



Marco Ettore Grasso

From the Emergency Crisis to Resilient and Transfigurative Ethics

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Table of Contents

7 Introduction

Section 1

Emergency, Crisis and Catastrophe Ethics

- 9 1. Emergency Ethics: Which Form of Sustainability?
- 10 1.1. The Theoretical Foundations of Emergency Ethics
- 12 1.2. The Concept of “Risk”
- 15 1.3. What is a Catastrophe?
- 17 1.4. Responsible Catastrophism Ethics
- 26 2. Crisis Ethics
- 34 2.1. Crisis as an Entropic-Nihilistic Pathology: Epistemology of Power
- 38 2.2. Entropic and Nihilistic Abstraction
- 43 2.3. Economy and Death
- 46 3. What type of “Humanism”?
- 49 4. Which Technoscience?
- 54 5. Fear
- 57 6. Vulnerability
- 62 7. Survival Ethics
- 74 8. Future and Social Justice

Section 2

Resilient and Transfigurative Ethics

- 79 9. Resilient Ethics
- 84 10. Resilience and Vulnerability: Two Sides of the Same Coin

85	11. Main Theories of Resilience
87	12. Post-Constructivist Ethics
88	13. Pre-Resilient Ethics
88	13.1. Fortitude
88	13.2. Hope
91	14. “Patiendi” Ethics
92	14.1. Patience
93	14.2. Empathy
95	14.3. Compassion
97	15. Closeness Ethics: Proximity and Solidarity
98	15.1. Proximity
99	15.2. Solidarity
100	16. Readily Measured Ethics
101	16.1. Temperance
102	16.2. Vigilance
107	17. Transfigurative Ethics: Trust, Conscience and Dignitary Justice
107	17.1. Trust
109	17.2. Consciousness
119	18. Justice
122	18.1. Dignity as Human Justice
126	19. An Ontology of Love: For a “True Human Justice”
128	20. Phenomenology of Light
129	21. Conclusions

Introduction

The emergency crises which strike humanity have often been caused by the same men who, in order to acquire more and more power, are willing to deny and subdue their own brothers. Therefore, fear and vulnerability grow within this pathological condition, which sees the financialized economy as an absolute god. Emergency crises, therefore, require justice and responsibility, as well as a new critical anthropological form of truth.

The resulting resilience is something which touches different spheres, so much so that this work will take some particular forms of ethics into consideration (“pre-resilient ethics”, “*patiendi* ethics”, “already measured ethics” and “closeness ethics”). These anticipate the transfigurative path, which – thanks to “critical consciousness”, “trust”, and “dignitary justice” – transfigure critical/emergency oblivion into luminous and free “Love”.

“Emergency ethics”, “responsible catastrophism ethics”, and “crisis ethics” are all related aspects of the same issue. They constitute three different branches of study that can be well associated with each other, as they describe the catastrophic critical-emergency process that faces the ethical context through variables, such as that of responsibility and survival. This analysis is epistemologically preliminary to the study of “resilience ethics” and “transfigurative ethics”.

This monograph, therefore, is divided into two sections: the first concerns emergency, crisis and catastrophe ethics, and the second section deals with resilient and transfigurative ethics.

Section 1

Emergency, Crisis and Catastrophe Ethics

1. *Emergency Ethics: Which Form of Sustainability?*

My vision regarding sustainability finds its best form of expression through sheer respect of life. This type of respect can be described through an ethics of love towards God, human beings, and every creature belonging to the natural world, which we could call the “environment”. It aims to mediate the opposing positions of strong anthropocentrism and radical biocentrism. This vision rejects both an absolute anthropocentrism, and an extremist perspective of eco-centrism.

A culture of sustainable development lays down the basis for a new way of thinking, and living in the world, and it requires the responsible modification of our lifestyle behaviours. It calls for a new form of anthropocentrism, which I would qualify as “responsibly mediated anthropocentrism”. “Responsibly”, because an acceptable model of anthropocentrism cannot exist without the criterion of responsibility which governs the actions of humanity, and “mediated” because it incorporates the reasons related to ethics, anthropology, philosophy, theology, ecology, law, and social development, directing them towards claims of social equity and justice, making sure that economic development and the protection of the environment of life, and society as a whole¹ walk on the same path.

My study has recently been moving towards a new theoretical interpretation that moves in the direction of an ‘emergen-

¹ Marco Ettore Grasso, *Lineamenti di Etica e Diritto della Sostenibilità*, Milano, Centro di Studi sulla Giustizia, 2015.

cy’ dimension, dealing with the study of humanitarian, ethical, environmental, health, and social emergencies, which are particularly connected to crises and catastrophes. In this sense, I had argued about a new branch of sustainability (*Emergency Sustainability*)², which would aim to overcome the classic bipartition between ‘weak’ and ‘strong’ sustainability, as well as contemplating a series of concepts, such as those of “epistemic health” and “responsible catastrophism”³, which give the ethical direction to this particular sustainable kind of vision. To better understand the “emergency” dimension, we just need to think about the fact that the protection of natural resources is becoming increasingly placed at risk, along with the lives of vulnerable populations who are faced with the consequences of emergencies deriving from climate change, and the numerous social, economic, and natural disasters, which often, unexpectedly, occur.

1.1 *The Theoretical Foundations of Emergency Ethics*

“Emergency Sustainability” constitutes a preliminary assumption for “emergency ethics”. It is a type of ethics, moving towards the “emergency” perspective. Therefore, it is “light”, without any complex abstractions, and “rapid”, because it is able to move fast, anticipating emergencies.

² Marco Ettore Grasso, *Ethical Approaches to the Tortuous Path of Climate and Health Justice*, Conference: *Ecological Integrity and Land Uses: Sovereignty, Governance, Displacements and Land Grabs*, Global Ecological Integrity Group, University of Salerno, 2018; Marco Ettore Grasso, *Emergency Sustainability and Ethics: Climate Change, Epistemic Health and Nihilism*, in Laura Westra, Klaus Bosselmann, Virginia Zambrano (eds.), *Ecological Integrity and Land Uses: Sovereignty, Governance, Displacements and Land Grabs*, New York, Nova Science Publishers, 2019.

³ Marco Ettore Grasso, *Natural Catastrophes and Forms of Catastrophism. A New Ethical and Moral Framework Leading Towards the ‘Responsible Catastrophism Model’*, in Laura Westra, Janice Gray, Franz-Theo Gottwald (eds.), *The Role of Integrity in the Governance of the Commons: Governance, Ecology, Law, Ethics*, Cham, Springer, 2017.

Etymologically speaking, the term “emergency” means “what emerges”. It seems to have a “flavour” of novelty, but it also preserves the meaning of ‘critical situation’.

“Emergency Ethics” aims to promote an “emergent transformative justice”, that is to say, an emergency sustainable justice, that intends first of all to recover human and social dignity, as this dignity is often endangered, due to various individual and collective actions undertaken by mankind⁴.

Moral and political nihilism, therefore, contributes to an increase in the extent of harmful effects caused by man. In this sense, I prefer to speak of “*masochistic nihilism*”, because these consequences also befall those who provoke them. The perception that the human being does not really love himself is evident, because through his actions, he damages himself, his own health and the health of the whole Earth, and subsequently, his entire living environment.

“Emergency ethics” gives a new sense to the term “health”, as interpreted in its philosophical, spiritual, psychological, and anthropological dimension. This sense is heading towards “what is healthy”. As we all desire a healthy life, we should embrace a moral kind of responsibility, which has both a deontological and a consequentialist matrix: a responsibility that imposes the necessity to make an authentic examination of our own consciences, which is related to the impact of our actions.

Moreover, given that political nihilism derives from a pathological vision of “power”, “emergency ethics” also proposes the revision of the concept of “power” through a heuristic key. Indeed, it should be lived as a service for the “common good”⁵. Within this perspective, we need a “*transfiguration of power*”⁶, through critical and conscious discernment, regarding the true

⁴ Such as, for example, the emission of greenhouse gases. Climate change is in fact caused by man, and its harmful effects fall on all humanity (present and future).

⁵ I would like to underline that both terms “climate”, and “health”, are to be considered, in an epistemic sense, as two common goods ‘par excellence’.

⁶ The term “transfiguration” brings to mind, the transfiguration of Jesus on Tabor Mount, a transformation that starts from above, as in, from God. There can be no authentic transformation of power if this is done by man himself. It, in fact, requires divine intervention. This requires a desire for change, along with the awareness that man cannot replace God.

meaning related to the ethics of the “common good”, as well as the ethics of “good living in common”.

I would now like to deal, briefly, with the concept of “risk”, which is fundamental for any sort of emergency. “Emergency ethics” uses the theoretical matrix of “vulnerability”, in order to then continue in the direction of “resilience”⁷. As I will explain later, however, the concept of risk is insufficient to rationally explain a crisis or a catastrophe.

1.2 *The Concept of “Risk”*

Effective risk management is a tool that allows us to be able to make a reality check with full awareness of all factors involved. Assessing the risk, and acting accordingly, means increasing the degree of resilience required by any given circumstance.

The concept of “risk” is an interdisciplinary concept that maintains a strong economic connotation, under which the notion of “probability” is an essential component of the same concept. The term “risk”, etymologically speaking, could be derived from the Arabic word *rizq*, the Latin *risicum* (or *resicum*), or on the other hand it could have Greek origins, or possibly even Celtic-Breton ones. For many authors, the word “risk” was first used in 12th/13th century in Italian seaside towns, when making reference to the shipping of goods, and the emerging insurance-business. The distinction between “risk” and “danger” was indeed introduced in the more recent German language debate by Evers and Nowotny.

According to Niklas Luhmann, the concept of risk is part of the decision making process in relation to which we can reasonably expect some degree of probability of repentance for our decisions. Although the concept of “danger” is connected to the idea of probable damage, Luhmann states that it is attributed to factors outside the social system. Technological development leads to an increased risk, as it transforms dangers into risks,

⁷ About the relationship between “resilience”, “sustainability” and law, see: Marco Ettore Grasso, *Resilience and Sustainability in Law. Theoretical and Critical Approaches*, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2021.

nature. One effect of this globalizing crisis is technocracy. From Mancini's point of view, in fact, delegating historical change to innovation means disregarding our responsibility as co-protagonists of history and leaving the symbiosis between the financialization of the world and technocracy intact¹¹⁸.

2.3 *Economy and Death*

In the *Dialectic of the Enlightenment* (1947)¹¹⁹, Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer believed that the system of capitalist civilization was structured in line with a logic related to the imitation of death: *homo oeconomicus* is literally a "mortifying man".

The "exit from the economy", proposed by Serge Latouche, is probably utopian. According to the author, leaving the economy would mean: creating a change of values through a "dis-economization" of the mind, or decolonization of the "imaginary", in order to rediscover the sense of proportion, reinvent common goods and abandon the asocial and totalitarian leadership of the job, towards a model of sober and convivial coexistence¹²⁰.

However, I contend that "leaving the economy" would mean forgetting that it must legitimately contribute to the material conditions of social life. The economy should be a service and therefore a "fair economy", aimed at respecting human dignity and the value of the "common good".

The "energetic" space of ethics is fundamental in this scenario¹²¹, since it helps to counteract moral entropy, which is characterized by the banal theorization of the impossibility of

¹¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of the Enlightenment*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2002.

¹²⁰ Serge Latouche, *L'invenzione dell'economia*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2010; Id., *L'economia è una menzogna*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri, 2014; Serge Latouche, Anselm Jappe, *Sortir de l'économie, déconstruire l'économie*, Sesto San Giovanni (MI), Mimesis, p. 6.

¹²¹ See e.g.: Hans Küng, *A Global Ethic for Global Politics and Economics*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

making a distinction between “good” and “evil”. By virtue of this consideration, not only is everything relative, but is in fact lawful. The effect is precisely not only that of the banality of evil (Hannah Arendt), but also that of its trivialization (Christophe Dejours).

One of the fundamental characteristics of the global economy is, in fact, the so-called “necronomy”, which assumes death as a form of truth and as a criterion for measuring life. It follows that within this horizon, it would be normal to inflict various forms of death on people and nature to allow the “system” to function properly. The consequences of the global economy are, therefore, destructive, starting from the concept of “growth” which, as Mancini points out, is a “growth of destruction”. Latouche similarly states that growth is an “anti-growth”, whereas in Pope Francis’ point of view, it is greedy and irresponsible (while development would be genuine and long lasting). Totaro underlines that it is necessary to broaden humankind’s vision, in keeping with ontological coordinates which complement the dimension of “producing” with the dimensions of acting, and contemplating, towards a good life¹²².

The economy has claimed to be a kind of super science, capable of governing everything. It has taken on an integral value as a whole, which has also claimed to be self-examining, in accordance with its own criteria, through formulas such as “corporate social responsibility”. In reality, as Totaro well states, philosophy is the only form of knowledge that is able to bring the economy to a critical awareness and discernment. The arrogant protagonism of the economy was already evident to philosophers of the past. For example, Habermas spoke of market economy urbanization and Karl Polanyi brought the gap between the economy and its original social context to our attention. Even Aristotle, for his part, emphasized the contrast between the hegemony of the economy, on the one hand, and living well, on the other¹²³. After all, man is a fragment who

¹²² Francesco Totaro, *Filosofia ed Economia*, Fondazione Centro Studi Filosofici di Gallarate, Brescia, Morcelliana, 2019.

¹²³ Aristotele, *Politica*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1993.

presumes and claims to be everything, thus hindering the “gift economy”, which is already evident in Benedict XVI’s *Caritas in Veritate*.

Overcoming capitalism requires the convergence of a spiritual turning point able to direct people and institutions towards a good life in common – and not towards death – in addition to a cultural and political turning point (which would develop the notion of democracy as a form of society), as well as a methodological turn, one leading to an alternative “path”, built through the integration of other models of economy, different from the capitalist one¹²⁴.

By “transformation of the economy”, Mancini means a change that affects its meaning, form, method, culture and moral sphere. It is necessary to put the economy under judgment, verifying its anthropological, ethical, political, ecological, and spiritual legitimacy. The economic system must not be an insurmountable and indisputable fact: it must have its own “honesty”. It cannot win without being right, and it cannot obtain consent by force. The economic system is relative and cannot claim any autonomy in formulating the rules of social order¹²⁵.

Furthermore, the concept of “transformation” implies a spiritual, anthropological and ethical discernment, which opens the doors to a solidary society that values human dignity and nature, harmony in justice, freedom, sustainability and an integrated form of wisdom. It is capable of developing critical-heuristic strength of thought, which diagnoses pathologies and determines paths of liberation. In fact, transformation occurs only if there is liberation. Our society has founded its rules of coexistence on power, which has victimized society. Therefore we need to get out of the “survival system”, which is imposed by the economy that forces us to a logic of universal competition. We also need to embrace both the essence of life – which is, first and foremost, a gift – and the principle of mutual care¹²⁶.

¹²⁴ Mancini, *Trasformare l'economia*, cit.

¹²⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁶ Mancini speaks more precisely of a gift, acceptance, care, dedication, fraternal relationship and sorority.

differentiate himself from the group, thus creating the fragmentation of the collective consciousness⁸³.

The subject of collective consciousness has been studied by various disciplines, especially in the field of cognitive psychology. In my opinion, starting from the mere assumption that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (an idea also found in psychosocial literature), the collective consciousness is something more than the sum of the single individual consciousnesses.

17.2.4 *Conscience and Crisis*

The spiritual crisis is the main crisis we are experiencing today. It can well sum up any other type of crisis. The process of the gradual death of consciousness, in fact, is at the root of any crisis. Economic crises, for example, are generated by human greed and pettiness. The networks of power that generate these crises are in turn the result of a crisis of conscience. These networks have, in fact, slowly suppressed the voices of their respective consciences, in view of utilitarian gains to the detriment of others.

Today, consciousness is increasingly critical terrain. Catherine Ternynck denounces the loss of the symbolic depth of human consciousness, which generates the drying up of relationships and spiritual limits amounting to a cognitive nihilism, for which only capital and market exist, and everything else is ephemeral and relative⁸⁴.

The disasters generated by climate change are also determined by human selfishness, which has contributed to causing this same change. The climate crisis, therefore, is the consequence of a crisis of conscience (individual and collective). Conversely, the effects of “other” crises, such as climatic or economic crises, contribute to aggravate crises of conscience, to the extent that they become a cause of despair that produces the loss of hope and faith in God. But not all evil comes to harm. In fact, certain

⁸³ Durkheim, *The Division of Labor in Society*, cit.

⁸⁴ Mancini, *Ripensare la sostenibilità. Le conseguenze economiche della democrazia*, cit., p. 112.

critical events could on the contrary generate an awakening of consciences. These have the power to open the heart up and allow everyone to look within, deeply examining their own conscience and thus allowing an awakening, which I would like to describe as “transfigurative”. The awakening of conscience never occurs with the strength of man alone. Indeed, the door of the heart must be left open to make room for a transfiguration of the soul. Only this way can the conscience awaken in the face of various crises, such as epidemics and famines.

Each of us has his/her own conscience, which we can hear or not. In a decidedly chaotic world, like the one we live in, the sound of consciousness should be sought within ourselves, through a silence that knows how to look beyond. Pursuing a higher state of consciousness is important in order to free thought, conditioned by oppressive forces which prevent the full development of the human person⁸⁵.

Thinking oneself out of oppression, through processes of inner awareness, generates new creativity of individual and collective thought. The study of conscience is fundamental, in order to consolidate a collective change, capable of defending freedom as an essential human value, or as a moral good which, as such, also presupposes an intrinsic relational character.

In addition to trust and conscience, dignitary justice is also a fundamental element of transfigurative ethics. To speak of dignity as human justice, therefore, it is necessary to define a brief introductory theoretical framework of justice.

18. *Justice*

Justice concerns the method of facing the contradictions that tear at everyday life and heal compromised situations. Only to the extent that dynamics of restitution of denied rights and dignity are initiated, can there be “justice”.

⁸⁵ Moreover, removing the obstacles that impede the full development of the human person is what is prescribed by the principle of equality in the “substantive” sense, pursuant to art. 3 of the Italian Constitution.

As Maria Zambrano reminds us, there is justice when we manage to treat others better than they deserve⁸⁶. Mancini stresses that it is appropriate to pose justice as the true foundation of society from the perspective of the pluralization of freedom⁸⁷.

The ancient Romans used to say that justice is about giving everyone his own equitable sharing of goods and resources: do not give more than you have and, at the same time, do not subtract. It is the dimension that also allows the development of other dimensions of ethics, such as harmony and tolerance.

The concept of justice follows the different philosophical schools that have followed one another over time⁸⁸. For example, in the three pre-Socratic schools we find three different concepts of justice. For the Ionian school, justice is an aspect of that necessity that governs the physical world; for the Eleatic school, it is a manifestation of the *logos* and therefore an aspect of that logical and metaphysical necessity that makes the absurd impossible; for the Pythagorean school, however, justice consists of an aspect of order and harmony from which the universe is generated.

Socrates manages to find a distinction between the just and the unjust only by placing man in his natural environment. With Plato, on the other hand, justice becomes a social virtue “*par excellence*”, it places unity in diversity, it prevents disorder between men and between the different parts of the same man. In Aristotle, again, the sociality of justice becomes stronger. It detaches itself from empty harmony, but rather resides in something positive or negative. In the *Nicomachean Ethics*, he argues for the ambiguity of the terms “just” and “unjust”.

Justice, whether general (i.e., pertaining to respect for the “*ius*”) or particular (distributive-commutative justice) sums up every virtue well. According to John Rawls, justice is the first virtue of social institutions and it denies that the loss of freedom for some can be justified by greater benefits enjoyed by others.

⁸⁶ Maria Zambrano, *Delirio y Destino*, Madrid, Mondadori Espana, 1999.

⁸⁷ Mancini, *Filosofia della salvezza*, cit., pp. 268-269.

⁸⁸ See e.g.: Ferdinando D’Antonio, *La Giustizia. Studio di Filosofia Giuridica*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1938.

In this writer's opinion, the concept of justice should be completed in Levinas's ethical vision⁸⁹, since it focuses on the relationship with the "other", where the primacy of sense and of meaning, originates from the other. From this point of view, justice concerns the distribution of my responsibility towards the many faces that question me. In fact, in front of me there is not a single "face", the face of the "you", but always also the face of the "third", namely, of the many others who "look at me through the eyes of others". Moreover, the ethical dimension concerns itself with gathering the other's instance within oneself, without ever feeling "absolute", separated from the rest, as this would lead to a delusion of omnipotence. If I do not internalize the other in me, if I do not feel part of it, I would undoubtedly end up feeling "everything". The relationship of otherness is the fundamental dimension of ethics. Without otherness there would be no ethics. Only through a right relationship of otherness, therefore, can men truly meet.

Acting ethically in the right relationship between oneself and the other requires a deontological approach⁹⁰ of justice. In other words, each of us must assume their responsibilities, regardless of the effects that will be produced, balancing in the best way the extremes that are rooted within us: those that lead us to accept our passions, generating destruction and prevarication of the other and those that lead towards a construction, generating the encounter with the other, where each becomes the neighbour and guardian of the other. The dimension of custody arises towards the other only if I feel responsible for his life. This responsibility is the highest element that characterizes ethics. Aristotle for example said that virtue lies between extremes.

⁸⁹ Giovanni Ferretti, *La filosofia di Levinas. Alterità e trascendenza*, Torino, Rosenberg & Sellier, 1996; Emmanuel Lévinas, *Altrimenti che essere o al di là dell'essenza*, ed. by S. Petrosino and M. T. Aiello, Milano, Jaca Book, 1983, pp. 191-203.

⁹⁰ Duties and rights should command our respect regardless of the social consequences. Instead, according to a consequentialist approach, the morality of an action depends on the consequences it produces.

18.1 *Dignity as Human Justice*

Transfigurative ethics requires a dignitary vision, that is, a vision where respect for dignity is necessary for the transfiguration of power and consciences to occur. The concept of dignity originally referred to a merit (a position that conferred a social elevation) and not to a moral status, capable of attributing a value to humanity or to the individual person. Dignity mainly concerns that set of qualifications that allow us to define ourselves as “human”.

Immanuel Kant, even without referring to this theme, stated that we have a categorical duty of treating people as ends in themselves. Considering the person as a means, in fact, would mortify the very concept of the person and therefore human dignity itself⁹¹. From this point of view, dignity is inherent in identity. George Kateb, for instance, sees dignity as an existential value concerning the identity of a human being⁹².

However, it extends beyond the human race, because it also concerns the whole natural world and finds its explicit declination in the inter-human bond and in the relationship that is established between men and creation. In Hans Jonas' perspective, respect for dignity extends to all living creatures in their tension towards life, therefore also towards the natural world⁹³.

Dignity also extends over time and affects future generations, as well as people who have already died. Indeed leaving degraded natural resources for posterity means degrading the dignity of those who will live in the world in the future. The dignity referring to those who have already left this land, on the other hand, derives above all from respect for life that continues after death.

The link between dignity and vulnerability is certainly a strong one. In fact, vulnerability is a condition in which dignity

⁹¹ Immanuel Kant, *Grundlegung zur Metaphysik der Sitten*, Riga, Hartknoch, 1785.

⁹² George Kateb, *Human Dignity*, Cambridge (MA) and London, Belknap Press of Harvard University, 2014.

⁹³ Jonas, *Il principio responsabilità*, cit.

often fails. Just think of the condition of those who do not have a job or those who live in precarious sanitary conditions (without safe water to drink, for example): we understand well that these conditions lack a certain important degree of dignity.

The concept of dignity is fully part of the ethics of responsibility. As the philosopher Roberto Mancini recalls, humanity in everyone is given by the dignity of responsibility⁹⁴. The ethics of dignity, therefore, becomes the authentic life of conscience. Karl-Otto Apel highlights the principle of respect for dignity in every member of the universal human community. It is understood as the cornerstone of a universal foundation (*Letzt-Begründung*) of ethics, which cannot be denied, as otherwise some contradiction would emerge. In the opinion of Apel, in fact, respect for the dignity of everyone is the fundamental criterion for a political macroethics that can guide humanity in the face of the planetary challenges it must face⁹⁵.

The ethics of dignity, however, is lost in the face of the anthropological-relational disintegration that occurs due to post-modernity. In this sense, for example, Hannah Arendt paints a picture of essential human faculties⁹⁶.

Losing one's dignity in the face of catastrophe or critical situations in general would necessarily mean losing one's own identity as a consequence. Human identity has been studied very well by the philosopher Maria Zambrano, who highlights the theme of risky existence, which nevertheless remains capable of leading us towards ourselves, acquiring an identity of its own⁹⁷.

The phenomenology of dehumanization, moreover, manifests itself clearly in the market society in which we live. Adorno, for

⁹⁴ Mancini, *Ripensare la sostenibilità*, cit., p. 52. Certainly bearing in mind that this humanity, or rather the human condition also consisting of vital relationships, identifies a specific quality in ethics. An ethics oriented to the values of life, as well as human dignity, the natural world and the common good is for Mancini a macroethics of dignity and the common good (Mancini, *Ripensare la sostenibilità*, cit., p. 56).

⁹⁵ Karl-Otto Apel, *Transformation der Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main, Suhrkamp, Vol. II, 1973, pp. 358-436.

⁹⁶ Arendt, *Vita Activa*, cit.

⁹⁷ Maria Zambrano, *Verso un sapere dell'anima*, Milano, Raffaello Cortina, 1996.

example, defined anguish as the claustrophobia of a society that has become a system⁹⁸.

In this regard, Mancini explains very well the processes of victimization of people in the face of isolation, the privatization of every good, the uprooting, the precariousness, the trivialization and the polarization of every living space by the system founded on capital. The distance between people becomes more and more dilated and the digital connection becomes an attempt to fill the void of real encounters between people⁹⁹. Similarly, Simone Weil spoke of an “uprooting” as the result of modernization¹⁰⁰. This uprooting inevitably leads to the loss of roots, and therefore to the loss of identity. Catherine Ternynck spoke in this sense of “pulverization”, and used the metaphor of the man of sand, which perfectly captures the disintegrated subjectivity due to the loss of vital bonds, useful for the construction of human identity¹⁰¹.

Faced with the spiritual inability to interpret critical life events, and in the face of the illusion of self-determination with one’s own strength, emotional relationships seem to increasingly lose their authenticity. Bauman argues about “liquid love”¹⁰².

From another point of view, Anthony Elliot and Charles Lemert speak of a new generation individualism, where the ego pluralises itself by losing integrity, conscience, responsibility, communion, cohesion and solidarity, stability, openness to the future, and freedom¹⁰³. Roberto Mancini, however, states that the backbone of human identity and its unconditional dignity is made up of uniqueness, relationality, openness, integrity and responsibility¹⁰⁴.

⁹⁸ Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialettica negativa*, Torino, Einaudi, 2004, p. 24.

⁹⁹ Mancini, *Ripensare la sostenibilità*, cit., p. 85.

¹⁰⁰ Simone Weil, *La prima radice. Preludio a una dichiarazione dei doveri verso la creatura umana*, Milano, Edizioni di Comunità, 1980, p. 43.

¹⁰¹ Catherine Ternynck, *L’uomo di sabbia. Individualismo e perdita di sé*, Milano, Vita e pensiero, 2013.

¹⁰² Zygmunt Bauman, *Amore liquido sulla fragilità dei legami affettivi*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2005.

¹⁰³ Anthony Elliot, Charles Lemert, *Il nuovo individualismo. I costi emozionali della globalizzazione*, Torino, Einaudi, 2007.

¹⁰⁴ Roberto Mancini, *Trasformare l’economia. Fonti culturali, modelli alternativi, prospettive politiche*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2014, pp. 97-134.

Regardless, however, of a certain inclination that we want to attribute to the concept of dignity, in my opinion we should recognize that there is no dignity without the aspiration of something greater, which I personally identify in the Love of God. Only by welcoming or living this Love, both in the relationship with the “Most High” and in the relationships we live among ourselves and with the natural world, could we call ourselves children of God and thus acquire a new dignity, which should be true “Dignity”, that is to say the only status that makes us free in a relationship of love, which from vertical (“Love” between God and men) becomes horizontal (interhuman love and between men and all other creation). This dignity allows us to truly feel ourselves creatures belonging to the Creator, who wants the best for his children.

Man’s search for infinity or the ideal destination is an essential component of a worthy life. The dignity that is acquired in the awareness of being children of God is not just any such one, but it is Dignity that gives meaning to all other dignities and gives meaning to life itself. In a sense, we could define it as a “macro-dignity”. Dignity can be obscured by a narrow and simplified vision of the human being that ignores almost all of our complex ways of being.

As Mancini points out in this regard, we are “utopian creatures”¹⁰⁵, which tend to a fulfilment that is currently lacking. If the study of the human ignores this special constitution, we arrive at the fragmentary and reductive anthropology of the adjective (*homo sapiens*, *homo economicus*, digital man, the posthuman subject)¹⁰⁶.

If we really have to consider an adjective, we should consider that of “*homo felix*”. By this expression we mean the man who has matured and transfigured his ability to love, thanks to encounters, passions, revelations and learning¹⁰⁷.

Often the theme of suffering has been left aside in favour of the principle of being, of the absolute. According to Mancini,

¹⁰⁵ Mancini, *Filosofia della salvezza*, cit., p. 35.

¹⁰⁶ Ivi, p. 35.

¹⁰⁷ Ivi, p. 36.

the consequence of this dulling was that of no longer being able to listen to the need for salvation of the living and the desire and expectation that are involved in this same need¹⁰⁸.

Where evil is affirmed, the human substance of our being is annihilated, while where good is confirmed, humanity flourishes among living beings. Buber, in the work *Paths in Utopia*, outlines the meaning of salvation, which is understood as the true path of humanity¹⁰⁹.

Man's path to salvation cannot be resolved in saving himself. Man is required to see himself as a starting point, and not as a goal: he does not end with himself¹¹⁰.

Transfigurative ethics, through its constituent elements, is characterized by two matrices, which represent the engine of the "ethical transfiguration". One relates to love and its ontological value; the other to Light and its phenomenological representation.

19. *An Ontology of Love: For a "True Human Justice"*

A real human justice should pursue love, without which we cannot speak of justice, humanism or humanity.

In Maria Zambrano and Hannah Arendt's perspective, love is the most supreme faculty of the human being. It follows that when it is not well developed, inhibited or – worse still – deviated, the inhuman is manifested. Love gives us back to ourselves and it is the way to participate in life, which is understood as communion.

Love is not a gift reserved for the good, but the foundation of everyone's life and of a truly civil society. God's Love embraces everyone, that is to say, everything that was created by love. Love holds the authentic dimensions of formation. It is demanding, it sacrifices itself in order to make one ready for life. This sacrifice,

¹⁰⁸ Ivi, p. 34.

¹⁰⁹ Martin Buber, *Paths in Utopia*, Syracuse (NY), Syracuse University Press, 1996.

¹¹⁰ Ivi, pp. 98-99, 101.

From the Emergency Crisis to Resilient and Transfigurative Ethics

The emergency crises which strike humanity have often been caused by the same men who, in order to acquire more and more power, are willing to deny and subdue their own brothers. Therefore, fear and vulnerability grow within this pathological condition, which sees the financialized economy as an absolute god. Emergency crises, therefore, require justice and responsibility, as well as a new critical anthropological form of truth.

The resulting resilience is something which touches different spheres, so much so that this work will take some particular forms of ethics into consideration (“pre-resilient ethics”, “*patiendi* ethics”, “already measured ethics” and “closeness ethics”). These anticipate the transfigurative path, which – thanks to “critical consciousness”, “trust”, and “dignitary justice” – transfigure critical/emergency oblivion into luminous and free “Love”.

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