

The theological contribution of Pope Francis for an inclusive economy  
“*an economy for all people and the whole person*” (Pope Francis 2016)

The ‘common good’ is the relationship that allows a crowd to become a community of life, able to integrating each of its members according to justice. It symbolizes the first mutual wealth and the basic condition of every further human resource. The awareness, in fact, that the social, economics, political relations need something which could be called ‘common’ has never vanished, nor it could be, but whether we can talk it ‘common good’, according to the classical meaning of the term, it is a wedge issue. Certainly it is a subject that should be taken up both on the philosophical level and on moral theology.

Today in fact, we hear talking about public goods, general interests or ‘commons’ as assets available and shared by many people in a basically non-rival and non-excluding way. This figure describes foremost the relationship between people and assets, or people put together by common interests regarding well-defined goals or projects, and marginally between people and people. On the contrary, the social teaching idea of common good understands its meaning as a relationship first and foremost between people. It does not consist «in the simple sum of the particular goods of each subject of a social entity. Belonging to everyone and to each person, it is and remains ‘common’ because it is indivisible and because only together is possible to attain it»<sup>1</sup>.

The ambiguity of the common good reaches its peak when the term is understood as a ‘comprehensive doctrine’ and hence the normative principle of public life. The new-contractualism considers the search for the common good worthless as well as dangerous for social peace, because it risks becoming intolerant towards any other vision of good. According to this social and political approach not only there is no connection but rather there is a real conflict between good life and common life. Indeed, the latter is only instrumental to individual fulfillment<sup>2</sup>.

According to the social teaching of the church, ‘common good’ is the paradigm of every kind of relational good founded on an integral vision of man that comes from Scripture and theological reflection. «The principle of the common good, to which every aspect of social life must be related if it is to attain its fullest meaning, stems from the dignity, unity and equality of all people»<sup>3</sup>. From a theological point of view ‘common good’ is not something that happens in a later time the establishment or the fulfillment of the human being. It is not an instrumental support but a relational good

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<sup>1</sup> Cfr., Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 164.

<sup>2</sup> Cfr., HOLLENBACH David, *The Common Good & Christian Ethics*, Cambridge MA, Cambridge University Press, 2002; IBID., *The Common Good Revisited*, in «Theological Studies» 50 (1989) 70-94; IBID., *The Global Face of Public Faith*, Washington D.C., Georgetown University Press, 2003, 147-173.

<sup>3</sup> Cfr., PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, Vatican Editions, Vatican City, 2004, 164.

founded and constituted by relations among subjects<sup>4</sup>. Indeed, «the dignity of each human person and the pursuit of the common good are concerns which ought to shape all economic policies» (EG203). Common good is the real good of every relationship. It is not exhaustible in the practical experience of shared assets, which we enjoy collectively.

It is very restrictive to suppose that relationship among human beings may be established by shared interests or 'converging goods' merely. They are goods we collectively enjoy, but in an instrumental and functional way.

When individual interest is extinguished, the pursue of common good is exhausted (such as public services).

Conversely the common good resides not outside but inside the human being, since «the human person cannot find fulfillment in himself, that is, apart from the fact that he exists “with” others and “for” others»<sup>5</sup>. In brief, the ‘common good’ is the mutual interdependence and reciprocal recognition. The issue of mutual interdependence has to be recognized in its economic, cultural, political and religious elements, but as a moral and social attitude as well. The common good needs the correlative response of the virtues, and in this case of solidarity. Because «as society becomes ever more globalized, it makes us neighbors but does not make us brothers»<sup>6</sup>.

Contrary to what the neo-contractualists think, common good does not consist in possessing the same ideological thought; it is not the sum of the many particular goods or the average of the many interests of which the society is composed; it is not a goal external to civil society; nor it is – in my opinion – the set of social conditions favorable to development<sup>7</sup>. Common good for human beings instead, resides in the same common life. This is the starting point of the social, economics and political life. Which is much more than converging goods, shared or enjoyed in common<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Cfr., TAYLOR Charles, *Il dibattito tra sordi di liberali e comunitaristi*, in A. Ferrara (a cura di), *Comunitarismo e liberalismo*, Editori Riniti, Roma 1992, 147-150. BRENA GianLuigi, *La comunità è costitutiva per l'individuo?*, in M Signore – G. Scarafile (a cura di), *Libertà e comunità*, Edizioni Messaggero Padova, 2005. 233-268. BOTTURI Francesco, *La ricchezza del bene comune*, in: *L'uomo e il denaro*, Quaderno 29, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, Milano 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr., *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, 165. «This truth does not simply require that he live with others at various levels of social life, but that he seek unceasingly — in actual practice and not merely at the level of ideas — the good, that is, the meaning and truth, found in existing forms of social life».

<sup>6</sup> BENEDICT XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 19.

<sup>7</sup> In this way we need rethinking the explanation of ‘common good’ according to the Vatican II (*Gaudium et spes* 74): «*The common good embraces the sum of those conditions of the social life whereby men, families and associations more adequately and readily may attain their own perfection*» (GS 74).

<sup>8</sup> Cfr., TAYLOR Charles, *Il dibattito tra sordi di liberali e comunitaristi*, in A. Ferrara (edited by), *Comunitarismo e liberalismo*, Editori riuniti, Roma 1992, 147-150.

## 1. The common good and the teaching of Pope Francis

Many things have already been written about the teaching of Pope Francis on the economics and financial system, immediately after the publication of the apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013) and the Encyclical *Laudato Si* (2015).

At the same time, in English-speaking area a lot of reactions and critical voices raised against Pope Francis's theses: «we have to say “thou shalt not” to an economy of exclusion and inequality» (EG53). His detractors and the passionate supporters of the free market economy did not limit to expressing a simple disagreement. But they showed a high degree of irritation by pointing right to the accusation of being ‘marxist’, a confused Pope and nostalgic of liberation theology, who does not understand anything about economy and finance<sup>9</sup>.

From the beginning there was the attempt to discredit the social teaching of Pope Francis. Scholars and columnists dismissed the Francis’ attempt to keep together ethical and economic issues included in EG and LS, evaluating his line of thinking as a great homily incapable of grasping the real problems, since the complex questions of economic nature cannot be resolved with exhortations and good intentions.

Of course, the voices in support and defense of Pope Francis’ teaching have been abundant as well. They were above all involved to demonstrating the continuity of his thought with the Gospel, the teaching of the church and the catholic social doctrine. Although there may be doubts about the implication of a new and umpteenth contribution on this topic, nevertheless the incitement to a new theological research about the meaning of common good in the social teaching of Pope Francis seems to be interesting on three levels at least.

In the first place it is remarkable his ethical and theological approach. The teaching of Pope Francis in fact arises primarily as a critical instance that denounces the fundamental inequities of 'this market economy'. The criticism of Holy Father arises from a single source – the integral development of the human person in the light of the Gospel – and it moves to a triple level: the anthropological level; the shape of social exchange that the market economy entails; and finally the level of ‘economic reason’ that is working as active ingredient (*ordo rationis*) of the economic and financial process.

Secondly, Pope Francis rebuilds the meaning of economics development by putting at the center of economic exchange the human being and the common good. He re-proposes the integral ecology of the whole man and of all men as the not reducible basis for every social exchange (economic as well). It is basic to understand the Pope Francis’ teaching, never losing sight of the compass point: maintaining the integrity of the human mystery, without simplifications and reductions. In this way the connection between ethics and economics is not only necessary but also intrinsic

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<sup>9</sup> I refer in particular to the criticisms by Rush Limbaugh, Jonathan Moseley, Michael Novak, Philip Booth, Robert P. Barnidge, Guy Sorman, Samuel Gregg, Bill Frezza. From a theological point of view, see: RENO R. RUSSELL, *Francis and the Market*, in «First Thing» February 2014; *The weakness of Laudato Si*, in «First Thing» January 2015.

because economic efficiency, human dignity and social equity are not detachable or alternative but indivisible goals. In this way, according to Pope Francis, the market economy has to support the integral human freedom. And the economy is a particular dimension of this freedom.

Third, last but not least, perhaps the most fascinating and original point for the social teaching, Pope Francis believes that it is impossible and unworkable conceiving the human being freed from his social relations and responsibilities.

## 2. The criticism to ‘this market economy’

In his social teaching Pope Francis censures the inequality of ‘this market economy’. Beware, however, his criticism does not concern the market as such, or as system of social relations. He criticizes "the dictatorship of an impersonal economy lacking a truly human purpose" (EG55). Those who presume to read a specific economic plan in the Pope's words are wrong. He, like Jesus, offers no such plan: «this is not a social document», he points out in *Evangelii Gaudium* (184). Jesus did not overturn the money changers' tables to implement a reform of the banking system of his time, but rather to raise the moral question. Pope Francis brings the message of Jesus to the heart of contemporary capitalism, reminding us that we need a moral framework for 21<sup>st</sup> century economy<sup>10</sup>. Sure, this message is fundamentally destabilizing, however for those who «continue to defend trickle-down theories which assumes economic growth, will inevitably succeed in bringing about greater justice and inclusiveness in the world» (EG54). Nowadays too many still believe in an economic ideology that places the right to property over human dignity, even above the survival of people. Too many believe that morality is the result of the market.

Pope Francis's approach to social issues in general, and in particular to economic ones, is typical of the Second Vatican Council. In this way He interprets his mission and task as that of being ‘critical conscience’. His target is to awaken consciousness of every human being, believer or unbeliever, opening new criteria for interpretation an evaluation. It is a conscience that must reckon with history (because time is greater than space), with correlation (because unity prevails over conflict), with reality (because realities are more important than ideas), with wholeness (because whole is greater than the part)<sup>11</sup>.

With the four famous postulates of *Evangelii Gaudium* since 1974 already current in the intellectual biography of the young Jesuit Bergoglio, He emphasizes the processes to be started in history facing the challenges and the constant tensions existing in every social reality<sup>12</sup>. The last postulate – which represents the whole with respect to

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<sup>10</sup> Cfr., SACHS D. Jeffrey, *Papa Francesco, riformatore del mercato*, in «Aggiornamenti sociali» giugno-luglio 2014, 509-512.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr., Pope FRANCIS, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 217-237.

<sup>12</sup> Cfr., Giovanni SCALESE in <http://querculanus.blogspot.com/2016/05/i-postulati-di-papa-francesco.html?m=1> (04.06.2018); Juan Carlos SCANNONE, *Teología del pueblo y la cultura. Raíces teológicas del papa Francisco*, Editorial Sal Terrae, Maliano, 2017.

the part – well describes the pope Francis’ main censure to ‘this market economy’, that we could summarize on three basic reductionisms.

- a. The first is an **anthropological** reduction. Pope Francis criticizes the vision of human being as economic agent exclusively moved by needs and interests, or by rational calculation and maximizing utility. The modern economic science understands individuals as “self-interested decision-making units that pursue their goals in a context of social interaction and competition”. The task of the “utilitarian subject” – and his “calculating reason” – seems to keep separate the domain of rationality (which is instrumental reason and therefore the willing) from the whole anthropological structure of the individual. The utilitarian subject in fact, has no desires, but only preferences<sup>13</sup>. For theological reflection it is not only reductive but definitely abstract a man understood as a simple economic agent driven by the need on the individual level and by the competition on the social one. This methodological individualism represents a lesser form of rationality than cooperation, which needs personal and social virtues in order to be realized.
- b. The second is a **social** reduction. It conceives the social interaction of the subjects involved in economic activity – private and public companies – as a competitive challenge for the maximization of individual goals such as utility or profit. The subject is conceived in its individuality regardless of the relationships which are born *post* and in any case remain instrumental to the wholeness of the subject. The serious limitation of this approach is not so much the inability to adequately explain the relational aspects of social interaction, but rather the claim to do that starting from an individualistic theoretical framework and on the basis of analytical and functional tools which, from the beginning, had been set up to deal with the relations between man and thing (ie between man and nature). The social relationship becomes the aggregate outcome of individual interaction, the instrument for the flourishing of the single subject. According to Pope Francis this is a lesser form of relationship because social interchange is not instrumental but in nature *everything is connected* and the common life is in itself, a good life.
- c. The third reduction refers to **economic reason**. It considers the exchange realized by market a pure trade between equivalents, a *commutatio*, a 'real or naked exchange' among things. Markets are merely places where buyers come to buy and sellers come to sell. Economic thinking makes a specific assumption about the nature of people: *people are rational, self-interested, maximizers*. Such a being is often called *homo economicus* (economic man). In this way “*rational*” means

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<sup>13</sup> Cfr., Ernesto SCREPANTI, Stefano ZAMAGNI, *Profilo di storia del pensiero economico. Gli sviluppi contemporanei*, Carocci editore, Roma 2015<sup>3</sup>, 244. Stefano ZAMAGNI, *L'economia come se la persona contasse. Verso una teoria economia relazionale*, in Pierluigi SACCO, Stefano ZAMAGNI, *Teoria economica e relazioni interpersonali*, il Mulino, Bologna, 2006, 17-52.

that each person knows what is best for himself or herself. “*Self-interested*” does not mean that people only act for themselves and never care about others. But it does mean that people do act in their self-interest as they perceive it. A “*maximize*” acts to get the most possible. Economic reason assumes that consumers act to maximize the satisfaction they receive from the goods and services they buy. Therefore the value of the ‘good’ runs out in itself, in the relationship between subject and thing. And the good of the exchange realized by market depends on the value or better on the satisfaction of external factors like the pleasure it produces and the pain it manages to remove. This is a lesser form of ‘good’ because the exchange that occurs in the market is not only between things but also and primarily among people. The reference point, the functioning paradigm of this economic reason is still subject-object.

The exchange realizing in and through the market – since it is among human beings – is a ‘symbolic exchange’ among people. Before to be a ‘real or naked exchange’ among things, the specific form of relationship that is the market, is an exchange of recognition and misrecognition among people. For this reason market requires trust. “We must demand that the market not only be efficient in generating wealth and ensuring sustainable growth, but also stand at the service of integral human development”<sup>14</sup>.

In short, the calling to think beyond capitalism is not a fight against the market economy or a rejection of any economic reason, but an invitation to reorganize the priorities, which must be assumed freely and responsibly<sup>15</sup>.

### 3. An integral and open anthropology

Why does the criticism of this market economy assume the shape of reductionism? What does it mean in Pope Francis’ thinking that the whole is greater than the part? Three synthetic points.

- a. The anthropological vision of Pope Francis is born above all from his Ignatius spirituality, where God is ‘*Deus semper maior*’. God always surprises. In this perspective He clarifies: «The heart of Christ is the heart of a God who, out of love, “emptied” himself. Each one of us, who follows Jesus should be ready to empty himself. We are called to this humility: to be “emptied” beings. To be men who are not centered on themselves because the center of the Society is Christ and his Church. And God is the *Deus semper maior*, the God who always surprises us»<sup>16</sup>. But what does 'to be emptied' mean? It is not about emptiness, but rather

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<sup>14</sup> Pope FRANCIS, *Pope Francis to Participants in the Workshop on Changing Relations among Market, State and Civil Society*, Rome, Friday, 20 October 2017.

<sup>15</sup> Reihnard MARX, *Beyond capitalism*, L’Osservatore romano, 09 January 2014.

<sup>16</sup> Pope FRANCIS, *Homily, Holy Mass on the liturgical memorial of the most Holy Name of Jesus, Church of the Gesù*, Rome, 3 January 2014; Cfr., *IBID.*, *Laudato Si*, 81.

about an open system. Being empty is not equivalent to being vacuum but to being extroverted, outside of oneself, to being open.

Pope Francis interprets the world as an 'open system' or a set of open systems. All opened in turn with the One in whom we live, we move and exist (Acts 17.28). It is this divine presence that ensures the constant openness and development of every being, is the continuation of the creative action<sup>17</sup>. When Pope Francis emphasizes that "the things of this world do not possess the fullness of God" nonetheless "all nature besides manifesting God is the place of his presence". In a few passages we find the alterity of God with the world (transcendence), aligned the presence of the world in God and the presence of God in the world (their reciprocal immanence)<sup>18</sup>.

Open thinking according to Pope Francis means aware of being incomplete, and therefore flexible, in research, available to be surprised, creative, enterprising. The "incomplete thought" is a thinking does not close, that does not raise walls and accept the challenge to dialogue. It is not definitive, static or coercive. Instead, it is curious, open, creative, searching restlessly. «To be a Jesuit means to be a person of incomplete thought, of open thought: because he thinks always looking to the horizon which is the ever greater glory of God, who ceaselessly surprises us. And this is the restlessness of our inner abyss. This holy and beautiful restlessness!»<sup>19</sup>.

- b. If the incompleteness draws the formal perspective of Pope Francis's thinking, the human constitutes its material object. The first criterion that guarantees the validity of thinking is: "never lose sight of the human being". It is what ensures the «validity of the thought». «Humans are in search of themselves [...] When does an expression of thought cease to be valid? When it loses sight of the human or even when it is afraid of the human or deluded about itself. The thinking of the Church must recover genius and better understand how human beings understand themselves today, in order to develop and deepen the Church's teachings»<sup>20</sup>. Here there are all the ingredients of the vision of the man of Bergoglio: the root in God that makes man a mystery to himself, just as it confers him an infinite and inviolable dignity; the human paradox, constituted by the polarity of greatness and

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<sup>17</sup> Cfr., TOMMASO, *Summa theologiae* I, q. 104, art. 1, ad 4.

<sup>18</sup> Cfr., Riccardo BATTOCCHIO, *Il Dio della Laudato Si*, in «Studia Patavina» 63 (2016) 603-616. Cfr., Pope FRANCIS, *Laudato Si*, 79: «In this universe, shaped by open and intercommunicating systems, we can discern countless forms of relationship and participation. This leads us to think of the whole as open to God's transcendence, within which it develops. Faith allows us to interpret the meaning and the mysterious beauty of what is unfolding. We are free to apply our intelligence towards things evolving positively, or towards adding new ills, new causes of suffering and real setbacks. This is what makes for the excitement and drama of human history».

<sup>19</sup> Cfr., Vittorio V. ALBERTI, *Il papa gesuita. «Pensiero incompleto», libertà, laicità in papa Francesco*, Mondadori Education, Milano, 2014; Luigi ACCATTOLI, *Il «pensiero incompleto» al posto dei «punti fermi»*, in «Il Regno attualità», 22, 2017, 695-696;

<sup>20</sup> Cfr., Antonio SPADARO, *Le Pape Francois. L'Eglise que j'espère. Entretien avec le Père Spadaro*, sj, Coll. Champs Essais, Paris, 2014, 133.

fragility, earth and sky; insertion into a people and then into a history that opens paths in which man, accompanied by God, can become fully himself. On the face of this concrete man the glory of God is revealed. The challenge of Pope Francis is to maintain the integrity of the human mystery, without simplifications and reductions. The most fundamental reference appears *Gaudium et Spes* 22: «Christ reveals man to man himself, in all his fullness and shows him his dignity». «Christ, the final Adam, by the revelation of the mystery of the Father and His love, fully reveals man to man himself and makes his supreme calling clear».

- c. A final and significant aspect for our research and for understanding Pope Francis' thinking is the issue of discernment in front of the inborn polarity of reality. The topic in the intellectual biography of Jorge Bergoglio has its roots in the study of Romano Guardini and a particular essay entitled "The polar opposition. Essay for a living concrete philosophy"<sup>21</sup>.

In continuity with the previously highlighted elements is the Guardini's notion that "the key idea of opposites is not a closed system, but an opening of the eyes and an interior orientation towards the living being"<sup>22</sup>. Pope Francis found in Guardini's polar anthropology a confirmation of his dialectical, antinomical vision of reality, understood through the French Jesuits Gaston Fessard and Henri de Lubac.

By investigating the profound structure of reality He comes to the realization that it is constituted by contrasting moments that very easily can become a tangle in which the individual can become trapped. The polar opposition prevails the perception of the fragmentary nature of reality, the ever-threatening risk of laceration, which however is overcome by the vision of the connection and unity of every living reality. The polar opposition is therefore the real key to understanding a complex reality always exposed to the tragic outcomes and that reaches and safeguards its unity at the cost of great effort and effort.

In short, the essential tensions of life become the hermeneutical model, the lens through which to look and meet the world and oneself. It represents the road through which he gains what, with his own words, «happens thanks to the experience of the limit that, together, places the identity and the difference»<sup>23</sup>. In this way Francis emphasizes: «we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships. We understand better the importance and meaning of each creature if we contemplate it within the entirety of God's plan»<sup>24</sup>. The result is a profoundly 'Catholic' thought

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<sup>21</sup> Romano GUARDINI, *L'opposizione polare. Saggio per una filosofia del concreto vivente*, a cura di G. Colombi, Brescia, Morcelliana, 1997.

<sup>22</sup> Cfr., Massimo BORGHESI, *Jorge Mario Bergoglio. Una biografia intellettuale. Dialettica e mistica*, Milano, Jaca Book, 2017.

<sup>23</sup> Romano GUARDINI, *Ethik. Vorlesungen an der Universität München*, Mainz 1993; tr. it., *Etica*, a cura di S. Zucal e M. Nicoletti, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2001, p. 509.

<sup>24</sup> Cfr., *Laudato Si*, 86; BORDEYENE Philippe, *La filosofia dell'uomo capace: papa Francesco e Paul Ricoeur*, in «Vita & Pensiero» 2 (2017) 65-75.

which, outside any conciliatory irenicism, struggles in the drama of history to initiate processes of unity whose synthesis is entrusted to God-led time<sup>25</sup>.

#### **4. «Everything is connected»: a new paradigm for rethinking the inclusiveness of the common good as a task for the market economy**

The advent of the market as a general form of exchange of goods and services, an exchange that – as we have already mentioned – does not involve personal identity, was historically carried out in the German cities of the Hanseatic League in the late Middle Ages. It is essential to remember that the first statements of the legal equality of all men are produced in civil law during the market days. The legal incapacities of the *famuli* (servants) were temporarily suspended for the first time, on market days, in the cities of the Hanseatic League of the 12th-15th centuries<sup>26</sup>. Why?

The market to work needs individuals who are equal or at least 'indifferent'. To access the market it is necessary to remove any form of discrimination and therefore of difference. At the market it does not matter if you are black or white, Christian, Jewish or Muslim ... The market establishes the principle of legal equality because it needs equals.

The element of novelty and the most interesting contribution – in my view – about Pope Francis' economic thinking, lies in the motto 'everything is in relationship', 'everything is linked', 'everything is connected'. It is a refrain going through the whole Encyclical *Laudato Si*. The term illustrates the concept of 'integral ecology' understood as the entire development of the human being, of the whole man and of all men.

«When we speak of the “environment”, what we really mean is a relationship existing between nature and the society, which lives in it. Nature cannot be regarded as something separate from ourselves or as a mere setting in which we live. We are part of nature, included in it and thus in constant interaction with it» (LS139).

Pope Francis moves in the awareness that everything in the world is intimately connected and the defense of ecosystems and the preservation of biodiversity will never really be effective if separated from apparently distant issues such as politics and economy, migration, urban planning and social relationships.

It is essential to look for integral solutions, which consider the interactions of natural systems between themselves and with social systems. «There are not two separate crises, one environmental and another social, but one single complex socio-environmental crisis» (LS 49). The guidelines for the solution require an integral approach. The strength of the paradigm of integral ecology appears in its ability to analyze, and therefore to trace a common root to phenomena that, taken separately, can not really be understood. In this way «an integral ecology is inseparable from the

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<sup>25</sup> Cfr., Massimo BORGHESI, <http://rivista.vitaepensiero.it/news-vp-plus-i-maestri-di-papa-francesco-4902.html> (2018-06-18).

<sup>26</sup> Cfr., Lucien GOLDMANN, *L'illuminismo e la società moderna*, Torino, Einaudi, 1967, 36-37

notion of the common good, a central and unifying principle of social ethics» (LS 156).

The principle of integral ecology (we could call it also principle of reciprocity or fraternity) is much more engaging and effective (even in determining the value of "goods and services") of the principle of equality because without reducing the criterion of equity (in Aristotelian terms), it encourages a more inclusive economy, supports a greater participation in common life, allows a fully human achievement of common good in the difference of identities, cultures, needs and resources. Solidarity in fact, is not a «feeling of vague compassion, but the firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good; that is to say, to the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all»<sup>27</sup>.

The principle of reciprocity better argues and testifies how the human act (*actus hominus*) does not tolerate the separation between facts and values (economy and ethic) because social (even economic) practice is not indifferent or neutral to the instance of the good. Fraternity is an essential human quality, for we are relational beings. A lively awareness of our relatedness helps us to look upon and to treat each person as a true sister or brother; without fraternity it is impossible to build a just society and a solid and lasting peace<sup>28</sup>.

## 5. Conclusions and perspectives

Exploring the idea of 'common good' is becoming nowadays a both theoretical and practical requirement, which is increasingly perceived, on the basis of three major reasons: the common good has been in western culture the purpose of the social commitment for a long time, instead, nowadays it is a 'confused object' which reveals a weakness whether not a vacuum of thought. The individualistic model of rationality 'self-interested agent' (cf. Rational Choice Theory) discloses an anthropological inadequacy and a social inefficiency. If this is true, the social sciences need to overcome the subject-object paradigm in order to put the relationship back to the center of research and inquiry about the economic and political realm.

Starting from Pope Francis' teaching (in continuity with Benedict XVI) every economic theory and model of development intersects theological and ethical reason. This intersection occurs on three different levels: in establishing the value assigned to 'goods and services' of the market; in supposing an anthropological model because economic thinking makes a specific assumption about the nature of people: people are rational, self-interested, maximizers; and in assuming a certain theory of social exchange in the interaction of buyers and sellers.

Since the Scholastic and the Franciscan tradition, establishing of the value of an asset is a social process that involves the *communitas* (civil community). At the same time

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<sup>27</sup> JOHN PAUL II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 38.

<sup>28</sup> Pope FRANCIS, *Message for the celebration of the World day of Peace*, 1 January 2014, 1.

the market realizes not only an exchange among equivalent goods but also a reciprocal involvement among people. The essential paradigm of 'integral ecology', or 'reciprocity' describes with different accents a high quality relationship in which the exchange starting from its origin, is effectively inclusive and inseparable from human fraternity. When reciprocity drives social and economic processes the exchange among goods and services ceases to be anonymous and impersonal but it becomes a twine of meanings, and value assigned to them. In this direction the *datum* that 'everything is connected' by Pope Francis is much more interesting than the idea of equality before the law of modern market theories.

Relationship among human beings it either becomes a relationship of recognition or misrecognition. The recognition that the other gives to me, it results in condition of my social existence. In this sense the common good is not a consequence or a result, an external outcome coming from the dynamics of social exchange but the common good is 'the good of each one and of everyone'. It is the good of those living together. The relationship is non-instrumental and non-exploitable good, but it is a good in itself from the beginning.

One of the major contributions of which theology can give today to the economic and social sciences, is a deepening of the analogy between the mystery of Trinitarian relations with human relationships. '*Each creature bears in itself a specifically Trinitarian structure*' (Saint Bonaventure). In this way, they make their own trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them from the time of creation. «*Everything is interconnected, and this invites us to develop a spirituality of global solidarity which flows from the mystery of the Trinity*». (Laudato Si 239).

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