

# Going from the Pact to the Soul

## Exploring a Metaphysical Journey<sup>1</sup>

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*then to the theoretical achievements of Plato, Nicholas of Cusa, and of Leibniz, this exploration comes to Chiara Lubich's contribution based on Uni-Trinitarian Love, the intimate mystery of God, which offers an original interpretive key for the One-many question.*

The account of the pact of unity between Chiara Lubich and Igino Giordani—a pact that is the prelude to the whole of Chiara's mystical experience during the summer of 1949 and that began with the entrance into the Bosom of the Father<sup>2</sup>—closes with a sober and meaningful hint of the reality that the pact was about to produce. “In the fire of the Trinity,” writes Chiara, “we had been, in fact, so fused into one that I called our company ‘Soul.’ We were the Soul.” It was a unique and unrepeatably mystical event, something truly new in the history of spirituality, and Chiara immediately put it in common with those who shared her spiritual path. This gave shape to a new subject: the Soul.<sup>3</sup> It was a subject that, bit by bit, took form, not as a kind of entity with clear edges, nor as a simple, single center, but as an infinite process of becoming one. From the source of the mystery of God, this subject drew triune Love, which gave it dynamism and life and was the

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2. The event, which took place on July 16, 1949, was proclaimed by Chiara Lubich on April 8, 1986, as the premise of the entire text of Paradise '49. A careful study of the event can be found in *Il Patto del '49 nell'esperienza di Chiara Lubich: Percorsi interdisciplinari* (Rome: Città Nuova, 2012).

3. Two studies, one of philosophical anthropology and the other sociological, explore the fundamental characteristics of the new subject. They are in the volume cited earlier, *Il Patto del '49 nell'esperienza di Chiara Lubich*: Jesús Moran's “Il Patto di unità e il ‘riceversi’ come esistenziale: Un'icona tra fenomenologia e antropologia,” and Vera Araujo's “Un inedito legame sociale.”

*The story of the Pact of unity between Chiara Lubich and Igino Giordani, which was the prelude to Chiara's mystical experience in the summer of 1949, concludes with the introduction of something new arising from the Pact: the Soul. Chiara describes it as “the bond between us,” the “space” where the multiplication of the one and the unification of the many is both actualized and explained. This article explores the conceptual development of thought about this issue. Pelli looks at the development of metaphysics over the centuries, investigating the One-many relationship emblematic of the cultural and spiritual history of the West. Beginning with the pre-Socratics and going*

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key to its interpretation. Thus the Soul was an encounter, a relationship perpetually bringing it into being.

The Soul, then, as that “relationship among us,” that “space”<sup>4</sup> where we are at once drawn together and opened out in distinction, is the multiplication of the one in the many and the unification of the many in the one.<sup>5</sup> This particular way of existing together, still more, of belonging to one another in the merging of the many (the company) in unity (the Soul), allows, significantly, the penetration of what is perhaps the most challenging question of philosophy, one that to human reason seems to face the ultimate metaphysical depths. This is the question of the relationship between the One and the many and, as a consequence, of the relationship between the infinite and finite, between the universal and the particular.

The long history of Western thought could be seen as a constant effort to work out the thorny problem of the reciprocal relationship between these two terms: unity and multiplicity. Sometimes they have been thought of as so divergent as to be irreconcilable and sometimes, through being given excessive value, one has prevailed over the other with obvious existential, historical-political and cultural repercussions. This story, articulated around the issue of the One and the many, has been decisive for the Western soul, to the extent that Hegel claimed “all of philosophy is nothing other than the study of the meanings of unity,” or, more precisely, it is nothing other than “determining in different ways the relationship

4. It is significant that Chiara, commenting on the passage cited above, speaks of the mystical event having taken place not only as a “being the Soul” but as a “living in the Soul,” alluding implicitly therefore to a “spatiality” where such an event can continue to happen.

5. Thus the author offers an important gloss on the passage cited above: “The term ‘company’ expresses more multiplicity, the term ‘Soul’ more unity. There were several of us there, but we were one. Distinctly then each one of us was the Soul.”

between unity (understood as Principle) and multiplicity.” What is determined, in the view of one contemporary scholar, gives “a common metaphysical basis to the different forms of philosophy.”<sup>6</sup>

Many have grappled with the vastness of the One: mystics full of wonder and philosophers in the vigor of their thought. These have included figures such as Plotinus and, later, Meister Eckhart, Jakob Böhme, Nicholas of Cusa, Leibniz, Schelling, and Hegel. Each one glimpsed in his own way that unity is, in essence, a marvelous interweaving of relationships and so, as it were, inhabited by multiplicity.<sup>7</sup> We can now begin to explore this story of centuries and indicate some of its most significant moments. We will see emerge an approach to the fundamental and creative nucleus of the one in the many and the many in the one.

### An Outline of the Question of the One and the Many: The One as Structurally Multiple Origin. . . . “and from all things One and from One all things.”<sup>8</sup>

The question of the relationship of the One and the many emerges in a significant fashion at the very beginning of philosophical thought. Thinking about the origins of things, the first philosophers began to discover the notion of a *first principle*, pictured as

6. Walter Beierwaltes, “Unità e identità come cammino del pensiero,” in *L’Uno e i molti*, ed., Virgilio Melchiorre (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1990), pp. 31–32. When titles of works are cited in Italian, all translations are the work of the editors.

7. Hegel’s affirmation in his *Einleitung in die geschichte der philosophie* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1959) can speak for all of them, “We are no longer atomists; the atomistic principle has been refuted. Certainly the spirit is also a One, but no longer is it the One in abstract terms. The simple One is a concept and definition of the spirit that is too poor to draw out all that it is” (p. 128). Cited in *L’Uno e i molti*, p. 419.

8. Heraclitus, *Fragment 22 B 10*.

the root of all things from which they are derived and to which they tend. As a fragment from Anaximander says: “The principle . . . encompass[es] all and steer[s] all.”<sup>9</sup> These were the first outlines of a vision of the real as the unity of all, sustained by a law that gives order to the many, the multitude of things, and forms reality as a structure of universal connectedness. “It is wise for those who hear, not me but the universal Reason,” states Heraclitus, “to confess that all things are one.”<sup>10</sup> And it is in looking at this all-one that the penetrating gaze of Heraclitus discerns the intimate relationship of unity and multiplicity not as a simple movement of one thing deriving from another, but as their mutual implication and connection to one another. As a marvelous fragment affirms, “There is one wisdom, to understand the intelligent will by which all things are governed through all.”<sup>11</sup>

There thus began to take form the concept of the One as un-generated and indestructible *Origin*, infinite and unlimited, immutable and immobile, and yet, in itself, *structurally multiple*, as demonstrated later by Anaxagoras and Empedocles, precisely because it is capable of generating the multiplicity of things and hence to justify the infinite differences present in the universe. Obviously, in considering the multiple that is constitutive of the One, these philosophers were not referring to empirical multiplicity, known through the senses, but to a universal capable of containing in itself and of giving meaning to all particular things, unifying them, hence to a further multiplicity that in itself is undifferentiated and imperceptible, and which nonetheless is the basis and

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9. Anaximander, *Fragment 12 A 15*.

10. Heraclitus, *Fragment 22 B 50*.

11. *Ibid.*

raison d'être of the very multiplicity of phenomena, in their qualitative differences.

Indeed, from the perspective of various Greek thinkers, the multiplicity of things is explained as the result of the refraction of the *One-Being* into an infinite number of one-beings, that is, of single beings, seeking to maintain as much as possible the characteristics of the One-Being. In a well-known fragment, Melissus of Samos says, “If there were many things they would have to be such as I say the one is.”<sup>12</sup> Leucippus, turning upside down Melissus’s attempt to reduce *ad absurdum* the pluralism commonly believed in, responded that in reality the many exist because they can be as the One, and hence are eternal and immutable. And therein lies the value of each of them. Nevertheless, in the context of the philosophy of origins, it is not the value of single things that is dominant so much as the absolute affirmation of the value of the One, since true multiplicity is that which is comprehended within the One, or, in other words, true multiplicity is the first Principle insofar as it is equivalent to the One.

Plato and the Concept of the One as that which is above Being. . . . “*These problems of the one and the many . . . that cause real difficulties if ill decided, and the right determination of them is very helpful.*”<sup>13</sup>

In a similar fashion, but with much greater theoretical depth, Plato makes the question of the One and the many the axis of his thought. The point of departure is his well-known theory of

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12. Melissus of Samos: *Fragment 6*.

13. Plato, *Philebus*, 15c.

the Ideas, which marks a turning point in the history of Western thought because it opens it up to that which is beyond the senses, discovered to be a new dimension of being, one where the truth of things resides.<sup>14</sup> Indeed if things are many, the Idea—of Beauty, Goodness and Greatness—is only one, inasmuch as it unifies the multiplicity by reducing it, so to speak, to its true being. It is, according to Plato’s rich intuition, a unified multiplicity. And it is, as Aristotle was to say later, “the one which is absolutely many.”<sup>15</sup>

But Plato’s metaphysical penetration goes further. The Ideas themselves are, in fact, many. Therefore in order to overcome this further multiplicity, also manifest at the level of the intelligible, it is necessary to reach another level, to proceed to a further unification, to go to the sphere that is supreme and primary in an absolute sense and which can give an account of the multiplicity of the Ideas and provide the ultimate explanation for the totality of things that exist. Plato thus arrives at identifying the sphere of the first Principles that are the *Supreme One* and the *indeterminate Dyad* or *Duality of the small and great*. Like this he gives a reason for multiplicity by using a bipolar metaphysical scheme, inasmuch as each Principle structurally calls for the other.<sup>16</sup>

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14. Hegel does not hesitate to affirm that Plato’s “true speculative greatness” lies in his teaching about the Ideas “thanks to which he marks a milestone in the history of philosophy and therefore in the general history of thought” (*Lezioni sulla storia della filosofia*, vol. 2 [Florence: La Nuova Italia, 1932], p. 209). It can be seen to be so because this teaching has given rise to the greatest number of theoretical revisions, to such an extent that it could be said that a history of its interpretation “would cover a huge area of the history of Western philosophy in one of its key points” (Giovanni Reale, *Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone: Rilettura della metafisica dei grandi dialoghi alla luce delle “dottrine non scritte”* [Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1997], p. 161).

15. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Book XIV, Part 1.

16. “The polar form of thought sees, conceives, models, and organizes the world, as a unity, in pairs of opposites. They are the form in which the world presents itself to

Indeed, if the One is the Principle of being as such and therefore absolutely without multiplicity, indeterminate Duality is the Principle and root of the multiplicity of beings. And, as such, it is conceived to be a Duality of the small and great, in the sense that it is *infinite smallness and infinite greatness, the tendency to infinite smallness and to infinite greatness*. It is a kind of “intelligible matter,” of indeterminate multiplicity, which, acting as a substratum beneath the action of the One, produces the multiplicity of things in all its forms. And these, participating in the original One, bring about value and beauty, order and harmony—that harmony which is unity in multiplicity.

It follows from this that the two Principles are not in themselves being, but, insofar as they are constitutive of every being, they are *prior* to being, so that the One, as a principle of determination, is *above* being—the “Nothingness of all” as Proclus was to call it—while the indeterminate material principle, as non-being, is *below* being.<sup>17</sup> It is at this level that, for Plato, the concept of the *One* takes on the features of the *Good*, so much so that it can be said that the highest measure of every form of multiplicity, which is precisely the One, constitutes the very essence of the Good. From

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the Greek spirit, in which it transforms and conceives the multiplicity of the world in patterns of order and as patterns of order. These pairs of opposites in polar thought are fundamentally different from the pairs of opposites in monist or dualistic thought, in the context of which they exclude each other, or, in struggling with each other, are destroyed, or, finally, are reconciled and cease to exist as opposites. . . . Instead in polar thought not only are the opposites in a pair indissolubly bound, as the poles of the axes in a sphere, but they, in the innermost logic of their existence, precisely because they are polar, are conditioned to exist in opposition: losing the opposite pole, they would lose their meaning” (Paula Philippson, *Origini e forme del mito greco* [Turin: Boringhieri, 1983], pp. 65–66).

17. See Giovanni Reale, *Per una nuova interpretazione di Platone* (Rome: Center for Metaphysical Research, 1987), pp. 214–227, 265–280, 341–388.

a Platonic perspective, indeed, the greatest good is “that which binds and makes one,” while the worst evil is that which divides and produces disintegrative multiplicity.

This produces a clear notion of human nature: the perfect person is one who harmonizes his or her various faculties so as to become “one out of many,” so that “wisdom and understanding consist in making unity out of the multiplicity that lies within” and, as a consequence, of that which lies outside as well. A human being, therefore, is called to introduce into human society a network of harmonious relationships, which means bringing order to disorder, proportion to excess, unity to multiplicity, “assimilating” them in this way, as much as possible, to the Good, the One, the Divine. For, Plato affirms, it is God who “possesses the knowledge and power needed to combine many things into one and again dissolve the one into many. But no human being could possess either of these in the present or the future.”<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, he adds, “and if I believe that someone is able to discern a one that is by nature also many, I will follow behind him, and walk in his footsteps as if he were a god.”<sup>19</sup>

Thus, in this surprising trust in the “knowledge” and “power” of God, Plato gives a glimpse of the final form of the solution to the problem of the relationship between the One and the many. And understanding what this means is, for him, to arrive after a long journey at that place where “for these paths lead at last to that place that is our final rest.”<sup>20</sup> It is a place that, in Plotinus’ reworking of the same themes, would take the form of a unity that, risking itself, shows itself to be an intense, relational web, so much

so that it seems that, if it is impossible to see the One, it is also impossible to see without the One. Plotinus writes, “There everything is transparent, nothing is dark and impenetrable, everyone everywhere is manifest in depth to everyone, because the light is manifest to the light. And indeed everyone bears all in self and every other sees all. Hence each thing is everywhere, each thing is all and each one is all and the splendor is infinite.”<sup>21</sup> Charting this unfolding of the One into the many, Plotinus suggests the fundamental features of a metaphysics that was to be decisive for subsequent reflection within Christianity. These features would emerge always more clearly as an echo of the Trinitarian unity, of the self-disclosure of the divine Being in its threefold Persons which will give rise, in the way of absolute otherness, to the most intense form of unity.

Nicholas of Cusa and the Philosophy of Unity as the Unity of Unity and Multiplicity. . . . *“If you have [mentally] removed all other things and behold oneness alone, you understand that oneness never was anything else or never is anything else or never can be made to be anything else, and if you [mentally] remove all plurality and every respect and enter only into most simple oneness . . . then you will have penetrated all things secret.”*<sup>22</sup>

Nicholas of Cusa, one of the most important contributors to Humanism and the Renaissance, should be acknowledged as starting a philosophy of unity understood as “the unity of unity and

18. Plato, *Timaeus*, 68d.

19. Plato, *Phaedrus*, 266b.

20. Plato, *Republic*, 532d–e.

21. Plotinus, *Enneads*, V, 8, 4.

22. Nicholas of Cusa, *De Coniecturis*, I, 5, 18.

multiplicity.”<sup>23</sup> This philosophy of unity refers explicitly to the image of the One who is God recognized as Absolute Being transcending all beings, as the absolute reflection upon itself within the Trinitarian process—a process which, giving itself and manifesting itself in the creation of the world, makes the world its theophany.

At the same time, Nicholas’s philosophy could be called a philosophy of the Infinite which, in its absoluteness and otherness, cannot be grasped by human reason. For reason proceeds by finite definitions based on the criterion of proportionality, which allows it to determine, for example, that one thing is greater or smaller than another. But the Infinite, by its very nature, cannot be captured by any proposition and thus remains unknown. Nevertheless, the very thing the human mind seeks is the knowledge of the Infinite, since the mind is itself a participation in the Infinite: it is a finite reality that subsists as otherness in the act of the Infinite. And this allows it to cast its gaze always more deeply into the unattainable infinity of the true.<sup>7</sup>

How does the Infinite manifest itself to this gaze? Nicholas’s reply is unequivocal: in its most proper meaning, the Infinite is *Absolute Unity*, without any limits or distinctions, and hence it is “absolutely simple,” so much so that the opposites of maximum and minimum are the same thing. Let’s consider, for instance, a maximum quantity and a minimum quantity. If our minds abstract themselves from the notion of quantity, if we set aside the great and small, what remains is the coincidence of the maximum and the minimum, “for maximum is a superlative just as minimum is

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23. Kurt Flasch, *Die Metaphysik des einen bei Nikolaus von Kues* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1973), pp. 254–255. See also Aldo Bonetti, “La filosofia dell’unità nel pensiero di Nicolò Cusano,” in *L’Uno e i molti*, pp. 283–318; Ernst Cassirer, *Storia della filosofia moderna*, Vol. 1 (Milan: Mondadori, 1968), pp. 39–96.

a superlative.”<sup>24</sup> Therefore, Nicholas writes, “it is not the case that absolute quantity is maximum quantity rather than minimum quantity; for in it the minimum is the maximum coincidingly.”<sup>25</sup>

In this sense, the Absolute Maximum, which is God, “is beyond both all affirmation and all negation. . . . [I]t is a given thing in such way that it is all things; and it is all things in such way that it is no thing; and it is maximally a given thing in such way that it is it minimally. . . . For Absolute Maximality could not be actually all possible things unless it were infinite and were the boundary of all things and were unable to be bounded by any of these things.”<sup>26</sup> As a result of its maximality, the Maximum is thus, for Nicholas, the *coincidentia oppositorum*, the coinciding of the minimum with the maximum: “Therefore, we see incomprehensibly, beyond all rational inference, that Absolute Maximality (*to which nothing is opposed and with which the Minimum coincides*) is infinite.”<sup>27</sup>

This “coinciding” results in a vision of transcendence that is not opposed to immanence, but contains it and raises it to an extraordinary intensity.<sup>28</sup> We can glimpse here a new avenue of research to express the fundamental metaphysical relationship between the One and the many, between the absolutely simple and the complexity of the multiple. It is a question of studying and focusing upon the One in its unfolding within the world of plurality, while

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24. Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia* I, 4, 11.

25. Ibid.

26. Ibid., I, 4, 12.

27. Ibid. (editor’s italics).

28. There are well-known examples of the coincidence of opposites in the infinite (the point and the line, the circle and the straight line) which Nicholas uses when drawing on geometry. Indeed he understood mathematics “as an eminently speculative science, able to supply effective symbols to represent the deepest core of reality.” See Ludovico Geymonat, *Storia del pensiero filosofico e scientifico*, Vol. 2 (Milan: Garzanti, 1970), p. 38.

remaining distinct in a dimension that does not participate in this variation, but that precedes it and makes it possible.

With this intention Nicholas developed his thought regarding the genesis of the multiple from the One and its subsistence within it, in the light of three key concepts, in which it is possible to recognize a kind of Trinitarian rhythm, a reflection of the eternal divine intra-Trinitarian relationship.<sup>29</sup> His argument goes thus: inasmuch as God is the Maximum of all maximums, all things are contained in God. It can be said that God, in God's identity and simplicity, includes them, *makes them complex*, in such a way that all things, in their necessity and truth, are God, are God in God. But God is also the *explication* of all things, in the sense that the divine identity is unfolded in diversity, God's unity in divisibility. God is the eternal living seed that stretches out to compose itself in a multiplicity of forms. Giving origin thus to the multiplicity of the finite, in all things God is what they are, although remaining absolutely beyond them in God's unmultipliable unity.

Derived from this is the third key concept: that of *contraction*. God is "contracted" in the universe, as unity is "contracted" in plurality, the simple in the composite, stillness in movement, eternity in temporal succession, and so on. God, who is the absolute essence of the world, is "contracted" in the world seen in its unity, and the universe, understood as the contracted essence of things, is determined, that is, is "contracted," in the multiplicity of things. Each being is thus the "contraction" of the universe, as, in its turn, the universe is the "contraction" of God. This means that each being sums up the whole of the universe and God. The whole universe, therefore, is sun in the sun, moon in the moon, flower in

the flower, wind in the wind, water in water. "It follows," Nicholas says echoing the ancient maxim of Anaxagoras,<sup>30</sup> "that *all is in all* and each in each."<sup>31</sup> "[I]n each created thing the universe is this created thing; and each thing receives all things in such way that in a given thing all things are, contractedly, this thing."<sup>32</sup>

Now, since the universe is contracted in each actually existing thing:

it is evident that God, who is in the universe, is in each thing and that each actually existing thing is immediately in God, as is also the universe. Therefore, to say that each thing is in each thing is not other than [to say] that through all things God is in all things and that through all things all things are in God.<sup>33</sup>

If therefore God is the *unitas absoluta* who precedes and conditions the multiplicity of being, any inquiry into reality can be undertaken only in the light of the divine unity, since any reality is only conceivable or thinkable as existing in its relation to the divine unity.

Alternatively, the *unitas absoluta*, in which every multiplicity subsists, has no need to be demonstrated, since it is the foundation of every reality and fundamental to its knowability. From this it follows that, if the *unitas absoluta* precedes every opposition, it

30. Anaxagoras, in fact, should be credited with having introduced the important idea of the mutual containing of things and of a mutual influence among the parts: "All things are in everything" and "all things have a portion of everything" (*Fragment*, 59 B 4; B 11).

31. Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, II, 5, 117.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, II, 5, 118.

29. See Nicholas of Cusa, *De docta ignorantia*, I, 9, 24 to I, 10, 29.

would be more accurate to deny the opposites in it rather than regard it as the coincidence of opposites. Nicholas therefore defines absolute being as *non aliud*, “not other,” meaning, on the one hand, that the absolute is not separated and divided from what is empirically observable, from which it constitutes immanent being and, on the other hand, that, insofar as it is the supreme unity, it cannot be understood and determined as “this” or “that,” like an individual thing. God “[i]n all things . . . is all things, and in nothing He is nothing”<sup>34</sup> is the unequivocal antinomy that concludes Nicholas’s metaphysics.

Therefore, the metaphysics of unity he proposes, placing the need for a rigorous distinction between the absolute unity of the One and the unity of the multiplicity which is proper to the sphere of being, brings as a consequence the abandonment of the notion of God as *coincidentia oppositorum* so as to achieve, in its final outcome, a notion of Unity as that which lies beyond not only multiplicity and its opposite, but the very coincidence of opposites. As such, God is not “the foundation of contradiction” but is “Simplicity, which is prior to every foundation.”<sup>35</sup> God is that ineffable unity which lies “above nothing and something,”<sup>36</sup> where, since every opposition is eliminated, also the dialectic of being and non-being loses any force.

In this way, Nicholas’s solution resolves the question of the relationship between unity and multiplicity by privileging oneness. It restores, certainly more than he intended, a renewed form of abstract unity, which, on closer inspection, does not allow the many, the different, to stand out in its specific identity, albeit in the

34. Nicholas of Cusa, *De li non aliud*, 14, 65.

35. Nicholas of Cusa, *De deo abscondito*, 10.

36. *Ibid.*, 9.

context of a unitary Principle. Therefore, in the end, in all its elevated and lucid speculation, the *coincidentia oppositorum* remains a pointer to a place where the opposites, in the words of Beierwaltes, “do not coexist . . . but are overcome.” It is a place dominated by “absolute difference without difference.”<sup>37</sup>

Leibniz and the Universe as “Infinity of Infinities” . . .

*“The universe in some way multiplies itself as many times as there are substances, and in the same way the glory of God is magnified by so many quite different representations of his work.”*<sup>38</sup>

About two centuries later, another German philosopher, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, addressed with particular speculative skill the relationship of the infinite and the finite, of unity and multiplicity, beginning, however, not from a Platonic metaphysical One, nor from a *unitas divina* as did Nicholas of Cusa, but from the multi-dimensional nature of the real in which he sees an infinite perspective, through which everything, according to different viewpoints, can be perceived more clearly. Leibniz thus reaches a notion where the world, in the words of Ludwig Feuerbach, looks like “crystal that refracts the light (of divinity) into a rich spectrum of infinite colors.”<sup>39</sup>

Leibniz’s thought is that reality is constituted in its multiple aspects and in its ultimate foundations by original principles of force, indivisible and therefore simple (the “substances” of classical

37. Walter Beierwaltes, *Identità e differenza* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero, 1989), p. 152.

38. G. W. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 9.

39. Giovanni Reale and Dario Antiseri, *Il pensiero occidentale dalle origini ad oggi*, Vol. 2 (Brescia: La Scuola, 1989), p. 289.

metaphysics). He uses the term *monad* (from the Greek *monas*, “unity”) to designate them.<sup>40</sup> A monad, then, is a substance or a substantial form (an Aristotelian *entelechy* as Leibniz himself called it),<sup>41</sup> a center of original force, of metaphysical order, which has in itself its own determination and essential perfection, and together, its own inner finality. Everything that exists, Leibniz maintains, is either a simple monad or a complex of monads. Consequently they constitute the “elements of all things,” such that by coming to know the nature of the monad, we come to know also the nature of all reality.

What, then, is the nature of a monad? Leibniz’s reply is highly significant:

The simplicity of a substance does not exclude the multiplicity of modifications that must be found together in that same simple substance, and that must be composed of the variety of relations with external things. Thus in a center or a point, although simple, there is found an infinite number of angles, formed by the lines that intersect there.<sup>42</sup>

Every monad, consequently, can be conceived as *expressio multorum in uno*, the expression of a multiplicity in unity, in that all

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40. Leibniz, *La Monadologie* I, 1–3 (Brescia: La Scuola, 1938), p. 38. This term, which originates in Neoplatonism, was later revived by Giordano Bruno. It was also used by the Dutch natural philosopher Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, who Leibniz knew personally and from whom he borrowed it. *Monadology* sets forth Leibniz’s basic concepts, centered on the themes of unity, individuality, and the uniqueness of each entity in its relationship with the universe and with the original unity. Christian Woolf considered this metaphysical text the point of departure for 18th century German scholasticism.

41. *Ibid.*, 18.

42. Reale and Antiseri, p. 340.

others converge in it, which it therefore represents. Every monad is a point of view upon the world and is therefore *all* the world from a specific point of view, such that each becomes the expression of the whole, of the totality.<sup>43</sup>

It could be said that from the perspective of its conceptual structure such a teaching, where every monad represents all the others, is a variant of what the Greeks called “the conspiring of all things among them,” which the Renaissance thinkers saw as *omnia ubique*, that is, the presence and echo of all things in all. But in his re-reading of this, Leibniz introduces a new and significant perspective. The presence of “all in all” is not only one of the basic points of his metaphysics, but it is also the key to unlocking his thought and to overcoming its apparently contradictory nature. As he says, “every substance exactly expresses all others through the relations it has with them,”<sup>44</sup> so that “each created monad represents the whole universe,”<sup>45</sup> which in this way manifests itself, in its infinite richness, as an “infinity of infinities.” “The wonderful thing is that sovereign wisdom has found the means, via representative substances, of varying the world itself and of doing so in infinite ways. The world, already having an infinite variety in itself, and being varied and expressed diversely in an infinity of different representations, receives an infinity of infinities.”<sup>46</sup>

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43. “And just as the same city looked at from different sides appears completely different, and thus appears multiplied by perspective, so it is that the infinite multitude of simple substances create the appearance of many different universes, which nevertheless are only perspectives on a single universe, according to the points of view which differ in each monad.” (G. W. Leibniz, *Monadology*, 57.)

44. *Ibid.*, 59.

45. *Ibid.*, 62.

46. Reale and Antiseri, p. 343.

A passage from *Discourse on Metaphysics* explains this notion clearly:

Every substance is like a complete world, and like a mirror of God, or of the whole universe, which each one expresses in its own way—rather like the same city looks different due to the positions from which it is viewed. The universe is multiplied as many times as there are substances, and in the same way the glory of God is multiplied by as many quite different representations of his work.<sup>47</sup>

In other words, every monad represents the world from a different perspective and it is precisely this perspective that makes each monad different from all the others. Each perspective, therefore, possesses its own essential importance, which is revealed however in a relative manner. Because of this it refers intrinsically to another—that of God—which is superior to it and resolves it in itself. The passage cited above continues:

It can even be said that each substance bears in some way the character of God's infinite wisdom and omnipotence, and imitates him as much as it is capable. For it expresses, though confusedly, everything that happens in the universe—past, present, or future—and this resembles in some way an infinite perception or knowledge. And as all the other substances express this substance and accommodate themselves to it—that is, they are as they are *because* it is as

it is—it can be said to extend its power over all the others, in imitation of the creator's omnipotence.<sup>48</sup>

It follows from this that the complex content of reality is revealed only through the totality of perspectives. Only in the interconnectedness and stratification of perspectives does being acquire ever-richer content. This vision is reflected, for Leibniz, in the constitution of corporeality. For him everything is alive because each monad is alive. Moreover, since every aggregate is made up of innumerable monads, it is possible to imagine in each of them a series of ever smaller aggregates, which infinitesimally reproduce the same characteristics, in a kind of fugue to infinity of increasing smallness. As we read in an emblematic passage of *Monadology*:

Each portion of matter can be conceived as a garden full of plants or a pond full of fish. But each branch of the plant, each limb of an animal, each drop of its humors, is also such a garden or such a pond.<sup>49</sup>

This principle is one that, in Leibniz's hermeneutic revival, expands to include the chronological succession of the multiplicity of events. In fact if every monad is a "perpetual living mirror of the universe,"<sup>50</sup> it is also of all the events of the universe, so that in the smallest monad (such as in the soul of each of them) we can perceive all that has happened, that happens and that will happen, that which is distant in time and space, and so the whole of history,

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48. Ibid.

49. Leibniz, *Monadology*, 67.

50. Ibid., 56.

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47. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 9.

the entire “connection” of the universe.<sup>51</sup> Leibniz can say therefore, in a deeply attractive expression, that “the present is pregnant with what is to come,” meaning that in each instant the totality of time and of temporal events is present, just as in each substance the totality is present: “the present is pregnant with the future.”<sup>52</sup>

This interrelationship of substances and things gives the entire universe a tone of harmony. Given that Leibniz emblematically defines substances or monads as having “no windows, through which anything could come in or out,”<sup>53</sup> which indicates that each one of them “is like a separate world, independent of all other things, except for God,”<sup>54</sup> it is also true that he conceives of substances as structured in such a way that each of them is in perfect correspondence and harmony with each of the others, since what each of them draws from within itself coincides with what each other, in perfect correspondence, draws from what is within itself. Nor is this all. Harmony also means agreement among the different and mutually conditioned perspectives by which reality can be represented and clarified.

51. Ibid., 61–62. With far-sighted intuition, which distances him decisively from his rationalist predecessors, Descartes and Spinoza, and makes him the harbinger of the coming Kantian revolution, Leibniz comes to a conception of space and time not as independent substances subsisting in themselves, but as ideal orderings of phenomena resolved in the “truth of relations.” Therefore they too are part of the phenomenal order, but of the *phaenomenon bene fundatum*, since they are based on the effective relations among things (space) and upon the effective succession of things (time), presupposing therefore the existence of other realities. As he writes with great insight, “Space is the order that makes it possible to situate bodies, and by which they, existing together, have a position relative to each other. In a similar way, time is an analogous order, in relation to the position of things in their succession. But if creatures did not exist, space and time would not be among God’s ideas” (Reale and Antiseri, p. 338).

52. Leibniz, *Principles of Nature and Grace Based on Reason*, 13.

53. Leibniz, *Monadology*, 7.

54. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 14.

This is what Leibniz calls “my system of *pre-established harmony*,”<sup>55</sup> which is “the most exalted and most divine among the works of God.”<sup>56</sup> It is what the Creator has established. God, then, is the true bond of communication among the substances and it is through him that the phenomena of one monad are in harmony with one another.<sup>57</sup> “*Harmonia universalis, id est Deus*,” Leibniz affirms, recognizing God as the foundation and, the same time, the point of view of his own metaphysical vision.<sup>58</sup>

Chiara Lubich and the Trinitization of Love. . . . “*It happens as in those mirrors that, looking at one another, project themselves infinitely into one another and recontain themselves through the reflection that returns.*”<sup>59</sup>

The intuition of the One as structurally multiple Origin, the highest measure of every form of multiplicity; the notion of the One as the coincidence of maximum and minimum, as the unity of unity and multiplicity; the vision of the One as that which makes it possible to understand the inner affinity placing the many in mutual relationship, giving life and connection to the real as the “infinity of infinities”: these are a few of the notable theoretical advances that we have seen punctuate the progress of philosophical thought about the metaphysical problem of the relationship between the One and the many.

55. Leibniz, *Monadology*, 80.

56. Ibid., 86.

57. Leibniz, *Discourse on Metaphysics*, 32.

58. For further discussion see Emerich Coreth, *Dio nel pensiero filosofico* (Brescia: Queriniana, 2004), pp. 218–229.

59. Chiara Lubich, unpublished passage, September 8, 1949.

Chiara Lubich's thought is located within this progress with its moments of darkness and its abundant light. She looks at the question of the One and the many from a perspective that, while it presupposes and values what has gone before, displays something truly new because it finds its focal point in a "principle that is unifying, and therefore active," which is "love."<sup>60</sup> Such love does not overcome the One-many duality by canceling it out. Rather this love interiorizes the duality by including it in itself and, in the process, it becomes the metaphysical key for an explanation of the origin and structure of the multiple.<sup>61</sup>

While it is indeed true that love is absolute "simplicity,"<sup>62</sup> it is equally true that love does not consider what is distinct as foreign to itself because it treasures that distinction in its inner self as the immanent secret of its life. It is precisely the nature of love to create space in itself for that which is other than self, so much so that it can be said that real diversity, real plurality is intrinsically part of love. This can be seen in the following passage from Chiara in which, going into that "unoriginated origin of love"<sup>63</sup> which is the inner self of the triune God, we see coming together the apparently irreconcilable extremes of unity and multiplicity: "The Father says 'Love' in infinite tones and generates the Word, who is

love, within Himself, the Son, and the Son as Son, who is echo of the Father, says 'Love' and returns to the Father!"<sup>64</sup>

In this light, love is manifested as something that can explain the contraposition of categories because the *one* Word-Love (i.e., "God in the infinitely small") treasuring within himself infinite richness (i.e., "the infinitely Great") can be uttered in "infinite tones" and so summon into existence the *many*. An examination of this kind, from the point of view of metaphysics, means that the ultimate depths of the Principle-Love, that is, of that One which displays itself intrinsically in a multiple plurality, allows us to see in the reality it originates<sup>65</sup> the very same dynamic it signifies in

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64. Lubich, cited in Piero Coda, "Sulla teologia che scaturisce dal carisma dell'unità," *Nuova Umanità* 18 (1996): 160.

65. To illustrate this springing of the many from the One, Chiara Lubich often turns to an image pregnant with meaning—the irradiating of the love of the Father outside of himself, revisiting thereby the Platonic doctrine of Ideas. She writes a passage cited in Hubertus Blaumeiser, "All'infinito verso la disunità: Considerazioni sull'inferno alla luce del pensiero di Chiara Lubich," in *Nuova Umanità* 19 (1997): 563; and in Piero Coda, "Viaggiare' il Paradiso," *Nuova Umanità* 19 (1997): 224–225: "I understood that from the Father emerged those divergent rays when he created all things and that those rays gave Order which is Life and Love and Truth; the Ideas of things were in the Word and the Father projected them outside of Himself," thus summoning them into existence in a new and different dimension: the created dimension. And Chiara points to the ultimate form of the solution of the question of the One-many relationship when she outlines the final fulfillment of us and of all creation. This is shown as the return into the Idea, who is the Word, of the Ideas. These returning ideas are the reality of us and created things that were made actual in historical existence, but now purified, transfigured, that is, made completely love. She writes, "Now, in the end, the Father will draw back those rays which from being divergent become convergent and they will meet one another in his Bosom. And the meeting will generate the Idea of the Ideas: the Idea of the Flower, the Idea of the sea, the Idea of the stars . . . and that Idea will be the Word whence it came and Paradise will be the Word: the substance of love where the flowers and the stars and the roads and the seas will be Love and therefore immortal: immortal in the eternal Word, eternal contemplation of the Father and of the children of the Father." At the end, then, "there will not be music, but the

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60. Lubich, "Gesù in mezzo a noi. Rendere visibile la presenza del Risorto nella Chiesa," *Nuova Umanità* 27 (2005): 414.

61. For an earlier reflection on love's semantic depths, see my article, "'Solo l'amore è': Alcuni tratti sull'essere come amore negli scritti di Chiara Lubich," in *L'essere come amore: Percorsi di ricerca* Anna Pelli, ed. (Rome: Città Nuova, 2010), pp. 91–115.

62. I interpret the meaning of absolute simplicity, which Chiara Lubich relates explicitly to love, as the absence of complexity. See Gérard Rossé, "Aspetti dell'etica cristiana nella luce dell'ideale dell'unità," *Nuova Umanità* 19 (1997): 56.

63. Walter Kasper, *Il Dio di Gesù Cristo* (Brescia: Queriniana, 1984), p. 410.

its existence. This dynamic is defined by Chiara, in a highly effective turn of phrase, as “trinitizing itself.” She does not mean by this a multiplication of individuals but a distinguishing of persons, where each one, being consumed in the One, is wholly the One, and hence the expression of the One.<sup>66</sup>

Significantly, the term “trinitizing” appears for the first time in a passage from December 8, 1949, where Chiara Lubich, in a reflection that recalls what happened in the Pact, describes this uni-Trinitarian dynamism, which requires the unfathomable mystery of “making oneself nothing” for love,<sup>67</sup> as the experience that gave rise to the Soul. She writes:

But when two of us, knowing ourselves to be nothing, made it so that Jesus Eucharist formed a pact of *unity* on our two souls, I was aware of being Jesus. . . . I experienced the thrill of being at the peak of the pyramid of all creation as on the point of a pin: in the point where the two rays converge:

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Music. Not poems, but the Poem. Not flowers, but the Flower.” But such music will be “The Music of musics (= that they too will be musics of musics) . . . Poetry of poetry . . . Flower of flowers. . .” And so “the Ideas of things (which then are the reality of things) . . . will unfold in a fan of many ideas, but each will be of the same value as the Idea. There will be one and many of each. And all, many, but *one*: the Word, who is the beauty, that is, the expression of God.”

66. In an unpublished passage Chiara says, “God-One is the Three—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—consumed in one. And God-One is wholly in each of the Three, as, analogously, happens in the Mystical Body of Christ, in which, precisely because of participating in the Trinitarian life, in the individual is present the whole.”

67. In another unpublished passage Chiara says, “The Three, in the Trinity, are One through their mutual indwelling. But to be one it is necessary that each of the Three should be truly nothing, a great nothing, a divine nothing, as big as their being One. . . . Without doubt it remains a mystery how in the Trinity the Word may be nothing and at the same time may be the Son, and likewise the Father and the Spirit. What is certain is that God, being Love, is capable of making himself nothing.”

where the two God (so to speak) made a pact of unity, becoming trinitized.<sup>68</sup>

What does this “trinitizing” mean? Chiara explains it like this: trinitizing “means that, because we make a pact of unity, we are one, but that each, becoming distinct,” is the one: “We are, that is, according to the pattern of the Trinity.” Therefore “trinitizing themselves” is like a mutual indwelling of subjects, *according to the pattern of the Trinity*, in a continuous mutual self-giving of one to another—to the point of experiencing one’s being nothing. This leads to refinding oneself in the mirror-like presence of otherness, in a being-more that does not simply exceed these things (as taught by the Platonic and Aristotelian lesson of the One beyond the many) but that, while it contains them, is, at the same time, contained by them. In other words, losing oneself to find oneself in that One which now makes itself known not only as something that is ultra-subjective or even only as inter-subjective, but as the One that treasures in itself and forms intra-subjectivity.

This is the origin and locus of the experience of the Soul, that mysterious but real identity of a “subject” modulated according to the rhythm of the Trinitarian life. This life is such that—as Chiara boldly maintains—it is possible to say that in an analogous way, in the Soul each one is Soul. The individual is the whole, the whole is the individuals. In other words, each one (the particular, the finite) attains the value of the all (the universal), because each one bears in self the reality of the all, of the one (“If the infinite is ‘broken up,’” Chiara notes, “there remain ‘many’ infinities”).

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68. Lubich, cited in Hubertus Blaumeiser, “Il patto d’unità come accesso esistenziale e metodo della teologia: Alcune riflessioni alla luce dell’esperienza della ‘Scuola Abbà,’” *Nuova Umanità* 22 (2000): 782–783.

But who, in the created order, allows us to see in the particular the value of the all, of the universal? It is the Word-Love who, in a climax of Love, was able to make himself Other in what is other than himself. Out of All Nothing, out of universal particular, he realizes thus an unimaginable *coincidentia oppositorum*, where finite and infinite, far from excluding one another, are reciprocally manifested and give space to one another—even though it is a reciprocity that nevertheless rests on an asymmetry—in their shared origin and vocation: Love. It is the Word-Love who has assumed the face of Jesus Forsaken, “the Love concentrated in the infinitely small . . . but [that] is all Love” and therefore “infinitely great.”<sup>69</sup>

It is the Infinite that has made itself finite, revealing to our eyes the unheard-of mystery of a Unity—the Unity of the divine—capable of shattering, in a sense, its own self to give space to a new and also unheard-of fullness of unity. It is the Infinite that makes itself finite while preserving its infinity, so that the finite makes itself infinite and, participating in the Infinite, may be. Chiara explains:

Never was Jesus so human as when he was Jesus Forsaken. Indeed, while before he was seen precisely as the Human Being, now he is a human being.

Indeed, being—because he is God—the universal Human Being, having detached himself from God, he remained a particular human being. But, not ceasing to be God, he divinized the particular.

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69. Jesus forsaken “is all the most contrary things: beginning and end; the infinitely great and small . . .” (Chiara Lubich, cited in Anna Pelli, “L’apporto di un carisma all’approfondimento teologico dell’abbandono di Gesù,” *Nuova Umanità* 18 [1996]: 333).

For this reason he, being God, renders the *particular* divine and shows how in a particular human being it is possible to contain the Universal.<sup>70</sup>

She concludes:

Hence participating in the divine Life [we can say, in Love, in the Universal] does not mean for us to receive a part of it, but to have it all in we who are particulars.

Each particular, then, even though distinct from the others, contains in itself the universal. And since the all, the universal in itself is unity, each particular in itself is “a harmony = *a unity*,” and in unity is composed “the harmony of harmonies.”<sup>71</sup>

Something new, therefore, that is infinitely reproduced and generates “designs” and “harmonies” that are “perennially new.” Chiara Lubich describes this with the evocative image of the “mystical rose,” which is an image of the Soul at whose center converge many souls, like many petals, so that they form a complete oneness among them, just as in a rosebud. “Then,” she continues:

they distinguish themselves, they detach themselves . . . as in so many petals, each of which will form a rose, a rosebud with other petals subdividing themselves, unknotting themselves and forming in their turn other buds. . . . The whole

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70. Lubich, cited in Silvano Cola, “Morte e resurrezione: la dinamica del ‘saper perdere’ per lo sviluppo integrale della persona,” *Nuova Umanità* 23 (2001): 235.

71. Lubich, cited in Maria Thérèse Henderson, “Gli infiniti toni della voce del Padre,” *Nuova Umanità* 25 (2003): 374.

then will return to the heart bud. . . . The rose then will open itself up again in other ways, according to other relationships that pass between the souls, and the designs and harmonies will be perennially new.<sup>72</sup>

Unity, indeed, Chiara comments, “is not static; it is a beauty on the move, it is a dynamism.” It is the vital trinitizing of the Soul as that oneness which shatters itself and makes itself reverberate, distinctly and singly, in each of the many, in the togetherness of which it then comes back to be recollected and expressed in unity, in a dynamic process, as Leibniz would say, of an “infinity of infinities.”

In the light of the uni-Trinitarian dynamic, briefly outlined, the many are not thus thought of as foreign to one another and in a dialectical relationship among them, but rather as tending to enter into relation with one another, to “interpenetrate” one another “to bring about a new beauty of love.” “Make one of all and in all the One.”<sup>73</sup> And this can be done by love, as Chiara illustrates in a novel passage where she explains the infinite refraction of the One in the many as a mutual containing of the Infinite in the finite and of the finite in the Infinite:

When a ray of light meets a drop of water suspended in the air, it unfolds in a rainbow and in the spectrum of the 7 colors are collected all the shades of every color. The one therefore is made 7 and the 7 is made 70 x 7 and so on to infinity.

It is the finite that becomes infinite by having in itself the Infinite.<sup>74</sup>

Finite and Infinite are manifested here in their intrinsically perichoretic nature, by which the finite does not appear as the outcome of a limiting of the Infinite, nor does the Infinite appear as the most extreme expansion of the finite, according to a logic that, in the end, imprisons and dissolves one into the other, as Hegelianism and nihilism would teach. Here, rather, everything goes back to their mutual indwelling, their mirror-like illumination of one another, and this allows the finite not only to maintain its identity, but to intensify and expand it to the measure of Unity. This, Chiara says, is done by “the Light of God” which unfolding “like a fan”

. . . . penetrated in every soul (which was to open itself) in a way that was varied but one, as the colors are varied and of the same luminous substance. It did not illuminate two souls in the same way—as the Three in the Trinity are not the same as each other but distinct Persons—and to each it gave its beauty so that they should be desirable and loveable by others and in love (which was the common substance in which they recognized they were one and themselves and each other) they were recomposed in the One who had recreated them with his Light which is Himself.<sup>75</sup>

72. Lubich, cited in Piero Coda, “Viaggiare’ il Paradiso,” *Nuova Umanità* 19 (1997): 110.

73. Lubich, *Essential Writings* (London: New City and New York: New City Press, 2007), p. 102.

74. Lubich, unpublished passage, October 15, 1949.

75. Lubich, cited in Hubertus Blaumeiser, “Un mediatore che è nulla,” *Nuova Umanità* 22 (1998): 406–407.

This unique explication of the logic of trinitization characterizes the experience of the Soul. Here trinitization finds its own spatial-temporal reflection as an experience that originates and founds a new ontological framework, with its consequent vision of what it is to be human. The nature of this is to expand further as a paradigm for all that is real. And this leads to the recognition that in the process of “trinitizing” there is that “fundamental agreement” in which, as Heidegger would say, “every thought vibrates” and in which, at the same time, it is established “in this origin and its breadth.”<sup>76</sup> The most luminous and convincing evidence for such a claim, formulated according to this fundamental agreement, is in the pages of *Paradise '49* where Chiara Lubich passes on the full extent of her mystical experience.

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76. Martin Heidegger, *Introduzione alla filosofia: Pensare e poetare* (Milan: Bompiani, 2009), p. 55.