

Daniel PASTIRČÁK: There are Many Gifts, but the Same Spirit

and unique part. We must bring together and assemble these rare stones, so that Jesus Christ may be whole. We must compose this mosaic again, so that Jesus Christ can appear in the world in which we live.

This is the basic task of each generation. Once more, again and again, to assemble together the whole picture of Jesus Christ. What we say about individuals can apply to the whole Church as well. That is, to the entire spreading many-layered phenomenon of present-day Christianity. Every denomination, every confession and every tradition receives its own special stone (or a set of stones).

Each is the bearer of a different charisma. The charisma of each denomination was given to serve the other denominations. No denomination has the whole Jesus Christ. Only in all of us together is the whole Gospel expressed; only in all of us gathered together is the whole Christian life manifested.

What we said about individuals applies also to church communities. As denominations and as spiritual traditions, we need to accept ourselves as a gift from God. We should not disdain our spiritual origins, but be thankful for the roots of our church tradition.

As church communities, we also need to become gifts for other denominations, confessions and traditions. We should not seek a way by which we, from our own store, can pour gunpowder on the shameful divisions that for hundreds of years Christians have perpetuated among themselves.

But rather we should seek in our own tradition that which can become a gift for all the others. And, finally, we need to learn to accept other denominations and spiritual traditions as a gift from God.

Then we will live worthily of the vocation to which we have been called and sent: the vocation to unity in the diversity of the Body of Christ, where there are many gifts, but the very same Spirit.

The fourth theme for reflection is: Do I accept my denomination as a gift from God? Am I prepared to put my tradition at the service of other denominations? Do I accept other denominations and spiritual traditions as a gift from God?

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Hermeneutics of Intertraditional Dialogue

*Dialogue is the basic model for hermeneutics; therefore, no limits are to be set on the dialogue in advance by unequivocal interpretation of the situation. Hermeneutics is "a philosophical analysis and description of the process whereby understanding is reached."*¹

In this sense, the hermeneutics of goodwill and interpretative benevolence are part of a fundamental anthropology, since human existence itself is an act of comprehension and of understanding.

I. The History of the Idea

Prior to a thorough and deep examination of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue, we need to focus on the historical reality of the important word, *dialogue*, itself. Both the term and its meaning have been present during the whole history of *philosophy*, right from its very beginnings, SOCRATES. For the sake of brevity, we only mention here the authors frequently referred to in ecumenical literature.

In this first part of our paper, we do not intend to offer a whole list or any kind of full elaboration of these authors. We rather aim to underline the fundamental importance of some of the thinkers, philosophers and theologians, who are cited in the ecumenical texts and contexts.

1. Dialogos in Philosophy

The very word *dialogos*, of Greek origin, is first used in the ancient Greek world,² with the original meaning of 'to balance accounts,' so to say, to harmonize debits and credits (*dialogizomai*).

Since *dialogos* is from *dia* (which means through or between)

¹ This article of OTT Heinrich is of fundamental importance for us: *The Horizons of Understanding and Interpretative Possibilities*. In SAMARTHIA Stanley J. (ed.), *Faith in the Midst of Faiths. Reflections on Dialogue in Community*. Genève, 1977. 85-89.

² The following historical panorama is partly based on the article: VERGHÈSE Paul, *Will Dialogue Do? The Ecumenical Review*, 1966/1. 27-38.

and *logos* (with the meaning of reason or word), linguistically this term can be defined now as a “reasoned and logical discourse.”

The opposite of dialogue is *monologue*, which is isolated and exclusive, self-righteous or solipsistic and egotistical. Essentially it was SOCRATES who successfully introduced this term into *philosophy*.

He was the inventor of the dialectical method, as we can read in the texts of his most important disciple, PLATO, who uses the name of SOCRATES in his fictitious and literary dialogues.

The contemporary *theological* resuscitation of the meaning of dialogue is due to the German Jewish thinker, Martin BUBER, who developed it into the theological thinking in his books *Zwiesprache* (1929) and *Ich und Du* (1923).

He made two very important distinctions—drawing a line between observer and participant, and discussion and dialogue. The *observers*, in the first place, are able to describe the object of their observations in words.

At the same time, the *participants* are addressed at the core of their being, and also respond with the whole of their being. On the other hand, *discussion* is an *ana-lysis*, a taking apart, which has the goal of objective understanding, while *dialogue* has the mutuality of the inner action as its basic element.

Genuine dialogue has a twofold movement in itself: a turning toward the other, and an abandonment of self-isolation for an inclusive awareness. The personalist, dialogical philosophers following Martin BUBER, like Stefan ROSENZWEIG, Ferdinand EBNER and Emmanuel LÉVINAS all start with the same conviction.

This conviction is that I do not exist without Thou, and we do not exist only for ourselves; we are in a genuine sense encounter and dialogue. Martin BUBER's thoughts find their way to the ecumenical movement especially through Yves CONGAR OP.

Yves CONGAR OP, who was a Roman Catholic theologian and a Dominican friar, himself had to face the interesting problem that this term of ours, *dialogue*, occurs not more than once in the *New Testament* (NT).

³ OUTLER Albert C. shows this parallel development in the article *From Disputation to Dialogue*. The Ecumenical Review, 1963/1. 14–23.

⁴ MACQUARRIE John analyses this expression of Ludwig WITTGENSTEIN in *Religious Language and Recent Analytical Philosophy*. In METZ Johannes B. (ed.), *The Development of Fundamental Theology*. Concilium 1969/46. 164–165.

⁵ SLAVKOVSKÝ Adrián, *Paradoxnosť niektorých základných postojov človeka* (Paradoxical Nature of Some Basic Human Stances). In ANDREANSKÝ E. (ed.), *Filozofia a život – život filozofie* (Philosophy and Life – Life of Philosophy). Prešov, 2004. 120.

2. Persuasion in Rhetorics

There is a parallel development of the theory of dialogue, although it does not use the term.³ In the long history of *rhetorics*, which was one of the seven free arts (*septem artes liberales*), one can find the prototype of current ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in the era of the European *Renaissance*.

In the Renaissance rhetorical school of the theory of *persvasio collisione*, which means persuasion in collision, one was supposed to and expected to state different opposing positions fairly and justly; otherwise one was regarded as not understanding the views of the other.

In a similar way, in the *postmodern* way of thinking we are expected by the others to be able to change the *register*, to jump from paradigm to *paradigm* (following the expression of the sociologist Thomas KUHN), or to play another *language game*⁴ in order to have credibility in understanding each other.

After the relatively short period of the Renaissance, it was later the *Enlightenment* era, and also the time of the XIXth century *liberalism*, which wrote this way of philosophical thinking on their flags.

“It is out of the discussion (*collatione*) of a variety of opinions that truth is elicited.” This is a popular slogan from the theologian ERASMVS of Rotterdam, and not surprisingly, was infrequently cited in the age of polemical disputations.

II. Waving of Dynamics

“Many dialogues are full of correct logical argumentation, and even then do not lead anywhere and create more tension and suffering rather than solve problems or persuade the other part. Many times the discussing partners differ in their unpronounced presuppositions. A deeper understanding of the paradoxical nature of our basic stances, and ... a more nuanced approach towards our convictions, can have a positive influence on the communication between individuals, nations, cultures, religions and life-views.”⁵

There are various and different levels of the dialogue model. This model is applicable for individuals, for groups, even for whole cultures. In this article we are centring around the second

and the third level, even if the original model was intended mainly for interpersonal relationships. Let us now examine some definitions which were attributed to dialogue in the course of the history of ideas.

Dialogue in general can be defined as “a sustained conversation between parties who are not saying the same thing, and who recognize and respect the differences, the contradictions, and the mutual exclusions between their various ways of thinking.”⁶

Genuine dialogue is “a spiritual journey in search of a *shared clarity*.”⁷ Another definition for dialogue can also be the following: “Dialogue is a style of living in relationship with neighbours.”⁸

“Dialogue is a common quest for *liberty*; and, as a consequence of progress in the liberty of each, a common effort to advance in the direction of *Truth*.”⁹ There is a firm place for dialogue “if *diversity* is not to become chaos, if *unity* is not to become mere uniformity.”¹⁰

After having a quick look at the history of the term *dialogue* in philosophy, rhetorics and also in theology, now let us see the fruits of a thorough analysis of what has been gathered and written on the vectors onwards and backwards. These vectors we call the dynamics of dialogue, and we will also attempt to synthesize our different findings.

1. Fusion of Transcendental Horizons

The previous mention of polemical disputes leads us to our next question: Exactly *why* are we dealing with this problem, the theoretical background of conversation or of dialogue?

The first and perhaps a kind of shallowish or superficial answer could be that we deal with this issue because the dialogical method is simply a *fact* to consider in the case of ecumenical and of interreligious encounters.

⁶ The definition is from TAYLOR John V., *The Theological Basis of Interfaith Dialogue*. International Review of Mission 1979/4. 373.

⁷ This other definition is from the article of ROEST CROLLIUS Ary A. St: *Harmony and Conflict*. Bulletin (Pro Dialogo) 1992/3. 377.

⁸ SAMARTHA Stanley J. in *Guidelines on Dialogue* quotes the definition. The Ecumenical Review 1979/2. 162.

⁹ SAMARTHA Stanley J. quotes the definition of DURABLE Daniel in *Religious Pluralism and the Quest for Human Community*. In NELSON J. Robert – BRILL E. J. (eds.), *The Unity of Humankind in the Perspective of Christian Faith. Essays in Honour of W. A. VISSER'S HOOP on His Seventieth Birthday*. Leiden, 1971.

¹⁰ TRACY David sets up these limits of dialogue in *A Plurality of Readers and a Possibility of a Shared Vision*. In BEUKEN Wim – FREYNE Sean – WIELER Anton (eds.), *The Bible and its Readers*. Conclivim 1991/1. 123.



In this case, however, the real meaning of the term *dialogue* still does not seem lucidly elaborated. On the other hand, there may be a second, a deeper, answer given—namely that our approach to the *truth* cannot be other than a dialogical one, at least in this era of *postmodernity* (or *hypermodernity*, or *late-modernity*).

We must say, we have such difficult and such hard historical times behind us, while we have been eagerly searching for and fervently debating the notion of truth, especially of religious truth, that there are not many other ways remaining.

The *aims* of any kind of dialogue are understood—and they should be understood—differently, when we speak about secular, about ecumenical or about interreligious dialogue.

For example, the recent Vatican text *Dominus Iesus*, which was a document originally intended to speak about interreligious dialogue, applies the same way of thinking and self-definition to both ecumenical and interreligious dialogue.

When the theories of dialogues were elaborated, they were structured towards *interpersonal relationships*. The discussion, the communication, and also the dialogue between the different traditions and worldviews has been mainly developed and improved in the circles of the XXth century's ecumenical

movement, including or in close relation with interreligious “convergence.”

Genuine dialogues usually begin every time any kind of tension arises due to a striving for a more complete *identity*, or due to *dialectic antinomies*, or *impacts* of the outside world.

The fourfold *purpose* of dialogue is *mutual advancement*, *elimination of prejudice*, *of intolerance* and *of misunderstandings*.¹¹ There is a pragmatic and a fundamental *aim* in dialogue.

The *pragmatic* aim is to remove mutual misunderstandings and to serve common human tasks. The *fundamental* aim is the open exchange of witness, experience, questioning and listening.¹²

The aim of dialogue can be a *fusion of horizons* (using the technical term of Hans-Georg GADAMER), a *consensus of conscience*,¹³ or a partial convergence for a new common horizon.

The *purpose*, aim and object of dialogue is “understanding and appreciation, leading to further reflection upon the implication for one’s own position of the convictions and sensitivities of the other traditions.”¹⁴

The *path* of dialogue is from *anathema* (excommunication) to *dialogue*, from dialogue to *coexistence*, from coexistence to *convivence*, and from convivence to *cooperation*. The final goal is *reconciled difference*, which is endured and productively shaped.¹⁵

Unlike dialectical dialogue, *dialogical dialogue* aims to stand under the Spirit of truth and of love that manifests Herself, shining through the *logos* of all the witnesses; to be led into a new self-understanding within a brand-new horizon. The dialogue-partners are taken over and are led by a *Middle Third*, that is, the Subject matter of the dialogue, which is the Holy Spirit.¹⁶

¹¹ FRANCIS ARINZE enlists these purposes in *The Place of Dialogue in the Church’s Mission: Reflection on “Redemptoris Missio”*. Bulletin (Pro Dialogo) 1991/1. 23.

¹² MULDER D. C. emphasizes the two main aims of interreligious dialogue in *The Dialogue Between Cultures and Religions. Kraemer’s Contribution in the Light of Later Developments*. The Ecumenical Review, 1989/1. 15.

¹³ SAMARTHA Stanley J. uses this meaningful term, the ‘consensus of conscience’ in *World Religions: Barriers to Community or Bearers of Peace?* In *Insight: A Journal of World Religions* 1979/1–2.

¹⁴ TAYLOR John V. mentions these aims in *The Theological Basis of Interfaith Dialogue*. International Review of Mission 1979/4. 373.

¹⁵ MOLTSMANN Jürgen meditates on the final aim of dialogue in the chapter called *Theology in Interfaith Dialogue*. In MOLTSMANN Jürgen, *Experiences in Theology. Ways and Forms of Christian Theology*. London, 2000. 20.

¹⁶ DURASINGH Christopher in *Issues in Mission and Dialogue. Some Reflections* looks upon dialogical dialogue. International Review of Mission 1988/3. 409.

2. Healing Hereditary Wounds

The obstacles for dialogue, for the most part, except for the danger of syncretism, are not specific to ecumenism or interreligiosity. At this point we are not going to take time to depict the history of strong pain and harsh suffering behind us, but we will just touch upon the points which are important because they form the main obstacles on the road to understanding each other.

Let us remember the painful *history*, the different fighting and bloody wars among committed humans in the name of defending or spreading the truth, the hates and wounds between certain groups, who could hardly say that they really understood the others’ values and concerns.

Our cultural, religious and contextual backgrounds fundamentally and essentially condition our experiences; and later, our experiences determine the way we think about or perceive the world.

Therefore, experiences influence our concepts and our theologies. Nevertheless, we can also work on our experiences by changing our concepts. The *healing of our memories* is a responsibility for all of us.

‘Contemporary history’—that is, the vernacular *politics*—is also a difficult-to-overcome obstacle between us: politics are religicised, religions are politicised. Many times one can hardly manage to separate them.

It is even more tragic that our historical experiences led us into a *language* of abrasive-pugnacious separation. This language is also one full of intolerance, of exclusivism, of tragically poisoned and hegemonic monologue, which in itself gave strong support back to the hostile deeds again.

This *circvlvs vitiosvs* is to be overcome by dialogue, the ministry of reconciliation. The historical bonds are strongly connected with *psychology* and also with the morality and ethics of dialogue.

The science of *psychology* is mainly concerned with making our deeply rooted *attitude-categories* and our culturally structured *experiences* more and more visible,¹⁷ transparent, and finally, understandable.

There is a special danger which can emerge if we are not aware enough of the coherence of our paradigms or of our narratives. If

¹⁷ These terms are from the article: PEURSEN C. A. VAN, *Gospel and Culture: Experience and Conceptualisation*. The Ecumenical Review, 1987/2. 187–191.

we are too relaxed in considering the intransigence of our worldviews, we can fall easily into the pit of *eclecticism*.

We should deal with the whole outlook of this behaviour in connection with the topic of interreligious dialogue, since this is the field where it is the most visible and also the most dubious. *Syncretism*, as we can see, is a form of eclecticism.

III. Means and Gentles

Now we intend to collect some controversial but crucial elements, which we call *means* of dialogue; and which were revolutionary new paradigms during the last century. These varied and multifaceted changes have made possible for example the so-called “ecumenical miracle” so far, and further changes in them could pave the way for further convergences in our thinking.

This chapter of ours follows the twofold aim of dialogue: speaking the truth in love (and thus dealing with truth, language and communication), and the ministry of reconciliation (dealing with community).

1. Involvement in Truth

The whole wide field of *epistemology* is at the moment probably the most difficult area in any kind of dialogue, but especially in interreligious dialogue. One of the reasons for this is the fact that truth is understood as a statement, an affirmation, and not so much as a *living, personal reality* (like in the statement, “I am the Truth”).

We just briefly touch upon this question here, since, together with ecclesiology, epistemology seems destined to be the cornerstone of gaining more visible catholicity for the One Church (Una Sancta).

We pointed out in the previous passages that to rightly understand the Truth is one of the two fundamental and final aims of dialogue. Also, Truth is the “third partner” in dialogue. *Aletheia, truth* is a movement and a relation in which humans are caught up and involved.¹⁸

Without going into this point too deeply, let us just explain which kind of truth we mean when we use this term. Basically there can be three main *kinds* of truth distinguished here: the ontological, the existential, and the epistemological one.

¹⁸ DURAISINGH Christopher quotes this definition of LEHMANN Paul in *Issues in Mission and Dialogue. Some Reflections*. International Review of Mission 1988/3. 411.

The notion of *ontological* truth goes back to the ancient Greek philosophical writings of PLATO, who speaks about the good, the true and the beautiful. His disciple, ARISTOTLE, even gives a definition for the truth: “To say of what is that it is, of what is not that it is not, is true.”

In this definition the truth is rather a claim which is not false, when checked against reality; and this very reality is that which the truth-claim is made about. Problems and difficulties that are more serious begin to gather and arise, however, when we try to use truth to refer to the reality itself.

The end-station, the final destination, can and probably will be, that anything that *is* (that has being), is true. Obviously enough, it is not really a good and meaningful starting point for any kind of a dialogue.

The *existential* truth, however, gives a kind of personal point of view. According to this understanding, truth is an encounter with the transcendent, and as a result of this encounter, a certain *quality of life*.

In this usage of the word, the relevant question still remains: how can we judge the truths themselves? The truth does not only consist of following the truth, but it should also answer the question of the rightness of truths themselves. Especially *religious doctrines* can not have a *purely theoretical or non-experiential* truth.¹⁹

The third usage of truth is the *epistemological* one. We should define the truth which exists in the true-false dichotomy as follows: truth is that which can be clearly shown to be *not false to the satisfaction of all* concerned.

In the huge field of religious and also of interreligious discourse, there is a wide range of other statements which really are or only can be called truth or true.²⁰ We should be ready and well prepared to distinguish, however, the *pseudo-epistemological* usage of the word from the epistemological one.

In the former usage, the truth-claims are not demonstrable and verifiable (although, in most cases, they are not falsifiable either), except in terms of what is called by JOHN HICK the *eschatological verification*.

These can only be *proclaimed* and can be *testified* to, which constitutes a real chance here and now for the existential truth.

¹⁹ BALTHASAR Hans Urs von Wertsch us to this truth in *Truth and Life*. In SCHILLERBECKX Edward OP (ed.), *Human as Human and Believer*. Concilium 1966/21. 90.

²⁰ The source of PICKARD William M. Jr.'s reasoning is *Truth in Religious Discourse*. The Ecumenical Review, 1985/4. 437–444.

Hence they rightly and exactly would be called truth-claims or truth-beliefs of the *homo convictus*, the committed human person (the expression comes from Willem F. ZUURDEEG).

Let us at this point mention something about the question of the *possession* of the truth. In our understanding, the pseudo-epistemological truth-claims cannot be possessed; they only can be *confessed* and testified to.

It is not the mere possession, but rather the *sharing* of truth that leads to enrichment. We strongly feel the possession of epistemological truth as a mere controversy in itself, if it is not connected sufficiently with nor transformed into existential truth.

If the truth reaches and touches our inner self, it is not we who possess the truth; rather the *Truth possesses us*. At the end, truth itself seems to be of *dialogical* nature. Truth comes to us primarily, if not only, in the form of answers to questions—answers coming from weighing the evidence—and each new answer gives rise to further questions.

The possessiveness of whole and full *truth* sounds very arrogant and seems to be in sharp contrast with the humble attitude of the one who is searching for the real meaning of what one believes and for the real face of the One in Whom one believes.

While justice is blind, truth itself is dialogical, *two-eyed*. In an *elliptical* model of reality, we too are called to look at Truth through two eyes.²¹ There is not only a horizontal orientation in dialogue, but there is also a *vertical* one, where we have the task to understand the *truth*.

Prerequisites for this vertical orientation are on the one hand, the giving up of the idea of *possessing* the whole truth, the true knowledge; and on the other hand, we can only attribute *well-meaning* error to our partner in dialogue.

In this way, we can recognize the partial aspects of truth, the *particulae veri*, in the other. Finally, the Greek and Hebrew concepts of truth, *aletheia* and *emeth*, constantly have to supplement each other.

Aletheia signifies that which appears, emerges from hiddenness into manifestedness. *Emeth*, however, signifies an unqualified and ultimate certainty.²² *Search for the truth* happens through *praxis*, *action-reflection* and *living dialogue*.²³

Plurality as a contemporary phenomenon does not relativise

²¹ SAMARTHA Stanley J. quotes ROBINSON John A. T.'s beautiful parallel on the elliptical model of the two-eyed Truth in *Ganga and Galilee: Two Responses to Truth*. In HICK John – ASKARI Hassan (eds.), *Diversities of Religious Experience*. London, 1981.

Truth; rather it relativises the different and varied *responses* to the Truth. In plurality or *pluralism*, we are almost forced to make a choice and to decide.

The fundamentalist usually opts for *truth* at the expense of tolerance; while the radical liberal opts for *tolerance* at the expense of truth. But the genuine Truth makes tolerance imperative.²⁴

2. Multilingual Vocabularies

Linguistics has undergone a fundamental and radical development since the publication of the works of such scholars as Ferdinand DE SAUSSURE. Without the practical implications of this kind of developments in theology, however, there is no real chance for effective and true reconciliation: for the complete changing of language and of register, for example.

“How we speak is as important as *what* we speak.”²⁵ The use of *rhetorics* as the science of *talking together* has to focus not only on how we do it, but on how we might *improve* it²⁶ in the future.

The stony road from hegemonic monolingualism to *inclusive multilingualism* is very long and is paved by learning and changing; otherwise the different claims can never be communicable. Dialogue belongs to and it is indeed the very nature of every language. Even in *Paradise* God had certain questions to Eve and Adam: *Where are you?*

Language has two main *functions* in this sense: it makes us heirs and a part of a *tradition*, heritage, and in the instance that it is *mutually comprehensive*,²⁷ it makes us *communicable*, which means being at the same time understanding and being understandable.

Neither of these sides is without the presence of dialogue: the acceptance of a tradition is happening in asking and answering, as well. We are *responsible* for the passing-on of our heritage further, to our children and successors.

²² OTT Heinrich discerns *aletheia* and *emeth* in *The Horizons of Understanding and Interpretative Possibilities*. In SAMARTHA Stanley J. (ed.), *Faith in the Midst of Faiths. Reflections on Dialogue in Community*. Genève, 1977. 85–89.

²³ DEVANANDA Yohan sets these three areas in *Living Dialogue*. In ARAI Tosh – AHARAJAH Wesley S., *Spirituality in Interfaith Dialogue*. Genève, 1989. 77.

²⁴ NEUHAUS Richard John sets up this new and revolutionary connection in *Truth and Tolerance*. *First Things* 1994/10.

²⁵ BROWNSON James V. sees this connection in *Speaking the Truth in Love. Elements of a Missional Hermeneutic*. *International Review of Mission* 1994/3. 503.

²⁶ BOOTH Wayne C. in his article compares the interrelated role rhetoric and religion are destined to play in each other's life in *Rhetoric and Religion: Are They Essentially Wedded?* In JEANROD Werner G. – RIKE Jennifer L. (eds.), *Radical Pluralism and Truth. David Tracy and the Hermeneutics of Religion*. New York, 1991. 79.

²⁷ DHAVAMONY Mariasusai SI sets this fundamental requirement of *mutual comprehensiveness* in his chapter called *Christian Theology of Interreligious Dialogue*. In DHAVAMONY Mariasusai SI, *Christian Theology of Religions. A Systematic Reflection on the Christian Understanding of World Religions*. Bern, 1998. 203.

We are responsible for our languages, as for talents given to us to cultivate them. We are called to pour our new wines into new wineskins, which means for the time being, the very language of *consensus*.

In this sense, we can make a distinction between two types of language, the language of science (digital language) and the language of *healing or therapy* (analogical language).²⁸ Digital language is objective, cerebral, and logical. Its functions are negating, subordinating, analyzing, hierarchizing, explaining and interpreting.

Analogical language, on the other hand, functions as imaginary, metaphor, synthesis and totality. Some main characteristics of analogical language can be discerned: condensation, figurativity, *pars pro toto*, aphorism and ambiguity, pun, allusion. Analogical language was born from the desire to *embrace the other*.²⁹

There can be another classification of language and literature: oral literature transforms, while literary literature informs.³⁰ Even the choice of *syntax and vocabulary* is a kind of political act that defines and circumscribes the way facts are to be experienced. In a certain sense, it even creates the facts that can be studied.³¹

Therefore, cleaning up the vocabulary is one of the most important tasks in a dialogue.³² There is a language to be approached, “a language of *degreas* and *measures*, of *proximity* and *quantity*.”³³

3. Communicating Existence

With this next part, we focus on the crucial question of communication. The theories of communication are mainly derivatives, or consequences of the different paradigms concerning languages.

We can distinguish and classify some of the dialogues taking place in the Bible, especially in the New Testament, some of them being epoch-making or paradigm-creating even for our time. Mere

²⁸ Paul D. FUETER quotes and analyzes these two kinds of languages in *The Therapeutic Language of the Bible*. International Review of Mission 1986/3. 211–213.

²⁹ WARD Graham quotes the opinion of LACAN Jacques in *Theology and Postmodernism*. Theology 1997/6. 438.

³⁰ This summary is from HOLLENWEGER Walter J.'s article, *The Ecumenical Significance of Oral Christianity*. The Ecumenical Review 1989/2. 262.

³¹ HOLLENWEGER Walter J. quotes the conviction of WINK Walter in *The Ecumenical Significance of Oral Christianity*. The Ecumenical Review 1989/2. 263.

³² THOMAS T. K. reviews a book by ELLER Verbard, who lends these important tasks to the title of his book: *Cleaning Up the Christian Vocabulary*, by Verbard ELLER. The Ecumenical Review 1977/1. 100–101.

³³ HUFF Peter A. hails and greets the documents of the Second Vatican Council with these summarizing remarks in *Separation Incomplete, Communion Imperfect: Vatican II's Ecumenical Strategy*. One in Christ 1995/1. 62.

communication, however, is not yet a dialogue in the fullest sense of the word at all, but only one of its means.

Communication can be defined as a reciprocal exchange of thoughts, of feelings and of desired actions between partners of equal status (*equality*) by means of signs, in a *symbolic interaction*, with the aim of understanding (*content* and *relations*).³⁴

The *meta-hegemonic discourse*, prototypical for any good and meaningful conversation, has a Spirit that is of one being with the conversants; thus God as well can rightly be called a *Conversation*.³⁵

Based on the well-known story of Jesus and the Samaritan woman from the Gospel of St. John (4,1–42), we can describe and name ten important steps, which are the *ten phases* of communication.³⁶

The first phase of this communication is the *perverted* one, or the *poisoning* one, in other words: rumour has it that Jesus was making and baptising many more disciples than St. John the Baptist.

Then, as a second step, comes the usual, *everyday* communication in the story. This is the realm of the various *personal relations*: Jesus Christ asks the Samaritan woman for a drink at Jacob's well.

Communication also can be *impossible*, when the walls of *separation* seem to be immovably solid between the partners in communication. The Samaritan woman reminds Jesus Christ of the long history of pain, suffering and hatred between and behind their two nations, between the Jewish and the Samaritan people.

The fourth step to consider here is the *language* and the *speech* themselves, in other words the whole area of *verbal* communication. The Samaritan woman at the well immediately identifies Jesus as a Jew from His dialect, peculiar pronunciation and special accent.

After these four levels our main topic follows here, which is the communication in *dialogue* and also the *personal encounter* with others. The two persons in the place of Sychar confront each other rather harshly, and this confrontation finally leads to a change inside these persons themselves.

The element, which afterwards creates a space in the conversation, is the *poetic* communication or, in other words, the

³⁴ BARTHOLOMÄUS Wolfgang gives this definition of communication in *Communication in the Church: Aspects of a Theological Theme*. In BAUM Gregory – GREELY Andrew (eds.), *Communication in the Church*. Concilium 1978/1. 97.

³⁵ JENSON Robert W. deals in a whole article with this topic: *On Hegemonic Discourse*. First Things 1994/8.

³⁶ The line of all that was mentioned beforehand could be seen in one of the outstanding exegeses by CHAPPUIS Jean-Marc. Now we are following his argumentation and classification concerning the ten phases of communication. His Bible study is called *Jesus and the Samaritan Woman, The Variable Geometry of Communication*. The Ecumenical Review, 1982/1. 8–34.

symbolic expression. Jesus plays with the different meanings of water.

But talking with each other is not supposed to remain at this level; it has to touch the very persons themselves. With a question about the woman's husband, the *existential* communication or the *disclosure of human* begins.

Soon afterwards the theoretical, the spiritual or the *theological* communication starts, in which God Godself is manifested on Earth, in the very person of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Virgin Mary.

Ninthly, the woman is challenged to make a Christian witness in a kind of *narrative* communication. She goes to her native city to proclaim the Messiah, Who most obviously arrived there.

The tenth and final phase in their personal encounter is basically a mystery, a *secret* for all of us, and it provides a *horizon* for our communication. The main aim of every kind of our speech, of our communication or of our discourse should be the creation of a new and more honest *community*, or theologically speaking, a communion or *koinonia*.

The process of *change of register* can be described in three levels. In the first level of communication, we usually superficially reduce the other (the other idea or, even worse, the other person) to the *same*, to one's very self.

In the next dimension of the change, we still continue to maintain this distinction, while at the same we also guarantee the relation. This is the level of the poetic or the *symbolic* communication.

Finally, the third level is the one of *self-giving*, which only makes receiving possible. This change of register encompasses the transition from a binary to a *ternary register*, from a duality and even a duel to a *trinity* and *reconciliation*, and from an exclusive contradiction to an *inclusive communion*.³⁷

³⁷ BLANCY Alain of the Groupe des Dombes speaks about the three levels of *changing register* in *From Sign to Symbol. A Change of Register*. The Ecumenical Review 1981/4. 380–382.

³⁸ SAMARTHA Stanley J. uses this term in his article *Reflections on a Multilateral Dialogue. An Interpretation of a Meeting Held at Colombo, Sri Lanka, 17–26 April 1974*. The Ecumenical Review 1974/4. 643.

IV. Plural Encounter in Community

We have not mentioned so far the final and ultimate aim of the whole process of dialogue. This element is that we are called and sent out to build a *community* on this Earth. The community we seek is not only a simple community; it is rather a community of communities, or of *communications*.

In other words, it is a genuine kind of *communion* (or *koinonia*). In dialogue we basically search for genuine *community*. In this kind of community we are held together by the *values* we share in common, in *differentiated interrelatedness*.³⁸

To build up a community of communities, for example to design a fellowship of churches, of denominations or of confessions, we need to be very clear concerning the meaning and role of pluralism.

Political pluralism means “the separation and division of powers, decentralized administration, regionalism, functionalism, representation, freedom of association and immunity from excessively bureaucratic state regulation.”³⁹

Cultural pluralism, on the other hand, is attained “when members of different cultures accept a basic set of values that enable them to live harmoniously together, while they remain free to preserve their differences in other cultural areas.”⁴⁰

All these units of pluralisms on different levels are the various communities. Community is the place where all the aforementioned elements effectively meet each other. “Communion is the *conditio sine qua non* of communication.”⁴¹

But the opposite is also true: genuine communication is a necessary condition for an effective and deep community. Above all, a *shared truth* constitutes the community.⁴² In Latin, the etymology of *communio* is *com-munus*, those who have the same task.⁴³

³⁹ TAYLOR R. J. defines both cultural and political pluralism in *The Meaning of Pluralism in Ecumenism*. One in Christ 1974/4. 369.

⁴⁰ The other definition of pluralism is also in TAYLOR R. J., *The Meaning of Pluralism in Ecumenism*. One in Christ 1974/4. 369.

⁴¹ KHODOR Georges underlines and also exemplifies the fundamental importance of community or *koinonia* in *Christianity in a Pluralistic World: The Economy of the Holy Spirit*. The Ecumenical Review 1971/2. 127.

⁴² CERTEAU Michel DE speaks about the question of language as a community-constituting factor in *Is There a Language of Unity?* In SCHILLERBECKX Edward OP (ed.), *Tension Between Church and Faith*. Concillium 1970/1. 83–85.

⁴³ WILLEBRANDS Johannes explains and underlines this etymology in *The Future of Ecumenism*. One in Christ 1975/4. 322.

⁴⁴ MBITI John, too, defines dialogue in such a way: *In Search of Dialogue in Community*. The Ecumenical Review, 1987/2. 192–196.



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The common language, the already existing communication, the shared truth and the same purpose constitute and build up a real community. *Dialogue* can even be defined as a face-to-face encounter with one's neighbour, in *community*.⁴⁴

Suggested Reading

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- TRACY David, *Beyond Foundationalism and Relativism: Hermeneutics and the New Ecumenism*. In GREINACHER Norbert – METTE Norbert (eds.), *The New Europe – A Challenge for Christians*. Concilium 1992/2. 103-111.
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Martin CONWAY

Christian Unity and Discipleship in WSCF

Over the past one hundred years the World Student Christian Federation (WSCF) has contributed, in different degrees, significant impulses to the exploration of Christian unity in at least three distinct contexts: that of its own movement, that of Christ's world-wide Church, and that of the total human community. I cannot try here to do more than recall some of the key elements in this path of discovery.

I. Unity in and of a World-wide Student Christian Movement

1. Guiding Principles of the WSCF

In regard to its own movement – the unity of this “world” movement brought into being by six men in the attic of an ancient castle, which within three years had members in twenty-two countries of Asia, Australasia, Africa, Europe and the Americas – it is often forgotten just how creatively John R. MOTT secured its freedom alike from undue North American domination and from the model of the student association within the YMCA in which he had himself been formed. Looking back in 1920, he defined the “guiding principles” of the WSCF in eight points¹:

A. The cornerstone principle of the whole construction is the “*recognition of the supremacy of the Lord Jesus Christ* and of his work as the only sufficient Saviour.” Any compromising of this principle has had immediate consequences for the whole life of the movement concerned.

B. The second is that of the *interdenominational and interconfessional* character of the Federation (note: not *un-*denominational, for it would never call its members to reduce

¹ MOTT John R., *The World's Student Christian Federation: Origin, Achievements, Forecast*. Genève, 1920.