liguria, Tuscany, the Marches, Sardinia, and Campania.

This was the result of almost two years of meetings, projects, intervals, starting over, and studies. The establishment of the Association “For Everyone” marked an important step in the development of the Economy of Communion in the sectors of *social enterprises* and non-profits. It makes us anticipate very innovative scenarios regarding, above all, the aspect of formation and training of EoC actors: entrepreneurs, managers, trainers and educators as well as employees.

The new President, Franco Bruni, said that to form this association they all turned to social coops and their consortiums, to foundations, to Public Institutes of Assistance and Beneficence, to religious institutes, and to aggregations of voluntary service. They wanted to form an association capable of participating to accomplish as their final objective, the Economy of Communion. To decide the name of the association we turned to Chiara Lubich, who was the first to have had the idea of the Economy of Communion in Brazil in 1991. Precisely one week later we received this message: “for the association that dedicates itself to the world of social services Chiara chose the name “Per Tutti” in the sense that no one must be excluded from your love”.



Franco Bruni



The name and the indications offered by Chiara – goes on Franco Bruni – sealed the birth of the association.

It plans to focus on the inspiring and founding principles of the

culture of giving and reciprocity and to accomplish the specific aims of the Economy of Communion with all the actors who bring them to life in their daily lives.

We asked Prof. Luigino Bruni a few questions:

Was this new experience born now because the times are mature for it? What does it bring to the EoC that is new?

“The Economics of the Work of Mary is not only the Economy of Communion, it is much more. It is sufficient to think of what was done before the EoC project began. The EoC expressed a part of economics, a culture related, most of all, to entrepreneurs. However, this spirit gave life to many other people in economics and introduced many other social activities. The EoC recognizes all this preexisting part and now it expresses this new maturity within the Work of Mary.

The Economy of Communion shares the business profits also with the poor: but who is the poor nowadays, who is vulnerable? We cannot think only of the poor of the favelas of the developing world. We must also look at the poverty and exclusions that we have near our homes, in our so-called opulent countries. “For Everyone” responds precisely to these forms of poverty so close to us”.

Is our hope then that this asso-

ciation may become an interlocutor of the EoC also in regard to politics and civil society?

“I hope that it will be a maturation for all economics. The EoC was born as a detail, but if it expects to become an economic culture it must also look at other realities, it can't stop at the standard enterprise. Economics is naturally inclined to dialogue with institutions. Economics is the Other of politics and vice versa. The State or Federal Government must help civil society to meet its needs. Today for me it is a day of celebration for the whole Work of Mary and for all those who wish a better world”.

This experience does open therefore new ways...

“I expect that this association will host many subjects, not only in Italy but rather at the international level. Economics is not only enterprise in itself, it is an enterprise open to any types of poverty found at any latitude of the planet. It is an answer much broader than to poverty, and much broader than the enterprise itself. I repeat it. Today I'm very happy, it is a great day”.



THE WORK NET

Pierangelo Tassano

After a conversation at a gathering of New Humanity in Castelgandolfo, in March, 1997, during a dialogue, what came into evidence, in all its dramatic aspects, was the problem of the lack of jobs. A young man from Southern Italy, in his talk, was saying that despite him being 35 and having two doctorates, he was not able to have a work experience. Many other participants were sharing that same experience.

Because of my past experience as a union leader, I was asked if I could take to heart the problem that came to the surface. I answered yes although I had many questions within me and also I did not want to create false hopes.

I did not know in fact any businesses that needed new personnel. I began to collect data and some resumes, among those who were present. Already at that meeting I was offered some advice and collaboration.

When I was a union leader I was accustomed to utilize the problems inherent in the work environment to unite the workers in a fight against the "bosses" but in the spirit of fraternity in which I was immersed I felt the need to convert. The problems of those young people were mine and all the schemes and tools I used before in the factory, had to disappear. In front of me I had a person: his lack of work was a tool that bonded us to resolve together the problem.

From that moment on, with these feelings and perspectives, we began, with some of those who were there at that meeting, to put these resolutions into practice in our native regions. We were so new at this that we felt overwhelmed by the arrival of many resumes to which we could not find a solution. Slowly, however, coordinating the information we had with the needs and the opportunity for work, we were able to find some answers.



The following year at the same type of meeting we met again, managing this time, with the help of people who had joined us in the meantime, to have representatives in all Italian regions. Also an expert in computer science helped us, at that point, to develop what we then called the "Net for work" with two different levels: the National Net and the Local Net.

The "National Net" is formed by one or two appointed people in each Zone with whom we exchange information of national character and share experiences and contacts: a secretary contributes to look for solutions at the national level for problems for which we can't find solutions locally.

The "Local Net" is a more detailed structure. It is formed by volunteers who serve freely and who establish direct relationships with anyone in need who pass by them. They help them to resolve the problem locally, thanks also to the information received from the National Net and trusting local structures such as the CPI (Council for Public Education), and the work employment agencies, who substituted for the old Employment Offices.

While organizing this project all over the national territory, a need surfaced. That of getting together in person. And that's how, starting in 1999, we held a meeting in Loppiano once a year for the regional key people.

In those meetings we became aware that the Net was most of all a tool to make mutual love

grow among everyone, through the exchanging of news, experiences, opportunities of jobs or needs for work. Most of all it was our love for an unemployed brother or sister what kept us together and made us feel part of a very large family also with those we encountered.

We also saw with amazement and joy that the people coming in touch with us regained trust and often found in themselves the strength and the initiative to resolve the problem but not only that. They in turn opened up to help other unemployed people.

The action always starts from an encounter, from a personal contact, but the Net, thanks also to email, has a capillary expansion that we do not know exactly where it reaches.

In the contacts we have, we see coming to the surface many wounds of the work world and we feel impotent to resolve them because they are so big. The experience we live is limited to facing out of love the problems for the person in front of us. We also feel, however, that in order to overcome the dualism that still exists between the world of work and economics there is still much to do on a much larger scale.

It seems to us that it is necessary to give more dignity to work and to workers: we think that only with this premise the economy will become "of communion" and contribute to elevate today's society at a larger and more human level.

TOWARD A SOCIETY OF BEING

Marcos Maciel *Excerpts from the speech by Senator Marco Maciel, ex Vice President of Brazil, on the occasion of the inauguration of the Ginetta Productive Park of the North East of Brazil. to the Brazilian Federal Senate on August 24th 2007*

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Senate,

I'm coming to you today to speak about the Focolare Movement, born in Italy during the second world war from a group of young women around Chiara Lubich and landed in Brazil in Recife in 1959.

Back then, in the early 60s, as a young university student I encountered the Focolare Movement, today present in 183 countries with more than four million adherents, of which two hundred and fifty thousand are in Brazil. Among its activities there is the building of Mariapolises, little towns where the inhabitants try to live according to Christian principles. There young people can spend their vacation or take part in voluntary work. They also teach arts and crafts in schools. In Brazil they are in San Paulo, in Pernambuco and in Pará.

Next to them some Productive Parks are built for small and medium size businesses animated by the spirit of the Economy of Communion (EoC) that aims at generating a culture of solidarity, to help the business grow and to help the needy.

The Economy of Communion assigns the profits to the entrepreneurs, to the workers and to the poor within and outside the Focolare, adopts an equal treatment for the workers of the business, a correct behavior with the competition and a great respect for the environment.

Every Productive Park has financial directors, technicians, administrators, managers for communications and for marketing. The first Productive Park is the one near Saint Paulo. It was followed by a park in Argentina and by one in Italy.

Now, the first Mariapolis of the Americas just inaugurated in Igarassu its Productive Park, called Ginetta, in homage to Ginetta Calliari, the Italian Pioneer who brought the Movement to Brazil.

The inauguration took place last Saturday, with the participation of many people from the Pernambuco society, entrepreneurs adhering to the project and two Bishops: Monsignor Bernardino Marquìo from Caruaru and Monsignor Francesco Biasin from Pesqueira who blessed the first business ready to be installed in the Park: the *Licitar Farmaceutica*.

The entrepreneurs of the association for an Economy of Communion act with the principle that it is not sufficient to make profits but that it has to be shared. In a time of wild capitalism, this experience proves that we can create an economy with more solidarity, with more homogeneity and more compatible with society's aspirations, less unjust.

The shares of the Productive Park are on sale to the public, in a grand experience of popular and productive capital, in agreement with the Social Doctrine of the Church.

Talking about this, I also want to mention the Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* by Leo the XIII, the first Encyclical of the Church with an eminent social character. Among the movements inspired by the doctrine of Leo XIII, I could cite that by Joseph Lebet, the Franciscan Father who carried out the first survey of the social and economic reality of the State

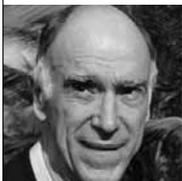
of Pernambuco and drew a development plan that marked the years between 1950 and 1955 in the North East of Brazil. He was a great thinker and he left remarkable works and gave life to the movement *Economie et Humanisme*, Economy and Humanism, for a social justice based economy.

Mr. President, the State of Pernambuco cannot but be happy to have been the first in America to welcome the Focolare Movement and to have in Igarassu one of the Mariapolises and now also a Productive Park of the EoC. I'm sure that it will give a positive and important contribution in the fight against unemployment, in the formation of small and medium entrepreneurs and in the professional qualification of workers. It will also offer an example of social and environmental development of which Brazil and the world have need.

All this in a climate of brotherhood capable of distributing income and to overcome class fights with an international resonance, demonstrated by all the prizes given to Chiara Lubich in the United States and in Europe, like the recent UNESCO Prize.

Mr. President, I ask that these words of mine may be attached to the other speeches pronounced at the inauguration of the Ginetta Industrial Park by its Director, Mrs. Socorro Sobral and by the Italian entrepreneur, Alberto Ferrucci who came all the way from Italy to take part in the ceremony.

I conclude, Mr. President, expressing my conviction, but even more, my certainty that experiences such as the EoC, are one of the ways through which we will be able to go from a society of having to a society of being. That is, *to be* more than *to have*.



TEN NEW THESES

Antonella Ferrucci

The theses we present in this issue are ten, four were done in Brazil, five in Italy and one in Croatia. There were all discussed between 2006 and 2007. Two are of the first level (baccalaureate), seven of the second level (master's) and one of 4 years of the old system.

The themes discussed are as always very varied but what is evident is the interest toward the new paradigm of economic rationality emerging from the EoC, i.e. the relational one seen from the viewpoint of economy, pedagogy, financial management, etc. Highlighted in a particular way the innovative meaning of "profits" in the EoC, "Social Capital", "Communion"; EoC as "Evolution of Social Responsibility of the Enterprise", EoC and game theory. Finally the analysis of a specific S.p.A., the

EoC S.p.A. born for the construction and management of the Lionello Business Park, was very interesting.

We point out the prize received by Irene Brundia from the Province of Bergamo for her theses on: "The Economy of Communion and its role in education".

I conclude inviting once more all those who think about this project to share their theses, once they are completed. It is simple doing it. You just have to fill out the form of the abstract that you can download from www.ecodicom.net and send it together with the files of your theses to the Email: antonella.ferrucci@prometh.it

World Archives for EoC Theses

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The theses available from the authors can be consulted on the Web site www.ecodicom.net. As of today the site lists 264 theses, written in 26 countries and in 13 different languages; of all these 204 can be viewed. The site can be viewed in 5 languages on www.edc-online.org, selecting "news and events" in order to be updated on all events regarding the EoC and all other sections to obtain bibliography, statistical data, articles and much more.

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Province of Bergamo, PRIZE FOR THESES WRITTEN IN SOCIAL FIELD VII edition

The judging commission, formed by the Provincial Councillor for Social Policies as the President and by the members of the Scientific Committee of the Study Center of the Social Policies of the Province of Bergamo, assigned the 7th edition of the Prize "Theses in the Social Field" to four new graduates, among whom is **Irene Brundia**, for her theses on "The Economy of Communion and the role of education". The ceremony of the distribution of the prizes took place last October 16th (2007).
"Four theses, four young

women newly graduated, four precise signals of sensitivity and attention of a world often forgotten or even emarginated in the name of efficiency and productivity. But the world is not just the one of which the media tell us every day. There is, luckily, also a

youthful dynamic reality that knows how to capture and read in between the lines of life and events and distinguishes between what is good and what is bad".
The theses will go to enrich the "Study Center of Social Policies" in the Province of Bergamo.



Irene Brundia



Benedito Lima Junior

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Master's Degree in
Administration Sciences
Paulista University, San Paulo,
Brazil

January 23rd 2006

Language:
portuguese

Thesis: **The Importance of the Profits in the Economy of Communion Enterprises**

Thesis advisor: Prof. Silvana Aparecida Kowaski Faccio

This thesis analyzes and evaluates the paradigm changes to the area of the relationship with profits proposed by the Economy of Communion (EoC) and the EoC's importance to the businesses that adhere to it.

The purpose of this work was to understand the new type of economic rationality and the new ways of management and profits distribution spread by the EoC project. All the material utilized for this the research was studied inside the businesses that are part of the EoC.



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Master's Degree in
Social Doctrine of the Church
Pontifical Lateran University,
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February 16th 2006

Language:
italian

Thesis: **Solidarity and Market. One Experience: the Economy of Communion**

Thesis advisor: Prof. Flavio Felice

The "non-profit sector", the "fair trade market", the "Economy of Communion" insert themselves in the will of the Catholic world to create an economy at the service of people and of society. After conducting an excursus on the Social Doctrine of the Church on the themes "Solidarity and Communion" and "Communion of goods," I approached the EoC project, whose basic novelty lies in who *are the receivers of the distribution of the profits*.

From the *anthropological* point of view, the Economy of Communion welcomes the person in his or her wholeness and gives the person a maximum value. From the economic view point, the EoC harmonizes the right to freedom for the private initiative with the demand for a universal distribution of goods. Work is given the highest dignity and pushed at the same time toward professionalism, competence and self-initiative. From a cultural view point, the EoC underlines that the productive subjects, although they are operating in the market economy, are inspired to a culture different from the capitalistic one, i.e., the "*culture of giving*". Inviting people to participate with money, creativity and professionalism in an economic project that requires solidarity and the culture of giving revealed itself to be a powerful means of *evangelization*. It is also demonstrated that it is possible to propose an economy of communion understood as the application of the Gospel according to the Social Doctrine of the Church.



Irene Brundia

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A four year doctorate
with the old system in
Pedagogy of International
Cooperation
University of Bergamo,
Department of Literature and
Philosophy, Educational Sciences
March 31st 2006

Language:
italian

Thesis: **The Economy of Communion and the Role of Education**

Thesis advisor: Prof. Felice Rizzi

This thesis highlights the central role that educational processes carry out in the development of further complexity in the current economic thinking and also the gradual re-convergence of the economy with ethics. Through the analysis of the epistemological-anthropological-ontological assumptions of the current economic thinking, I highlighted the rationality paradigm enlivened by all the present day economic thoughts and actions.

From the description of the enterprises and Schools participating in the Economy of Communion project, what emerges is a new *relational paradigm* and a different way "to do science" based on *sharing*.

Finally, I underlined the current relationships between economy and education and the possible contributions that education and formative processes may offer to the economic sciences. The comparison between the assumptions that hold the thought and practice of the standard economy and those that support the thought and life style of the EoC highlights two strategic aspects for the re-convergence of the economy to ethics. It lies in *Chiara Lubich's words*, i.e., in the *formation and training of "new men and women" and the communitarian dimension* in which to frame the meaning of working together.

Opening the dialogue between economy and education along with the research of common objectives become ever more important in the building of *sustainable* development and in the formation of human beings capable of living and fulfilling themselves in "*a common destiny*".

Mateo Basic

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Master's Degree in
Financial management
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Department of Economy
June 20th 2006

Language:
croatian

Thesis: Ethical Management and Financial Strategies of the Economy of Communion Organizations

Thesis advisor: Prof. dr. sc. Zelimir Dulcic

Distinguishing, in the sector of business ethics, between the Ethic of the Law and the Ethic of Love from the view point of ethics management, both the literature and the practice are based on the Ethic of Law, which, however, does not allow achieving true justice. The Ethic of the Economy of Communion is an Ethic of the Spirit, an Ethic of Love. The founding objective of the organizations that adhere to the Economy of Communion is not only profit but also the fulfillment of the business as a community of people who achieve their basic needs in agreement with their principles and who place themselves at the service of the entire society. The business profit remains important as a source of financial resources for the aims of the EoC project and it represents a kind of "good news" in the economic realm.



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Master's in
Engineering of production
Federal University of
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June 26th 2006

Language:
portuguese

Thesis: Social Capital and Social Values, the Current Relational Challenge of Work Organizations

Thesis advisor: Prof. Roberto Cintra Martins

This thesis plans to identify in two enterprises that are part of the Economy of Communion project the different forms of Social capital and Values that flow from the interpersonal relationships among the employees. Through the collection of data and the research in the field (questionnaires and interviews administered to the entrepreneurs, managers and workers) I presented the concept of Social Capital as a tool to be used in understanding human relationships in work organizations.

In both businesses, the study showed the existence of different forms of Social Capital, and it identifies interpersonal relationships rich in "social virtues", at all hierarchical levels. For this reason we could take for granted the construction of interpersonal relationships in a work environment that is enriched by social values.



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Master's Degree in
Practical Theology – Morals
Pontifical Department
of Theology of our
Lady of the Assumption
2006

Language:
portuguese

Thesis: To Fish and to Eat Together – Analysis of the Ethical-Theological Aspects of Communion in the Economy of Communion Project in Freedom by C. Lubich

Thesis advisor: Prof. Dr. Pe. Ney de Souza

The *Communion*, a relational model lived in the most Holy Trinity by the three divine persons, is analyzed under the ethical, theological and economic aspect. I started with an historical analysis of the relationship between economy and ethics, of the capitalistic rationalism reinforced by the protestant vision of profits, of the market vision of Adam Smith, and of Max Weber's proposal to humanize socio-economic behaviors. It is precisely today's unsatisfying results that make everyone look for new behavioral paradigms.

The thesis examines the history of the Social Doctrine of the Church, all the way to John Paul II, who, in the Encyclical *Centesimus Annus*, proposes an answer to the current world challenges. It is a moral and a spiritual answer, based on evangelical love. The EoC project is one of the new proposals based on communion, confirmed by the 735 businesses that have it as the basis of their operations. In the EoC project, *communion* becomes a true ethical-theological paradigm for every socio-economic activity.



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First Level Doctorate in
Business Economics
University of Ferrara, Philosophy
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March 19th 2007

Language:
italian

Thesis: Transformation in a business from a spiritual approach

Thesis advisor: Prof. Andrea Gandini

The objective of this thesis is to illustrate how the EoC economic model is able to create reciprocal and fraternal relationships and to guarantee to everyone a standard of dignified living in which every person is both the beneficiary and the producer of wealth at the same time. Thus research was carried out with key people who were asked to design theoretical and then practical solutions that would confer a dimension of collaboration on work and that would have the well-being of the community as the primary purpose. The most important conclusion was that it is possible to conduct economic and working activity successfully while at the same time respecting and appreciating the human fulfillment of all those involved. Reviewing the company's operations with the workers, suppliers, customers, competitors, and public institutions will help create a new economy oriented toward the common good. Such a new economy is not only just for the good of others but also for one's own good.





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Master's Degree in
Communication Sciences
University of Pavia
April 18th 2007

Language:
italian

Thesis: **The Contribution of the Economy of Communion to a Culture of Responsible Enterprises**

Thesis advisor: Prof.ssa Giampaolo Azzoni

The thesis examines the relationship between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the Economy of Communion, highlighting the contribution offered by the latter.

The sources of information utilized were the literature on the CSR and articles, books, questionnaires and interviews about the EoC.

We concluded that the CSR suffers from a low level of stakeholder involvement and from the lack of a culture oriented toward social responsibility. The EoC, on the other hand, represents a sort of evolution of its own. It is an ethically oriented example of the integration and synergy between the culture and the practice. It demonstrates that it is possible to have success in the market although wealth is considered as a means and not as an end.

The knowledge and the spreading of the EoC project can therefore strengthen its value as a "sign", stimulating, on the one hand, the enterprises which are not part of the EoC, to raise their standards of reference and, on the other hand, the stakeholders so that they request and reward behaviors that are more and more advanced at an ethical, social and environmental level.



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Master's Degree in
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May 3rd, 2007

Language:
portuguese

Thesis: **The Spreading of the Economy of Communion Enterprises in the Market in the Perspective of the Game Theory**

Thesis advisor: Prof. Francisco S. Ramos

This study applied Game Theory to the ways in which EoC businesses behave toward competitors and customers. The purposes of the study were to determine whether taking part in the EoC is a good choice for an enterprise in terms of its future development and also to analyze the future prospects of the project.

After evaluating the meaning and the characteristics of the EoC, we studied the incentives for entrepreneurs to choose this managerial system as well as the development of the project during its fifteen years of existence. Finally we carried out case studies in all the EoC businesses existing in the Metropolitan Region of Recife. The conclusion is that it is possible for entrepreneurs to adhere to the project as long as they are motivated not only by financial rewards, but also by non-material recompenses, also called "relational goods".



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Bachelor's Degree in
Business Economy – General
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University of Florence – Italy
June 20th 2007

Language:
italian

Thesis: **E. di C. SpA (a public corporation): A Company of Capital for an economy of solidarity**

Thesis advisor: Prof. Massimo Cecchi

The Purpose of the thesis was to analyze a new "type" of corporation, one which is not different in its juridical form from most other public corporations, but rather operates in a much different way. The new entity is the not-for-profit corporation whose goal is not profit for its own sake but rather whose goal is profit-making to help the indigents.

The business chosen to be the object of the study is the E. di C. SpA, born in 2001 in Incisa Valdarno near the small city of Loppiano; its inspiration is the Economy of Communion in Freedom Project.

An excursus on the EoC Project is followed by an analysis of the chosen business, highlighting its particular features, the reasoning behind its decision to be a public company, its relationships with its stockholders, and its 2006 budget.

The study concludes with a description of the construction process and the finished building, of the businesses who took office there and of the experience of "fraternity" experienced within its walls.

Then the strengths and weaknesses of the Productive park are outlined, and the results of the study and the future prospects of the Park are detailed, emphasizing how the EoC can positively influence the socio-economic fabric. It was found that the Park attracts not only the active involvement of other businesses but that it also generates virtuous behaviors more oriented toward the common good. It builds a network of relationships among the various stakeholders, and solicits, in addition to the enterprises themselves, all the other social components and institutions needed to review and renew the existing economic mechanisms in the light of a new value, that of communion.

“François Neveux, an economically incorrect entrepreneur and inventor”

UTOPIA EN ROUTE

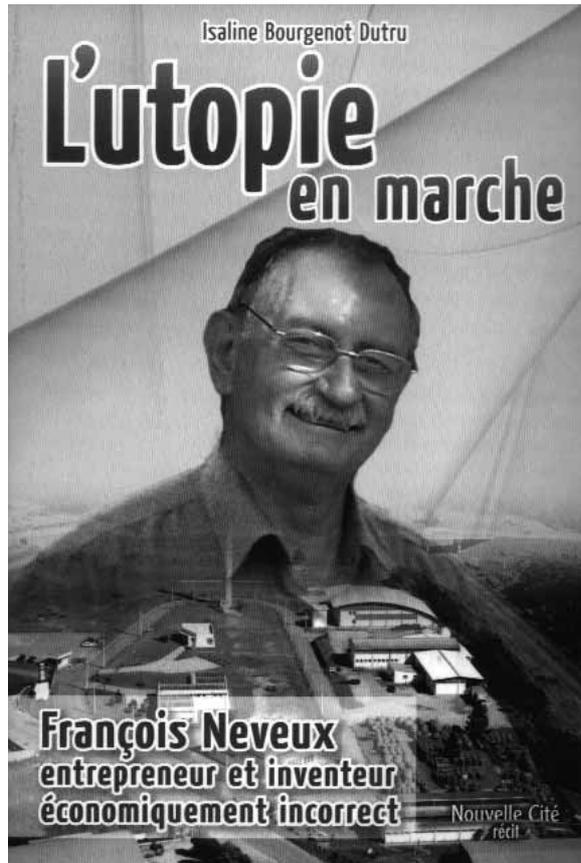
Alberto Ferrucci

“Cher Alberto”. This how François, who was already suffering, greeted me in May 2006 as I was leaving for Brazil to attend the EoC convention, an event he had never missed. “*This year my task for the EoC is to remain in France to help write the story of my life*”.

This book is now in print in his native French through the publishing company Nouvelle Cité. I hope it will soon be available in other languages. The author, Isaline Bourgenot Dutru (email: isaline.bd@orange.fr), is a French professor. She heard the story of his life from François when he was already aware that he was in the last stages of his life. After he died she decided to go to Brazil with François’s wife to collect testimonies of his works from the living.

The book is happily entitled *Utopia en route* referring to the Utopia dreamed of and described by St. Thomas More five centuries ago, and now fulfilled in the Economy of Communion. The subtitle of the book is: “*François Neveux, an economically incorrect entrepreneur and inventor*”. In fact, François was an exceptional entrepreneur who, from the beginning of his career, ardently desired to work in a different way. Entering the work force as a young engineer, he invented a new technology to purify water. After two years he decided to launch his own business “to create wealth for others”. It was a business with a unique culture, one in which every problem is resolved through dialogue and trust. Each employee was valued and paid a salary that was thirty percent above the market. There was no need for strikes or unions.

In a short time he earned a lot of money and so he founded a second business to construct



water purification plants. All appeared to be going well, when the threat of a heart attack brought him face to face with himself and with God. From that moment, François was filled with inexhaustible energy and would say: “Paradise, we are the ones who must build it. God is impatient!” Two years later, François encountered the Focolare Movement and immediately committed himself to it, certain that God waited for him there. He started a third business which his wife Françoise named “Hundredfold”. He employed ex-drug addicts and people marginalized by society to fabricate little boats, windsurf boards and toys. His commitment was to create a new rapport amongst the employees, customers and competitors placing human beings and not the “system” at the center. When he heard of the Economy of Communion in freedom, he saw there the solu-

tion to all economic problems of our times and he embraced it immediately. He first offered gratuitously his technologies and patents. Then he left his activities in France to move to Brazil, starting a business in the first Industrial Park Spartaco and donating his patents, technologies and money. He was a specialist in the purification of water and a natural inventor. He registered 35

patents and was a recognized expert in normative standards for the European Community. He had flashes of genius accompanied by an innate humor and he charmed everyone with his tenacious utopia that he never abandoned: the creation of paradise on earth.

Struck down in just a few months by his disease, François left us in August of 2006. One year later, Chiara Lubich gave his name to the third Industrial Park of Brazil in the Amazons. It was the one in which he dreamed of setting up a branch of his Brazilian business, Rotogine.

On the last page of Dutru’s book, she describes the greeting she received from Louis Carlos, a Brazilian entrepreneur, at the airport the moment she returned to France. He said, “Isaline, tell the whole world that François was a giant, the first amongst us all and the greatest. You must write this!”

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*A "school-business"
of communion
and sustainable
entrepreneurial
activity*

