

Radix, Matrix

Título *Radix, Matrix. Community belonging and the ecclesial form of universalistic communitarism*
Autora Teresa Bartolomei
Coleção Teologia e Estudos de Religião

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Capa Inês Castel-Branco
Revisão Editorial Francisco Silva Pereira
Paginação acentográfico
Impressão e Acabamento Sersilito – Empresa Gráfica, Lda
Depósito Legal 437171/18
Tiragem 200 exemplares
Data fevereiro 2018

ISBN 9789725405901
ISBN e-book 9789725405895

Universidade Católica Editora

Palma de Cima 1649-023 Lisboa
Tel. (351) 217 214 020 | Fax. (351) 217 214 029
uce@uceditora.ucp.pt | www.uceditora.ucp.pt



BARTOLOMEI, Teresa
Radix, matrix : community belonging and the ecclesial form of universalistic communitarism. – Lisboa : Universidade Católica Editora, 2018. – 80 p. ; 23 cm. – (Estudos de religião). – ISBN 9789725405901
I – Tit. II – Col.
CDU 260.11:321.7

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Teresa Bartolomei

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Index

Acknowledgments	8
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SECTION I

From where to where

Introduction	9
The Word of God as <i>root</i> and <i>verbal matrix</i> of history	10
Communities in the horizon of globalization	12
Ecclesial universality as a principle of unity and not of identity	16
Ecclesiality as a historical paradigm of the principle of universalization of community belonging: the activation of <i>inclusion as inclusiveness</i>	31
Many peoples: diversity and inter-communitarian communion	42
<i>Inter-communitarian similarity</i>	43
<i>Inter-communitarian cardinality of intersection</i>	45
<i>Inter-communitarian sociality of intersection: interdependence</i>	47
For a non-nationalist notion of citizenship	50
Giving the right in communion and being mindful of the poor	63

SECTION II

Application horizons

For a not unilaterally individualistic reconstruction of human dignity	
The complementarity of universalistic communitarianism and human rights	
Community belonging and sociality: an implication at risk	65
The protection of community belonging	70
Universalistic communitarianism	73
Community belonging between particularity and universality	74
The case of the family	75
Conclusion	78



For Karl-Otto Apel,
the master who taught me that truth, rightness and authenticity
are the horizons towards which
the word tells itself, becoming a community.
The community's beyond is not its outside –
it is rather a dimension that builds the community from within,
exposing itself in the horizon as the spanned distance.
This is why horizons are not frontiers:
both surround, but the former are open,
the latter closed.
The former situate and guide,
the latter just divide.

Acknowledgments

This text is born from the contribution of many, scattered roots, which in different but equally decisive ways have shaped it.

First of all, I would like to thank my friends whose participation made the CITER seminar at the EUARE conference in Bologna on 22 June 2017 a very special intellectual experience: professors Michele Nicoletti, Miguel Poiares Maduro and Rosario Sapienza. The wish to jointly and effectively continue the journey started there is an inevitable corollary of my gratitude.

To Eoin Lavelle, a young jurist who shares the passion for a Europe united in the solidary meeting and interchange of so different communities and citizenships, my special thanks for the patient revision of the English version of this text.

To Father Tolentino Mendonça, who first rooted for this project, I owe the grateful recognition of his matricial role in the issuing of my ideas into a text and then in a publication.

SECTION I

From where to where

*(Wurzel.
Wurzel Abrahams. Wurzel Jesse. Niemand's
Wurzel – o
unser.)*

Paul Celan, "Radix, Matrix"

Introduction

Do we live in apocalyptic times? Is the world plummeting into a distressing chaos, engendered by political and technological threats, in which humankind will consume itself? Or is the disorder that we are witnessing at present merely an opacity that will gradually dissolve, giving way to a new chapter of history?

Given the difficulty that exists in making accurate short-term predictions, it is even more difficult to make a long-term prognosis of the situation. The banal, yet persuasive, argument that this uncertainty must be faced as if the world's ultimate dissolution also depended on our choices (an argument whose factual truth is no less critical than the prediction it claims to replace) is nevertheless an indispensable resource, the *adage that accelerates the pace*.

Therefore, one must look for coordinates to steer the way as the future is never one but many. Choosing where to go will yield not only a direction but also a horizon of arrival. The Christian paradox is that what matters for the way is not the destination but the point of departure. In this perspective, one must choose not the goal but the origin, looking at the future not as an empty field of infinite possibilities but as the fulfilment of the promise this origin is for human history. This is why Christians see the future in the light of the permanent actuality of a past that shapes their present. If the *source is the way*, you have to

make a memorial of memory: past is a form of the present drawing the shape of the future.

This Christian memorial, lived inside the city, is the spiritual reception of a Word used enabling to read the signs of history, to name what occurs and to learn to manage rather than subdue it. Economy – as the regulation of our home, of the space and of the time we live in – is a theological concept as well as being a political and a sociological one, and in that it exhibits the complexity of the history of individuals and communities.

In reflecting on their own story, Christians reflect on the history of humankind. In living and thinking about ecclesiality, they live and think about the city, namely the multiple forms and instances of the community that overlap, cross, and meet, without ever merging.

For this reason, Christians can never think of religion as being outside of politics or of religion as being politics. As citizens, they can only think of religion as being within politics, and as believers they can only think of politics as being within faith. This is a daring dialectics of non-identification and interdependence, which has never been finalized and cannot be resolved by a single and definitive formula. Instead, it is reconfigured again and again in the concrete story of the experience of every generation, every believer and every community.¹

The Word of God as *root* and *verbal matrix* of history

In examining their own story, Christians understand that this story is a living, fruitful revelation at all points, that ought be seen as a path to the alliance between God and his people. However, they also know that it has its *root* and

¹ As eloquently and clearly expressed by the *Epistle to Diognetus*: “But, inhabiting Greek as well as barbarian cities, according as the lot of each of them has determined, and following the customs of the natives in respect to clothing, food, and the rest of their ordinary conduct, they display to us their wonderful and confessedly striking method of life. They dwell in their own countries, but simply as sojourners. As citizens, they share in all things with others, and yet endure all things as if foreigners. Every foreign land is to them as their native country, and every land of their birth as a land of strangers.” (V, 4-5). (Cited from *Epistle to Diognetus*, by Mathetes, translated by James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts, in: *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*, (1867-1885), T. & T. Clark in Edinburgh, Volume I. https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Ante-Nicene_Fathers/Volume_I/Epistle_to_Diognetus).

verbal matrix in the Word of God. The Word of God is made human being in Jesus Christ, and in Him this Word judges and saves history; in the Sacred Scripture, the Word of God is history that yields and reads history, transmitting it to man as a way of shaping his humanity and welcoming his vocation as a Son of God. Sacred Scripture is a sign and an instrument, an expression, a part and a factor of this history.

Reading history through the *root* and *verbal matrix* that is present in the Sacred Scripture as the Word of God does not result in the dissolution of the complex discursive construct of the latter, which consists of narration, mythical and parabolic figurativeness, kerygmatic announcement, sapiential meditation, and normative prescription, in a dogmatic grid that is conceptually superimposed on the phenomenal and informal material of worldly events (in an exercise of critical transcendentalism, philosophically but not theologically legitimate). However, it does respect the polyphonic complexity of these various components, allowing them to germinate in their respective potential of sense through a differentiated interpretative approach that converges towards the unity of the Incarnation of the Word in the person of Christ; however, that is not this unity, which is achieved only in His Person. There is only one Word of God, but no unique interpretation of it outside the person of Jesus, so all hermeneutical interpretations are merely a route of meeting with the Word, which is the Word of God that interprets Itself for man as a manifestation of love and salvation. The hermeneutic normativity of which the Church is the guardian in relation to Sacred Scripture consists not of the dogmatic determination of the only human word acceptable as its interpretation, but of the circumscription of the interpretative experiences of the Word that arise in the ecclesial communion of the Church, namely the body of Christ. In their diversity of results, these experiences tend to converge, but they do not embody it, because it is only incarnated by the person of Christ, of whom the Church is body and bride (flesh of his flesh), without being Christ himself.²

² For this reason, dogmatically mutually incompatible interpretations can be nevertheless accepted as equal partakers of ecclesial communion, because dogmatic consistency is not its exclusive criterion. This principle, which is not questioned in the diachronic perspective, is more difficult to accept in the synchronic one, but they can only go hand in hand: if the fact that certain doctrinal stances are recognized in the path of Tradition as outdated, no longer valid, does not disqualify their ecclesiality (even the most superficial review of the evolution of the doctrinal formulation of the natural law by the Catholic Church shows a dizzying, non-superficial but substantive evolution), it is because the communal criterion goes beyond the dogmatic one. This communal transcend-

It is part of these different interpretative experiences, which are converging but not univocally assimilable, to read the history narrated in Scripture as the *root* and as the *Verbal matrix* – the genesis and the form of sense – of history of each age, that is recognizing each present as memorially enrolled in the Word revealed by Scripture. The life of Jesus, the events of the early Church, the doctrinal contents of the Pauline and Catholic epistles, are not, for the believer, events and words of the past from which to learn something as is dictated by the classic lemma “*Historia magistra vitae*”. Instead, they are the future and the disclosure of the messianic dimension of history, the fulfilment of the fullness of time as salvation that is not ‘behind’ us, but from which we are derived and that is ahead of us. As *telos* we tend to, we adhere to and we “conform to” (Rom 12: 2). The present is thought *from* its *root*, in the commitment to understand, mould and transform it into the light of the *matrix* of Truth that saves history.

Communities in the horizon of globalization

This dialectics between the *root* from which we come and the *matrix* to which we conform, between provenance and advenience, between the factuality of tradition and the normative openness to the new that transcends, purifies and regenerates tradition, characterizes the relationship of the Christian community with the Word of God in recognition that this Word, personified by Christ, is the starting point and the arrival, the Alpha and Omega of history. Meeting with the Scriptures is an essential part of this dynamic of generation and regeneration, continuity and renewal. In its listening to the Scripture, the

ence of belonging to Christ's body with respect to its doctrinal self-representation cannot be reduced just to a chronological *ratio* – the evolution of Tradition as the gradual fulfilment of Revelation – but has to be accepted in the fullness of its mysterious dynamics. If doctrines condemned as heretical by the Church's Magisterium at a given historical moment can be subsequently rehabilitated without the magisterial condemnation for this reason being condemned as heretical, it is because the Church recognizes that ecclesial communion is deeper than the doctrinal consistency, including different doctrines, possibly incompatible, and therefore even those in due time recognized as dogmatically fallacious. Dogmatic truth is an important normative criterion on which to build and judge ecclesial communion, but it is not in itself sufficient or extrapolable as an absolute one. In this perspective, an inevitable rate of doctrinal pluralism does not expire in relativism because it feeds on (and lets be purified by) the sacramental unity of common belonging to the body of Christ. The sacramental unit bases the doctrinal unity and not vice versa.

Christian community draws on the living source that generates its identity and at the same time transforms it; the community welcomes the Word that tells it what it is and what it is to become, in a balanced manner that must always be rebuilt based on both fidelity and prophetic novelty. The renewal of Tradition (*l'aggiornamento*) to which every generation of Christians is called does not, therefore, consist of the actualization of its contents as a “conformation” to the present, to the mentality of the era, through the dissolution of the identities of the past, but consists of the capacity to “conform” to the Word of God as the *root* and at the same time the *Verbal matrix* of our present, a form of sense in which the present becomes the actuality of salvation for man.

The need to adequately reflect the polarity involved in the self-understanding of the Christian community in relation to Christ, the Word of God, as the *root* of its identity and the *matrix* of its change, of its conversion (as being at the same time founding and depleting – *kenotic* – instance; of fidelity to the irrevocability of the Covenant and of messianic transformation; as content of historical memory and of eschatological purification of the carnal identities), is particularly urgent at a time like the present which is characterized by a profound change in levels, factors and processes of the constitution and social legitimization of communities. Recognizing in ecclesiality an ideal and historical model of universalistic communitarism (the community belonging whose genetic *root* is deployed as a *matrix* of universalization) can in fact open up new perspectives in order to solve, in a politically freeing and non-regressive way, the crisis of traditional communities that is one of the costs of globalization.

Indeed, in the wake of globalization, societies are faced with the double challenge of ever-increasing supranational integration and an increasing internal disintegration. The push for a growing homogenization at supranational level is combined with the erosion of traditional forms of social cohesion that is brought about by the growth of individualism (with the transition to so-called liquid societies) as well as by the growing religious and cultural pluralism that is linked to increased immigration flows.

The destabilizing impact of this two-sided factor, of external assimilation and internal fragmentation, cannot be underestimated nor can the social resistances to it be *a priori* dismissed as unfounded and univocally regressive. The condemnation of the simplifying political solutions advocated by populism and sovereignism does not exempt us from addressing the issue of how to offset the social, cultural and political costs of globalization.

It is necessary to provide answers that, without falling into the false solution of closing in, do provide valid and effective means of compensation for the factors contributing to the breakdown of social cohesion and of assimilative uniformation, by protecting the cultural and religious pluralism of traditions and the vitality of community belongings as a constitutive element of genuinely democratic and open societies.

In the present context, however, there is a lack of conceptual tools that adequately express solutions of this nature, due to the fact that in the political and philosophical discourse of the past few decades, a somehow artificial contrast took shape between the (negative and positive) protection of individual rights towards the coercive power of the political order of society (as a State) based on a criterion of justice anchored in a universal understanding of human rights on the one hand, and, on the other, the protection of particular community belongings in their rooting in content-bound notions of good, in particular cultural, ethical and religious traditions, that are resistant to processes of abstractive universalization and ultimately incompatible with them. In this regard, enucleating the principle of the legitimization of law either on the basis of community belonging (in a nationalist-sovereignist or communitarianist perspective) or on the basis of human rights (in the liberal perspective of an essentially individualistic definition of human dignity), provides alternative and irreconcilable political and philosophical options, drawing a net divide between conservatives and progressives and between authoritarian and democratic regimes.

How dangerous and wrong it is to leave the protection of community cohesion to conservative or reactionary authoritarianism that sees a corrosive breach of the autonomy of religious, cultural and national traditions in the protection of the individual by the rule of law is made apparent by the growing regressively nationalistic and illiberal trends which yield public opinions that convert their legitimate resistance to the trying strain on their community identities into anger towards 'delocalized' and uprooted elites. The stress of novelty becomes resentment towards its social vectors and fear towards *the Other*: processes and people who are different from the known communitarian fabric and nonetheless knock at the door and want to enter. A politics of anger and a politics of fear combine into an explosive mixture that threatens to undermine the democratic order of Western societies and block the democratic growth of developing countries. The stereotyped contrast between the progressive *anywhere* and the conservative *somewhere* does not help democracy; it does

not help either individuals or peoples, and risks bringing the world towards a growing and dangerously conflictive fragmentation.

The challenge of a good policy that promotes solidarity and peace among peoples, religions and cultures by boosting broader spheres of communal law, is, in other words, to yield on the internal and external domains (both within national societies and in the relations between States, beginning with the supranational space of the European Union) forms of universalistic communitarianism, which go beyond the dominant philosophical³ and political opposition between liberal-universalistic individualism and conservative-particularistic communitarianism, identifying in community belonging, the ideal and real space for the activation of processes of emancipative universalization for individuals and for the particular traditions of historical, cultural and religious profile.

In seeing community belonging not as an obstacle to universalization (which would only concern individuals as subjects of law defined on an abstractly rational and ahistorical plan) but as one of its essential drivers, not as a particularistic condition to defend or overcome, but as a special condition to be universalized through the dynamics of progressive and differentiated integration of the communities themselves and not just of the individuals, it will be possible to produce healthy self-defence processes against the destructive stress of social cohesion yielded by the push towards individualistic liquidity and by the religious and cultural pluralism of society. It will also be possible to produce effective legitimizing mechanisms of the spheres of supranational law, beyond the by now critical absolute primacy of State sovereignty.

³ We cannot summarize in a brief note the endless philosophical debate on this subject and mention the most significant texts. For a balanced overview and for a bibliographic guide (which is, however, chiefly focused on Anglo-Saxon areas, with little attention to the continent's approach) to the vast literature it has generated, cf. Daniel Bell, "Communitarianism" in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/communitarianism/>.

It is also necessary to emphasize the peculiarity of the position of the Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor, who, while welcoming the communitarian criticisms of the abstraction of rationalist ethics and liberal political philosophy (revived in the second half of the twentieth century by Rawlsian contractualism), has always tried to combine the protection of content-definition of good proper to the historically given religious and cultural traditions with the intra- and inter-communitarian need for universal and normative legitimation of moral and juridical obligations (both on the individual and collective sphere). See in particular "Conditions of an Unforced Consensus on Human Rights", in *The East Asian Challenge for Human Rights*, J. R. Bauer and D. Bell (eds.) (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge U. P., 1999), pp.124-144; and *Philosophy and the Human Sciences. Philosophical Papers 2* (Cambridge / New York: Cambridge U. P., 1985).

This notion of community belonging as an inclusive and emancipatory universalization factor in contrast with both exclusive and regressive particularism, as with the assimilative erasure of differences, finds in Christian ecclesiality, one of its strongest ideals and historical expressions. This is a powerful *root* and *Verbal matrix*, and an exegetical and theological reconstruction of the process of formation in which particular communities have united into a single community in the primitive Church (in a sapiential and sacramental process of accepting the Word of God as the *root* of the Christian community to which it must *conform* as to its own *matrix*) can be of great help to focus on questions, answers, possible solutions and the difficulties of the current process of internal and external integration of national societies with respect to internal divisional drives and processes of levelling external assimilation (in a sapiential and sacramental process of acceptance of the Word of God as a *matrix* of the Christian community as an “expert on humanity” (Paul VI, *Populorum Progressio*), a historical space in which man experiences the messianic fullness of his own humanity, as the horizon of the possibilities of history.⁴

Ecclesial universality as a principle of unity and not of identity

The reading of the scriptural testimonies of the early Church, in particular the *Acts of the Apostles* and of some of Paul’s *Letters*, reveals the turbulence of a beginning which is far from peaceful, contrasted by a dialectic that is so profound and divisive that it risks producing a real schism, which is slowly recompiled into the principle of communal unity. The first years after the death and resurrection of Jesus, the ‘founder’ of the new community, are in fact marked by the polarity between two profoundly different patterns of community belonging, which we could characterize on the basis of two opposing demands: Jamesian-Petrine protection of the particularity of the pre-existing religious-historical tradition and Pauline instance of its universalization. The solution to this tension in the implementation of a principle of communal universalization as

⁴ In the diversity of approach and analysis, this idea of the Church as an *exemplary* historical space, “utopian” in its ideal radicalization of the potentialities of the human, is deeply converging with the Ricoeurian notion of “sens et fonction d’une communauté ecclésiale”, see Paul Ricoeur, *Plaidoyer pour l’utopie ecclésiale*. O. Abel et A. Romele (éds.) (Genève: Labor et fides, 2016).

the essential form of Christian ecclesiality was not only the foundation paradigm on which the building of Christian communities developed over the next two millennia, but as we will try to see, a reference criterion that is likely to find fruitful conjugations in the political and legal fields as well.

In the early days of Christianity, the situation of the Church was that of a community galaxy scattered in very different geographic areas and religious, linguistic and cultural traditions. How could this plurality be distilled into a unitary principle, without sacrificing the cultural pluralism of communities in a coercively levelling uniformation on the one hand, and on the other avoiding centrifugal dissolution in a multicultural multiplicity of realities that are incapable of converging into a common core of beliefs, ethical norms and shared ritual practices?

From the Jamesian-Petrine point of view, the particularity of the religious tradition of origin (the *root*) has a clear primacy with respect to the branches that are later grafted on it (Rom 11: 16-24) (with respect to the ethnic, cultural and religious ‘exterior’ belongings flowing into it). From the Pauline point of view, this particularity must undergo a universalizing process of adaptation to the *matricial* novelty expressed by this same tradition in the fulfilment of the messianic promise on which it is founded. This is achieved by accepting new branches that “have come to share in the rich root of the olive tree” (Rom 11: 17): fidelity to its own *genetic root* does not consist of attaching itself to particular aspects that are particularistic (divisive and exclusive against inclusion in this same tradition of new identities) but in the ability to recognize it as the *normative matrix* of an extension of the particular core content of tradition (the adherence to the promise made to the people elected by God as the owner of his covenant of salvation) to all humankind. For Paul it is not a matter of ‘diluting’ the original identity in a relativistic eclectism of assimilation, but of recognizing its universally inclusive nucleus, distinguishing it from ancillary determinations, qualifying its particularistic conjugations to activate its communion potential of convergence of diversities in the abandonment of the content components that are incompatible (because they are intrinsically exclusive) with this universally inclusive core and in the “deactivation” (*katargein*)⁵ of the non-qualifying content components, being irrelevant from the point of view of communion.

⁵ This is the crucial verb used by Paul to designate the forms of ‘overcoming’ the law by faith (Rom 3: 31; 7: 2 and 7: 6) and death and sin by the redemption of Christ (Rm 6: 6; 1 Cor 15: 26; 2

The particularity on which ecclesial belonging is founded (the content-determined core that defines its substance: the choice of faith for Jesus Christ) consists precisely of its accessibility to all humankind, says Paul, and this universalizability is therefore the *matricial* criterion of verifying the actual correspondence and the actual appropriateness of the self-understanding of the ecclesial community (in the concreteness of its ethical and ritual order, of its own *legality*) to its genetic root.⁶ If the ethical and ritual order of the community is not consistent with this fundamental principle of communion universality (in which cultural, ethnic, gender diversities are not deleted or assimilated but accepted as such), the community is not genuinely in communion with its root, with the promise accomplished in Christ: it is not the Church.

For Paul, the fact that Jesus was crucified and is risen – thus manifesting himself as Christ, the Messiah – constitutes the fulfilment of the message inherent in the history of the covenant between God and the Jewish people, that is, that the promise of salvation entrusted to it is destined for all humankind:⁷ the community belonging founded by this covenant is open to *all peoples* and to all human beings, because “There is no partiality with God” (Rom 2: 11, see Gal 2: 6) either in relation to individuals or to peoples.⁸ For this reason, the community belonging originally generated by the promise (from this *root*) must “convert” (“conform”) to the conditions of increased inclusion manifested by its

Tim 1:10; Eph 2: 15; Heb 2: 14), as well as, inversely, the promise by the Law (Rom 4: 14 and Gal 3:17).

⁶ “If the first fruits are holy, so is the whole batch of dough; and if the root is holy, so are the branches.” (Rom 11: 16) (All biblical quotations correspond to the version of *The New American Bible*, Revised Edition – NABRE, 2011 –, adopted by the USCCB.).

⁷ For the Old Testament announcement of the universality of salvation, in an eschatological perspective that makes the election of the Jewish people (and of the Christian Church) not a privilege but a service, a means of redemption for all humankind and not a destiny for the few, see: 1 Kings 8: 60; Dt 28: 10; Jsh 4: 24; Is 19: 23-24; Is 563-8; Is 60 -22; Mic 4: 1-4.

⁸ In “accordance with the gospel that I preach and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, in accordance with that mystery which for endless ages was kept secret but now (as the prophets wrote) is revealed, as the eternal God commanded, to be made known to all the nations, so that they obey in faith” (Rom 16: 25-26). In these words Paul echoes directly the announcement of Isaiah 56: 3, 7: “The foreigner joined to the Lord should not say, / «The Lord will surely / exclude me from his people»; / Nor should the eunuch say, / «See, I am a dry tree.» / Them I will bring to my holy mountain / and make them joyful in my house of prayer; / Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices / will be acceptable on my altar, / For my house shall be called / a house of prayer for all peoples.”

realization⁹ (welcoming it as a normative transformation *matrix*).¹⁰ Community belonging must be transformed from its own *root*, recognized as a *matrix*,¹¹ in a process of communal universalization that opens it to the potential inclusion of all humankind and requires a constant exercise of purification and discernment (of conversion to messianic novelty) with regard to its self-understanding settled as a tradition. The *law*, in the Pauline perspective, is nothing else but the state of belonging to an ethical tradition, lived as an identitarian absolute, an intangible external objectivity, unable to deal with the internal instance of normative legitimation established by its own fundament,¹² and by the *promise* of universal salvation entrusted to a particular community so that it may witness and carry it to all humankind.¹³ The *law* provides consistency of historical,

⁹ “Welcome one another, then, as Christ welcomed you, for the glory of God. For I say that Christ became a minister of the circumcision to show God’s truthfulness, to confirm the promises to the patriarchs, /... / And again Isaiah says: / «The root of Jesse shall come, / raised up to rule the Gentiles; / in him shall the Gentiles hope.»” (Rom 15: 7-8, 12).

¹⁰ “Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect.” (Rom 12: 2).

¹¹ “According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But each one must be careful how he builds upon it, for no one can lay a foundation other than the one that is there, namely, Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw, the work of each will come to light, for the Day will disclose it. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire [itself] will test the quality of each one’s work.” (1 Cor 3: 10-13).

¹² “Circumcision, to be sure, has value if you observe the law; but if you break the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Again, if an uncircumcised man keeps the precepts of the law, will he not be considered circumcised? Indeed, those who are physically uncircumcised but carry out the law will pass judgment on you, with your written law and circumcision, who break the law. One is not a Jew outwardly. True circumcision is not outward, in the flesh. Rather, one is a Jew inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart, in the spirit, not the letter; his praise is not from human beings but from God.” (Rom 2: 25-29).

¹³ “Scripture, which saw in advance that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, foretold the good news to Abraham, saying, *Through you shall all the nations be blessed. Consequently, those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham who had faith.*” (Gal 3: 8-9) “Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his descendant. It does not say, *And to descendants*, as referring to many, but as referring to one, *And to your descendant*, who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came four hundred and thirty years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to cancel the promise. For if the inheritance comes from the law, it is no longer from a promise; but God bestowed it on Abraham through a promise.” (Gal 3: 16-18) Whereby: “And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendant, heirs according to the promise.” (Gal 3: 29)

symbolic and ethical factuality to the community founded by the promise. But this necessary historical constellation of factors contradicts its founding root (a hindrance to its development and a betrayal of its true function) if it does not recognize its normative subordination to it and if it does not allow itself to question, transform, and purify by its own root as the promise. The *law* that defines belonging to a community tradition (every law, in fact, Judaic or Roman, which may be the object addressed in Paul's discourse) is sin and enslavement, in the Pauline perspective, if understood as being a self-referential order, a conventional legality, as not being subject to an internal legitimation which is not constituted by other ordinances (by other historical, factual legitimities: by the other religious, ethnic, cultural, legal traditions from which the new members of the community, enlarged by its Messianic universalization, come), but by the very root of law in general, recognized as a normative matrix: its destination for the salvation of man – of every man and all humankind.¹⁴

The law, in its normative power to which the individual has to conform, is one “disciplinarian” (Gal 3: 23-25)¹⁵ that the community gives to itself to ‘teach’ and implement on an individual and public level the notion of good that is recognized by the community. However, *no* community good that is not a good for the individual who is a community member may be recognized by him as legitimate, and only a good that is such for every human being as a potential member of the community can be the subject of a universally valid and legitimate

“For this reason, it depends on faith, so that it may be a gift, and the promise may be guaranteed to all his descendants, not to those who only adhere to the law but to those who follow the faith of Abraham, who is the father of all of us, as it is written, *I have made you father of many nations.*” (Rom 4: 16-17).

¹⁴ “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption. As proof that you are children, God sent the spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying out, «Abba, Father!» So you are no longer a slave but a child, and if a child then also an heir, through God.” (Gal 4: 4-7).

¹⁵ “Before faith came, we were held in custody under law, confined for the faith that was to be revealed. Consequently, the law was our disciplinarian for Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a disciplinarian.” (Gal 3: 23-25).

law. For this, the normative law matrix can only amount to the freedom and equality¹⁶ of all the members of the community as open to all humankind.¹⁷

The ecclesiality, as a form of community belonging that bases the validity of the law (its legitimacy) on its consistency with the full recognition of the universal and solidary freedom and equality¹⁸ of every human being (as a form of universalistic communitarism) and refusing as illegitimate any form of conventional legality that is not validated by this criterion of universalization,¹⁹ results in

¹⁶ The condition of the hereditary that has come to maturity is that of full freedom and full fraternal equality. To acknowledge all men as heirs and children of God, therefore implies the abolition of every condition, illegitimate, of enslavement and inequality. Not only must Gentiles not therefore be “enslaved” to the purely conventional and peculiar rituals of Judaic tradition, but they also must be regarded as brothers of equal dignity, with the consequent removal of all ritual interdictions related to their ‘impurity’. This statutory, intercultural and interethnic recognition of the condition of equality between all men, however, must also have a material enforcement concerning the economic conditions of members of the ecclesial community. The duty of active solidarity, repeatedly emphasized in the *Acts of the Apostles* and in the Pauline and Apostolic *Letters*, derives directly from the commitment of communities to make messianic equality among men a concrete factual condition of their members. For this, says Paul, in relation to the duty of the collection: “not that others should have relief while you are burdened, but that as a matter of equality your surplus at the present time should supply their needs, so that their surplus may also supply your needs, that there may be equality. As it is written: / *“Whoever had much did not have more, / and whoever had little did not have less.”* (2 Cor 8: 13-15).

¹⁷ Because: “This means that it is not the children of the flesh who are the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted as descendants. /... / For the scripture says to Pharaoh, *This is why I have raised you up, to show my power through you that my name may be proclaimed throughout the earth. /... /* namely, us whom he has called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles.” (Rom 9: 8, 17, 24) “For Christ is the end of the law for the justification of everyone who has faith. /... / For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all, enriching all who call upon him. *For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.*” (Rom 10: 4, 12-13).

¹⁸ “For you were called for freedom, brothers. But do not use this freedom as an opportunity for the flesh; rather, serve one another through love. For the whole law is fulfilled in one statement, namely, «You shall love your neighbor as yourself.»” (Gal 5: 13-14).

¹⁹ The sovereignty that derives from this legitimation is that of a judge who is an arbitrator of peace and solidarity among peoples, the defender of the needy and of the *excluded*, is the one who makes the *outcast*, the marginalized, the foreigner, the member and cornerstone of the community, as proclaimed in Micah’s prophecy: “the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. / He shall judge between many peoples / and set terms for strong and distant nations; / They shall beat their swords into plowshares, / and their spears into pruning hooks; / One nation shall not raise the sword against another, / nor shall they train for war again. / They shall all sit under their own vines, / under their own fig trees, undisturbed; / for the Lord of hosts has spoken. / On that day—oracle of the Lord— / I will gather the lame, / And I will assemble the outcasts, / and those whom I have afflicted. / I will make of the lame a remnant, / and of the weak a strong nation; / The Lord shall be king over them on Mount Zion, / from now on and forever.” (Mic 4: 2-4, 6-7).

an exemplary regulatory paradigm to think of the question of legitimizing legal systems in terms appropriate to the peculiar problems posed in the current political framework by spheres of sovereignty broadened on the supranational field and by the tensions between different value traditions which are increasingly urged to converge upon shared norms on the one hand, and on the other the need to protect the particularities of their content with regard to technical, economic and social drivers of levelling assimilation.

If the faith given by Jesus Christ occurs in the acceptance of freedom²⁰ and the equality of every human being as a member of the universal community of the children of God (Gal 3: 26-29; 4: 4, 7),²¹ freedom from the law that originates from this faith, in the internal verification of its universality, is not the abolition of the law, as Paul incessantly stresses.²² Instead, it is overcoming a legalistic dependence on its determination as an illegitimate factuality, impermeable to the reformulation necessarily yielded by the scrutiny of its adequacy to its function. Conventional legalism, which is irreversibly broken by the word of Christ: "The sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" (Mc 2: 27), is recognized and denounced by Paul as the obstacle which prevents the opening of a community belonging generated by the promise to its communal universalization by the incorporation of traditional belongings bound to other conventional legalities²³ which are also required to abandon the particular differences that exclude them from the communion based on the fulfilment of

²⁰ "For freedom Christ set us free; so stand firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery" (Gal 5: 1) "The son of the slave woman was born naturally, the son of the freeborn through a promise. /... / But the Jerusalem above is freeborn, and she is our mother. /... / Therefore, brothers, we are children not of the slave woman but of the freeborn woman." (Gal 4: 23, 26, 31).

²¹ "For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by the slave woman and the other by the freeborn woman. The son of the slave woman was born naturally, the son of the freeborn through a promise. Now this is an allegory. These women represent two covenants. One was from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; this is Hagar." (Gal 4: 22-24) In the New Covenant the promise of freedom and equality of the Old Covenant is fulfilled, widening to embrace all humankind, in a people belonging that is no longer defined in ethnical (biologically founded) and cultural (conventionally and traditionally founded) terms, becoming universal.

²² "Does God belong to Jews alone? Does he not belong to Gentiles, too? Yes, also to Gentiles, for God is one and will justify the circumcised on the basis of faith and the uncircumcised through faith. Are we then annulling the law by this faith? Of course not! On the contrary, we are supporting the law." (Rom 3: 29-31).

²³ So that "the blessing of Abraham might be extended to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." (Gal 3: 13-14).

the promise²⁴ and to “deactivate” (recognize as subordinate) the particularistic ones, which are not relevant from the point of view of the community unit.²⁵

The Pauline universal is therefore profoundly misunderstood when interpreted as a principle of neutralizing differences: ²⁶ not being Jewish and Greek,

²⁴ Thus the Jews are required to abandon all precepts concerning the unyieldingness of non-Jews, the rigid principle of separation between communities, which characterizes their relationship (interdictive and exclusive) with other peoples (“the nations”). In order to bring about a community in which different communities are not assimilated and absorbed but united in their differences, it is not enough to avoid imposing their own values, namely their own particularistic criteria of belonging (such as circumcision), on one another. Instead, it is necessary to remove any intercommunitarian form of interdictive taboo of the other diversity. The recognition of this condition constitutes the central core of Chapters 10 and 11 of the *Acts of the Apostles* dedicated to the conversion of the Roman centurion Cornelius and to the angelic vision that leads Peter to eat at his home, breaking a rigid taboo of the Jewish religion. As Peter says to Cornelius: “«You know that it is unlawful for a Jewish man to associate with, or visit, a Gentile, but God has shown me that I should not call any person profane or unclean. And that is why I came without objection when sent for. May I ask, then, why you summoned me?»” (Acts 10: 28-29). The messianic meaning of the ‘transgression’ committed by Peter receives a direct and immediate epiphany consecration: “While Peter was still speaking these things, the holy Spirit fell upon all who were listening to the word. The circumcised believers who had accompanied Peter were astounded that the gift of the holy Spirit should have been poured out on the Gentiles also, for they could hear them speaking in tongues and glorifying God. Then Peter responded, «Can anyone withhold the water for baptizing these people, who have received the holy Spirit even as we have?» He ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” (Acts 10: 44-48) Peter tells this experience in Jerusalem, in front of the assembly of disciples of Jewish origin, troubled by his serious infringement of the Law (“So when Peter went up to Jerusalem the circumcised believers confronted him, saying, «You entered the house of uncircumcised people and ate with them.»” At 11: 2-3), underlining that the obligation to adhere to this novelty is not a betrayal of tradition, but a form of renewal imposed by its very *root*, the will of God, to which is given a messianic fulfilment in Jesus Christ: “As I began to speak, the holy Spirit fell upon them as it had upon us at the beginning, and I remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said, «John baptized with water but you will be baptized with the holy Spirit.» If then God gave them the same gift he gave to us when we came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I to be able to hinder God?” (Acts 11: 15-17).

²⁵ “For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation. Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule and to the Israel of God.” (Gal 6: 15-16).

²⁶ The paradoxical ‘particularistic peculiarity of the Pauline universal’ is at the centre of a broad debate (for an overview of this discussion, see José Tolentino Mendonça, “The Reactivation of Paul: A Critical Dialogue on Giorgio Agamben”, *Didaskalia* XLI [2011] 2, pp. 53-63), that in the last thirty years, starting from Jacob Taubes’ fundamental work, *The Political Theology of Paul* (Engl. transl. Stanford University Press, 2003. Orig. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 1993, 2003³), has re-located the thought of St. Paul to the centre of political philosophy, although with profoundly different and in some cases even divergent readings. The common recognition of the ‘non-identitarian’ character of this Pauline universalism leads in fact to alternative interpretations of the relationship between the individual and the community it formulates. While for Taubes, Paul’s discourse only authorizes a negative political theology (which delegitimizes every historically given political belong-

servant and free, man and woman of Galatians 3: 28²⁷ and of 1 Cor 12: 13²⁸ does not mean the annulment or disappearance of the social, cultural, gender and tradition-based differences. Instead, it means that just the particularistic aspects of these differences are eliminated or “deactivated” in the context of a wider inclusion process in which they coexist without being any more mutually exclusive as factors of their respective belongings.²⁹ In light of a common

ing), for Giorgio Agamben (*The Time that Remains. A Commentary on the Letter to the Romans*. Engl. transl. Stanford University Press, 2005; orig. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2000) it bases an idea of a messianic-generated community, based on the non-identity of individuals and of the community with themselves: it is the recognition of their deviation from every historically given identity that constitutes messianic belonging to a community of which one is member in virtue of one *as-if-not* which deactivates all particular identities in the *any (quodlibet)* of singularity (in other words, for Agamben the Pauline universal consists of recognizing oneself not as particular, individual, but as singular: the being that comes is the ‘anybeing’, which is not defined by any predicate, any criterium for belonging to a class – about this point, see also *The coming community*, Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2001). For Alain Badiou, in turn (see *Saint Paul. The Foundation of Universalism*. Engl. transl. Stanford University Press, 2005; orig. Collège International de philosophie. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1997), the Pauline universal is the one that dissolves every particular community belonging into the universality of a regulation of an events-based novelty that transcends givenness. Rightly pointing out that the Pauline universal is a finish line, a goal, critically questioning the *status quo* in its stifling conventionalist and idiosyncratic particularism, Badiou systematically removes, however, its community dimension. His exclusively individualistic perspective (aiming to the institution of a universalistic singularity) is nonetheless ultimately incompatible with Paul’s discourse, and – in this specific point – radically alternative to the proposal elaborated here (which in other respects is very close to Badiou’s reading), as evidenced by one of the most significant passages in Chapter I, according to which Paul’s main intuition is that the “connexion paradoxale entre un sujet sans identité et une loi sans support fonde la possibilité dans l’histoire d’une prédication universelle. Le geste inouï de Paul est de soustraire la vérité à l’emprise communautaire, qu’il s’agisse d’un peuple, d’une cité, d’un empire, d’un territoire, ou d’une classe sociale.” This view produces “la ruine de toute assignation du discours de la vérité à des ensembles historiques pré-constitués. / Séparer durement chaque processus de vérité de l’historicité «culturelle» où l’opinion prétend le dissoudre: telle est l’opération où Paul nous guide.” (*Ibid.*, 6-7).

²⁷ “For through faith you are all children of God in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free person, there is not male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s descendants, heirs according to the promise.” (Gal 3: 26-29). See also Rom 8: 14-17.

²⁸ “For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit.” See also Rom 1: 16-17: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel. It is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: for Jew first, and then Greek. For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, «The one who is righteous by faith will live.»”

²⁹ “Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, «It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life,

commitment to freedom and equality aimed at creating a unity which normatively does not discriminate between the differences but between their “impure” components, which are not likely to be included in the process of communion universalization: the sacrifice to idols that Gentiles have to give up is impure and not universalizable, because it is incompatible with the central factor of belonging which consists of the faith in the Risen Christ. On the contrary, what is not impure is non-circumcision and the non-observance of dietary and hygienic³⁰ practices that are not at the core of normativity that is relevant from the point of view of the communion universalization of the community belonging.³¹

Ecclesial universalism is a principle of unity and not of identity, a historical and eschatological principle of the convergence of diversity that triggers processes of purification, sharing, and inter-communitarian and personal inclusion, by relating to the universal from which it originates (its root) as to the point of arrival of the many (the matrix to conform) and not as a coercively assimilating, objective presupposition.

In the experience of the faith of the early communities, first formulated by Paul, the Church is the community of human beings who, in the encounter with Christ, recognize themselves as saved and therefore discover their new messianic humanity. The essential thing for Paul, therefore, is to understand (and progressively conform, not only intellectually, but in all aspects of his life as an individual and in the community) what this novelty consists of, a novelty that emancipates us from dependence on biological, ethnic and social belongings and identities (male vs. female, Jew vs. Gentile, slave vs. free person) in order to enter a state of salvation that is universal in its *deactivation* of these

we now turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us, «I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth.» / The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the word of the Lord. All who were destined for eternal life came to believe.” (Acts 13: 46-48).

³⁰ “[For] one person considers one day more important than another, while another person considers all days alike. Let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. Whoever observes the day, observes it for the Lord. Also whoever eats, eats for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God; while whoever abstains, abstains for the Lord and gives thanks to God. /... / For the kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace, and joy in the holy Spirit /... / Let us then pursue what leads to peace and to building up one another. For the sake of food, do not destroy the work of God. Everything is indeed clean, but it is wrong for anyone to become a stumbling block by eating;” (Rom 14: 5-6, 17, 19-20). See also 1 Cor 8: 1-13.

³¹ “For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.” (Gal 5: 6).

differences (they are not erased but become ineffective; they are no longer divisive and relevant in relation to the community communion around Christ).³² Christians continue to be males and females, Jews and Gentiles (Jews continue to circumcise, Gentiles continue not to do so), but these individual and group identities are insignificant with respect to belonging to the body of Christ, to the community of the saved, to the people of God, which is now irreversibly composed by many peoples.³³

The difficulty involved in bringing about this “deactivation” of particular identities in the emergence of a Messianic universality of the ecclesial body is witnessed by the terrible disagreements within the early Christian community, by the fatigue with which its members approach the effective understanding of this new condition, in the dialectics between the two poles of the James-Petrine protection of the traditional communities and of the particular identities embodied in them as well as their deactivation in communion universalization. The solution embraced by the primitive Church, on the basis of the Pauline lesson, was that of discernment:³⁴ the distinction between what is essential

³² The centrality of ritual and the coexistence practices (sharing of meals, celebration of the Eucharist) in the definition of the religious identity of the early “pre-Christian” communities and its role in characterizing the tension between “Jacobite” and “Pauline” point of view is masterfully rebuilt by Adriana Destro and Mauro Pesce in: “L’identité des croyants en Jésus au I^{er} siècle: Le cas de Paul de Tarse. Inclusion et exclusion”, in N. Belayche – S. C. Mimouni (éd.), *Entre lignes de partage et territoires de passage. Les identités religieuses dans les mondes grec et romain. “Paganismes”, “judaïsmes”, “christianismes”* (Louvain: Peeters, 2009), pp. 409-435. The authors emphasize that the inclusion-exclusion polarity, inherent dimension of belonging to a religious community, is structured in the Pauline discourse in relation to liturgical and community practices that define the two identity markers of “holiness” and “fraternity” in full continuity with the Jewish tradition of origin, but seeing it as open to the plurality of multiple historical identities. Communion and service (*koinonia* and *diakonia*) are, for Paul, the two essential functions of ecclesial belonging, which derive from the condition of holiness and fraternity of its members instituted by the Grace of the Spirit.

³³ Or “as in one body we have many parts, and all the parts do not have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ and individually parts of one another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us exercise them: if prophecy, in proportion to the faith” (Rom 12: 4-6). “Is Christ divided?” (1 Co 1: 13).

³⁴ It is important to remember that if afterwards Christianity came to finally break away from Judaism as a ‘separate’ religion, its fidelity to the Old Testament root and the clear affirmation that the God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New one and that the New Covenant does not replace the Old one but instead fulfils it, has remained a firm point of ecclesial belonging.

to the definition of the value particularity which constitutes the content core of belonging and what is accessory. The renunciation of sacrifice to idols is mandatory as a sign of recognition of the fact that the only foundation of the legitimizing normativity of the community belonging is its destination for the good of each and everyone.³⁵ On the contrary, such prescriptions as circumcision and dietary rules are accessory,³⁶ non-mandatory, being purely ritual and non-sacramental signs of belonging to tradition: signs that point to a historically specific conjugation to be integrated communionally in its evolutionarily universalizing self-understanding),³⁷ Discernment is the capacity of matricially distinguishing between the normative content on which legitimacy of the root-tradition is founded and its conventional content, which constitutes its 'pedagogical' dimension, subordinate and 'available', spatially, temporally and culturally contextual conjugation of conventional legality.³⁸

This went against all tendencies (starting from Marcionism, these were recognized as 'heretical' and non-ecclesial) claiming to consume separation as a substitution and as an annulment of the root by the matrix.

³⁵ "At a time when you did not know God, you became slaves to things that by nature are not gods; but now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and destitute elemental powers? Do you want to be slaves to them all over again? You are observing days, months, seasons, and years." (Gal 4: 8-10) See also 1 Cor 8: 4-6 and At 15: 19-20, 28.

³⁶ See the discussion on circumcision in the Council of Jerusalem and the solution adopted, justified in the speeches of Peter and James, which reconciles in a formula of unity the Jamesian-Petrine requirement for the protection of the particularity of tradition and the Pauline instance of its inter-communitarian universalization: "And God, who knows the heart, bore witness by granting them the holy Spirit just as he did us. He made no distinction between us and them, for by faith he purified their hearts. Why, then, are you now putting God to the test by placing on the shoulders of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they." (Acts 15: 8-11 for Peter's discourse and 13-21 for James' discourse.)

³⁷ "And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal on the righteousness received through faith while he was uncircumcised. Thus he was to be the father of all the uncircumcised who believe, so that to them [also] righteousness might be credited, as well as the father of the circumcised who not only are circumcised, but also follow the path of faith that our father Abraham walked while still uncircumcised." (Rom 4: 11-12).

³⁸ As pointed out by James in his address to the assembly of the Council of Jerusalem: "Symeon has described how God first concerned himself with acquiring from among the Gentiles a people for his name. The words of the prophets agree with this, as is written: /... / «so that the rest of humanity may seek out the Lord, / even all the Gentiles on whom my name is invoked. / Thus says the Lord who accomplishes these things, / known from of old.» It is my judgment, therefore, that we ought to stop troubling the Gentiles who turn to God." (Acts 15: 14-15, 17-19).

The Church of the later centuries underwent a push for the assumption of social functions of substitution and for the federalization around a single centre (originally territorially identified as Jerusalem and later functionally as the Petrine primacy), which was increasingly conceived as a sovereign power rather than as a pole of convergence in the universalizing unity. This centre thus stiffened itself gradually in a dogmatic self-definition as the head of the mystical Body (vicar of the mystical Head, Christ himself – Col 1: 18), draining into the canonical discipline and the organizational structure of the priestly ministry as a clerical power³⁹ involving the intense difficulty of the *conformation of earthly man to heavenly man* (1 Cor 15: 45-49), of *natural* human being (imprisoned in particular historical identities and objectified as definitive and self-sufficient outwardnesses, impermeable to the universalizing force of the Spirit)⁴⁰ to the *spiritual*, messianic one ('redeemed', liberated from these identities as being able to transform them by the power of Grace).⁴¹ Rather than being seen as a convergence pole in the universalizing unity, the centre (the Petrine primacy) has come to be conceived of as a sovereign power in the verticalization of communion into hierarchical centralism.

In recovering the density and wealth of the process of self-definition of the early Church, and in reconstructing the spiritual, theological and ethical steps that characterize it, it is therefore important in order to re-establish both a non-clerical and non-confessional self-understanding of the Church (as the people of God being constantly on the road to a state of sanctity, a condition that is reductively understood as something exclusively moral but is more profoundly spiritual, of fulfilment of the truly universal status of God's children), and the relapse that this can have for the role of the Church as an "expert on humanity".

³⁹ According to a vision of the pastoral and doctrinal magisterium very different from that put forth by Paul: "Not that we lord it over your faith; rather, we work together for your joy, for you stand firm in the faith." (2 Cor 1: 24).

⁴⁰ Cf. 1 Cor 15: 44-50: "This I declare, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does corruption inherit incorruption." (1 Cor 15: 50).

⁴¹ "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. All of us, gazing with unveiled face on the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord who is the Spirit." (2 Cor 3: 17-18) "Consequently, from now on we regard no one according to the flesh; even if we once knew Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know him so no longer. So whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold, new things have come." (2 Cor 5: 16-17).

In view of its vocation to an ever fuller ecclesiality (to an ever more perfect communion of its members with Christ), the Church recognizes itself not as the depository of truth on man but as the guardian of the Truth of man: the Truth in which man becomes himself, the Truth to which man is on the road as the realization of his full humanity.

In this light, recognizing, on the basis of the paradigm of ecclesial universalization, that man is on the way towards his own universality (his humanity is not a previous universal to be 'applied', bending pre-existing identities, but a novelty to be welcomed within these identities, discovering and enhancing in them the potential of redeemed humanity: free, egalitarian and fraternally solidary), the Church's contribution to human civilization can no longer be seen as the compaction of the various historical traditions around an axiological and cultural unitarian device (possibly the one expressed by Western society), but as the process of universalization of conventional, particular identities, without eliminating them. What is instead eliminated and deactivated are self-referential, divisive and exclusive components in order to open them up to inclusive dynamics of communal integration⁴² in inter-communitarian identities.⁴³

This deeper messianic understanding of the relationship of the human condition with Truth as its root and matrix – genetic but also normatively and eschatologically transforming, to be achieved and accomplished – makes it possible to take a step forward with respect to the problematic and risky adoption

⁴² "Only, everyone should live as the Lord has assigned, just as God called each one. I give this order in all the churches. Was someone called after he had been circumcised? He should not try to undo his circumcision. Was an uncircumcised person called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision means nothing, and uncircumcision means nothing; what matters is keeping God's commandments. Everyone should remain in the state in which he was called. /... / Brothers, everyone should continue before God in the state in which he was called." (1 Cor 7: 17-20, 24) See also 1 Cor 9: 20-23: "To the Jews I became like a Jew to win over Jews; to those under the law I became like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win over those under the law. To those outside the law I became like one outside the law—though I am not outside God's law but within the law of Christ—to win over those outside the law." (*Ibid.*, 20-21).

⁴³ This is the political-cultural paradigm expressed in the *Epistle to Diognetus*: "For the Christians are distinguished from other men neither by country, nor language, nor the customs which they observe. For they neither inhabit cities of their own, nor employ a peculiar form of speech, nor lead a life which is marked out by any singularity. /... / They pass their days on earth, but they are citizens of heaven. They obey the prescribed laws, and at the same time surpass the laws by their lives." (V, 1-2, 9-10).

of the natural-law-paradigm of human rights as an anthropological universal one, of which the Church should become a representative, proclaiming itself to be a kind of container of universals of which it must be a protector and jealous dispenser to humankind. The anthropological magisterium of the Church is in fact misunderstood in this framework as the dogmatic crystallization of a value patrimony (principally not negotiable because interests are negotiated, not values) that is to be transmitted⁴⁴ rather than to be received, to represent rather than to allow germinate and develop in history as messianic novelty.

Recognized not as a container of universals, but as a factor of the universalization of human cultures that open to it, leaving it to *conform*, Christian faith proposes the Truth to men as being the universal that generates us and to whose light we recognize the universal of our human being rather as a point of arrival (of my experience of life, meaning) than as a starting point: the universal to which the Word is “way” (John 14: 4-6).⁴⁵ It is the form of redeemed humanity that comes from the adherence to the advent of salvation and to the sacramental participation in the redemptive action of Christ in favour of all men.

The paradigm of ecclesiality transmitted by the experience of the early Church clearly shows that participating in ecclesial communion does not mean that all become the same, that the universalizing principle is not a criterion of identity but of unity: of convergence of the diversities in a common principle of legitimation. It is in remaining different that the “many peoples” (“the many nations”) become a single people. The ecclesial one is a unity of plurality and not of identity (of many charismas, of many identities, of many communities);

⁴⁴ Against the error of reducing the announcement of a doctrine, the truth of which the Church is a sign and tool for dogmatic knowledge, see again the *Epistle to Diognetus*: “The course of conduct which they [the Christians] follow has not been devised by any speculation or deliberation of inquisitive men; nor do they, like some, proclaim themselves the advocates of any merely human doctrines.” (V, 3).

⁴⁵ In the *Acts of the Apostles*, embracing the Gospel is explicitly designated as “the Way”: Apollos, a Jew of Alexandria, arrived in Ephesus and “had been instructed in the Way of the Lord /... / [W]hen Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the Way (of God) more accurately.” (Acts 18: 25-26). And in his speech to the governor of Caesarea, also reported by the *Acts of the Apostles*, Paul calls “the Way” the community that will be baptized as Christian in Antioch (Acts 11: 26): “But this I do admit to you, that according to the Way, which they call a sect, I worship the God of our ancestors and I believe everything that is in accordance with the law and written in the prophets.” (Acts 24: 14).

it is communion and not levelling assimilation. Ecclesial communion does not arise by dissolving the content-determined particularity of good in the formal universal of law, but in recognizing what given particularities have in common, which makes them part of a single body in the diversity of mutually irreducible, non-equivalent, non-interchangeable, irreplaceable limbs.⁴⁶ Joining does not suppress the particularity, but instead activates its communal power of openness to the other, to the other particularities, in the individuation and generation of what is shareable with them.

Ecclesiality as a historical paradigm of the principle of universalization of community belonging: the activation of *inclusion as inclusiveness*

By synthesising these observations concerning the history and the self-understanding of the early Church, as the root and universal matrix of ecclesiality – concerning the self-understanding of Christian churches, in its complex intertwinement of both historicity and universality –,⁴⁷ we can extrapolate some

⁴⁶ “As a body is one though it has many parts, and all the parts of the body, though many, are one body, so also Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free persons, and we were all given to drink of one Spirit. /... / But as it is, God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended.

If they were all one part, where would the body be? But as it is, there are many parts, yet one body. /... / [S]o that there may be no division in the body, but that the parts may have the same concern for one another. If [one] part suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part is honored, all the parts share its joy.” (1 Co 12: 12-13, 18-20, 25-26).

⁴⁷ The need to draw on the Church’s self-understanding of the origins as the *root* and *matrix* of the authentic formulation of ecclesiality is linked to the fact that the historical self-understanding of Christian churches has also been strongly influenced (modelled) by factors outside this *root-matrix*: the historical conditions that led to Christianity being a State religion of the Roman Empire from the time of Constantine (for more than a thousand years in the Eastern Empire), then assuming the autonomous functions of the political regime in the Middle Ages (with the Pope-King and Bishops Counts), and subsequently negotiating in the modern age a status of an ‘alternative’ or complementary social organization to the State (as an outcome of the institutionalization of Christian churches as confessions), have somewhat concealed the principle of ecclesiality in the *radical* and *matricial* purity of its derivation from the Word of God as the origin and form of the Christian community.

basic elements that help us to reconstruct the logic of the community belonging in general, in the link between its general social function (belonging) and the particular criteria that determine it at any particular time.

The *root* is – organically and metaphorically – the condition of origin and of subsistence of a being, of a ‘living’ entity. The *matrix* is that original condition in its giving form to being. The matrix is the root as a morphological function. It is the root as a form that shapes what it gives birth to. Every community, recognized as being ‘living’, dynamic, moving and in perpetual transformation, has a root – a source – that is also its matrix, reason and the key to its identity. Properly reconstructing the dialectics between these two moments is essential in order to focus on the logic of community belonging. This clears the field from the equivocation that generally affects the perception of the constitutive and ineliminable particularity of the belonging criteria as particularism, that is, as a condition refractory to all universalizing dynamics, which would bring about its self-dissolution.

Guided by the historical and exegetical considerations gathered on the self-understanding of the *ratio* of the Christian community belonging as ecclesiality, we can therefore propose as a working hypothesis the following conclusion: ecclesiality enunciates inclusiveness, that is, the principle of universalistic inclusion, potentially extensible to every human being as the normative criterion of legitimization of any community belonging that aspires to be universally valid (that is, consistent with its social function), thereby in turn qualifying as universal any universally valid community belonging that is potentially extensible to all humankind.

In other words, the genetic root of community belonging, inclusion, must understand itself as a normative matrix of universalization of belonging, as inclusiveness, in order to activate itself as a principle of legitimation.

As it is incompatible with every particularism, that is, with every aprioristic exclusionary criterion, and thus turning out as a principle of inclusion of all particularities, ecclesiality is instanced as an exemplary historical manifestation of inclusiveness. It presents itself as a factor of critical discrimination and purifying construction of historically-given community belongings, as a driver for testing and promoting the potential of inclusive universalization of the particular inclusion criteria that define the pre-existing community bond. In order to be legitimate, any historically given, content-determined communitarian bond must be compatible with a consistent, non-self-contradictory, and hence universal

notion of inclusion as inclusiveness. In other words: every content-determined criterion that defines a community belonging condition must be compatible with its social function of inclusion, otherwise, it is illegitimate because it is 'dysfunctional'.

As a historical form of a community belonging that claims to be universally valid and universal, activating a dynamic of protection of the particularity of the community belonging by way of its purification from every particularism, ecclesiality, as the formula of universal communal unity determined in the doctrinal self-understanding and in the historical experience of the early Church, can be a reference paradigm for the reconstruction of the constituent dynamics of community belonging. Indeed, if community belonging consists of the inclusion of its members (in other words: if the general social function of community belonging is the inclusion of its members), its founding principle is inclusion and not exclusion, so that the latter is compatible with community inclusion only as a derivative fact and as a particular criterion, not as a constitutive principle. This is due to the fact that it contradicts the basic principle (the genetic root) of belonging.

More concretely, legitimation models of community belonging based on an exclusion criterion, because they are determined by a logic of competition (Schmittian friendship/enemy dialectics, the agonistic *ratio* that is the basis of the interagency relations in the market economy, in sport, etc.) or by the discriminating relevance of an identity quality (family, race, gender, class, etc.) are acceptable (legitimate, consistent with their functional root) only (a) insofar as they are recognized as being related to particular spheres of coexistence (they are recognized as merely associative and not communitarian) and only (b) when they are not incompatible with the universalization of the principle of community inclusion as an inclusiveness open to every human being.

Such community (associative) belongings, defined by exclusion criteria, are legitimate, non-sectarian, particular and non-particularistic, and are not in contradiction to their foundational principle, when they subordinate the criterion of exclusion to the superior validity of the principle of inclusion, recognizing that the former is dependent and limited by the second to a specific and conditional pertinence: the exclusion criterion can therefore neither 1) be generalizeable to a general form of coexistence (because it is applicable only in a content-restricted sphere of coexistence: it must be recognized as being simply associative and not as being comprehensively communitarian) nor 2) teleologically

oriented to the elimination of the excluded; nor 3) axiologically marked as the inferiority of the excluded.

In the context of belongings as determined by sports competition (teams, clubs, federations, fan clubs, etc.), for example, we have forms of inclusion determined by an exclusion criterion (the '*social ratio*' of a sports entity is the race: there is an 'external' against whom we compete) which is fully legitimate because it is subordinated to the superior validity of the principle of inclusion on the basis of the three factors of the *sectoriality*, of the *axiological equivalence of the excluded* and of the *interdependence from its subsistence*. Belonging to an associative entity based on the criterion of sports competition is self-disrupting if 1) it is not recognized as being limited to sports activity (the social scope of belonging is so sectorial that it is merely associative and not fully communitarian), and if it does not accept 2) and 3), because the elimination of the opponent puts an end to the competition, while the non-equivalence of the opponent invalidates it (there is no competition with opponents whose inferiority is postulated *a priori*: inferiority must be the result of the race). The fairness of the confrontation on a plane of equality is the law that makes the award a prize in its own right. Unfair competition destroys the race, eliminating the 'pleasure', which is the essential dimension of sporting activity, underlining how it is a form of 'art'. This 'free', 'gratifying', 'graceful', exhibition of community logic is one of the main elements that makes sport – paradoxically, thanks to and not despite its agonistic nature – an extraordinary educational device for sociality, performatively implementing the subordination of the exclusive dimension to the inclusive one.

In sport, therefore, the exclusive principle of conflictuality is structurally subordinate to that of inclusiveness, 'purifying' itself into competition and agonism. The elimination and inferiorization of the excluded (which are respectively the teleological and the axiological reasons underpinning war) are incompatible with the logic of the competition, which is exclusive but at the same time limited and conditioned by superior inclusiveness.

This threefold subordination also applies in the case of systemic (non-communitarian) forms of association determined by economic competition (limited to the sphere of the market): monopoly (the elimination of the competitor), for example, ends the competition and therefore the market. The result is thus incompatible with its subsistence and therefore illegitimate (tolerable only in specific cases and only for political reasons, i.e. in the view of reasons for social

inclusion that are higher because more general). The rational condition of self-consistency of the social function of inclusion rules its systemic shortcuts too.

Similarly, the forms of community belonging that are determined by the discrimination of a non-optional identity quality, yielded by an unalterable biological, social or historical fact (birth, gender,⁴⁸ race, ethnicity, blood or soil), that are established on the basis of an insuperable exclusionary criterion determined by the absence of the property in question, are only legitimate if they are compatible with the three criteria of subordination to the higher principle of inclusiveness: sectoriality, axiological equivalence and interdependence from the existence of the excluded. A religious congregation of only men or women, a club of retirees or teenagers, the league of diabetes patients, State citizenship attributed by filiation or birth within the national territory, are all forms of community belonging principally not universalizeable to every human being. However, they are legitimate because they lose their reason to exist if outsiders are lacking (the subsistence of the community as such is qualified by the subsistence of the excluded), provided that they do not become sectarian belongings that disregard their sectorial profile (claiming pertinences wider than the restricted ones defined by the selected identity properties) and by postulating a value qualification of exclusion (for this reason, for example, the rule of law knows a strengthening rather than a weakening of its legitimacy in extending the criteria for granting citizenship to optional factors such as a prolonged stay in the country, thus expanding the juridical relevance of one's own historical category of citizenship – essentially associative – into a more comprehensive principle of belonging to a political community).

Community belongings based on competing and non-optional identity qualities that claim a social scope wider than the one selected or which make these two exclusion criteria a teleological orientation to the suppression of the outsider and/or a factor of his axiological de-qualification, such as the case, for example, of racist communities such as white supremacists, is illegitimate because the exclusion criterion on which they are based is in contradiction with the principle of inclusion that defines community belonging, because it is not subordinate to it.

⁴⁸ Since it is assigned by genetic heritage, this is an 'unalterable' quality. However, given current shifts in medical progress and a legal evolution of the definition of gender, it can no longer be considered as being *non-optional*.

For this reason, all the (para-Schmittian) attempts to establish the legitimacy of the sovereignty of a political community on the basis of an exclusionary criterion such as the friend/enemy dialectics are inconsistent (and hence illegitimate), even if it is conceived of as being competitive, agonistic and having non-war dynamics (i.e. based on the axiological equivalence and interdependency from the subsistence of the excluded), because the general social scope of community belonging defined in relation to political sovereignty – either State or another order – is irreducible to the only sectorial compatibility of the criterion of competitive exclusion with the principle of inclusion. The competition criterion can only legitimize particular belonging (associative) and non-orderly social coexistence, because its generalization contradicts its subordination to the principle of inclusion.

On the genetic primacy of the principle of inclusion over the exclusionary one as the root of community belonging (as its primary social function) also depends on the fact that this belonging necessarily implies the equality and freedom of its members. Any form of inequality is in fact a form of exclusion (a form of violation of the genetic root of belonging as inclusion), and there is no full equality without the full freedom of all the subjects involved (any form of enslavement violates the equality of members).

This consideration introduces a further (*matricial*) regulatory criterion of the consistency, and therefore legitimacy, of any particular form of community belonging in relation to its genetic root. It points out that it also forms community belonging based on univocally inclusive criteria that must be critically tested in light of the principle of inclusiveness, which is a criterion for verifying the compatibility of particular, historically given, inclusion criteria, with a universal, non-self-contradictory, formulation of the inclusion principle.

This means that only particular inclusion criteria that prove to be a) compatible with the full equality and freedom of all members or b) universalizable in itself (since it is, at least potentially, inclusive of the whole humankind) or compatible with universal inclusion principles (that is, that are not irreconcilable with the principles of universal inclusion and therefore accessible to every human being) can be accepted as a device of legitimizing general (and non-sectorial) forms of coexistence: of universal or universally valid community belongings.

The distinction between universality (to be open to all humankind) and universal validity (to be universally non-exclusive and open to every human being)

as different spheres of legitimacy of the community belonging sifted through by the principle of inclusiveness is essential in recognizing the processual nature of this principle and in recognizing the fact that it is nothing but the activation of the root as the matrix, of the genetic principle of inclusion not as universality, but as a factor of universalization, both in the intra-communitarian and inter-communitarian sphere.

As a factor of the critical test and active promotion of their status of universal validity, the principle of inclusiveness checks historically-given community belongings on the basis of their consistency with the principle of inclusion, requiring the removal of particular criteria that result in particularistic (exclusive) and promoting the strengthening and the broadening of genuinely inclusive criteria and mechanisms (which increase cohesion and at the same time the accessibility of belonging, as guaranteed by all solidarity and reciprocity devices). In particular, the principle of inclusiveness establishes that a historically-given community belonging can be considered as not being contradictory to itself because it is exempt from any exclusivity (and can therefore be considered universally valid and legitimate), if it is compatible with the double requirement of the principle of inclusiveness (of the universalistic formulation of the principle of inclusion):

a) None of the criteria defining it constitutes an infringement of the principle of equality and freedom of its members.

b) The community belonging in question is accessible to every human being because no criterion of principle excludes them as human beings.

In other words, it is universally valid and legitimate, without being universal – broadened to all humankind –, a non-sectorial communitarian belonging (not purely associative, because it constitutes a general form of social coexistence) that does not exclude in principle any human being and does not violate the equality and the freedom of its members.

By scrutinizing the legitimacy of historically-given community belongings in the light of this double requirement, the principle of inclusiveness unfolds as a factor of universalization that does not yield an elimination or an assimilative dissolution of the content-bound particularities of community belonging in the name of a principle of superior validity. The criterion is immanent to the communities, to their inclusive dynamics, which is not overcome but strengthened by the universality test, which expels or corrects only the particularistic criteria of belonging that are contradictory to inclusion.

The principle of inclusiveness does not function as an external criterion, based on a heterogeneous *ratio* to that of the community, coercively overlapping the particular dynamic of the community to subordinate it to universalistic legitimation principles of ahistorical, rationalistic and abstract nature, possibly calibrated on individualistic law categories. Instead, it turns out to be a confirmatory and emancipatory activation device of the genetic dynamics of community belongings in their expression as traditions and as a critical criterion inherent to the very process of making and preserving the community in the diachronic and synchronous horizon of their historical existence.

In order to be legitimized in light of these two requirements of universalization, concrete community belongings do not have to undergo a levelling process of mutual assimilation and uniformation. The particularity of their concrete content determinations remains fully safeguarded, to the extent that it is not particularistic or exempt from any mechanism of exclusion.

The test that particular community traditions undergo in this immanent dynamics of self-legitimation does not subordinate them to a higher principle of universality, which de-potentiates them as being irrelevant or inadequate if not radically incompatible with the *ratio* of legitimation of the public space of social coexistence (as happens for example, in the context of a *laïcité* which reserves the civil legitimation of the public space of coexistence to the absolute monopoly of the Republican order of politics). The plurality of particular community belongings is, from the point of view of their legitimacy in light of the immanent principle of inclusiveness, an indispensable dimension of social coexistence which cannot be conceived as being the total uniformation of legitimacy on the basis of a monologue criterion of normativity (which would eliminate the plurality of different value representations and their aspiration to shape general coexistence forms, possibly mutually exclusive on the plane of contents), but as the multiplicity of content-determined representations of good and of their implementation as communitarian forms of coexistence.

The particularity of the concrete criteria of community belonging (expressed by content-determined value representations) is not abolished by the legitimization test of their universalizability, but merely scrutinized from the point of view of its compatibility with the principle of inclusion that functionally substantiates that belonging. So, for example, if wearing the veil is understood to be an indicator of a woman's community belonging (it is a sign of her own Islamic faith), it is fully consistent with the principle of inclusion, and is therefore fully legitimate.

If, on the other hand, wearing the veil is understood as a sign of a woman's submission to man, it violates the equality of members within the community and is therefore illegitimate not only from an individual human rights point of view but also from a community point of view that examines the requirements posed by the principle of inclusion.

The universalistic legitimation of the historical richness of religious, cultural and political belongings, in their infinite variety of form and content, does not erase or diminish their variety, nor does it in itself judge the intrinsic consistency of the value representations they are based on (the choice between animism and polytheism or monotheism, between republic and monarchy, is not in question). Instead, it simply examines the compatibility of the criteria of belonging respectively recognized by them along with the principle founding their belonging. For example, the plurality of religious and political rituals (such as the celebration of national holidays) is, from this point of view, a fact to be welcomed and protected. It invalidates, on the contrary, as illegitimate all of the rituals that result in human sacrifices, disabling mutilations, or degrading and humiliating processes should not, i.e. rituals that violate body and moral integrity and therefore the equality of (current or potential) members of the group. Particular and non-particularistic belonging criteria (i.e. criteria applicable to every human being) include religious food regulations (such as the ban on drinking alcohol, respect for Ramadan, Kosher food)⁴⁹. On the contrary, particularistic, illegitimate, criteria include those involving internal discrimination of members of the group (such as inequality among the sexes) or external discrimination of non-members of the group (such as the multiple prohibitions affecting non-Muslims in many Arab countries).

It is important to emphasize once again that the illegitimacy of criteria recognized as particularistic (not universalizeable) is not determined by ethical or legal norms outside of the community belonging itself, but by the internal *ratio* of

⁴⁹ The legitimacy of halal slaughter, prescribed by Jews and Muslims, is contested by a part of public opinion because it is made according to rules (the animal's lack of stunning before slaughter: the animal must be conscious during bleeding) that do not protect the welfare of animals by inflicting on them unnecessary suffering. Given that this form of ritual slaughter obviously does not violate the principle of the inclusion of members of the community (since the animals do not enjoy in fact or in principle such a statute) and is therefore legitimate from the point of view of community belonging, the discussion on this point can only be based on criteria that are 'external' to such a claim of legitimation (such as the rights of animals as living and sentient beings), criteria whose validity is not necessarily implicated by the belonging itself.

community belonging yielded by criteria that are particular due to the fact that they are content-determined. The religious, cultural and political rules that are incompatible with the principle of inclusion on which the community belonging is based are illegitimate in this respect because they contradict their very social function: they are inconsistent from the point of view of the community membership they found. No particular community therefore has the right to escape the process of critical scrutiny of the legitimacy of their belonging criteria, because they implement a principle of inclusion with which they must be compatible. No particular criterion determining belonging is exempt from the legitimation instance represented by the activation of its genetic root, namely inclusion, as a normative matrix, and as the consistency criterion of the application of the principle itself in terms of inclusiveness.

A community whose belonging criteria are not entirely consistent with the principle of inclusion (and the requirements set by it) is not universally valid as a community: it is in contradiction with its social function and hence its constituent principle.

This instance of intra-communitarian legitimacy represented by the universalization of the genetic root of belonging, the principle of inclusion, as a matrix, as inclusiveness, also functions as an instance of inter-communitarian legitimation, resulting in a normative principle of validation of the relations between particular community belongings.

The universalizing dynamics of community particularity, its intrinsic logic of progressive purification from every particularism in the preservation of its content determination, makes community belonging a vector of, and not a hindrance to, ethical and legal universalization, activating the self-understanding of community belonging as non-exclusive inclusion, i.e. promoting communal, participative, sharing dynamics, in which particularity is recognized as alterity and not as extraneousness, as difference rather than as division and separation, and as a dimension of plurality and not of conflict.

The permanent exercise of self-legitimation by particular communities promotes the identification of possible common spheres of legitimacy among particular communities, which can be found both in the case of 1) *similarity* and 2) *cardinality of intersection* between the communities themselves and, finally, of 3) *sociality of intersection*. The push for the construction of common legitimation spheres arises when different community belongings have 1) similar systemic pertinence of social function (religious, political, economic, cultural

pertinence); and, if belongings, although dissimilar in the systemic pertinence of their social function, hold 2) partial coincidence of members (because all members of a community are principally holders of multiple memberships, related proportionately to the degree of social complexity); or exhibit 3) an objective interdependence in relation to the fulfilment of its own functionality.

Such determination of common spheres of legitimacy among particular communities, which is the result of widening the sharing of common criteria of belonging – of communal inclusion –, is a result of the self-legitimation process of the communities, which represents a strengthening (in their inter-communitarian enlargement), and not a weakening, of the particular criteria of legitimacy.

In this line of mutual and shared inter-communitarian legitimacy, individual communities do not develop as self-referential monads that are impermeable to any process of integration with other communities. Instead, they recognize in the identification of membership criteria shared with other communities a consolidation mode of their own legitimacy fostered by the widening of its sphere of inclusion. This dynamics of communal integration does not mean an erosion, a reduction, or even an elimination of its own particularity (in subordination to an external universalization criterion). Instead, it results in the differentiation between particularistic, idiosyncratic particularities, and particularities shared with other communities, on the ground of a recognized common criterion of legitimacy. Under the umbrella of these shared particular criteria, non-shared, idiosyncratic particularities are not deleted but 'deactivated': they are recognized as irrelevant in relation to these common inclusion criteria, which circumscribe areas of inter-communitarian belonging.

For example, the form of government in force in a State, be it monarchical or republican, is a particular criterion for belonging to a given political community which is not relevant from the point of view of its inter-communitarian belonging to a wider sphere of inclusion. European Union Member States include those with monarchical, republican, semi-presidentialist, parliamentary, chancellorship, etc. regimes. These regimes are either unitary or federal, unicameral or bicameral and have either one-shift or double-turn, majority or proportional electoral systems. All these differences, which are politically decisive in themselves, are not relevant from the point of view of the inter-communitarian, common political legitimacy that is underpinned by legal principles, regulations, representative bodies and governmental devices (of the exercise of sovereignty)

they share as members of the European Union. Other differences are, on the contrary, relevant to this legitimacy concerning the respect for democratic rule, so that the Union can actually impose sanctions on Member States that pass specific laws that are incompatible with the common norms of the Union.

Likewise, ritual and theological differences between Christian Churches are not dissolved, but are not relevant from the point of view of a common faith in Jesus Christ within the framework of institutionally established historical traditions. These constitute the qualifying principle of a common legitimacy to converge into inter-communitarian organs such as the Ecumenical Council of the Churches, which are aimed at the communal universalization of their respective community belongings. Common legitimation criteria are identified for the purpose of building enlarged spheres for the sharing of principles and theological and ecclesial practices.

Many peoples: diversity and inter-communitarian communion

In the language of Paul, each member of the Church continues to be Jewish or Greek, Roman or 'Barbarian', man or woman. However, these differences (and the corresponding different criteria of community belonging) are distinct from, and are not pertinent to, the belonging criteria recognized as being common by new inter-communitarian belongings, which bind not just individuals but also pre-existing particular communities. In the case of Christians, the principle of faith in the Risen Christ joined the members of Jewish and pagan communities in the diversity of their religious path of meeting and ritual enculturation. In the case of sport associations, the recognition of common rules (along with related membership of an association that organizes and stipulates this recognition, carrying out sanctions and enforcement) plays this inter-communitarian role. In the case of different State citizenships, it is the juridical recognition of a cluster of common principles, rules and rights (along with related membership to international organizations configured on the basis of the agreement on their respective normative pertinence) that founds the inter-communitarian belonging. The degree of institutional organization, normativity and the legal obligations attributed to these common legitimation devices is extremely variable depending on the type of belonging (associative, political, scientific, religious, etc.)

and the degree of universality and social complexity. It is important to point out that the rate of axiological normativity is not directly proportional to that of the legal obligation. For example, it is very high in religious and scientific belongings, but, outside the theocracies, its legal obligation is minor.

FIFA is not the UN, so to speak, and the International Criminal Court is not the IMF. The European Union is neither the OECD nor the Ecumenical Council of Churches, but the principle common to these organs is the recognition by particular communities of a common sphere of legitimacy (rules and shared belonging criteria) that do not imply the deletion of particular belongings. Instead it involves their redefinition in relation to this common inter-communitarian belonging, with the related transfer of a share of idiosyncratic self-determination in favour of a participatory self-determination process: as regards the specific sphere delimited by shared legitimation criteria, particular communities join together under a principle of inter-communitarian self-inclusion where their self-determination is conjugated in a process of participatory deliberation and not in a practice of exclusive self-sufficiency.

This communal dynamics of inter-communitarian legitimation, of recognition and effective implementation of common criteria of legitimacy is, of course, very different depending on whether it takes place on the basis of similarity, cardinality or sociality of intersection (interdependence) respectively.

Inter-communitarian similarity

The similarity of the social pertinence favours the inter-communitarian integration of particular belongings, especially given that integrating on the level of legitimation processes objectively benefits the social interests inherent in such belonging. The working, economic or sporting profile of a diverse constellation of memberships, for example, is a driver in fostering an associative union. Sports federations, trade unions, employers and consumers organizations, and professional federations are among the most successful inter-communitarian aggregations and combine the legitimation push with the strategic one of a common defence and promotion of their own interests.

However, the similarity of social pertinence can also be a divisive factor, triggering mechanisms of competitive and non-synergistic alterity. This is not convertible to a logic of strategic interest because it is axiologically unconditional

and symbolically saturated. The more existential and central the belonging is, the greater its 'self-sufficiency' is, as well as its inter-communitarian non-integrability. It is in objective tension with its social function of inclusion. At this regard, a conspicuous example are religious belongings, for which the sphere of potential common criteria of legitimation is very wide (starting from the postulate that community belonging is a condition of *individual* salvation). However, its recognition is restrained and conditioned by the exclusive radicality of the central criterion of belonging: the ritual, ethical and dogmatic device on which it is based and which determines an essential incompatibility with similar community belongings. The violence historically associated with religious belonging, which has often understood itself and behaved as being in conflict with alternative similar belongings, is not an absolute implication of that belonging. It is rather a possible consequence of its fundamentally axiological nature (derived from content-determined notions of primary good and metaphysically relevant truth), which is not subordinable either to strategic deliberations or to argumentative universalization of a formalist kind.

The objective interest of social communities in the peaceful coexistence of religious belongings, which evidently also depends on their recognition of common self-legitimation criteria, is an important factor in the promotion of this logic of inter-communitarian self-inclusion, which is inherent in the very dynamics of self-legitimation of community belonging from the point of view of its social function of inclusion. However, the axiologically unconditional character of the central criterion of religious community belonging always runs the risk of degenerating into conflictual radicalization, closing in exclusivist intransigence.

The interest in social peace on the part of particular political communities can therefore push (historically, they have occasionally pushed) for the neutralization of the public relevance of the community belonging criteria (for example religious ones) that are potentially divisive in their competitive and exclusive alterity. This is the Jacobin model of *laïcité*. However, the promotion of inter-communitarian integration processes, typical of political regimes of religious freedom, is much more fruitful and coherent when combined with a symmetrical interest in cultural and value plurality as an essential condition for freedom and self-regenerating vitality of a society. The reinforcement of self-legitimation processes, not their public removal, in critical comparison with alternative instances, guarantees healthy, non-sectarian, non-fundamentalist community belongings that are capable of renewing themselves in processes of

universalizing validation of their inclusion criteria. The mutual dialogic scrutiny of their respective axiological criteria in the context of argumentative but also performative and symbolic self-representation practices, as well as in the context of social interaction situations (sharing social projects, solidarity actions, conservative and emancipatory social and cultural initiatives), is an essential guarantee of the effective normative activation of the principle of inclusion as inclusiveness by particular community belongings in the universalizing dynamics of self-legitimation processes.

Inter-communitarian cardinality of intersection

The interest of the social community as a whole in encouraging processes of inter-communitarian inclusion as a condition of peace and social cohesion, which is based not on the assimilative removal of the different, but on the differentiating complexity and multipolarity that is intrinsic to plurality, also emerges in relation to the dynamics of identification of possible common spheres of legitimation among particular communities that are dissimilar in their social pertinence but are characterized by cardinality of intersection, i.e. bound by the fact of having a greater or lesser part of their members in common. Since people living in societies usually have multiple belongings (generally, though not necessarily, at least a linguistic, family, and juridical belonging – in citizenship –,⁵⁰ to which can be added religious, cultural, political, economic, social belongings etc.), it is appropriate both for the individual and for the social body as a whole that these belongings are not in conflict with each other (this is for example the case when the wars of religion become civil wars, but also when particular belongings become a factor of exclusion of other social backgrounds, as it happens with societies that discriminate against minorities), and that they possibly integrate into peaceful and fertile synergies. Apart from the objective injustice of the situation from an individual human rights point of view, the fact that religious or ethnic belonging is in conflict with, for example, the political one, as it happens with persecuted or discriminated minorities, is a source of profound social

⁵⁰ There are, in fact, the *familyless*, *languageless* (in cases of severe mental deficits and diseases), and *stateless* persons. They are all limited cases in number but cannot be ignored by principle.

stress (of the social body as a whole and of its members individually). Discrimination is incompatible with social peace, and for this reason it so easily degenerates into persecution and a drive towards genocide: eliminating a belonging in conflict with one's own is the 'simplest solution' to get rid of – not to solve – a problem which is indeed insoluble from the view adopted by the discriminating majority that opts for a criterion of belonging that is incompatible with its social function of inclusion and, therefore, condemns itself to the impossibility of legitimating itself as a community. The disappearance of alterity is, therefore (falsely), interpreted as a way out of illegitimacy. Paradoxical though that it may seem, it is the sense of guilt, the obscure perception of self-contradiction that deprives the community of legitimacy, which radicalizes rejection in persecution. The persecuted minority is perceived as a threat because it is clear proof of the illegitimacy of the persecutory point of view. The principle of inclusion is genetically foundational of community belonging: exclusion is subordinate and only surreptitiously postulated as prior. This inconsistency is no less effective for being rejected ideologically, and hate – or at least hostility – is the poisoned fruit of the malaise that is intrinsic to this inconsistency, which stokes the community's dynamics and stiffens it in self-defence.

Even with regard to less extreme situations of tension between multiple belongings of the members of a society – between particular belongings with cardinality of intersection – it is evident that a peaceful and fruitful general social coexistence depends on the possibility of their being harmonized in inter-communitarian dynamics of mutual recognition through the sharing of common spheres of legitimation. Therefore, the promotion of these dynamics of inter-communitarian integration is inherent in the very inclusive logic of belonging.

Indeed, it is heavily divisive for individuals and for societies when multiple belongings are incommunicable, mutually alien, and unable to communally integrate into common criteria of belonging. Thus, for example, it is a source of extreme social stress if ethical criteria dictated by religious belonging are incompatible with ethical criteria implemented within the juridical framework of the political community: the ban on blood transfusions practiced by Jehovah's Witnesses is an endemic, though all in all marginal, element of incompatibility of this religious community with the State rule of law. Of far greater general impact and with far deeper implications is the split on abortion, because its religious inadmissibility is perceived by believers of different faiths as a more general ethical inadmissibility, so that the legitimacy of its legal depenalization

is subject to political discussion among the same believers (divided not on the merits of ethical judgment, but precisely on the merits of the modalities of political delimitation of the spheres of common legitimation between different value traditions). The consensus on ethical merit does not necessarily come to consensus on political merit (their direct equivalence is a fundamentalist postulation that is incompatible with the democratic self-understanding of the social complexity of a liberal political regime), because the difference between moral norms of a religious nature, which are particular insofar as they are content-determined, and moral norms of a 'universal' nature (constituting the right and hence to be enforced by the law) is not an absolute limit, given once and for all. Instead, it is a work in progress, an on-going construction; the result of a complex, non-linear, contradictory and tiring process that is subject to collective deliberative processes of dialogue exchange and reflective scrutiny by multiple social subjects, traditions, competences and multiple community belongings.

Similarly, a socially destabilizing collective and individual stress is represented by constellations of normative divisions between science and religion: conflict situations with respect to the criteria of arguing justification and competition with respect to the areas of normative pertinence (a disagreement, that is, on the attribution of the respective validative skills, represented by claims which exceed the respective devices of belief and experimental truth, as in the case of creationism and, conversely, of atheistic scientism).

Inter-communitarian sociality of intersection: interdependence

The dynamics of communal inter-communitarian legitimation is less problematic and complex in principle, if not in fact, when promoted by the social interdependence between community belongings (sociality of intersection). If the existence of a belonging depends to a more or less relevant degree on the existence of another, the collaborative harmonization of their coexistence is intrinsic to the interests of both (in particular when the dependence is biunivocal). However, a strategic synergy of promotion of the common interests can rarely exist without being configured in more convergent dynamics, also in relation to their respective legitimization criteria. Trade agreements between political communities are a significant example of the fact that the purely economic

maximization of profit is not sufficient to produce a trade agreement (not even under the 'negative' aegis of the free movement of goods). This is because when an agreement is achieved, it is indispensable to define a minimum common denominator for respecting social and political rights and duties, working conditions and product standards. Political resistance to TTIP by broad areas of European public opinion is determined both by purely economic logic (the negative effects of competition liberalization for European producers) as well as by a 'normative' logic of defending superior social and legal guarantees of the rights of consumers and workers. The question of the convergence of the legal legitimacy criteria of their respective political communities becomes essential in determining common areas of collaboration, even though they are sectorially limited.

Recognizing mutual interdependence is, from this point of view, an objective factor in the promotion of spheres of inter-communitarian legitimation, the lack of which can in turn be a significant cause of the lack of recognition (of ideological removal) of such interdependence in a process of prejudicial denial of their own interests. A strong divergence and incompatibility of the self-legitimation criteria yields an antagonistic relationality that tends to hide the conditions of interdependence, even to the detriment of the related advantages.

If ideologically irreconcilable political regimes tend to minimize any form of cooperation (of sharing common governance rules), denying mutual interdependencies even where they are obvious, the systematic concealment of interdependencies with other communities and the consequent devaluation of participatory legitimation processes are a direct result of the emphasis on the particularistic understanding of their particular criteria of community belonging that choose the path of normative and practical self-sufficiency. The nationalistic tendency that emerges as one of the models that tempts the world's political communities, disoriented and stressed by the speed and radicality of globalization, is essentially characterized by this ideological denial of interdependence (of sociality of intersection). To hide, for example, the fact that the problem of climate change cannot be solved within national boundaries, the nationalistic Trump can only 'cancel' it, discrediting it as being a militant invention. Similarly, anti-European nationalists can only deny the interdependence of irreversibly globalized financial markets. The selective sovereignism inspiring Brexit's management does not seem to be more sensible, historically-speaking. It claims to recognize interdependence solely on the merits of interests (in purely economic

terms) and denies that the implementation of cooperative liberalization mechanisms in this field inevitably involves processes of inter-communitarian integration of a legal and political nature (to establish common rules of legitimacy, of governance). It claims that it would be possible to maintain a single market for goods without the free movement of workers and citizens, that it would be possible to keep up the economic union without a political union. This is a clear counter-factual assumption because to recognize that you have common interests is different than putting in place common and collaborative strategies to protect and promote them. This second step inevitably involves the definition of mechanisms of co-participative self-determination, political processes of a shared definition of the criteria for legitimizing decisions to be taken. “What you get” and “who we are”⁵¹ are two indissociable aspects in the policy implementation of a concrete strategy that can turn social interdependencies between communities into inter-communitarian collaboration. Cooperation is a form of common legitimation that is all the more effective and adapted to the complexity and breadth of the interdependence it faces.

In reflecting on the history of the forms of conversion of social interdependence between community belongings in collaborative processes of determining shared legitimization spheres, of the identification of common criteria for participative self-determination, it may be useful to recognize that these processes do not yield the extinction, through the effects of assimilative indifferentiation, of community belongings. On the contrary, they yield their consolidation, due to the expansion of self-inclusive spaces, the institutionalization of forms of mutual recognition, the virtuously innovative and critically dynamizing impact of systematic exchange with non-hostile (draining) but synergistic (productive) differences. The fact that traditional, political, cultural and social communities nowadays feel that their self-determination rights and their particular identities are threatened by indifferent standardization mechanisms produced by economic and technological carriers of globalization must not prevent us from recognizing that the growing social interdependence arising from this evolution must be governed and not simply suffered. This can be done by activating

⁵¹ Paul Statham & Hans-Jörg Trenz, “Understanding the mechanisms of EU politicization: Lessons from the Eurozone crisis”, in: *Comparative European Politics*, May 2015, Volume 13, Issue 3, pp. 287–306 (online in 2014).

decision-making mechanisms of participatory governance in place, starting from the criteria of the particular legitimacy of each community involved, through practices of their validation and inter-communitarian sharing. It is not by denying ever-larger interdependencies, but by governing them through the institutionalization of participatory processes of inter-communitarian legitimacy of effective decision-making strategies, that particular communities can maintain their own space of self-determination that is effective simply because it is shared. They can thus guarantee the social significance of the axiological particularity implemented by their defined belonging that is threatened by the standardization impact of economic and technical carriers of globalization.

For example, scientific communities able to assert their autonomy through dynamics of organic inter-communitarian collaboration can better withstand the systemic pressure of their reduction to mere economic and political teleological vehicles (in the tragic debasement of technique and science to a tool of social domination and to a profit service). Only political communities able to co-ordinate in decision-making mechanisms bound to democratic legitimation can resist the passive subordination to the objectivity of systemic coercions at the global level, embracing the effective strategies of their democratically validated governance.

For a non-nationalist notion of citizenship

The construction by particular community belongings of spheres of common inter-communitarian belonging based on the recognition of shared legitimation criteria and on institutionalized participatory self-determination processes is thus a direct result of the self-legitimation dynamics yielded by the universalizing activation of the inclusion principle as inclusiveness, favoured and partially made necessary by social logics of inter-communitarian similarity, intersection and interdependence.

The intra-communitarian dynamics of universalistic validation of the legitimacy of community belonging criteria is results expansively in a communal dynamics of universalistic validation of common criteria for the legitimation of spheres of inter-communitarian belonging, to be regulated or constructed starting from existing inter-communitarian relations (of similarity, intersection and interdependence).

It is within the framework of this twofold process of legitimation, triggered by the normative activation of the principle of inclusion as inclusiveness, that it is possible to adequately formulate a notion of citizenship that remains adherent to the communitarian and particular root of this category (which in political terms is defined in relation to concrete coordinates of sovereignty and legality, defined on a territorial, popular, constitutional basis) and is able to justify the very universalistic openness fostered by the normative matrix of its determination as a category of legitimation.

In other words, the universalistic criterion of legitimation of community belonging as it is generated by a principle of inclusiveness that has been reconstructed here, starting from the theological-historical idea of ecclesiality, appears to be the conceptual key to regarding the notion of citizenship as a principle of non-nationalistic legitimation of the community belonging generated by the right in the political sphere.⁵²

As an indicator of a community belonging of a juridically institutionalized political nature, citizenship is defined on the basis of particular, historically determined, community belongings: *civitates*, sovereignties (municipal, imperial, national, etc.) that form the framework of legal institutionalization of this belonging. However, the principle of juridical legitimization of this legal institutionalization is not the sovereignty of the political body as such (its organization as an architecture of powers over individuals and the social body as the plurality of community belongings and devices of systemic sociality: *societas*, *societates*). This sovereignty of the *civitas* (of the political order competent for a particular regime of citizenship) proves, in fact, to be a consequence and not a source of political belonging if it is recognized that the citizen is a member and not a subject (a servant) of the *civitas*. For this reason, the fundamental principle of citizenship as belonging to a political community is not sovereignty (of the State or of any other political order) but inclusion.⁵³ It is inclusion that makes

⁵² For a communitarian approach to international relations, based on a constructivist epistemological orientation, see generally the writings of Emanuel Adler, in particular *Communitarian International Relations. The Epistemic Foundations of International Relations* (London / New York: Routledge, 2005). The need to combine analytic-descriptive dimension and normativity is at the heart of his reflection (see Chapter I in particular).

⁵³ An important reflection on the concept of political inclusion as a principle of democratic legitimacy that helps define the purpose of the political community (*polity*) and in general of democratic societies is developed by Iris Marion Young, *Inclusion and Democracy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). Although Young's work is essentially focused on the processes of democratic

up the social function of belonging and is therefore its genetic root and also its legitimization matrix, in the critical verification of the compatibility with this social function of the particular criteria of determination of any historically-given belonging (in verifying their inclusiveness: their universal validity).

As a politically-defined community belonging statute of a physical person, citizenship designates a juridical relationship between an individual and a particular *civitas*, which is not abstractible from this particular historical determination. At the same time, it highlights the fact that the legitimation of this particular legal determination is intrinsically tributary to a universalistic validation principle that puts it to the test of the double requirement of inclusiveness (full equality and freedom of community members and potential accessibility to every human being) binding in relation to community belongings that are non-sectorial (not simply associative) but constitutive of general forms of coexistence.

This universalistic principle of legitimization of the particular criteria determining community belonging, in the juridical status of citizenship, is united, without being identified, with the juridical principle of intrinsic, inalienable, and universal human dignity which must be recognized for every individual regardless of his belonging to a political *civitas* (of his status as a citizen). In other words, it is necessary to recognize both the difference and the interdependence between a) the principle of universal dignity of the individual, articulated in the Charter of Human Rights, and b) the principle of universal dignity of their members (in the potential accessibility of this statute to every human being) in relation to which historically given community belongings must legitimize themselves to be recognized as being universally valid (as being consistent with their social function of inclusion).

In fact, the relationship of non-coincidence, but of necessary connection, between the communitarian and the individual formulation of the principle of human dignity that is attributable to its expression as a principle of inclusiveness (to be universally valid, a communitarian rather than merely associative

participation in a deliberative democracy horizon, and programmatically avoids a normative foundation of its assumptions, the overall approach and the specific results of the author's research are closely related to what is presented here, so it is necessary to refer to Young's insights into the purpose of the political community in its local and global declinations; the recognition of social difference as a political resource; the essential role of group membership in the structuring of democratic self-understanding – with the consequent criticism of a unique speech of common good; the notion of differentiated solidarity.

belonging, which is produced as a general form of coexistence, must be potentially accessible to every human being) and as a human rights device (to be recognized as an inalienable patrimony of every individual, regardless of any community belonging) results both productively enhanced and acutely problematized in the inter-communitarian dynamics of coexistence between particular community belongings and of the communal building of spheres of shared legitimation and of participative self-determination. An indispensable condition for such peaceful inter-communitarian coexistence (which is an essential component of public order as well as peaceful coexistence among individuals) is the mutual recognition of the dignity of members of particular belongings by the various communities. Only the common definition of the fundamental and inalienable criteria of this dignity to be recognized on an inter-communitarian basis guarantees such mutual respect of their members. In addition, the need for this common definition becomes more acute in the case of the cardinality of intersection between different community belongings (the case of their having some members in common). Since individual members of a community belonging can be, and in fact generally are, simultaneously members of different (mainly different) community belongings, it is incompatible with the principle of inclusiveness to postulate that they 1) lose in one of their multiple belongings the rights guaranteed by other belongings. The logic of inter-communitarian inclusion is that of the accumulation of rights and not of their recession. 2) There must be a core of members' rights shared by all community belongings whose recognition constitutes the minimum common juridical denominator necessary to ensure both their peaceful inter-communitarian coexistence and the accumulation and non-coexclusiveness of the rights recognized for individual members in particular community belongings.

The human rights device represents precisely the core of rights that, from one community belonging to the other, must be individually recognized for their members to ensure their equal dignity in the plurality of belongings: mutual inter-communitarian respect for the dignity of their members.

It is evident that the community belonging criteria can be largely co-exclusive, especially in the case of socially similar, axiologically alternative, community or associative belongings. One can not simultaneously belong to the Catholic Church and to the Islamic religion, one can not be a member of the Federation of Industrialists and of the metalworkers' union, a member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group (ALDE-ADLE) and

of the Europe of Nations and Freedom group (ENF-ENL). However, the co-exclusivity of the particular content-criteria of belonging must be distinguished from the common principle of legitimization, which judges the universal validity of these particular belonging criteria in relation to their social function of inclusion. The co-exclusivity of particular belonging criteria is a content-selective device of multiple belongings, while the common principle of inclusiveness (of legitimacy of the community belonging as universally valid) is a harmonization device, normatively binding the belongings to the recognition of a basic set of their members' rights (based on the double requirement of their full freedom and equality). This constitutes the basis of equivalence on which to build the common recognition of the rights of members of other belongings (and of their own members as holders of multiple belongings).

A Catholic or a Muslim can be a member of the Federation of Industrialists or of a trade union, of the Socialist Party or of the Liberal Party, may be a member of the Rotary Club or Greenpeace, an American citizen and/or an Italian citizen. What multiple belongings are content-compatible is the subject of a historical process of communitarian and individual definition of the content-criteria of belonging that is clearly coupled with evolutionary dynamics of social differentiation, self-understanding and self-legitimation. It is therefore a progressively universalistic dynamics, but can at any time particularistically regress (this is the case with the fundamentalist trends that have taken hold in recent decades among many religious, especially Evangelical and Islamic, communities). At the end of the 19th century, a good Italian Catholic could not be a good Italian citizen. Half a century later one could not simultaneously be Catholic and Communist. Today, the communitarian definition of compatibilities of pluralistic belongings of its own members within Catholicism is much more inclusive than in the past, starting with the political field, while it continues to be very rigid in other religious, political, cultural, and ethnic communities.

As a matter of fact, the definition of the content threshold of legitimate plurality of multiple community belongings is the exclusive object of the self-determination of the communities themselves, in the permanent tension that this determination yields between specific points of view of individual members or groups of members, and the communitarian, publicly codified, point of view. Nevertheless, in the public sphere of Western countries, the need to bind such plurality to common rules for the protection of the dignity of members of community belongings, as an indispensable condition for peaceful inter-communitarian

co-existence and guarantee of rights of individuals involved in cardinality of intersection, is more than ever recognized today. The definition of these common communitarian rules and shared individual rights that essentially descend from the activation of the inclusiveness principle in its convergence with human rights obviously requires juridical implementation through the communal processes of legitimization (of participatory self-determination by different, particular, community belongings) and mechanisms for guaranteeing the effectiveness of decision-making (of specific sovereignty devices).

If we postulate therefore that:

a) Determining and implementing consistently compulsory rules (legitimate and legally effective: the result of participatory self-determination and made binding by coercive legal mechanisms through the establishment of a corresponding sovereignty) for the coexistence of the various particular community belongings requires that it circumscribes a general cardinality of intersection, that is a community belonging that is endowed with cardinality of intersection with all the possible community belongings.⁵⁴

b) Such belonging with general cardinality of intersection can be identified in citizenship as belonging to a juridical community endowed with sovereignty (the power to legally implement its self-determination) whose content-based criteria of belonging are only those of binding determination and the enforcement of common communitarian rules and shared individual rights converging in the protection of the inalienable human dignity of the members of the community belonging in question – of their own citizens (and of every human being as in principle potential member of this community belonging) – and of their inclusion (communitarian protection of belonging, which, unlike the protection of equal dignity, is limited to current members of the community – only to effective citizens –, and to varying degrees to ‘guests’ of the citizenship community).

Citizenship can in the end be defined as a community belonging of general cardinality of intersection that is historically determined in the territorial framework of a *civitas*, a territorially determined political community whose essential

⁵⁴ In combinatorial mathematics, this general cardinality of intersection is defined by the inclusion-exclusion principle as an “identity that relates the cardinality of a set, expressed as a union of finite sets, with the cardinalities of intersections between these same sets”.

aim is to ensure order and social cohesion, implementing and promoting the conditions of consistent inclusion of their members and of peaceful individual and inter-communitarian coexistence.

What citizenship puts together as a legal obligation are not the values (content determined by particular community belongings: religious, cultural, political) but the rights, rules and principles: inclusion conditions that are universally valid (that are common communitarian rules) and therefore convergent, although not coincidental, with conditions of mutual respect for the human dignity of the actual and potential members of community belongings which are integrated within the framework of citizenship (shared individual rights).

It is important to emphasize that principles, rules and rights recognized as a common legal obligation by citizenship as the normative core of social relations common to all community belongings that are self-legitimizing as universally valid are also relevant to the citizen's socio-systemic relations. This is due to the fact that they are normatively subordinated to community belongings since their primary social function is a systemic result and not a condition of the subjects involved.

We can define socio-systemic relations as being the institutionalization of the role of individuals in functional systemic devices, whose social function does not have as its primary objective the subjects involved, as in the case of community belongings whose social function is the inclusion of individuals as members, but with an objective variable factor: e.g. profit, power, legality, scientific truth, etc. Socio-systemic relations are all those relating to the regulation of economic, administrative, scientific, and political relationships, whose purpose is not the inclusion of the individuals involved, but the production of the result defined by the sub-system in question, so that social integration is ensured by maintaining and increasing systemic differentiation and not by the civil and political participation of social actors. As they are based on a functional rationality whose purpose is an objective result disengaged from a subjective or intersubjective semantic determination, such subsystems do not need legitimation. They have no autonomous normative profile: they are tautologically self-legitimizing (their self-legitimation consists of the efficiency of their performance). From a juridical point of view, such subsystems are therefore subject to the normative rationality of individual and communitarian self-determination. The juridical regulation of socio-systemic relations depends, in other words, on the regulatory core of common rules and shared rights defined by citizenship

as a community belonging of general cardinality of intersection within the territorial framework of a *civitas*.⁵⁵

Thanks to their performativity, the (increasing) hypertrophy of the various forms of rationality of social subsystems in the structuration of society as a whole gradually erode the role of (traditionally preponderant) community belongings in determining the forms of coexistence (increasingly economified, bureaucratized, technologized). However, their growing power does not eliminate their subordination from the point of view of juridical normativity to the historical legitimation devices that human beings are given, in the context of their belonging to society under individual and community self-determination.

As a matter of fact, from the point of view of self-referential economic, technological and bureaucratic rationality, it is not possible to postulate that the protection of human dignity is binding, because in this framework human dignity

⁵⁵ This paper will not discuss the statute attributed to law as a social subsystem within the framework of theories of systemic functionalism, such as the Luhmannian. It contends that its exclusive determination as the functional rationality of a self-referential differentiation subsystem is inadequate in order to reconstruct its social role as a legitimizing, and not just as a legal device. Social integration is not only ensured by the differentiation of social systems, but also by the (inclusive) participation of social subjects, which normatively regulates their own self-determination processes through mechanisms and principles of legitimation, subordinating to them the systemic mechanisms of social integration and therefore limiting, without erasing, the autonomy of the latter. On the subject of the normative primacy of the participatory (inclusive) process of social integration, see generally the two fundamental works of J. Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*. 2 Vols. (Engl. transl. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984 and 1987; orig. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981) and *Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy* (Engl. transl. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996; orig. Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992). Although it is essentially linked to the formidable Habermasian and Apelian conceptual framework of discourse ethics, the proposal put forward here differs in some respects (not to be addressed in detail in this paper) from the specific Habermasian philosophical-political construction, beginning with the fact that it relativizes the distinction between ethics and morality as an alternative between content-contextualistic definitions of good life and universalizeable, and therefore compulsory rules of 'righteousness' – of just interaction – (the first ones essentially related to values, the latter ones to rights and interests), thus disabling the twofold subordination resulting from this alternative. On the basis of this proposal, there is no subordination 1) of ethics to morality in the case of inter-communitarian conflicts, and 2) of the self-legitimation instance of the particular community belongings to the legitimation test constituted by deliberative formation of a democratic consensus in the framework of the public sphere. The deliberative scrutiny of legitimacy claims in the context of a democratic public sphere of equally entitled citizens is not 'rationally superior' to the scrutiny of self-legitimation of its belonging criteria by particular community traditions (such as scientific and religious ones). It simply prevails (for reasons of the protection of social peace) in situations of inter-communitarian conflict, and also constitutes an essential tool in complementing the intra-communitarian critical self-legitimation exercise itself without, however, being able to assimilate it normatively.

implodes to a secondary systemic variable, not discriminating from the point of view of the communicative logic of the respective system. This protection results nevertheless as being compulsory with regard to the socio-systemic relations institutionalized in the framework of these rationalities, depending on their subordination to the normative rationality of the self-determination of the human beings involved: the foundation of the normative legitimation of the legal order is not systemic rationality (which is paramount from the point of view of social structures, but secondary, derivative, from that of the justification of human action). The rule of law is grounded, on the contrary, on the ethical rationality of the individual and communitarian self-understanding of the subjects.

If, therefore, the device of established principles, rules and rights defining citizenship is recognized as the nucleus of juridical obligation common to all subjects of social relations – both of socio-systemic relations and of community belongings – within the framework of a historically defined political community (*civitas*), it is evident that an abstract, ideal and definitive definition of the normative contents of this juridical device can not be given. It must be rather seen as an open set or a work in progress: they are the factual different conjugations in the many *civitates* that circumscribe historical expressions of citizenship, that are evolutionarily and normatively shaped by the legitimization driver of the universalistic validation of the social function of inclusion as inclusiveness.

Even citizenships with exceptional constitutional stability like the one in the United States, which has been codified in a charter that has been in force since 1789, are actually juridically evolutionary devices (just think of the fundamental legal changes that have taken place in the meantime, from the introduction of universal suffrage to the abolition of slavery). Citizenship is historically implemented as an evolutionary process of reflexive self-understanding of a social body determined by different and partially contradictory factors: the pre-understood values of community belongings (religious, cultural, social) that characterize a particular *civitas* (a society that is territorially circumscribed as a politically autonomous entity) and shape the concrete formulation and legal enforcement of rules, rights and principles; the universalizing trend intrinsic to the normative *ratio* of self-legitimation of individual and community self-determination practices; the objective, social, economic and historical constraints to which each society is subjected. These different drivers of historical citizenship may yield *internal* (the constitutional dictate of modern State of law) and *external* (the binding recognition of treaties and international agreements as forms of

inter-communitarian integration) *constraints* of partial irreversibility and of normative definitiveness, meaning that this immutability is given only in one direction: it is allowed only to go forwards, not to go back. The *definitive* nucleus is content-unalterable, it can not be pulled apart, although it may be widened. In fact, the States of law depend on constitutional provisions whose core cannot be tampered with, but can be developed by the expansion of rights). There is no nationality device that applies once and for all, because the very definition of the reference *civitas* is historically variable and is evolutionarily conditioned by the reconfiguration of the processes and subjects involved in the exercise of individual and communitarian self-determination and in the mechanisms of accessible and activated juridical scrutiny and enforcement.

The deepening of the interdependencies between community belongings is, as has already been pointed out, an essential factor in the expansion of the spheres of participatory self-determination and of the building of spheres of inter-communitarian legitimacy, which is also produced between political communities, among historically codified citizenships. On the one hand, the traditional boundaries of citizenships, in the modern age consolidated in their coextension with the nation States, are nowadays partially put in crisis by the processes of globalization, which yield a growing convergence of interests and economic, technological and media interdependence between State citizenships, in a landscape in which the systemic functionality of society is increasingly detached from territoriality. On the other hand, the tragic events of the twentieth century, devastated over thirty years by two world wars, have pushed European States into the path of economic and political integration of an inter-communitarian nature. This has profoundly altered the juridical profile of citizenship of the EU Member States, which is increasingly oriented towards convergence in normativity of intersection which on the one hand safeguards the particularity of their respective State identities on a structural, administrative and democratic basis, but on the other disables their particularisms (divisive differences) by promoting the dynamics of participatory self-determination that broaden the spheres of democratic representation and of mandatory enforcement of decisions (sovereignty) on a supranational level.⁵⁶

⁵⁶ For a reflection on the historical-normative fundamentals of European integration, and for a clear wording of the 'participatory' path to its construction, see Patrizia Nanz, *Europolis* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2009). Militant europeism goes here hand in hand with the rejection of any irenic optimism, in the timely illustration of the complexity of a process of democratic legitimization of the Union's

In this context, rather than talking about citizenship, it is correct to speak of citizenships, different levels of legitimization and political enforcement of juridically binding rules, principles and right, in which territoriality proves to be a variable coordinate of *civitas*, functional to its pertinence in relation to the object of political regulation. The participatory enlargement of the self-determination exercise to inter-communitarian mechanisms of legitimization and enforcement is a transfer of State sovereignty to the strengthening of the sovereignty of the citizens (in the areas in which community belonging to a political order is best safeguarded by supranational levels of self-determination), constituting not a *vulnus* of democracy, as claimed by the sovereignists (because the national State is not the source of sovereignty but a territorially selective framework of its pertinence), but rather its enrichment, through the differentiation of levels and fields of its exercise on the basis of the inter-communitarian enlargement of self-determination processes. Alongside the principle of subsidiarity as a criterion for vertical and horizontal distribution of governmental power, which must, moreover, be recognized as relevant not only in a descending but also in an ascending direction (sovereignty must be displaced at higher levels where its exercise at a lower level hinders its forcefulness due to structural conditions), it must therefore be acknowledged that the inclusion principle in its normative and universalizing activation as inclusiveness constitutes a criterion of vertical and horizontal modulation (both in ascending and descending terms) of legitimization processes in the sense of possible enlargement of inter-communitarian spheres of participatory self-determination in which the plurality of particular determinations is maintained, since the universally valid criteria of co-exclusive diversity are attributed to different legitimization spheres.

Properly articulating the role of the principle of inclusiveness is essential for the normativity of inter-communitarian integration processes in a juridical perspective that is not limited to interests or to the purely individual formulation of the protection of human dignity as human rights. Within the notion of citizenship, it is possible to identify a catalyst and a democratically valuable point of

political organization that cannot simply see itself as the result of intergovernmental agreements and their parliamentary ratification (according to the current model of vertical alignment and legislative pre-eminence of the Council). An authentic democratic legitimation of the Union's political order can only arise from a wide and diversified public deliberation network, involving many social actors, contributing to the intercultural, open and flexible composition not only of interests, but of languages, approaches, traditions and values.

convergence of the diverse processes of normative self-legitimation of multiple community belongings of the traditional type in the common recognition of the protection of human dignity, not only from the individual (liberal) point of view, but also from the communitarian one.

The difference between the individual matrix of recognition of the universal dignity of the human person (of the human being, regardless of any given belonging) and the communitarian matrix of the universal dignity of the member of a legitimate community belonging is obviously not an index of co-exclusivity, but of different logics of legitimation, whose interaction fruitfully pluralizes the evolutionary dynamics of historical communities of communal integration into inter-communitarian spaces of common legitimation, of participative self-determination.

To take into account the duplicity of this twofold carrier of juridical integration on the inter-communitarian level is particularly important in relation to political entities such as the European Union, which in the notion of citizenship finds an immanent and concrete normative key (which does not abstractly neutralizes the historical particularities) for the legitimization of the democratic processes of juridical integration between political communities.⁵⁷

The centrality of this concept has been progressively highlighted in the theoretical reflection on European law and on the legislative production of the Union by providing an essential category for formulating the relevance and legitimacy of Union law in its supranational quality over the sovereignty of the States. The reference to the tradition of Roman law, where universalism was inherent to the idea of *cives romanus*, has certainly been a fruitful vector of this reflection. However, it must be emphasized that this historical-juridical lineage remains too constrained by the notion of sovereignty, in a 'vertical' perspective of the prevalence of a superior power on the lower levels, to enable us to adequately consider all of the dimensions of a juridical legitimacy generated by the processes of universalization relating to the progressive institutional enforcement

⁵⁷ Over (at least) the last twenty years, the need for a legal foundation of European law has gradually been highlighted, as well as the awareness of the complementary inadequacy of a uniquely contractual-liberal perspective on the one hand and communitarian on the other. On the need to get rid of this strict alternative, combining the "normative turn" into a convergence between the contractualist and communitarian approach, see, for example, Richard Bellamy and Claudia Attucci, "Normative Theory and the EU: Between Contract and Community", in: Thomas Dietz, A. Wiener, eds., *European Integration Theory* (Oxford: Oxford U.P., 2009²), pp. 198-220.

of the recognition of human dignity, while respecting the complexity of the forms of community belonging in which the social link within societies is created, and between peoples who do not submit to an empire but join in an egalitarian network of peaceful and solidary co-existence.

As it is the dimension that defines the individual in relation to a political order (by placing his community belonging beyond absolute juridical individualism), the notion of citizenship is a neuralgic point of departure for the rethinking of the issues of legal legitimacy and democratic sovereignty in a Post-State cosmopolitan landscape of globalization. The notion of citizenship thus proves to be a non-abstractly cosmopolitan, but concretely historically key to the complex network of differences between the particular determinations of traditional community belongings that are to be safeguarded.

If sovereignty stems from citizenship and not from the State, in this key of particular belonging which is a tributary of an immanent logic of universal self-legitimation and openness to communal processes of inter-communitarian legitimation, it becomes possible to conceive of composite architectures of democratic legitimation in which the juridical status of citizens is defined pluralistically in relation to different levels of community belongings that arise from multiple sources of law (infra-national, national, supra-national). This allows for progressive degrees of the universalization of community belongings to be determined without being reduced by the cosmopolitan abstraction of an individual conceived as absolute above and outside of any social bond.

On the basis of this idea of citizenship as a model of universalistic communitarianism that is extrapolated from the historical form of universalistic community belonging, which has understood itself as ecclesiality, it is possible to construct a political project (such as the European one) which is necessarily derived from a refounding of the categories of political and juridical legitimation and proves capable of responding to some of the central challenges of our time.

Promoting and strengthening forms of multipolar and cooperative democracy and inter-communitarian integration that safeguard the difference between cultures, traditions, social and political belongings, as well as the autonomy of the spheres of sovereignty will only be possible:

1) By dismissing the juridical and political primacy of the notion of State, recognizing that it is not a source of sovereignty but instead a legal framework of a certain level of self-determination and sovereignty and that in the

present historical landscape many of the equivalences on which the State of law was established in the twentieth century are failing. It is therefore necessary to rethink the forms, instruments and political and juridical make-up of self-determination and sovereignty.

2) By developing a model of democracy that is not liberal, insofar as it couples an individualistic determination of the source of the legitimization of law with a determination rooted in particular community belongings and in the impossibility of procedurally dissolving their content-determinations, but that is liberal in the polyarchic, subsidiary and rule of law articulation of the necessary mutual autonomy and respective limitation of the social and sovereignty spheres that contribute to a sound democracy.

In reflecting on the notion of citizenship from the historical and ideal paradigm of universalistic communitarism represented by the Christian principle of ecclesiality, one can therefore open up new horizons of understanding and elaborate the issues associated with it, confirming the self-understanding of Christianity as a force behind the universalization of historical communities and as the ethical and spiritual guardian of human dignity.

When considering community belongings in the framework of the two concepts of ecclesiality and citizenship, theological research, in open dialogue with legal science and political reflection, places itself beyond the nationalist paradigm of the distinction and possible opposition between the Church and State as opposing powers that negotiate, collaborate or fight, helping to develop new conjugations of the social and political implications of the Church's understanding of itself as consisting of the people of God, and of providing valuable critical and conceptual stimuli to legal and political reflection.

Giving the right in communion and being mindful of the poor

The root from which we come as a community is the matrix towards which we go; the condition of our subsistence is the condition of our transformation; the identity factor is the factor of its critical redefinition. If the community has to legitimate itself from the point of view of its social function, namely inclusion, by verifying the compatibility of its particular criteria of belonging with this principle, the protection of its own subsistence and self-determination as a community (the non-subordination to 'external' criteria of validity, to axiological

representations of good from other traditions) passes through the normative scrutiny of this internal consistency, which converges intrinsically with (it does not diverge from) the protection of the universal rights of the individual and of the members of the community itself. Against the backdrop of any progressive or conservative stylization of the community/individual dialectics as a polarization between conflicting devices of rights, pointing out the constitutive principle of community belonging (i.e. inclusion as inclusiveness) highlights the fact that the universalizing dynamics that characterizes the legitimation instance is also relevant to the community's belonging. It fosters a dynamics of objective convergence between the universality of human rights defined on an individual basis and the particularities of community traditions: the protection of human rights in their universality and the protection of the community belonging in the particularity of its criteria of determination that are legitimated as being universally valid from the point of view of their social function of inclusion are the two sides of the protection of human dignity. The handshake between Peter and Paul in Jerusalem marks the recognition of an interdependence upon which the plural and universal path of humankind, the only people made of many peoples, is built, and in which diversity, particularity and the specificity of cultures and of their belongings is preserved and promoted as a wealth that yields communion (*koinonia*) rather than as a factor of conflict and division. Peaceful coexistence of the communitarian differences as sharing of the common human dignity goes therefore along with the solidary taking into account the inequalities and with an active commitment for the weaker party, for those who are in the last place: "James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave me and Barnabas their right hands in partnership, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. Only, we were to be mindful of the poor, which is the very thing I was eager to do." (Gal 2: 9-10).

SECTION II

Application horizons

For a not unilaterally individualistic reconstruction of human dignity The complementarity of universalistic communitarism and human rights

Community belonging and sociality: an implication at risk

Community belonging is a factual, anthropological universal factor, which cannot be postulated as an essential characteristic of ‘human nature’ (as a biologically or ontologically constitutive form of the human being) but which, in its radical contingency, constitutes a necessary condition for survival of the human being and of his self-realization as such. Outside of some form of community belonging, the human being is not able to survive, at least in the early years of life. The evidence suggested by the rare but documented cases of “mowglism”, namely of human beings raised in animal community belongings (think of the case of the young girl who lived with a pack of monkeys, discovered in a Uttar Pradesh forest in April 2017), is that this infra-human belonging, which excludes learning a language, also deprives the individual of the basic conditions of self-development. Against the claim of “conscientism”, we must recognize that the mental *tabula rasa* is just a created fiction that doesn’t prove the self-sufficiency of the individual but only the philosopher’s self-sufficiency towards reality. In the radical and original deprivation of any inter-human relationship, the human being is incapable of acquiring any linguistic competence (at best, he can develop the communicative competence of the animal species that has accepted it, by learning a communicative code, not a language).

Linguistic communication is essentially a social phenomenon, without which the individual does not achieve self-awareness. Humanity is a point of arrival as well as a starting point, which in fact – if not for the principle – is impossible to reach in isolation.

Of course, one can consider a mental experiment (itemized in the script of a science fiction film) where a human being is bred and educated by a combination of technological devices, in a completely artificial, totally isolated environment. Outside of any community belonging, the unfortunate human guinea pig would survive and even develop language and communicative skills (even emotional and social communication skills) that would be sufficient to fully grasp its rationality.

The question is what would be the fruit of this anthropological experiment. A newborn bred by a team of intelligent artificial machines could become a perfectly healthy, talented, and thinking person. However, would he become a person with a full understanding of his own humanity?⁵⁸

Although this would be absurd in practice, the experiment is sufficient in its theoretical plausibility to exclude community belonging as an ontologically essential character of human nature. It is a universal and necessary, but contingent, fact that tells us what man can become, not what he is. It is the genetic condition of a human becoming teleologically enrolled in the subject; it is a potential that is not necessarily activated and never fully realized: it is only through community belonging that man can fully become what he is, but it is a contingent and (both historically and culturally) diversified fact, varying furthermore by a maximal communitarian saturation of the social horizon to its radical unsaturation. The community belonging of a native person in an isolated tribe of the Amazon forest, whose social horizon is coextensive with belonging to the tribe (maybe coextensive with family belonging), is structurally different from that of a citizen of liquid society. Liquid citizens have a community belonging that is increasingly eroded by non-communitarian socialization networks (i.e. by the dislocation of social functions from the environmental (intersubjectively ruled) to systemic ones, with the growing replacement of social ties characterized essentially by recognition dynamics and reciprocal relationships, with

⁵⁸ What about children raised in welfare facilities for the “familyless”? An orphanage is not a community and rivers of literature have been devoted to illustrating the human devastation resulting from the amputation of an essential dimension of the formation of the human being.

bureaucratic and media utilities, with economic exchanges of consumer services provisions, telework, associative disaffection and with professional and existential nomadism. Changing family, work, city, country, by cutting or at least rarefying the ties of environmental belonging to a communitarian order, is always a less than exceptional condition, and is in fact tendentially strengthened as a rule that seems to be beneficial rather than damaging, both on an objective and symbolic level. What once was negatively catalogued as instability and marginality is today positively seen as mobility and flexibility. The radical individualist is no longer seen as an outsider, but as the forerunner in society. Expanding one's own social horizon more globally (for example, on Facebook, you can have friends scattered around the four corners of the world; the perception of the relevance of historical events is, to a growing degree, inversely proportional to its local character: Pentagon's decisions are – rightly – perceived as more significant than those of its own local administration) often goes hand in hand with the erosion of community bonds. The Facebook network, like many other social networks, may be cosmopolitan but is not a community (contrary to what is claimed by his powerful owner). Where the common denominator of belonging is an ego, the reference group is not a community, but instead is a network of individual friendships (some or more of the user's Facebook friends may not even know each other, and in any case they often have nothing more in common than to have known the same user, while 'thematic groups' are generally 'platforms' rather than real associative realities). This is the case unless it is a celebrity that establishes a belonging syndrome: one of the watersheds between an ordinary man and a 'VIP' today is perhaps the ability to make a community of one's own network (regardless of any assessment of the existential consistency provided by such a criterion of belonging, it is worth noting that devotion has always been a powerful tool of community cohesion). Although the now proverbial polarization between *somewhere* and *nowhere* does not necessarily pass from the dissolution of rich, multiple, and intense community belongings, it is evident that the prevailing trend in this cleavage is that of the isolationist estrangement of an exacerbated individualism. The citizen of the world is becoming less and less a citizen of small or large traditional homelands, and, even when they adhere to ethical or religious continuities, they tend to do so in a strictly individualistic manner, without community interdependencies. It is the ethical-intellectual *do-it-yourself* model that, in passing from religion into culture, today dismantles the very concept of fashion, which

is a notion that equates the aggregation capability of modernity to the level of taste.

The current push for an increasingly less community-based socialization, i.e. driven less and less by community belonging, and more and more by socio-systemic functionality (which has been widely studied by sociologists), is an evolutionary phenomenon of phylogenetic relevance with immediate ontogenetic implications. From pre-school to university, the educational path of the individual within the framework of advanced societies seems to be a progressive rarefaction of the environmental and communitarian density of the education process, which then reduces its broad claims to being 'formative', as opposed to the transmission of narrower skills, as one advances along the varying degrees of education (i.e. of 'maturity' of the student). The due ideological and value impartiality of teaching thus turns into a radical formative abstention, which leaves the camp free to an ethically massive economicistic instrumentalization of the imparted skills, which are seen as pure goods to be allocated to adequate pay. The increasingly common and successful "business schools" are symbols of a business in which school and university shrink (the reaction to this trend is that of escaping in the opposite pattern of radicalized confessionalism, characterized by educational offerings oriented to a model of values transmitted in univocal, excluding, and centripetal forms).

The distinction between community belonging and sociality, as distinct anthropological characters, acquires an increasingly decisive factor in today's landscape, to the point of putting consolidated equivalences into question. To say that man is a social animal perhaps does not necessarily mean that he is also a communitarian one, at least not to the extent and in the forms of multiple intersection that the two dimensions have in both traditional societies and still in modernity.

In fact, it is legitimate to wonder whether the evolutionary trend of society towards a progressive, functional differentiation does not inevitably have, as a phylogenetic impact (that is, as an evolutionary trend of the human species), the progressive erosion of community belongings by systemic sociality (by systemic mechanisms of the structuring of coexistence that yields social integration through the functional processing of social communication): economics, bureaucracy, and the technological conversion of personal needs related to the biological and communicative spheres (through growing computerization, medicalisation, medicalization, automated nursing, externalized catering) growingly

absorb social functions traditionally carried out through community dynamics by specializing and objectifying them. What was once achieved through personalized and holistic intersubjective mediations, within which various social functions collapse, through the mutual recognition and mutual obligation processes of axiological and symbolic sharing, is now increasingly carried on in the form of bureaucratic, commercial, technological services.

The progressive preponderance of systemic sociality on community belonging on the collective level and in individual existence is not in itself a negative fact, as it supplies a rationalization of services that makes certain social functionalities increasingly transparent, efficient, and universal. However, it is not inherently risk-free, and threatens to drain the social interaction of those communitarian dynamics that guarantee effective collective processes of recognition and interpersonal obligation by generating, in the public sphere (and not just in the private interaction), those imperatives of fairness, justice, solidarity, and symbolic sharing that are essential to the self-representation of a society as *res publica*, and not as the sum of atomized individualities that are impersonally interdependent in a network of systemic functionalities.

In other words, if, as noted, community belonging does not actually represent an ontological character attributable to human nature, but simply a factual, historically contingent, and changeable universal, then nothing guarantees its continuity and its irreversibility. On the contrary, it appears to be a fragile and vulnerable asset that is to be guarded, a condition to preserve and cultivate, shaping its transformation stemming from the evolution of social processes and orienting the latter toward the promotion of virtuous communitarian dynamics that are beneficial to individuals and societies (both privately and publicly). There are many historical forms of family, clan, church, religion, and political community. Not all are equally good. Many are stained by injustice and violence, oppression and inequality. Social progress finds one of its decisive parameters in their pacification, dignification, and conformation to respect for human dignity. But it is certain that a society progressively deprived of these community belongings, a society in which social relationships are uniquely objectified to impersonal systemic mechanisms, is a society that regresses, reducing the public spaces of ethical and symbolic sharing, confining individuals to increasingly narrowed social pertinencies, atrophying their potentialities, roles, and interactions.

The protection of community belonging

If the great ethical legacy of the twentieth-century tragedy is the unconditional imperative of the protection of human dignity, the complementary commitment set by this trying beginning of the third millennium to politics, ethics and culture is therefore to protect community belonging as an essential dimension of sociality, in the rethinking of the intersection and complementarity of these two spheres in the transformation and radical redistribution of the fulfilment of social functions. If community belongings tend to be cleansed by social functions that are most effectively performed through systemic mechanisms, it remains essential to safeguard the existence and vitality of public processes of self-identification, self-determination, and interpersonal obligation. These are relevant on the ethical and communicative level and can yield dynamics of symbolic and axiological sharing and identification, which can be effective in practical terms. Without shared identities, society as *res publica* breaks down, and only vital, plural, mutually critical and mutually integrative community belongings have the ability to generate, maintain and transmit this kind of non-particularistic, non-idiosyncratic, non-potentially fundamentalistic identity.

It is perhaps time to recognize that the commitment to safeguard human dignity, the unconditional respect of every human being as an end in itself – the protection of the universal rights of the individual –, must be matched with the protection of community belonging as the form of sociality in which this dignity can be fully achieved and in which sociality does not prosper as an impersonal sum of atomized individualities correlated with social functionalities, but fully expands to become the joint interaction of subjects bound by free, public and not only private, dynamics of mutual recognition, obligation and sharing.

Recognizing the complementarity and interdependence of this dual protection means counteracting the concrete and politically acute risk of the contrast between these two requirements, which are often perceived as competitors rather than as being interdependent (as evolutionary and axiological opposite poles), so that the protection of traditional communities comes to catalyse, politically and conceptually, the resistance to systemic globalization and juridical universalization, the cultural resistance to individualistic liberalism, and hence, the resistance to the implementation of human rights understood as a form of ideological political struggle. The defence of the family as being a nuclear form of community belonging thus turns into a clearly conservative defence

against the disintegrating force, that, *against* it, would constitute the freedom of its members (in a perspective where traditionalist Catholics, Jews and Muslims are fully convergent). The defence of the particularity of traditional religious and cultural belongings thus does not occasionally see itself as a resistance to a juridical logic of systematic subordination of community rights to those of the individual. The prohibition of circumcision, theoretically promoted by some political and juridical sectors, and whose practical enforcement has been repeatedly attempted by law in some European countries, is just one of many examples. The refusal of this subordination – which is not always adequately formulated and critically justified and is instead sometimes ideologized in obvious dogmatism – nourishes the identitarian resistance of particular community belongings to legislation oriented towards the liberal protection of the rights of individuals. This is perceived – not always unfoundedly – not as a universalizing factor but as a uniforming, levelling one (for example, when the public wearing or display of religious symbols is considered incompatible with the political and legal protection of equality and freedom of all citizens, including those not belonging to the religious traditions in question).

How can we overcome the alleged divergence, occasionally understood as frontal opposition, between the political and legal protection of the community belongings and of the universal rights of the individual? How can we disrupt the regressive, or at least conservative while not radically illiberal and anti-democratic, potential nowadays often associated with the defence of traditional community belongings, by promoting convergence and interdependence along with the defence of human rights? The proliferation of a post-factual *Monroism* dismisses in the deceitful emptiness of tautological slogans heavy political tangles associated with irreversible globalization in the deceitful emptiness of tautological slogans (so “America to the Americans” is the formula, which can be reproduced infinitely as “La France aux français”, “Great Britain to the British”, “Europe to Christians”, “La Padania ai Lombardi”, and so on...). It distorts through the violent argumentative falsification of nationalist populism and fraudulent protectionism a legitimate and genuine need to safeguard geopolitical, institutional, linguistic, cultural, ethical and symbolic pluralism against the levelling pressure of the economic and technological carriers of globalization. The fundamentalist drift extinguishes the essential role of the Islamic religion in preserving the historical dignity of populations that were humiliated by centuries of colonialism and underdevelopment, of mass numbers of

immigrants placed under stress by way of economic and social marginalization within countries unable to develop and transform their reception and absorption of the workforce into genuine integration. Nationalistic and Islamophobic radicalization betrays the legitimate aspiration of the Jewish people to overcome the historical tragedy of the Diaspora and the Shoah in a State settlement capable of providing protection and peace to a people martyred over thousands of years of persecution, discrimination, expulsion and forced nomadism.

The established and fruitful instance of the preservation of the particularity and autonomy of peoples and religious and cultural traditions, denoting the irreplaceable richness of civilization and humanity, is disrupted by this violent and particularistic interpretations, which result a source of regression and authoritarian closures, of profoundly divisive (even when not bloody) conflicts, instrumentalized and motivated by political paladins that make populism and fundamentalism a mainstay of the conquest of power and sovereignty, the *prêt-à-porter* of anti-democratic simplification.

How can we redeem this legitimate and pressing historical need from its illiberal degeneration?

How can we show that the protection of human rights goes hand in hand with that of autonomy and particularity, that is, of the plurality and the right to self-determination of community belongings? How can we show that these two fronts, far from being divisive, are two interdependent ways of safeguarding human dignity?

This question brings us directly to the heart of a debate that has dominated the philosophical scene of the late twentieth century. If, on a theoretical level, this dispute seems less central than a few years ago, on a political level, the longstanding controversy between communitarism and universalism has acquired a current political relevance that brings it within the rarefied atmosphere of pure philosophical diatribe. The political and social landscape is split nowadays by many divisions and alternatives: public opinions are polarized between sovereinism and multipolarism, between nationalisms and supranational political integration processes such as the European Union, between xenophobia and hospitality; between religious and ethical fundamentalism and tolerance; between religious freedom and laicism neutralizing the public role of religions. All these cleavages are about inescapably concrete issues that shape not only the present but also our collective future. It is becoming more apparent than ever that the philosophical stalemate of a theoretical discussion

that did not come to a satisfying result was not a purely academic problem, depriving the public of categories that could go beyond the irremediable contrast between abstract rationalistic universalism (an elaboration of human rights based on a dehistoricized notion of individual, and on an often idealized and voluntaristic political and juridical model of contractualism) and a historicistic and relativistic communitarianism based not on a particular, but on a particularistic notion of belonging, impermeable to universalistic legitimation criteria and rooted only in categories of self-referential culturalistic conventionalism.

Universalistic communitarianism

In short, the challenge with which we are confronted on the political and social level can only be won by finding a philosophical response that helps overcome this divide through the elaboration of a universalistic communitarian paradigm, in which the category of human dignity – in its normative and universal scope – is no longer thought of only from the point of view of the individual, but also from the view of the community. It is only by activating the normative relevance of the principle of universalization (as a criterion of legitimization of conventional obligation) also within the particularity of traditional belongings, that the positively emancipatory, dignifying and pacifying potential of this essential dimension of the human condition will be adequately valued, recovered and fostered.

Such a paradigm combines the preservation and promotion of particularity, of pluralism of the belongings, of the indissoluble content-density of traditions in their value pre-comprehensions, with the normative scrutiny of their legitimacy in light of universalistic instances that are incompatible with any particularistic shrinking, and thus promotes dialogic dynamics and collaborative openness on the inter-communitarian level. It can, therefore, help politics formulate and implement categories capable of providing ever larger spheres of common supra-national law which are increasingly needed with regard to globalization. Moreover, since it avoids turning this process into a neutralization of differences that mortify the plurality of cultural, religious, and national traditions, producing a coercive impoverishment of the civil and spiritual wealth of peoples, this paradigm can help find valid forms of coexistence in the context of the growing religious and cultural pluralism of societies driven by migratory flows and

supra-national assimilation (avoiding the creation of a 'bubble' society) where different particular closed-in communities live in self-referential identities, floating within a sea of totally unrelated individuals.

As noted above, populist and nationalist resistance to the process of European integration and multipolar international cooperation are also fuelled by the popular rejection of a politics that, in this regard, seems too often to be towed by the main carriers of globalization, technology and economy, and whose systemic imperative of standardization and assimilation is endured by social subjects as a limitation of their own faculty of self-determination and as an erosion of their community belongings, of the autonomy of the 'environmental' dynamics in which such belongings are built. This means that only a politics and a culture capable of responding to this legitimate need to safeguard diversity and self-determination as a good, capable of forming pathways of integration as a unit of the plural and not as dissolution in the identical, will overcome the difficult battle of a more united, but not more even, world. A world which is more equal, but no less complex, more cohesive and solidary in respect and promotion of multiplicity, more functionally differentiated, but not for this backing out of the processes of communitarian self-legitimation and democratic self-determination of peoples.

Community belonging between particularity and universality

The main difficulty inherent to the theoretical and practical implementation of a normatively binding principle of universalistic communitarism is evident in its own designation, which sounds problematically like an oxymoron, which can be used as a rhetorical slogan but not as a philosophical solution. What is characteristic of community belonging is it being determined by cultural-axiological content-based criteria. There are certain representations of values that shape the belongings (formed on the basis of more or less extensive and complex ideas of what is good: from the common good of a society, of an individual and of humankind – as in political and religious belongings – to the victory of their own team – as in the sporting ones), and they are impermeable to any universalization criterion, insofar as this represents the very dissolution of particularity. As a matter of fact, an idea of what is good can be considered universal only by eliminating any competition with alternative ideas of good: the universalization

of an axiological content means the dissolution of its particularity, and thus the delegitimization of value plurality. Universalizing means reducing multiplicity, reducing diversity by normative unification. Particularity yields to universality, the concreteness of historical contents is drained by the normativism of procedural rationalism: good gives in to law, value to norm. The evolutionary logic of law and justice seems to indicate a rational obligation, in which tolerance is only the benign name of an inflexible hierarchization of manifold as subordinate to one.

This problem becomes apparent in all the virulent and recurring historical attempts to credit an idea of good as being universal, which inevitably turns into a coercive exercise of (more or less violent, more or less legally sanctioned) imposition. This is because the universality of the contents of a particular axiological model cannot rationally be proven. This pseudo-universalization is the drama of religious fundamentalism, in which adherence to a universal salvation model (by definition, one's own belief is the only authentic and therefore the only truly universal; the only one who saves) condemns those who do not embrace it to damnation (in this or other life). But this is also, in much more sophisticated and civilized, and yet not less subtly violent forms, the drama of the paradigm of non-negotiable values, which has gained so much relevance over the political scene today, passing from the Catholic field, in which it was put forth, to that of Western public opinion. Here it becomes, with very different connotations and ideological and political intentions, the core of Western superiority over cultures that do not belong to its own tradition and, within the same tradition, of resistance to any process of integration. The ethical patriotism of the Nationalist International is essentially based on this (intrinsically violent) pseudo-universalization of the non-universalizeable, disqualifying as a libertarian relativism the rational appeal to the argument of the non-universalizability of any particular cultural model, of any content-determined notion of good.

The case of the family

This irreducible particularity is also apparent in the case of a community belonging such as the family (which is perhaps the most universal of the community forms), which has even proved resistant to the more systematic social planning attempts that have been made throughout history (communism has tried to eradicate religious belongings but not the family). Historically, in fact, there is

no family. Instead there are the many family models that societies and cultures have produced in space and time. Presenting a particular family model as being universal is an obvious temptation, because, in fact, what is more 'natural' than to think of the family as a community consisting of a father, a mother and children (the biological architecture of animal reproduction)? The monopoly of this "bio-zoological" family model, rooted in a monogamous and heterosexual couple, that has dominated our civilization for millennia, has today been put radically into question in the Western world under a number of different profiles. Without taking into account the objective alternative represented by polygamy, which is not yet seriously under consideration in the West, but is consecrated as a principle acceptable by an ever stronger and larger Islamic tradition, one cannot ignore that the crisis of diachronic monogamy (with divorce, different spouses may come in succession: monogamy consists of binding on the synchronic, not on the diachronic level) which converts the mononuclear family model into an extended family one (one can, respectively, be a parent and a child in more than one household). At the same time, LGBT claims to have their own couple and parental rights recognized have irreversibly put an end to the unique model of a family based on the heterosexual couple.

The resistance to this evolution cannot hide the fact that the Western family paradigm has known fundamental changes over the course of history, beginning with the progressive criticism of the patriarchal nature of society, that had been dominant for millenia. Both the roles and duties within the couple and parents' obligations toward their children have radically changed over the last few centuries and even the last few decades. The family in a modern rule of law society does not resemble family constructs of one hundred or even fifty years ago. Claiming that the monogamous couple outlined in current family law is the same model of one hundred years ago (with its legalized degree of discriminating domestic violence towards wife and children that is totally incompatible with our current standards of equality) is to hide substantial differences and to forge fictitious continuities. Denying inequality between genres as a criterion of family belonging is not a less profound change than claiming to erase gender difference as an exclusive principle for the foundation of such a belonging (i.e. claiming to recognize the right of homosexual couples to marry and have children).

It is evident that this evolution (towards a growing differentiation of family patterns, modulated on the basis of exclusively synchronous and non-exclusively heterosexual monogamy criteria) goes in the opposite direction of

universalization conceived as a reduction of multiplicity in one, as overcoming particularity in the generality of the same. The question remains, therefore, whether it represents a disintegration of the universal institution of the family (as a universal form of community belonging legally sanctioned on the basis of the biological architecture of animal reproduction: procreation and breeding) triggered by the, by definition 'individualistic', claim of individual rights, as supported by and large, chiefly but not exclusively, religious sectors of society. From this point of view, the rights to the self-determination of the individual would be a threat and an objective factor for the erosion of community belonging (according to the argumentative tradition of its authoritarian and paternalistic models of legitimization: social cohesion is, in this perspective, inversely proportional to the freedom of the members of the group), producing its progressive relativization and weakening. In some ways, in this view, societies that are increasingly free on an individual level are increasingly rarefied and fragile on the communitarian level and only a mutual self-limiting balance between individual rights and community rights, seen as objectively antithetical, provides both a subsistence of individual freedoms and a cohesive society.

Nevertheless, one may possibly answer the question differently, recognizing in this differentiating evolution from a monopolistic family model to a plurality of particular forms, an authentically universalizing dynamics of the community belonging in question, its growing normative legitimacy not with respect to individual rights but with respect to community rights, in the same line of depatriarchalization that saw the progressive egalitarian redistribution of (archaically male, parental and patrimonial) rights to all members of the family (regardless of their sex and their status of children, firstborn, etc.).

In this case, universalization would go hand in hand with differentiation in a growing plurality of forms: inclusion criteria of community belonging drawn by family ties (gamic union and parenthood) multiply at the same time as the normative demand towards such criteria in relation to the equality and freedom of its members is strengthened.

Conclusion

A response, a hypothesis of this kind, can however be formulated only by identifying a principle of universalization of community belongings that is not equivalent to the dissolution of their particularity, which does not imply a formalistic dismissing of their content determinations by a criterion of external legitimation, or the absolutization of a superior content model, which undermines the competition of the plurality of axiological-cultural representations in a higher ranking notion of good.

This principle of universalization cannot be obtained (at least this is the hypothesis that has been put forward in this reflection) through the construction of an abstract, rational, model of ideal community belonging (in the prospect traditionally pursued by contractualism, which postulates as rationally necessary presupposition the individual rather than the community). Instead, it can solely be obtained by the possible reconstruction of rationality inherent in the factual dynamics of historically given community belongings.

It is only by identifying the social function rationally inherent in community belongings that it is possible to determine their conditions for consistency and functionality, extrapolating a normative principle of legitimation. The proposal presented here seeks to identify this principle, thus starting from the critical reflection on a historical model of community belonging, Christian ecclesiality, which is precisely characterized by the claim of combining the irreducible particularity of its core values (the faith in the Risen Christ) with the universality (transversal to all cultures, to all civilizations, to all ages, open not only to every human being but to all humankind) of the belonging created by this particular content. Since this historical model of community belonging, the ecclesiality, has built its legitimacy precisely on the basis of a principle of universalizeability of particular belongings, communally united together in a normatively demanding but non-uniforming convergence, its reconstruction proves to be relevant in determining the logic of a universalistic principle of community belonging, here formulated as the principle of inclusiveness.

By conjugating inclusion, as the social function of community belonging, in inclusiveness, as the principle of legitimation of any factually given belonging, through the verification of the compatibility of its content-criteria with its social inclusion function, a principle of universalistic communitarianism is set. This principle involves respecting the plurality and fecundity of historically-given

Application horizons

community belongings as a wealth that is to be safeguarded and promoted. In recognizing the necessary particularity of the value determinations that establish these belongings, nevertheless, it formally clarifies their constitutive dependence on a normative process of rational legitimization of their universal validity as social aggregations. The core of universal validity conditions in which community belongings self-legitimate as social entities – full equality and freedom of their members and principle openness to every human being – is objectively converging with the core of universal human rights, by delineating a content-relevant, complementarily individual and communitarian determination of the notion of human dignity.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ A synopsis of this text has been read as a contribution to the Seminar “Citizenship and Ecclesiality. For a paradigm of universalistic communitarianism. Theological, philosophical and juridical paths”, which was the Participation Panel of CITER to EX NIHILO, A “Zero Conference” on Research in the Religious Fields, EUROPEAN ACADEMY OF RELIGION 2017 – Bologna, Sunday 18th – Thursday 22nd of June, 2017.

