

Contributions Of Cordial Dialogue To Fundamental Theology

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ABSTRACT: This article seeks to respond to the longing that strikes in the heart of the individual and of society through an authentic dialogue that allows personal development, as well as the construction of a social network. Along with presenting cordial dialogue as a categorization that can respond to the needs of a relational being, this article also shows some of its contributions to fundamental theology. The goal is that this frontier discipline can recover its beauty and respond to the concerns of contemporary men and women.

KEYWORDS: Communication, ontology, relation, theology.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The human being can be understood as a “network of relationships”¹, immersed in the dynamism of dialogue with other beings who allow him to confront himself through the unfolding of the self. This relational structure of the self is subject to both understanding and confusion. It demands a constant effort to better understand the dialogue that weaves these relationships in such a way that responds to the desires that dwell in the heart of the individual.

This article will propose the concept of *cordial dialogue*² as a response to this human need that aches for authentic and profound encounters through dialogue, that which constitutes an important sign of the times with which fundamental theology—always open to new horizons—longs for a fertile dialogue. Therefore, this article suggests (1) the necessity of a new dialogue, (2) the proposal of a cordial dialogue to meet the needs of the modern man and woman, and finally (3) the contributions of this cordial dialogue to the fundamental theology.

II. THE NEED FOR A NEW DIALOGUE

There are many situations that bring to light the question regarding dialogue and its importance in human relations. There are many ethical, political, psychological and religious scenarios in which there is talk of the necessity of a dialogue directed toward the reconstruction of the family, the reconciliation of country, the brotherhood between religions, social peace, true friendships, partner relationships³, etc. But few have asked, how should this dialogue be? What conditions are needed for authenticity? What guarantees a real and productive dialogue beyond the simple exchange of mundane content?

More elements are needed beyond just the transmission and reception of a message in order to cultivate a real dialogue between two or more subjects, and so it is necessary to inquire about the possibility of a new, open, sincere, and profound dialogue that leads to an encounter and a communion with others. Gadamer writes of true dialogue: “The participants in a dialogue are less the directors than the directed. What will ‘come out’ of a conversation cannot be anticipated by anyone”⁴, because beyond a consensus or negotiation between the parties involved, a true dialogue seeks to create a space that permits the interlocutors a cordial meeting. Thus, “every true conversation involves genuine care for the other, to give value to his point of view and to put oneself in his place”⁵.

¹ Tokumura, *La amistad en el principio*, 7. This text demonstrates the force of the concept of the “network of relationships” in the work of Antoine de Saint-Exupéry as a fundamental anthropological approach.

² Cfr. Jaramillo, Gabriel, *Contexto actual del diálogo y posibilidad de un diálogo cordial desde una perspectiva realista y subjetiva*, Tesis de maestría en humanidades, Universidad Católica de Oriente, Rionegro, 2016.

³ Studies about the need in families and Colombian youths can be seen in: One Hope, *Estado espiritual de la niñez mundial*, 11-12. In the situation of post-conflict Colombia: Páez, *La familia rural y sus formas de diálogo en la construcción de paz en Colombia*, 163-168. And in psychology: Schulz, *El arte de conversar. Psicología de la comunicación verbal*.

⁴ Gadamer, *Verdad y método I*, 461.

⁵ *Ibíd.*, 463.

In a global society where we remain hyper-connected through technological advances, we have lost some aspects of profound interpersonal dialogue, which leaves the individual ruptured and lonely. This is a subjective and interior solitude, already perceived by the psychologist and theologian Ignace Lepp in comparing the ambivalence of the human being who, according to sociological studies, had never been thus accompanied, but at the same time, according to psychological diagnoses, had never been so “terribly alone in the middle of the crowd”⁶. In this way, Lepp concludes:

...the contradiction between sociology and psychology is only apparent. The reality of loneliness, like all existential realities, is ambiguous. It does not necessarily or primarily signify the physical separation from the rest of men [...] Its reality is positive, of a moral and spiritual order. Loneliness results from a rupture between subject and object.⁷

2.1. THE RUPTURE BETWEEN THE SUBJECTIVE AND OBJECTIVE DIMENSION

It can be said that this diagnosis, made more than 60 years ago, is still valid today. If a sociologist and a psychologist sat down to talk, they could give the reason for the rupture between the subjective and objective reality of the individual; therefore it is necessary to consider the meaning of these two dimensions of human communication.

The objective dimension of dialogue is understood through the work of Mariano Ure as the dimension determined through the foundational *ontological dialogue*⁸ of the human being that as such is situated in a specific historical context, with a language and a human experience that connects him to other similar beings. This dimension makes it possible for two individuals to speak in a comprehensible and logical manner about the same thing, to verbalize one’s own lived experiences while simultaneously giving legitimacy to the capacity for reason of the other, and to arrive at an agreement despite differences of opinions. The objective world allows for categorization and permits us to capture the intuitions, forms, feelings, and other spontaneous experiences that transcend the human being himself.

The subjective dimension, on the other hand, makes possible alterity and relation, and the putting of oneself in the place of the other with an open and friendly approach. It facilitates understanding that goes beyond words and concepts that fall short of personal experience, thus valuing the importance of context and the multitude of factors surrounding objective content. Taking subjectivity into account, one can better understand the range of dialogue that not only relies on the crutches and scaffolding of spoken language, but also expresses itself nonverbally through looks and gestures—in tones, shapes, and colors that enrich all conversation and require accurate interpretation.

When these two dimensions are ruptured, the separation generates extrapolations that fracture and distort reality. When one separates the subjective dimension, the dialogue can fall into a subjectivist process centered exclusively on emotions and feelings, away from the reality of others, locked in the self-referentiality of a sterile monologue and a slave of the relativism that endorses the self as the measure of all.

When one travels to the opposite extreme to safeguard dialogical objectivity, the dialogue can become a cold, impersonal instrument to communicate ideas, a short-sighted failure to capture the richness of communication that transcends rationalism. This dialogue risks falling into mere negotiation or argument, culminating in the authoritarian domination of the strongest position, the exclusion of those who think differently, and the closure in a rigid dogmatism.

III. THE CORDIAL DIALOGUE

In order to propose the cordial dialogue as a new dialogue that responds to the profoundly relational dimension of the individual and that achieves a synthesis between the two opposed dimensions, it is necessary to first delve into the relational concepts on which the present conversation will focus: the dialogue and the cordial. As Julián Marías affirms, “the primary way to interpret reality is to name it. The capacity of language in Spanish and English is very poor to express and distinguish emotional relationships [...] A linguistic deficit impoverishes reality [...] It makes it confused, rough”⁹.

3.1. DIALOGUE

Dialogue is a word that comes from the Greek *diá-logos*, two words that compose the meaning of dialogue. *Diá* is an article that means through, because of, by means of, on the basis of¹⁰; and the word *logos* expresses a great variety of meanings such as word, reason, story, revelation, law, virtue, relationship, and

⁶Lepp, *La Comunicación de las existencias*, 10.

⁷Ibíd.

⁸Ure, *Filosofía de la comunicación en tiempos digitales*, 43.

⁹Marías, *Breve tratado de la ilusión*, 21.

¹⁰Cfr. Oepke, A., “Διά”, 152.

truth¹¹. *Diá-logos* can be understood as *a link between the word and reason*, an investigation of the relational, an encounter with the truth, an experience based on story and revelation. The “logos” that constitutes the base element through a relation can be formed with a person, a text, nature, or the Word that was at the beginning of creation (Jn 1,1).

Without a doubt, the person referred to is “essentially in dialogue”¹², and therefore “obligated”¹³ to dialogue with the reality that surrounds him, as Adela Cortina would say. One can understand all these “logos” as connected. Along these lines, one understands Ratzinger when he says that “in the human word enters, along with the human logos, the logos of every being”¹⁴, resounding in a singular way the divine Logos that weaves a relationship with each person which always involves others people and even creation itself¹⁵.

Thus the *diá-logos* can be understood, can become a means to find truth, to achieve friendship between people, and to form cordial relationships with others. The *diá-logos* can give birth to a “cooperative search for the truth”¹⁶ in which reason resides and through which a consensus or mutual understanding can be reached. However, as the pedagogical anthropologist José María Barrio affirms, it is also an end in itself:

Dialogue is an authentic praxis, an end in itself, and not a means to obtain consensus. Dialogue that arises with the purpose of achieving a consensus is rather a specific type of dialogue, which we could call a negotiation. But a dialogue that ends in disagreement is no less satisfactory a dialogue. Friends know it well.¹⁷

3.2. CORDIAL

In the logos communicated through the *diá-logos*, the cordial dimension is present because in the heart there are also reasons and contents that have been lost in the dialogue—an idea confirmed by Adela Cortina as “reasons of the heart of which geometric and productive reason are unaware”¹⁸.

Cordial comes from the Latin *cor, cordis*, which means “heart, stomach, soul, intelligence, and head”¹⁹. It seems strange that one word can be used to designate such distinct realities, but the amplitude of the conceptual horizon of the ancients was capable of conceiving of this reality in a unitary way. Lewis explains it in this way: “the head dominates the stomach through the heart”²⁰. For this English thinker, magnanimity, emotions, and stable feelings occur in the heart, because the heart and the feelings “are the indispensable official link between the cerebral and the visceral man. It can even be said that it is through this intermediate element that man is man, since by his intellect he is a mere spirit and a mere animal by his appetite”²¹.

The heart is that which allows man to be what he is, from which it follows that a lack of humanity is a cardiac atrophy that leads to a hardened existence. As Marias says, “the human person, rather than being intelligent or rational, is a loving creature”²², and when he does not love with his heart, with his mind, and with his entire being, he is incapable of being a full person and of seeing others as such. *Cordis* tries to explain the most intimate and authentic of an individual, his deepest center where “the intimate and hidden” lie (1P 3,4), from which good intentions and “bad thoughts” sprout (Mc 7,21). *Cordis* is “without a doubt affection, but also intelligence, talent, spirit, even stomach, because one has to have a stomach—and a lot—to be fair”²³.

In the biblical Greek, *Kardia* is the word that designates the cordial dimension, understood as the seat, the place, and the “organ through which God addresses man”²⁴. It is a figurative expression that intends to materialize a spiritual reality that being immaterial can be felt and expressed factually—although in a very precarious way. This place is extremely rich because it constitutes “the site of thoughts, desires, and passions [...] the religious center with which God deals, which is the root of religious life and which determines moral conduct”²⁵.

Being an immensely rich reality, “the heart is the most disconcerting, even perverse. Who can know it?” (Jr 17,9). There exists a great existential paradox that the man wanting to love generates heartbreak and

¹¹Cfr. Debrunner, A. “Λόγος”, 496.

¹²Guardini, *Mundo y persona*, 117.

¹³Cortina, *Ética de la razón cordial. Educar en la ciudadanía en el siglo XXI*, 194.

¹⁴Ratzinger, *Introducción al cristianismo*, 70.

¹⁵Papa Francisco, *Laudato Si'*, 84.

¹⁶Cortina, *Ética de la razón cordial. Educar en la ciudadanía en el siglo XXI*, 179.

¹⁷Barrio, *El balcón de Sócrates. Una propuesta frente al nihilismo*, 48

¹⁸Cortina, *Ética de la razón cordial. Educar en la ciudadanía en el siglo XXI*, 191.

¹⁹Blanquez, *Diccionario manual latino-español y español-latino*, 144.

²⁰Lewis, *La Abolición del hombre*, 10.

²¹*Ibíd.*, 11.

²²Marias, *Persona*, 176.

²³Cortina, *Ética de la razón cordial. Educar en la ciudadanía en el siglo XXI*, 193.

²⁴De Ausejo, “Corazón”, 375.

²⁵Behm, H., “Καρδία”, 410.

frustrates the deep-seated longing that pulsates within him, and so it becomes necessary to deepen his understanding each time.

3.3. THE CORDIAL DIALOGUE

“Think the feeling, feel the thought”²⁶ is a beautiful synthesis between feeling and thought expressed in poetic language, not only to be contemplated again and again with relish, but also to be considered with philosophical and intellectual gravity. Cordial dialogue is inspired by an idea taken from the school of Madrid with contributions of thinkers like Miguel de Unamuno, José Ortega y Gasset, Xavier Zubiri, Antonio Machado, María Zambrano, and Julián Marías²⁷, all of whom have spoken of cordial reason.

Cordial dialogue, like the thought that feels or the feeling that thinks, is posed as a categorization that intends to capture life in its dynamic development. In this sense, cordial dialogue can act as a synthesis that responds to the being of the individual as a relational and *ontodialogical* subject who unfolds in in a constant dynamism of encountering God, his own being, his neighbor, and all of creation.

Cordial dialogue is a *diá-logos* of the heart that involves both reason and feeling, an encounter through the word that seeks the deeper truth that is to be unveiled but that also accepts the subjective convictions of each involved in the conversation. Dialogue rooted in respect for the other motivates sincere agreement or dissent of opinion, because respect alone requires one to take a stand against his own opinion²⁸.

This dialogue accompanies all contexts in which the human being unfolds. It colors the tone of conversations, be they academic, commercial, existential, spiritual, familial, etc. In this way, no matter how much a person moves from place to place, his heart remains steadfast, because the heart is precisely the space within which once can experience a true encounter through the word. The heart not only creates the appropriate spark required by each encounter and each interpersonal dialogue, but also provides warm welcome to the objective message that the other hopes to deliver with the subjective burden it carries with it.

Following the paths of cordiality drawn by Julián Marías, it is possible to speak of cordial dialogue as a style or temper of speaking. For this Spanish thinker, the temper is the “modulation of the installation”²⁹, that is to say, the proper tuning that situates the *ontodialogical* being in life. This temper constitutes an obligation of the individual person, because in the end one has to live by some mode of existence:

I can speak coldly, cordially, irritably, authoritatively, passionately, lovingly, submissively; I can speak ‘distemperedly’, because there is a particular temper called distemper. The linguistic installation is modulated in many various tempers; none is necessary; but it is necessary to be in on one, to speak from one of them. And whoever says to speak says listen or write or read.³⁰

One could speak of cordial dialogue as a temper that seeks to respond to the condition of the individual as a loving creature, which requires open and spontaneous conversation, a heart-to-heart dialogue that burns with the love of giving oneself in communication because “love consists in mutual saying”³¹. To love is to give oneself totally and generously through words, gestures, and looks; it is to recover gusto for life, the enjoyment of simple pleasures and the delight of each one’s own professional installation. The dialogue of love fills every office with eloquence and effusiveness, with dignity, simplicity, and beauty, be it domestic service or management of a multinational corporation. To live in a distempered way impedes the true encounter that beats in the heart of each person.

As in the case of the distempered guitar that requires tuning to communicate its beauty, the cordial dialogue is an invitation to temper one’s own life from the language of the beauty best articulated in art, literature, theater, poetry, and music, all of which capture the loveliness of nature, fragility, alterity, and the human condition.

IV. CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE CORDIAL DIALOGUE TO FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

After contextualizing the current situation of dialogue and proposing the cordial dialogue as a proposal that try to response to the desires of the contemporary human being, it is essential to describe some of its contributions to fundamental theology³². Much more can be said of cordial dialogue and its ability to recover the

²⁶Unamuno y Jugo, *Poesías*, 10.

²⁷Cfr. Aldo, *La persona como ser en relación en el pensamiento de Julián Marías*, 19-43; y, Marías, *La fecundidad de la generación del 98*.

²⁸Here, opinion is understood as a pretense of truth.

²⁹Marías, *La educación sentimental*, 21.

³⁰Ídem, *Antropología Metafísica*, 236.

³¹Ibíd., 280.

³²This hermeneutic exercise that try to ground theology from a category brought from the humanities, it is inspired by other exercises that focus in concepts such as: the theory of communicative action [Cfr. Peukert,

beautiful and lyrical nature of existence, but now it is imperative to develop some of its contributions to fundamental theology so it might display its own beauty and lyricism.

The work of the theologian is not easy when he wishes to speak of the ineffable that cannot be seen (Jn 1, 11), of a God that transcends human categorization and refuses to be enclosed in concepts that define life. Theology is not a mere conceptual construct; as the Pope affirms, the “idea disconnected from reality originates insufficient idealism and nominalism, which at most classify or define but never summon. That which it summons is the reality illuminated by reasoning”³³. The theological work, or theologizing, is a challenge that requires experience in contemplation, a cordial encounter with God and a purification of the heart, as affirmed by one of the first theologians of Christianity, San Gregorio Nacianceno: “it is no one’s, listen well, no one’s job to talk to God. This is not something that can be acquired at a low price”³⁴.

For Nacianceno, theologizing also implies an experience of cordial encounter with the recipients of the said experience they desire to communicate. To express the cordial experience of the theologian implies a consideration of “how it should be, with whom, when, and to what point it should be discussed”³⁵. In this sense, this Capadocian Father spoke in his theological prayers 12 and 32 about the lyrical exigencies of the theology summarized by the Jesuit Rupnik, when remembering the importance of the dialogue of Nacianceno, who considered himself the mouth of Christ and the servant of the verb:

Whoever sets out to speak of God should tune his mind and his tongue, like a musical instrument that leaves itself to be played by an excellent artist: The Holy Spirit. Also, the listeners must first “attune themselves to the Spirit” (*synarmózein to Pneúmatoi*).³⁶

Certainly, the theological vocation requires—as in the case of the guitar—the tuning of each of its strings before dialogue with God and with the community of believers, so that the true artist, the Holy Spirit, can interpret beautiful melodies through fragile instruments (2Co 4, 7). Refined in this way, one can understand how to lay his foundation.

Fundamental theology, as its name implies, seeks to collect in the foundation of theology³⁷, at the very heart of the dialogue between God and men that seeks to take on theology. Fundamental theology is a matter of having a passionate heart that wishes to go to the very foundations of faith, as expressed beautifully by the Scripture: “worship the Lord, Christ, in your hearts, always ready to respond to all who question your hope” (1P 3, 15). This exercise of theologizing on the foundation, although it has been present since the beginning, has only taken a particular physiognomy within theology since the nineteenth century. As Martínez explains: “the expression ‘fundamental theology’ arose only in the nineteenth century originally to denominate the theological discipline that pretends to assume in that moment the task of defending Christianity”³⁸.

According to Martínez, the understanding of fundamental theology has evolved from an apologetic conception of defense into a more open consideration, building bridges through dialogue³⁹. The nuanced way of understanding fundamental theology illustrates “the prevailing disagreement in the field [...] a definition of fundamental theology can not be definitively fixed, nor of its theme, subject, objective, or method, because this theological discipline—like all of theology—responds to a dialogue”⁴⁰. Dialogue constitutes its backbone.

Just as there exist various definitions to understand this discipline, there can also be different metaphors, because all of fundamental theology needs metaphors to try to understand life in its dynamism—as Jesus did himself when using parables in his proclamation of the Kingdom. Hans Waldenfels, for example, uses the metaphor of the door:

...one can compare the work of the fundamental theologian with waiting at the threshold of the home [...] the decisive point of Christian theology consists then in showing the door of which we speak metaphorically as the door of salvation [...] following the metaphor, if fundamental theology is a science at the door, dogmatism will be the interior of the house.⁴¹

Teoría de la ciencia y teología fundamental] and the encounter [Cfr. Rodríguez, *El encuentro, propuesta para una teología fundamental*].

³³Papa Francisco, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 232.

³⁴Gregorio Nacianceno, *Discursos teológicos*, discurso 27, 3.

³⁵*Ibíd.*, 28, 1.

³⁶Rupnik, *Teología de la evangelización desde la Belleza*, 179.

³⁷Cfr. Peukert, *Teoría de la ciencia y teología fundamental*, 7-9.

³⁸Martínez, *Teología fundamental*, 203.

³⁹ For a more deeply study of the importance of dialogue in contemporary theology, see: Marshall, *Theology and dialogue. Essays in conversation with George Lindbeck*; Izquierdo, *Teología Fundamental, Temas y propuestas para el nuevo milenio*; and Pablo VI, *Ecclesiam Suam*, 27-31.

⁴⁰*Ibíd.*, 206.

⁴¹Waldenfels, *Teología fundamental contextual*, 104-105.

Theology must resort to other languages, as affirmed by José Alcaín: “it is an authentic creation or recreation of language. And all of creation follows more the laws of poetic inspiration than those of method. Therefore, along with methodical work, the creative inspiration of the poet and the saint is required”⁴². The guitar will be the metaphor used in order to refine fundamental theology in the light of six contributions inspired by the cordial dialogue, so that it responds to the needs of the contemporary subject that sometimes perceives the theological field as a cold and distant discourse, as the Pope has insisted to theologians since the beginning of his pontificate: “carry in your heart the evangelizing purpose of the Church and also of theology, and do not content yourself with theology of desk”⁴³.

4.1 THE CORDIAL DIALOGUE AS A SIGN OF THE TIMES

Usually, a guitar is tuned with a fork that helps to tune the first string on the fifth fret. Once the first string is tuned, the sharpest of all, all of the other strings can be tuned. In theology, like with the guitar, each of its strings are intimately related. You cannot play a chord with a single string; you need all the others. Undoubtedly, there are strings that wear out more than others and that need tuning again and again as is the case with this first string.

Theology, as a human effort to welcome the revelation of God, affirmed by the international theological commission, “aspires to understand the true salvation of God in a rational and systemic way”⁴⁴. This aspiration is coupled with a dialogue with the signs of the times that helps to discern them properly with a “willingness to seek the way in which the Spirit of God could be speaking through such events”⁴⁵. A sharp and refined discernment leads to agreement with Torres Queiruga that theology is contextual: “in cordial and two-sided dialogue with theology and culture”⁴⁶, which finds in postmodernism a door and not a wall, and sees an opportunity to enter into dialogue and not isolate the other.

Olga Consuelo Vélez, when speaking of the importance of the method that configures different contextual theologies in dialogue with postmodernity and her own cultural matrix, highlights the need for theological literacy that takes “awareness of the urgency of learning to read and write our faith”⁴⁷. As George Lindbeck affirms, being requires a literacy that permits dialogue with “religions as dialogues that deal with what is most important—with the fundamental questions of life and death, right and wrong, chaos and order, meaning and nonsense”⁴⁸.

More references could be cited regarding the importance of a new dialogue in theology, which is not only open to the signs of the times but also in itself is understood as a sign of the times—a theological place from which one can theologize about a God who is present in the dialogue of his contemporaneous subject. As Jacques Haers affirms, it exists in the theologians:

A feeling of uneasiness, frustration or dissatisfaction with theologies that seem to have lost their touch with reality while failing to respond to a lot of the questions and problems of our contemporary world [...] Of course, this frustration can be restated in a more positive way, as precisely the desire for such responsive, committed and responsible theologies. And even more than a desire, there seems to be an intuition that theological reflections built on key or root metaphors constructs as “relation”, “encounter”, “connectedness”, and “conversation” may well prove to be a good candidate for a renewed and fruitful interaction with reality.⁴⁹

4.2 RELATIONAL ONTOLOGICAL TUNING

If the renewal of theology passes through the hermeneutics of the relationship and dialogue that constitute an important sign of postmodern times, the second string will be tuned by tuning the first string. One string honors the other and the category of the relationship constitutes an important sign of the times here, as Benedict XVI said:

Today, humanity appears much more interactive than before: that greater neighborhood must be transformed into true communion [...] This thought requires a *critical and evaluative deepening of the category of the relationship*. It is a commitment that cannot be carried out only with the social sciences, since it requires the contribution of knowledge, such as metaphysics and theology, to clearly capture the transcendent dignity of man.⁵⁰

⁴²Alcaín, *El lenguaje teológico*, 558.

⁴³Papa Francisco, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 133.

⁴⁴Comisión Teológica Internacional, *La teología hoy: perspectivas, principios y criterios*, 15.

⁴⁵Ibíd., 55.

⁴⁶Torres Queiruga, 282-283.

⁴⁷Vélez, *Repensando las “Teologías en el contexto de la posmodernidad”*, 83.

⁴⁸Lindbeck, *The nature of doctrine, Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age*, 40.

⁴⁹Haers, *Theology and conversation*, 1.

⁵⁰Benedicto XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, 53.

Relational ontology has much to contribute in this effort to comprehend the human being not as a substance in isolation but understood as the relationship between an I and a you. From here one can construct an anthropology that emerges from the revelation of a Trinitarian God who is eminently relational—a Father who creates a relationship of love with the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Fundamental theology can be tuned according to the comprehension of a relational God. If God in the very heart of his being is one in three persons, man and woman bear the imprint of this personal being that unites them with each other and with creation in such an intimate way that there is no place for individualism and egotism, which as Zizoulas affirms has been the foundation on which “Western thought has not ceased to settle its own culture”⁵¹.

In the perspective of the Second Vatican Council, fundamental theology has man and woman as the center of its concerns, with all the joys, hopes, and anxieties “of our time, especially of the poor and of those who suffer”⁵², because as it continues affirming, “there is no one truly human that does not find an echo in his heart”⁵³. In this ontological tuning, everything human finds an echo in the heart of the theologian, even ecology itself is part of human culture. It is important here to highlight with the Council “above all of the poor” which is accentuated again in *Aparecida*⁵⁴.

4.3 TUNING THE ACCLESIAL COMMUNION

In the aforementioned metaphor of the fundamental theologian being like the one who waits on the threshold and finds himself simultaneously within and without, it is possible that to go out and illuminate the peripheries he would neglect domestic and social tasks and leave the inside of the house in shadows. Although fundamental theology is being tuned, it is in the words of García Maestro a “theological discipline, as a theological matter of the border”⁵⁵, it is important to understand that the peripheries are not only geographic but existential. As in the example of the good Samaritan (Lk 10, 25-37), he could be the brother by blood or by faith who is by my side.

Theology arises from the intra-Trinitarian dialogue of a community that turns inward rather than toward a frontier, showing the world with authenticity that love is real and can be lived. Before leaving this world, Jesus himself prayed insistently to the Father for the unity of his disciples, so that in ecclesiastical unity the Trinitarian God becomes present and is an eloquent testimony of communion. The testimony speaks more than words: “May they all be one. Like you, Father, in me, and I in you, so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17, 21).

The Church, as a sacrament of communion, has not only suffered many ruptures in the dialogue as seen in the Eastern schism or the Protestant Reformation, but it is also presently threatened by the tensions that are generated from within the Church and that deserve a patient dialogue. As Pope Benedict XVI insisted on the reformations of the Council, it is a dialogue that must go through the tensions of childbirth, as in the case of Saint Francis of Assisi who began a reforming movement that put the hierarchy in crisis. He also had to “fit into a juridical skeleton, but, in the end, a reality was born that lives today and will live in the future”⁵⁶.

The poet of Assisi became holy by being obedient, and through Jesus Christ he converted for the cause of salvation (Hb 5, 9) and of unity. The history of the reformers has been tinged by this dialogue that assumes the traditional and the new from a hermeneutic renewal in continuity, as did the *ressourcement*⁵⁷. This current, wanting to assume the spirit of contemporaneity, did so while also assuming the source of revelation: the father of the church and in communion with the magisterium. In the intergenerational dialogue typical of the cordial temple, one discovers that the key to modernity is hidden in the past.

To temper the cordial dialogue it is necessary to assume, from relational ontology, the different theological currents and their different accents, as Ratzinger summarizes in speaking of the theological movements of the Second Vatican Council:

On many occasions they seemed directly contrary, both from the point of view of their fundamental positions and from their theological orientation. The liturgical movement even liked to describe its piety as “objectively” sacramental, before him, the marked accentuation of the subjective and the personal in the Marian movement was evident [...] among the tasks of a Council, celebrated in this time period, that had to determine the correct

⁵¹Zizoulas, *Comunión y alteridad. Persona e Iglesia*, 13.

⁵²Concilio Vaticano II, *Constitución pastoral Gaudium et spes, sobre la Iglesia en el mundo actual*, 1.

⁵³Ibíd.

⁵⁴Celam, *V Conferencia general del episcopado latinoamericano, Aparecida*, 147.

⁵⁵García Maestro, *La teología del siglo XXI. Hacia una teología del diálogo*, 19.

⁵⁶Benedicto XIV, *Encuentro con los párrocos y sacerdotes de la Diócesis de Roma*, 4.

⁵⁷Cfr. Kristiansen, *Key Theological Thinkers: From Modern to Postmodern*, 39-41.

relationship between these two divergent movements and to lead them to a fruitful unity (without simply eliminating the tension)⁵⁸.

4.4 THE TEMPLE OF TRINITARIAN THEOLOGY

In this fundamental theological tuning in which one string helps to tune the other, one arrives at the bass strings that create the low sounds of the chord. The fourth string is the least deep of the three, but the one that wears out the most along with the first. In this string that is in the center of the instrument, the foundation of the cordial dialogue is tuned.

In this deep sound, the divine logos that is present in all dialogues and that “throbs in the heart of all”⁵⁹ resounds, because, as Mark Rupnik affirms, “the privileged means of spiritual union are the words”⁶⁰ and God is the Word. It was necessary to begin refining the acute strings of history, the center of the person and the ecclesial community, in order to open a deeper and more profound space for Trinitarian theology. As Ratzinger affirms, “God’s testimony is muted when language becomes a technique of communication”⁶¹.

The testimony of the Trinitarian God traverses all of Sacred Scripture through his Word and his Spirit that fluttered over the waters (Gen. 1, 3), the incarnation in which the Father sends his Spirit to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:35, Mt 1:18), the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan in which the Father asks them to listen to the Son and the Spirit descends in the form of a Dove (Mk 1: 9-11), as well as events of the transfiguration (Mk 9, 2-8), the priestly prayer of Jesus (Jn 17), the resurrection (Rm 8, 11), and Pentecost (Acts 2, 1-4).

Dei Verbum reminds us that the “invisible God (Col 1, 15; 1Tm 1, 17), moved by love, speaks to men as friends (Ex 33, 11; Jn 15, 14-14), deals with them (Ba 3, 38) to invite them in and receive their company”⁶². The Trinity, which lives in an eternal and loving dialogue, wants to invite each person to participate in this loving dialogue, as the Scripture repeats over and over again: “May you listen to his voice today: do not ‘harden your heart’” (Ps 94, 7-8), “Behold, I stand at the door and knock, if anyone hears my voice and opens up to me, I will go into to his house and dine with him and he with me” (Rev 3, 20).

The word of God is one that summons. It is alive and omnipresent. That is why he speaks in deeds and words, in nature and historical events, in the poor, the businessman, the child, the elderly, because there are many theological places in which the Logos resounds. In order to be able to dialogue, the theologians must first listen; “they must not only be hearers of the Word (to borrow an expression from Rahner) or of the ecclesial community, but listeners of those who do not believe”⁶³.

God speaks permanently, and this distinguishes him from the idols that “have a mouth and do not speak” (Ps 115, 5), but it is the person as a theological subject who closes the door of his heart because it is in the heart that one must listen and respond to God. God communicates his love to each heart, inviting them to communicate that same love to others—especially to the poorest and those who suffer the most.

4.5 THE CONVERSATION AS CONVERSION

To participate in an existential way in the Trinitarian dialogue is certainly an authentic transformation. By tuning each of the strings, already a route of pastoral conversion has been presented implicitly for anyone who wants to theologize. The interpellations of Pope Francis follow along the same line, as he reminded the theology students at the Catholic University of Argentina:

We must avoid a theology that exhausts itself in academic dispute or that contemplates humanity from a crystal castle. We learn in order to live: theology and holiness are an inseparable binomial [...] theology must also take charge of conflicts: not only of those we experience within the Church, but also those that affect the whole world and that are lived on the streets of Latin America. Do not settle for an office theology.⁶⁴

The problem is certainly complex because it has generated a dualism between dogma and praxis⁶⁵, which applied to the concrete life of the theologian is expressed as a separation between theology and life. In the

⁵⁸Ratzinger y Von Balthasar, *María, Iglesia naciente*, 14-15.

⁵⁹Papa Francisco, *Encuentro con las autoridades, el cuerpo diplomático y algunos representantes de la sociedad civil*, 7 de septiembre de 2017.

⁶⁰Rupnik, *Teología de la evangelización desde la Belleza*, 173.

⁶¹Ratzinger, *Introducción al cristianismo*, 25.

⁶²Concilio Vaticano II, *Constitución dogmática Dei verbum*, 2.

⁶³García Maestro, *La teología del siglo XXI. Hacia una teología del diálogo*, 19.

⁶⁴Papa Francisco, *Carta del Santo Padre Francisco al gran canciller de la Pontificia universidad católica de argentina en el centenario de la facultad de teología*.

⁶⁵This was one of the concerns of the then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Cardinal Ratzinger. A good study on this can be found in: Meider-Hamidi y Schumacher, *El teólogo Joseph Ratzinger*, 224-232.

origins of Christian theology, as seen with The Nacianceno, the theologian was both the mystic and the saint. According to Von Balthasar, this separation already had its roots in medieval scholasticism:

...there is surely no less studied event in the history of Catholic theology and, nonetheless, worthy of greater attention than the fact that since the great scholasticism there have been very few holy theologians [...] in their fullest sense: as the teacher and doctor within the church.⁶⁶

The experience of cordial conversation has much to do with the evangelical conversion, in that through an encounter with the heart of God one must not be consumed by the impurities of one's own heart and to go passionately "toward the heart of the world"⁶⁷ as affirmed by Aparecida. Theologizing and dialoguing cordially is an extremely transformational experience, as Gadamer expressed in *Truth and Method*:

Conversation always leaves a mark on us. What makes something a conversation is not the fact that it has taught us something new, but that we have found in the other something that we had not before encountered in our experience of the world [...] Conversation possess a transformative force. When conversation is achieved, we are left with something, and something remains in us that transforms us. That is why conversation has a peculiar similarity with friendship.⁶⁸

When there is an authentic experience of cordial dialogue and it leaves its mark on the interlocutors, it is impossible not to leave as a different person because the heart expands so that it can welcome others in their respective alterity. Not in vain was the importance of temper discussed; just as a musical instrument that is tuned helps to temper another instrument, so it is in daily life with a friend who helps another to temper. People usually seek shelter in the refuge of a friend, just as a bird seeks nest in a leafy tree, because it gives a roof of confidence and security to protect themselves.

What can come out of a dialogue is more than just a maieutic birth in which knowledge is given and consensus is achieved. This is undoubtedly important and quite laudable because it implies having gone through childbirth and the suffering inherent therein, but the illusion is also awakened by the other in the transfer that arises from father-son, teacher-student, friend-friend, and companion-partner relationships.

4.6 COR AD COR LOQUITUR

In the dialogue of the heart, the human condition as a loving creature is best expressed, open to being affected by the force of love in all its dimensions. This last guitar string, the lowest of all, sounds the same note but with a deeper sound—it is a "mi" but two octaves below. With this string we return to the starting point and conclude the tuning with the deep theological thought of Cardinal Newman and his cardinal motto: "The heart speaks to the heart".

As a good reformer, Newman was able to inherit an interpretation of the past but to give it new meaning with his own life. *Cor ad cor loquitur* is a phrase he takes from San Francisco de Sales and aptly appropriates into all his work, because theologizing and dialoguing cordially was his vital temper. Newman declared his self-biographical motto with his heart more than with words, so the only instance in which he stated it directly was in 1955:

...that you yourself have imbued yourself and are convinced of the doctrine of which you want to convince others. The supreme artifice will be the complete absence of artifice. Let the words burn, but not because of screaming or unrestrained gestures, but because of inner feeling. This arises more from the heart than from the mouth. As much as we speak with the mouth, it is the heart that speaks to the heart, the tongue does not go beyond the ears.⁶⁹

The cordial dialogue certainly aims to ignite hearts in its pastoral exercise. But this is only achieved if there is fire in one's heart. The heart-to-heart dialogue, according to Lukács, expresses Newman's conversational and Trinitarian theology, which is charged with a strong patristic influence that determined his conversion from Anglicanism to Catholicism. For this and other reasons developed by Lukács, Newman "can be called one of the precursors of the Second Vatican Council and the theology of our time [...] the sincere search for the truth made him a contemporary thinker of our time who can help us in our study of theology"⁷⁰.

Newman is a concrete example of cordial dialogue in fundamental theology in his search for truth, in his ability to capture in the diversity of subjective perspectives a symphony in dialogue with the ecclesial dialogue, a progressivism that places authors of the fourth century in conversation with others of their time, as well as his concern for ecclesial communion.

As Lukács affirms, dogma is a cordial, prayerful reality in Newman's thought. When one recites the creed, it is not "an abstract formula of dogmatic statement or a conceptual synthesis, but a 'hymn of praise,' a

⁶⁶Von Balthasar, *Ensayos Teológicos. I Verbum caro*, 235.

⁶⁷Celam, *V Conferencia general del episcopado latinoamericano*, Aparecida, 148.

⁶⁸Gadamer, *Verdad y método II*, 206-207.

⁶⁹Newman, *La idea de la universidad*, Encuentro, 184.

⁷⁰Lukács, *Conversatiocordium. Conversation as basic principle of Newman's Trinitology*, 270.

‘song of love’⁷¹ or the cordial dialogue that expresses the lyricism of fundamental theology. It is a song of love, a conversation with the heart of God, that asks to be welcomed not as an idea, but as an individual willing to enter into a relationship and to touch their own heart. The problem that makes dogma cold and distant is that “we have hearts of stone, hearts as hard as roads”⁷². Faced with this, contemplation suggests “as the safest remedy [...] meditation is ‘able to soften our hard heart,’ so ‘little by little we can get some warmth, light, life, and love’⁷³.”

This drama in which God speaks, commits himself, and awaits an answer constitutes the sacred history, which Newman understands “not as a drama acted by us as an audience, but a drama in which we are invited to take part” in a free and relational way. The economy of salvation is a dialogue in which the heart of God “wants to extend its loving communion out of the trinity”⁷⁴.

V. CONCLUSION

After tuning each one of the strings that will make the cordial dialogue resound in the right way, something arises that is inevitable and not able to be anticipated, but that always awaits in the heart. A true dialogue awakens the artist that everyone carries inside and that likes to sing with relish and recite with passion. Unconsciously, we expect to find something in dialogue and be internally changed by having shared with a friend—reliving special moments, resolving an issue, unraveling a problem, objectifying a subjective experience, venting a pain, comforting those who love each other, etc.

There are many experiences that can arise from the cordial dialogue, and it is impossible to pigeonhole them in this work. Dialogue can arise from a small smile, gesture, or hug full of cordiality, resulting in a courtship, an unexpected friendship, the solution of a conflict with groups outside the law, and the opportunity to start a new business or project to improve society. In the dialogue or theology that has been refined, one can listen to the Logos that echoes in the heart, making all dialogue a theological experience of the frontier.

The true cordial dialogue does not end at the moment defined by spatial and temporal circumstances, but extends as an infinite shot that echoes in eternity. Patience dilates the heart and, in time, makes words understandable that originally were not. This is how a dialogue can continue to resonate in the heart and be remembered constantly despite the time, geographical separation, or even the death of one with whom the conversation was held. Often, not until after death does one better understand the words of the other and his legacy begin to pass from mouth to mouth, as in the case of Jesus Christ.

Cordial dialogue not only provides a synthesis between the objective, subjective, and relational dimensions that are present in the dialogue, but it also allows us to overcome the extrapolations of relativism and the dogmatism that harm society, the Church, and fundamental theology itself.

From cordial dialogue, one can access the narrative value of Sacred Scripture with a hermeneutical key to interpretation that allows them to welcome the revelation in one’s own heart, to contemplate it, to dialogue or theologize in tune with the concerns of contemporary women and men, trying to “manifest the ever-present significance of the Word of God” and thus give meaning and guidance in the search for truth.

Many things remain to be said of the cordial dialogue, but the most important is the experience of dialoguing and theologizing in the intimacy of the heart, and the affections and desires that make possible feelings in a world that needs them urgently in all areas of existence.

⁷¹Ibid.,272.

⁷²Ibid., 280.

⁷³Ibid.

⁷⁴Ibid., 275.

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