

“Ce sont des temps de fraternité”.

Towards a form of social, economic and political fraternal organization¹

By Sandra Cristina Campos²

... ...If I speak in human and angelic languages, and do not have love, I become like resounding brass, or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and do not have love, I am nothing.

And if I distribute all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, and I have no love, it is of no use to me.

Love never stops being; but prophecies will end, and tongues will cease, and knowledge will end. For we know in part, and we prophesy in part; now faith, hope and love remain, these three; But the greatest of these is love.^{3.4}

¹ CAMPOS, Sandra. (2024) *Sé el cambio que quieres ver en el mundo*. Ed. Espacio del Silencio. Cap. 2

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³ English Standard Version Bible, 2001, 1 Letter of Saint Paul to the Corinthians 13:1-7)

⁴ Soundtrack of the French film *Azul* by Polish film director Krzysztof Kieślowski, which is part of the “Trois couleurs” trilogy https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_1lcpurc7rQ

Humanity is experiencing the peak of a systemic crisis that began a few decades ago. It is comforting and encouraging to know that millions of women and men around the world have been striving daily - also for decades - to build themselves as human beings with a consciousness different from the commonly dominant one. They are reflecting this inner change in concrete practices as individuals, citizens, consumers... in their daily lives.

Undoubtedly, they are making an essential and concrete contribution to global change, both personally and collectively, enabling the materialization of a paradigm and model of planetary coexistence different from the currently dominant and crisis-ridden ones, born within the very bosom of modernity.

In moments like this, when we are gambling with the existence of life on Planet Earth -I am referring to the conditions of existence of all species, including the human one- it is imperative that more men and women join this change quickly. If we collectively accelerate in this direction, we will become the necessary critical mass for the consolidation of the paradigm shift and the model of coexistence at a planetary level before we fall into the announced abyss that the human being has opened up in the era some call the Anthropocene.

It is about making a change of consciousness that permeates our being and our actions, from the clarity of understanding that we are an organic and interconnected whole. As a consequence of this, we will understand that everything an individual does affects the entirety of the web of life, and everything the web of life does affects the individual in one way or another. We are all interconnected.

This aspect is crucial because, without sincerely personal changes in our lives, in the practice of *virtues* different from the *values* in which those of us who are alive today were born, such as individualism, selfishness, competition, disqualification, exclusion of the other, the great collective changes that we must achieve will lack a real support.

However, I must emphasize that what we can call *the silent and peaceful Revolution of the small and profound things* is essential to achieve the great changes required in the macro scenarios of ethics, economics, and politics at a global level. I am talking about a new social, political and economic organization, community-based, ecological, networked and with interconnected proximity.

Next, I want to reflect on how these personal changes can acquire a political dimension, expressed in a society that organizes itself to live and coexist in a harmonious and balanced way. That is, how the administration organizes its resources and resolves its conflicts, respecting the balance of the web of life.

If each of us accepts the responsibility we have (by action or omission) for what is happening in our lives and on the planet, then we will have the possibility to empower ourselves and begin to be accountable for our actions, and with them, reclaim the power we have as individuals, part of a web of life, to change our action in the world.

On this personal path, we will meet many others who are also doing it, and in this building, in this daily walk, we are building a "we" that is the necessary substrate for individual changes to articulate and drive the great collective change.

Change begins within us, but this is not enough; we must weave ourselves into a conscious network to advance collectively and achieve new forms of social, economic, and political organization in the external world. It is not about toning down what is in crisis; it is about building a radically different world.

On the other hand, whether we are interested or not, we are also citizens; however, most of us do not deal with these issues because perhaps we see them as distant, ineffective, and generally led by corrupt politicians serving personal or economic interests that also do not reflect the interests and needs of the majority of people. Precisely for this reason, we, as citizens, must step out of our comfortable position of apathy or mere criticism and begin to combine it with action, involvement, and commitment from a fraternal planetary perspective.

I have wondered how we could find a path towards a different organizational form in which we can connect our personal life projects into a collective, harmonious, and just life project, and among the things I have read, there is a writing by Victoria Camps⁵ regarding Fraternity, a writing that undoubtedly provides many clues, and I want to discuss it next.

Of the three principles of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity, only two had an impact on modern states: liberty and equality, but fraternity did not fare

⁵ Victoria Camps is a Catalan philosopher, considered by many to be one of the great philosophers in history. https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Victoria_Camps

the same fate and was quickly relegated to political oblivion, perhaps for the reason that Victoria Camps says:

...the value of fraternity was quickly forgotten by the republicans of the French Revolution because, unlike liberty and equality, it is a value difficult to regulate. In order to regulate it, human beings need to feel like members of a species.... (Camps, V. 2015).

I believe that the articulating principle between our personal and collective projects is this third principle of the French Revolution: Fraternity, expressed in three ways: as a human filing, as an ethical virtue, and as a political practice.

And what is Fraternity? What makes men and women feel fraternal? Brothers or *fratres*? Following Victoria Camps in her reflections, before the French Revolution, Fraternity had a sense given to it by Christians, determined by divine filiation.

I wonder: what about all those who had a different interpretation of God than the Christians did? Or did not have any divine filiation? Do they, by this fact, remain excluded from human Fraternity?

I think that the idea of Fraternity of the Christians of that medieval time, to which Victoria Camps refers in her writing, was an exclusive idea of fraternity, determined by the dominant civilizational paradigm of that time, in which ideological and political power was concentrated in the church, with the support of those who held capital - which at that time was represented in land ownership - and weapons, referred to the feudal lords.

a.-Fraternity as a feeling

The idea I have of fraternity is one that includes all human beings: men and women, because of being of the same species, but this fraternity is not limited only to the human species. I believe that this fraternal filiation that we have among human beings that encompasses all living beings is because we are all children of the Earth, we come from its insides. Let us observe that all the chemical elements of the periodic table (which they teach us in schools) present on the planet Earth are also in our bodies. We are made of the same material, as Leonardo Boff⁶ affirms in the video of the four ecologies:

⁶ https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leonardo_Boff

Scientists who discovered the genetic code allowed us to prove that all living beings are made of the same biological alphabet, we are all built with the same 30 amino acids and the same four nitrogenous bases, only the combination of these syllables, of this alphabet, makes the differences of the species and thus biodiversity... the great community of life. This means that we are all brothers and sisters (*fratres*)⁷.

Indeed, we all have the same origin, we are members of the same family of life; hence Fraternity is extended to all living beings, Earth included. In this Fraternity of life, there is a necessary interdependence to exist: "it must occur in perfect balance," otherwise, the conditions of life disappear.

From that initial idea of fraternity that Christians had, I would rescue the bond it creates between human beings, because it links us, binds us, commits us to each other, "love your neighbor as yourself," a new commandment that Camps (2015) quotes in her text. But I think we must go one step further, towards the essential, as Francis of Assisi did, and understand that Fraternity is above all a feeling (feeling in the other) that binds us to all human beings, to all living beings: plants, animals, minerals... and to the planet, a thought beautifully reflected in his writing: Laudato Si!

Laudate sie, mi signore, cun tucte le tue creature...

Laudate sie, mi signore, per sora luna e le stelle...

Laudate sie, mi signore, per frate vento...

Laudato sie, mi signore, per sor aqua...

Laudato sie, mi signore, per frate focu...

*Laudate sie, mi signore, per sora nostra matre terra...*⁸

Brother Francis of Assisi.

Fraternity, as a feeling that unites us human beings with the others, symbolically arises from the heart, where love resides, Fraternity is the feeling of love projected into a bond that arises in our essence as people, towards others, and links us; Fraternity, therefore, is that bond able, and with the participation of all living beings, it intertwines, weaves, and structures into a network.

⁷ Leonardo Boff. The four ecologies <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0b6QG7P50ww>

⁸ Brother Francis of Assisi, Canticle of Brother Sol. <http://www.franciscanos.org/temas/lehmann14.htm>

Now, we have spoken about love; but what is love for others? Is it not the ability to step out of oneself and put oneself in the place of the other, contributing something of ourselves for the betterment of others? What makes us feel more love within ourselves? And is this not essentially the same as what the East proposes when it speaks of compassion, or when Muslims speak of *rahma*? Or the social movements and the left when they speak of solidarity? For me, the love of Christians for their neighbor, the Buddhist compassion, the *rahma* or mercy of Muslims, the solidarity of the left and the alter-globalist movements are essentially the same, a feeling that arises from the center of human nature and binds us to others and to the entire Universe. The Mayans constantly reaffirmed this with their greeting:

In lak'ech means 'I am another you'

to which the other replied:

Hala ken means 'you are another me'.

When love is set in motion from us to others, it makes us feel united, intertwined, and this is the essence of the feeling of fraternity: Feeling united with others. This feeling, this knowledge of being brothers, *fratres*, part of the same diverse community of life, is the feeling of fraternity; love extended as a bridge from one to the others.

It is this feeling that allows us to step out of our selfish world and meet others, creating that dimension of brotherhood that is given to us by being members of the same species, linked to other species and to planet Earth, forming together, a great community, a great network of life.

b.-Fraternity as a virtue

Now, this feeling of fraternity that builds that framework, that network among all expressions of life, must also take shape as a virtue that determines our practices and as a political principle, to achieve building a social, political, and economic organization essentially different. Regarding these two latter aspects, Victoria Camps concludes:

Fraternity is a virtue (or a moral duty) that must be cultivated by each and every citizen who takes pride in being one. A virtue acquired through education and through a social and cultural *ethos* that recognizes it as something valuable. The problem is not so much in education but in the

non-existence of that ethos. Because the construction of a certain ethos depends not only on the goodwill of individuals, which will never be generalized, but on structural changes in society that promote other values than economic ones. I believe that is where the need to understand fraternity not only as a virtue lies but also as a political principle⁹.

Therefore, we must work on the construction of that *ethos* and make it a personal and collective practice.

c.-Fraternity as a political practice

Some think that fraternity, more than a feeling, is cooperation, as the French republicans thought, and Victoria Camps quotes this in her text. I think cooperation is another facet of fraternity and has to do with the action of collaborating, helping, contributing effort to a common cause, of joining forces with our contribution to something; it has to do with the idea of uniting efforts, of helping each other.

Now, this idea of cooperation gives us more elements to understand how fraternity is expressed, and it has to do with that community of humans who cooperate to unite efforts and wills in order to build a collective framework in which the individual is harmonized with the collective, without the individual being ignored, but also not imposing itself on the interests and the common good. For this to be possible, it is necessary that, instead of understanding ourselves as isolated and antagonistic beings, we understand ourselves as articulated, interconnected beings in this immense web of life that manifests itself on this planet and understand that when the social whole benefits, we all benefit individually and collectively.

Louis Blanc says, "In the fraternal community, everyone looks out for everyone else, there are no private interests of a sector because the 'true' interests are those of all citizens" (Blanc, 1839, p. 14)".

This new fraternal organizational form is a collective, participatory, horizontal construction, with local bases and global expressions.

In another part of her writing, Camps affirms that Fraternity is a political principle that:

⁹ Camps. Victoria, *La Fraternidad, condición de la Justicia*; Barcelona: Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona, 2005, p. 10

Indeed, it cannot be normative in the sense that a tax law is, which obliges the redistribution of incomes, but it is political insofar as it contributes to modifying structures that hinder the cultivation of fraternity or do not give it the value it deserves. Precisely, the root of the economic crisis is becoming clearer that without major structural changes, not only will the welfare state not be sustainable, but also the vices of a system that, as everyone agrees to recognize, it only generates more inequalities¹⁰.

This organizational form that goes beyond democratic representation must find collective forms of representation, participation, and permanent and daily construction, an organizational form that goes beyond associationism, cooperativism, and democracy, although it feeds on them. In this sense, one of the great ideologists of ecofeminism, world leader and Alternative Nobel Prize winner, Vandana Shiva¹¹, contributes:

One of the things I learned in Hindi class was that human beings are part of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* or the family of the earth. By being part of the family of the earth, each of us participates in the democracy of life¹².

The community of life inspired and moved by fraternal feelings and virtues must adopt a form of organization in which humans also contribute this capacity to the service of the common interests of that community of life, using relevant organizational forms and structures that favor harmony and balance; that is, peaceful coexistence and justice in all its expressions. Camps says, referring to the principle of the association of republican revolutionaries, that:

... puts collective problems ahead of individual ones, it is seen as the necessary condition to build a harmonious, fraternal society... without antagonisms derived from individualism. It is the way to end the selfish and individualistic spirit¹³.

However, this fraternal social and political organization cannot, by its very essence, be based on the struggle of everyone against everyone, free market competition,

¹⁰ Op. Cit.

¹¹ https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vandana_Shiva

¹² SHIVA. Vandana, MILES. María, (2016) Ecofeminism. 2nd edition, Barcelona, Icaria Editorial. Colección Antrazyt

¹³ Camps. Victory, Fraternity, condition of Justice; Barcelona: Autonomous University of Barcelona, 2005, p. 2.

and selfishness: "*Laissez faire et laissez passer, le monde va de lui-même.*" "Let do, let pass, the world goes on by itself." This is no longer the way.

d.- Towards a Fraternal form of Social, Economic, and Political Organization

Here and now, all people must look out for everyone else, because the true interests are those of all citizens, who see each other as brothers, as *fratres*, members of the same family of life, who understand that their individual actions affect the community and that collective scenarios are essential for that individuality to develop and project without harming others.

It is not enough to exercise universal suffrage if those who vote and those who are elected have not changed their mentalities and daily practices. Within the framework of the fraternal state, the individual and the collective must be reconciled, and from this balance, build a political community different from the established one.