

A fundamental and spiritual choice

Before we describe the paradigm, I will explain the path we will take. It will be inspired by the Christian tradition, with the metaphor of the Godhead. Let's compare here two possible approaches:

- 1) Eastern religions have focused on describing preferably the path of spiritual search rather than the nature of the Godhead; it gives instructions concerning the practice that allows disciples to discover the Reality which is beyond any possible representation. It is focused on the "how" rather than on the "who" or on the "what". In this way it provides the tools for the disciple to experiment through a regular practice what is taught and to discover his path by himself when guided by the teacher or teaching.
- 2) In a way which seems opposed but reveals itself indeed very complementary to this approach, Christianity has focused its teaching on the description of the nature of the Godhead: who is God? The attempt to describe the fathomless Reality is a great risk because Reality cannot be seen and cannot be described; the description can only lead to the creation of false representations and of idols. God is in no way as the representation we have made of Him. Yet, this narrow and risky path can be very rich, especially when it is lead in the spirit of the Eastern apophatic tradition, which does not say clearly but only suggests or indicates. The finger only shows the direction in which to search; the teaching (the finger) is not the truth itself which remains always hidden and impossible to grasp. The description uses metaphors and symbols because the deep nature of the Godhead cannot be expressed with words. It is why myths, metaphors and parables are so important in the Christian teaching. Here too, the practice remains the only true path on the spiritual search.

To describe the new paradigm of economics we will start from the metaphor of the Trinity which is the core of the Christian tradition. We will show that our society has created an Anti-Trinity which is the complete opposite of the Christian Trinity and finds its expression in power, technology and market.

My intention in introducing here this model is not to preach a Christian truth but to let us be inspired by an understanding of life that is very liberating.

Trinity and Anti-Trinity

Our modern society adores its Anti-Trinity (Power-Technology-Market) as a negation of the true Trinity (Life-Incarnation-Love).

It is fascinating to observe how the false Anti-Trinity created by our modern society is a kind of negative caricature or a sort of idol which represents the values of our materialistic culture; it constitutes in each of its aspects an exact negation of the Christian Trinity which is a symbol and expression of life:

- 1) *As everybody knows, the Christian Trinity describes God as three persons in one Unity: it is composed of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. By analogy, as a unity composed of three persons, it can be described basically like the three different natures of the fire which yet remains one: energy + light + heat, in the equation $3 = 1$. It means that the Godhead is composed of three persons and yet remains One.*

- a) *1st person: the Father is the invisible energy of the fire, the force of life which gives himself freely and animates everything.*
- b) *2nd person: the Son is the light of the fire, the expression and incarnation which make the Father (the energy of the fire) visible, in the gift of himself, in humility and gentleness.*
- c) *3rd person: the Spirit is the heat of the fire, the energy of love which unites everything and moves and inspires us on the path of the search for Truth.*

2) *The Anti-Trinity of our materialistic society is also composed of 3 elements, of 3 idols which are also leading forces:*

- a) *1st idol: Power, as a force of domination, exploitation and destruction.*
- b) *2nd idol: Technology, as a force of control and manipulation.*
- c) *3rd idol: Market and Consumption, as a force of greed, accumulation and retention.*

The Christian Trinity is evidently a metaphor for the true nature of life understood as a spiritual reality which leads the evolution of the whole cosmos since the beginning of the world. This evolution is not the fruit of chance and necessity. The diversified forms of life we know (from the bacteria to the whale and the bird or the human being), is not an accident but a purposeful transformation under the guidance of a spiritual energy which leads evolution and can be called Reality, Emptiness, Allah, God, or else. As such it incarnates itself into matter but yet remains fundamentally a spiritual entity. This energy is love and relates to each of us in a personal way. This rich metaphor of the Trinity describes the sacred reality and teaches us how to live. It tells us that life is not about accumulating more material goods but about giving oneself into the flow of creation and transformation, to be united with the source of all life and to be solidary of our brothers and sisters, the other human beings. Life in this sense is a subtle energy which animates us and leads us to find peace and joy, whatever happens to us, when we learn to let go and trust. This model of life leads us to freedom and true living.

The materialistic Anti-Trinity is completely the opposite of this generous movement of life. It is completely materialistic and egocentric. It aims at controlling, dominating, exploiting, accumulating. Instead of a living flow, it is a sclerotic obsession of oneself which prevents life, transformation and perception of a wider reality.

Let's now examine these three persons of the Trinity, and their materialistic counterparts, in more detail.

Father vs Power

1) While the Father is the energy of life that gives himself freely, Power is a means to conquer and dominate, to oppress and destroy.

If we compare now the Father, 1st person of the Trinity, with the Power, 1st idol of the Anti-Trinity, we have the following contrast:

- *First person of the Trinity, the Father is the energy of the fire, the energy of life. He is not the bearded nasty fellow who sits on a cloud and wants to punish us, as it has been too often represented. No, he is invisible, like the wind, but yet real. He is the Creator, not so much because he made the Earth and the Universe (this is a metaphor), but principally because he is the source of all life, the strength of love, the deep nature of everything*

which exists. He is the energy and life which supports everything. Without him, everything returns to nothingness. He gives himself unconditionally, yet he leaves us free to choose to recognise him, to accept him in our lives or to ignore him. He does not impose himself. He is all powerful but remains discrete, hidden in a way which remains yet always accessible. He is invisible like the wind which cannot be seen but can be noticed and observed through its effects. If we let him do, he nourishes our lives, lifts us, guides us, inspires us; he is the meaning of our own evolution that we have to trust because it will lead us to peace and joy. When we trust in him and let him guide our lives, his power of life (which is not imposing) can flow through our presence, to be given to others.

- *By contrast, and completely at the opposite, the 1st idol of the Anti-Trinity is Power. This is also the energy which believes to lead our world, but it is only an illusion, although very harmful and in this way nevertheless real. Power wants to dominate; it uses violence to achieve its ends. It wants to be in control, to use people and all kinds of resources to its own advantage. It is completely obsessed by oneself. It is the centre to which everything should converge. Force and violence are the main tools of its implementation. Its violence is assimilated with civilisation and development as if violence were a sign of maturity. Power is based on fear and suspicion. It is in this way the opposite of love.*

These two persons of these opposed trios are very much in contrast to one another. In our western culture we are very fascinated by Empires. We believe the Babylonian, the Egyptian, the Roman and the Chinese Empires were great stages of civilisation because they accumulated great wealth, built great cities and they were all dominating powers which spread war and conquered in order to exploit their neighbours. We are obsessed by this image of power which conquers and imposes itself. The British Empire conquered the world because they had good ships, good weapons and less moral restraint, not because they were wise and gentle and generous, caring for the wellbeing of all. It is interesting to notice how this image of power fascinates us and prevents us to see what it was truly.

By contrast traditional cultures seem dull because they are usually materially not so impressing. They practise a kind of gentleness in their relationships between people and with nature. They do not do this by ideal, although there is certainly a great part of spiritual awareness in this attitude, but mainly by lack of more powerful means. Yet we can feel how there is a great quality and harmony in this more simple way of life. The myth of the wise savage is not born out of nothing, but out of our intuition that there is in these societies a quality we often dream of, although they are far from being perfect. They practise a human scale which our modern way of life does not know anymore; they do not destroy their environment as we do but live (or leave what is) in a better form of harmony with nature than we do, in a form of self-restraint. They do not work in generally dehumanised conditions for an abstract income but seem to work essentially for their subsistence, yet often in harsh conditions that have nevertheless a meaning. Many exchanges take place in a more natural way, without using money as an intermediary. They have developed more ways of reciprocity than we are capable of. We know that despite these qualities these traditional societies are not an ideal model, but we know also that they have nevertheless kept alive something in their humanity and small scale we have lost and this model awakes in us a form of nostalgia. In fact they practise a human quality that we are mainly still capable of experimenting only in the reduced intimate circle of our families. They practise it; this is culture. We talk about it; this is civilisation. Who is primitive?

The Father figure in the Trinity is in this way a powerful challenge. Although he is all powerful because he is the energy and essence of everything, he remains hidden because it is

his way to remain discrete, not to impose himself. His power is gentle, it is offered but never forced upon us. The signs of his presence are everywhere in everything, if we learn to identify him, in the beauty and the marvel of what surrounds us. But we got too much accustomed to these marvels. We are no more aware of our breath, of our skin, of the beat of life in us, because we have known it for ever since we lived. This great discretion is the true power of love which does not expect anything in return, yet the presence of this force of love is constant, like the pumping of our heart. This form of power relies on inspiration and not on oppression. It is all directed toward the wellbeing of all others, in no way egocentric. Therefore it is a force of liberation, of growth into maturity, of deep transformation, instead of being the power which reduces, oppresses, retains, extracts. The Father image is the figure of our own evolution towards light.

Son vs Technology

2) While the Son is expression, incarnation that makes love visible, Technology imposes itself as manipulation that shapes the world.

If we compare now the Son, 2nd person of the Trinity, with the Technology, 2nd idol of the Anti-Trinity, we have the following contrast:

- *Second person of the Trinity, the Son is the light of the fire, the expression which makes the invisible visible. Since the beginning of the world he has been the transformation of what cannot be seen into what can be perceived. He is the expression of creation into signs and matter. He is by excellence the expression of love, the true love which helps to grow, to become more real and mature, more aware and integrated into the general movement of creation of the cosmos. Light makes things visible. Shadow is what remains where light does not shine. The man Jesus is only the human figure who incarnated the person of the Son into a human being. By giving himself he made the generosity of the Father perceptible as well as his own because they are united in one will. He made known that the Father is a gentle power who gives himself. He did this not so much by obedience to the Father but because he is of the same nature as the Father and he is therefore love too. He gave himself of his own will because it is his true nature, and it is also our true nature that he reveals to us. The Son is present in us, in our surroundings, in nature because these material realities are expression of who the invisible Reality is. He is the Revelation. The deep change happens in us when we understand the nature of his gift. He is Action. Salvation is nothing else than this transformation in ourselves of the perception of what is the sacred and true dimension of life, and of ourselves, and of the others.*
- *By contrast, and completely on the opposite, the 2nd idol of the Anti-Trinity is Technology. It is based on domination, and in this way the second idol is also expression of the first (Power), but, instead of giving and revealing, it aims at domination and control because of greed, because of a need to shape the world to our own desire. Technology makes of us takers: it aims at comfort without effort. It is based on virtuality: how to create a bubble of comfort which is not confronted by the harsh reality of the real world and which allows us to avoid effort, concentration, clear-sightedness, growth in maturity, all things that are required from us by the real world but that we do not want because we do not know where they lead us. We have indeed lost the trust in life, because sheer power has replaced the trustful Father. Technology is believed to be the sign of real development. It is in fact too powerful for our degree of knowledge. We are too ignorant of the laws of the cosmos to be able to master technology. We use it as a toy which is more effective in its*

hidden consequences than we think. Hence we mess up the world, and we find only one solution: to use more technology to solve the problem created by technology. Hence more problems. In technology there is no light, no revelation, only darkness, because it is unable to propose solutions, it is only a means to an end. The end is essential, and it needs to be defined by our Spirit, our capacity to be in tune.

We want to be the semi-gods who can also create and shape our surroundings. But we do not know what we do, because we lack the wider picture. It is why we destroy nature, we exploit people, we create victims, we generate more destruction than we wish to. Our main problem is the illusion that we believe to be able to see what is; but the true Reality is invisible because it is immaterial. How does one fight against the wind? Constantly it pushes us back or diverts our efforts, and we do not understand why. We are decided to change our environment in order to make it more habitable, more comfortable, more suitable to our taste. In this way we have chosen to adopt a stand of conflict against the environment, against nature, against our own society, against our fellow humans. We declare war and we are astonished to collect violence.

Technology is meant to link people: cars, planes, phones, TVs, internet... Yet people have never been so isolated in their deep being. People who sit around a fire and tell each other stories are more linked than people who chat on internet or watch TV. This is evident and yet we persist doing the same thing. We persist buying TVs and spending time in front of computers because we believe it brings happiness. The fact is that technology isolates. It isolates us first from our surrounding: when we drive or we sit inside our well heated houses, we are no more in tune with the rhythms of the environment. Yet nature is our guide and teacher in our search for the true nature of God and we need to remain in touch with its energy to be lead on the right path. To be warm is not bad as such and technology has allowed many improvements in our way of life. It is evidently not a bad thing in itself, but we have to learn how to use it in a mature way. With a hammer one can break the head of one's neighbour or build a house. The choice is ours.

In fact the truth is that we have to adapt to the world as it is. We have to accept the laws of the cosmos, to learn to decipher them and to change our ways of life in order to adapt and be in harmony with what is given. It does not mean we become passive and do nothing. Adaptation is a very active attitude which needs to learn how to listen, to observe, to discern. We do not have to become the creators of a new and different world. The present world is in fact perfect if we learn to adapt to it and live in harmony with it. The essential is not our action: what we do; but our attitude: how we perceive the world in both its subtle and material dimensions and the quality of the energy which animates us.

And this attitude may only be non-violent. We believe that our violence is an answer to the violence in the world, but in fact it is our violence which triggers violence in the world. We are scared and we learn to act violently when we are not sure of how to behave. Our own fear is the source of our own violence. And violence is never a solution because it only generates more violence, in an unending spiral of destruction. The difficulty in conflict is to be able to escape this cycle of violence and to create more peaceful conditions. This is our initiative and responsibility. Without this courage to break the cycle of violence and to start to trust, even with great cautiousness, there is no solution for conflicts.

The person of the Son is a great challenge and support in this process of understanding the true nature of the world because he is the Revelation. He proposes a fundamentally different

attitude: the choice of love, of simplicity, of forgiveness, of surrender. He chooses to be on the side of the victim and not the oppressor. It is not a theoretical discourse but a practical way of giving himself without restraint. In the choice between killing and being killed he chooses the latter. It is not because of a morbid taste for suffering, but an acceptance of this suffering because he knows that life is broader than what we experience of it, and that love is the core. Better to remain faithful to true love than to save one's skin. This non-violent choice for life is the revelation of our fundamentally violent reaction to conflicts, of our basically murderous attitudes. The killing of Jesus has not been anything else than a murder, the murder of an innocent. This opens an incredibly new and powerful door on a completely other way to behave towards others. And we know we can rely on the energy of the Son to start a move in this direction.

Spirit vs Market

3) While the Spirit is energy of love which inspires and unites, Market is a force of greed, fear, accumulation, exclusion, violence.

If we compare now the Spirit, 3rd person of the Trinity, with the Market, 3rd idol of the Anti-Trinity, we have the following contrast:

- *Third person of the Trinity, the Spirit is the heat of the fire. He is the energy of love which moves creatures forward and inspires them in their choices, in their being, in finding the right attitude. The power of the Spirit is a unifying force which creates Unity beyond differences and complementarity. Love is the linking force between antagonistic tendencies. Antagonisms are necessary to keep the balance, hence the difficulty of keeping the whole together in a balance between attracting and antagonistic forces. For instance the arm has two muscles which work in antagonistic ways, yet the arm remains one because the antagonism is kept in balance by the sense of equilibrium. On the other hand, the Spirit is also the energy of transformation because life is constant change. Nothing lasts, nothing remains, all is flowing. Transformation is growth in maturity and awareness, adaptation to the flow of life. Like the wind, the Spirit is leading us where we go, without us knowing where. He is the guide on our spiritual path.*
- *By contrast, and completely at the opposite, the 3rd idol of the Anti-Trinity is the Market. This is the energy which leads us in this materialistic world. Our motivation is centred on, and limited to, ourselves. Market and consumption are means for accumulation and retention, for competition and exploitation. This is a war of us against the others, based on violence. There is no self-restraint, no sharing. We become mere takers who do not care about what is left. Nature is depleted, people starve, although nature provides enough for all.*

This is the biggest scandal of our times: how can richer nations look, without feeling concerned, at their neighbours who do not even have the minimum for surviving. The world is said to be a village, but is it true only for takers? Where is the basic human feeling gone? Where is civilisation gone? if we still believe that civilisation means also culture, i.e. the art of behaving, and not only material wealth and power.

Consumption kills creativity, our most precious energy for inventing. We live in a constructed world which has channelled our creativity into repetitive tasks, either for production, or for leisure. Our tastes are shaped by fashion and publicity (the spirit of the market). Software and games are predefined ways of using tools. When we use them we just

follow the instructions; we are the slaves of our machines. Our true power for invention (invention of a present and a future) has to be oriented into positive ways, for the wellbeing of all, which will open the future of young generations instead of drowning them under an avalanche of possible goods and choices which in fact resemble each other because they are made of the same spirit. Creativity is not a neutral power to do what pleases us. The use of our creativity defines where we go. Here again the Spirit is the inspiring power.

I have shown earlier how everything is given freely by nature or society: life, air, water, food, education, love. We need just to care how to share these privileged resources and keep our consumption in balance with the rhythms of nature. A market is a good place for exchanging what we do have in surplus and what other people need; and the exchange itself does not mean it should become a place for speculation or exploitation. It can be regulated and controlled by the community which is concerned at this level, whether local, regional, national or international. Market, as it functions today i.e. as a destructive force of our deeper culture, is not a calamity but something we, as a community of human beings, have created because we wanted to.

The power of the Spirit is a challenge in our lives because it reminds us that we are very different in our true nature from what we are doing of it. It is like an alarm which calls us to change, for our own safety and happiness. It calls us to simplicity; less is more. If we are ready to give up our heavy materialistic, oppressive and violent way of life, we will be much lighter, much more open to the inspiration of the Spirit. We will be better observers and listeners. And before all we will be freer to choose what is suitable, because we will be under much less pressure. It is well-known that the hunters-gatherers had much more leisure time than we have and they knew what to do with this free time: it was a time of connection, being together, linking, a time of dance with love. It is probably what our society needs the most.

Matter and Spirit

Our spiritual energies are making the world what it is; they catalyse material forces. They need to be rooted in the living Source.

The comparison between the metaphor of the Trinity and the idols of the Anti-Trinity makes it clear how much our world can be shaped by different types of energies, depending on which ones we choose to be rooted in. We can choose to become expressions of negative tendencies or be agents of positive energies. Our choices define how we influence matter, because matter is governed by the spirit. Matter is a visible image of the spirit. It expresses the deeper content of our orientations: do we act in a spirit of anger, of greed, of fear, or do we aim at being signs of compassion, peace and joy. It is an expression of a deeper Reality which is in us. Our attitudes have their source in the deep of ourselves and in our choices how we want to behave, before they take shape into matter. Love, peace, joy are not feelings that arise naturally in us; they are conscious choices which we then attempt to make real in our life. Incarnation is about making the spirit of our choices visible.

This statement has a huge significance for the way we choose to live in the world and for the way we define which priorities will be the leading values of our behaviour. First it is essential to see how our choices are principally of spiritual order. And secondly we need to learn how to make the choice of spiritual commitment: choosing life over matter, and being a testimony for it, in each of our actions and attitudes.

This choice for life can translate itself in different ways:

About the Father: in issues concerning power, shall I be dominant, aggressive, greedy, or shall I offer generously my skills and time in order to create equality and harmony?

About the Son: in issues concerning the choice of means of transformation and expression, shall I choose the ones which reshape the world at my image, or shall I choose the most gentle and human ones in order to leave space for everybody and give a chance for expression to the weakest?

About the Spirit: in issues concerning the energy which becomes the leading force, shall I choose attitudes of greed for profit and accumulation, or shall I let myself be guided by the inspiration brought by others, by the beauty of nature, and the quality of silence?

These are three simple examples which illustrate the three persons / idols of the comparison above. It is evident that the quality of these choices, more than the actions which will result out of them, is what makes the world. These options are situated very much at the root of our being; they are the source of our behaviour. The quality of our world depends on their quality. This is the true root of the debate.

When we become aware how much our choices are of spiritual nature, the world can become a more liveable place for all, because we are made free of the resigned belief that we cannot change the quality of our interaction with our surroundings and become free to behave in a responsible way. Very important: we do not need to change the world to make it a good place; the true priority is for us to find how to become true to ourselves and to the world. The former is not in our power but the latter is just the topic of our everyday life. And slowly the latter leads to the former.

The fundamental choice

About Trinity / Anti-Trinity: the main thing is not the difference but their incompatibility and the fact we have to choose between them.

The comparison of the corresponding respective natures of the Trinity and the Anti-Trinity shows that they are fundamentally different. Although the three persons of each triune group have similarly to do the first with power, the second with expression and the third with energy, we can see how much they are of opposed natures and how much they lead us into opposite directions. The comparison and the essential difference it shows are fascinating as such. But this is not the core of the teaching we have to receive from this comparison. What counts the most in this demonstration is the absolute necessity for us to see how much they are antagonistic acting realities in our world which are not compatible and which are also of very different fundamental orders.

- *They are incompatible because they foster by their model and action on us two different types of natures and attitudes about life which cannot be mixed inasmuch as they are not compatible, i.e. they cannot cohabitate without destroying each other. We must become aware that we have to choose once for ever between these two possible attitudes in order to give a true meaning to our life.*
- *They are also of fundamental different natures because they concern different levels of maturity and consciousness. The Anti-Trinity has to do with energies which covet*

material and short term privileges while the Trinity is a metaphor which tries to make the meaning of life understandable for disciples who want to learn about the nature of the source that generates life in the way it does. The former is like a manual for apparent success in a short future while the latter is the wider picture of what matters in life and truth. It is evident that the second level of meaning is what makes our exclusive choice between the two models so necessary.

Out of this double statement ensues hence the necessity for us to choose between the two models as two fundamental possible ways of being how to foster our life. This is the main choice; this is the great leap forwards in the orientation of our whole existence. We need to become aware of the necessity of this choice. And this is the difficulty in the context of our society because we try to believe that both models are compatible and do not exclude each other, precisely because they operate on very different levels. But this is a treachery which makes our awareness very difficult to arise. Once the choice appears clearly – it could be called enlightenment – the opposition and the necessity to choose fundamentally between the two models and acting energies becomes so evident that one wonders how one could not see it more clearly before.

The choice is an absolute urgency in our life. In short it can be resumed to the following: is life a means to get power and wealth or is it a way to learn about the practice of love which requires attitudes of gentleness and trust and care, rather than domination and control?

First this new understanding and the clarity of this choice need to appear as fundamental to us. Secondly, equally important it is also to make clear that the incompatibility which makes this choice necessary is not an incompatibility between life and power, or life and technology, or life and market. These three fields of our activities are neutral as long as we do not use them as means for domination and control. The essential difference consists in the energies and attitudes which lead us in everyday life. In other words our choice to follow the model of the Trinity does not mean that we will have nothing to do with power, technology and market; this would be simply impossible because they are realities of our daily life. But it means that we have to act in these three fields with the cautiousness of people who are aware how much we expose ourselves to the negative energies whose inversions that I have described are the expression. This is why the awareness of the necessity of choosing clearly and once for ever is so important; and the same awareness will also lead us in our attempt to discern how to handle power, technology and market.

Why do I describe here this qualitative choice about power, technology and market? The answer is very simple: because, if we choose life (the model of the Trinity), actions of death and destruction become much more difficult and we won't succumb to the forces of market. Where there is a will for life and for love, for care and solidarity, for adaptation and for non-violence, it is evident that mechanisms of destruction, domination and violence, such as what I have illustrated previously, are much more difficult to obey.

This is why the choice of gentleness and kindness is a fundamental one: it is the choice of the solidarity with the victim. We want to stand on the side of the weakest. This is a definitive choice. One should make this choice once for ever. Yet it is clear that we will constantly fall back into the usual patterns of our western culture, because it is not easy to resist the pressure of conforming. For this reason we will have to refresh the vow regularly, but it will just be the re-enacting of the original choice.