

Commerce

If we stop to think about the word "commerce", a few thoughts easily come to mind - elements that are also useful in bringing the discussion to an operative level.

"Engaging in the buying and selling of goods" is what the word "commerce" means and thus, working with goods, contacting others with goods, through goods, using goods as the "means" to carry out business transactions.

An important need, or better, an essential need, lies within the word "commerce" however.

In times when the equilibrium of community living has been so deeply marked by unrest, the thought comes to mind that commerce needs a context of peace in order to prosper, to the point that commerce itself becomes a synonym for peace. With war, the trade network dies because productive activities collapse. Vice versa, in times of peace, we return back to the dynamics of supply and demand.

If peoples of the world exchange goods, engage in commerce, and have economic relations, an aggressive conception of relations between different peoples is overcome. Different cultural and economic assets are brought closer together, and people communicate.

Therefore, commerce does not merely represent an occasion for economic growth, but it is also a necessary link between civilisations that may also be very distant from each other in many ways.

History is a witness to this, as are our present times, revealing it as a need.

In light of these considerations, I am convinced that the meaning of the word "commerce" needs to be fully exploited, in order to re-launch a concept of development that is compatible with:

- the diversification of individual economic situations
- the network of relations established by globalisation
- and last, but not least, with the need to reach a situation marked by an equilibrium of peace.

To have a full grasp of the potential inherent in commerce, the concept of "goods" should be expanded.

Goods are not only finished products or raw materials. They are not only material or auxiliary goods. Goods also consist in the supply of services, proposing a skill, the putting together of a training plan, the definition of an organisational model; goods may consist of technology, labour...

Commerce cannot be limited to the selling of material or auxiliary goods. It must encompass the supply of the entire wealth of elements that the word "goods" contains...

Likewise, commerce must also stand for buying, leaving wealth where one sells, rendering less unequal economic transactions and with the developing countries also

in mind, enhancing the value of the existing resources that are present such as labour, either as commodities, or as products of the local economies.

In my mind, commerce should lean towards this **reciprocity**, as in its search for a fair profit, commerce should support a revitalisation of the resources of the partners involved, and be capable of not depleting assets, but of generating them.

Commerce can become an opportunity for development. This is possible if, for example, in a sort of modern **barter** system, the more advanced of us, are able to exchange services and skills for raw materials and goods, which, in other geographic areas, can find other routes for circulation, other distribution and marketing circuits.

The idea in mind is based on the economic prospects involved in the extension of the concept of business relations, fostering, in the logic of expanding enterprises, relations between different nations, firms, and other subjects that may even be heterogeneous in terms of wealth, level of development, or sales volumes.

The important thing is that substantial transparency regarding the agreements and the common denominator of a "code of honour" based on quality, exist as the basic foundation of all business deals and/or "bartering" (however one wishes to call it).

Quality must be sought after as an aim and used as the means permitting our presence in the "barter" system, and in the logic of fair retribution.

In the "barter" exchange, for example, the quality that agricultural producers make available to consumers, as material for trade, finds confirmation and stimulus in the price.

In addition, if we turn our attention to the agricultural products of the developing nations, here too, quality can become an element for exchange because it is boosted by the intervention of the wealthier nations aimed at training, the transfer of skills and technological knowledge, the start-up of specialised plant systems.

A utopian vision of things? Perhaps so, but we must keep in mind that History's great utopian thinkers have always widened the perspective of their times. Perhaps we can also accept their invitation to broaden our minds to a way of thinking that crosses the boundaries of what we have already seen and done before.

Commerce can be a tool serving for great beginnings, and for new, cross-cultural economic relations.

Angelo Rossi
angelorossi@clal.it

(translated by Interlanguage)