INTERCULTURALITY NEEDS A 'RELATIONAL HUMAN REASON' TO BUILD AND MANAGE THE 'INTER'

LA INTERCULTURALIDAD NECESITA UNA "RAZÓN HUMANA RELACIONAL" PARA CONSTRUIR Y CONSEGUIR EL "ENTRE"

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Abstract: Our societies are becoming more and more multiethnic and multicultural. How can we approach the growing cultural differences and diversity that can be seen in society as a result of globalization? The political doctrine of multiculturalism has generated more negative than positive effects. Today, in its place, we speak of inter-culturalism. But this expression too seems more or less vague and uncertain. Interculturalism lacks a relational interface between cultures. To get beyond multiculturalism's shortcomings and the fragilities of interculturalism, a secular approach to the question of coexistence between cultures is needed – one that is capable of restoring life to reason through a new semantics of inter-human difference/diversity. 'Making human reason more relational' is the proposal of this contribution.
Key-words: interculturality; multiculturalism; recognition; relational sociology; relational reason

Resumen: Nuestras sociedades se están convirtiendo poco a poco en multiétnicas y pluriculturales. ¿Cómo podemos acercarnos a las emergentes diferencias culturales y de diversidad que se dan en la sociedad debido a la globalización? La doctrina política del multiculturalismo ha generado más efectos negativos que positivos. A día de hoy, y en su lugar, hablamos de interculturalidad, pero esta expresión también parece un tanto confusa y problemática. La interculturalidad carece de una interconexión relacional entre culturas, así que para superar las limitaciones del multiculturalismo y las inconsistencias del interculturalismo es necesario abordar un acercamiento tradicional respecto a la convivencia entre culturas, un acercamiento capaz de darle sentido a la vida mediante una nueva filosofía interhumana de diferencias y diversidad. "Hacer la razón humana más relacional" es la propuesta de este artículo.
Palabras-clave: interculturalidad, pluriculturalidad, reconocimiento, sociología relacional, razón relacional.

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1. The challenge of a 'plural society' in which sociocultural differences are affirmed and denied at the same time

Our societies are becoming more and more multiethnic and multicultural. How can we approach the growing cultural differences and diversity that can be seen in society as a result of globalization? In other words: how can we treat those people who are bearers of relevant cultural differences or diversity?

The doctrine of multiculturalism is the answer that has gained the biggest foothold in the West, albeit in a variety of forms, for the simple fact that it seems to be the most consistent with the liberal premises of Western democracies. The doctrine of multiculturalism was, in fact, born to favor respect, tolerance, and the defense of different (minority) cultures. It later morphed into an imaginary collective, under which we would be "all different, all equal," in the sense that our differences/diversity are all placed on the same level and treated under rules which render them in-different – that is, in such a way as to maintain that the meaning and relevance of those differences make no difference, since making a difference would mean to make a discrimination between them.

In this approach there is an evident contradiction, since, on one side, differences are understood as a positive things (to be respected, preserved and implemented) while, on the other side, they are held to be potential sources of inequalities or discriminations (to be avoided and denied). Take for instance the cultural difference between the monogamous and polygamous marriage. According to the doctrine of multiculturalism, this difference is to be respected and given full recognition, but what about the inequalities and discriminations among women when a husband has multiple wives? More generally, multiculturalism claims that any family arrangement should be regarded as functionally equivalent in terms of 'being a family' irrespective of its social and cultural structure, although this assumption is clearly disconfirmed by empirical findings.

The troubles that stem from cultural differences/diversity do not concern the modes of feeding and clothing *per se*, or the linguistic differences as such. These modes are an asset for a multiethnic population. The troubles I am referring to concern the rights inherent to the human persons and their social relationships. So that the modes of feeding, clothing, speaking, or the ways of housing and the ways of understanding the sanitary conditions of a house, etc. are relevant in so far as they entail opposite conceptions of the human person and of her/his social relations. Since these modes imply different modalities of relating to other people, it is in their relational dimension that the intercultural issues lie.

From this viewpoint, the doctrine of multiculturalism is a coherent consequence of pure neofunctionalism –as alleged 'scientific approach'– when

applied to cultural dynamics. Differently from classic functionalism (e.g. Durkheim conceived of culture as a 'moral fact', i.e. a 'collective conscience'), today neofunctionalism (e.g. Luhmann) legitimizes cultural anomie in a systemic way. It claims that "everything that is possible is allowed"; in other words, ethics and morality are wholly relativized.

This multiculturalism produces a society characterized by a growing pluralization of all cultures, generated not only by migrations, but also by the internal dynamics of individual native cultures (national, regional or local). In particular, multiculturalism erodes the very modern Western culture, which loses the rational bases that assured it a certain homogeneity for many centuries. Indeed, multicultural ideology justifies new, so-called post-modern cultures and lifestyles that challenge Western rationality, and its religious roots.[2] The multiplication (systematic production) of cultural differences nourishes a social order in which the individuals individualize themselves by means of the search for an identity that refers to particular social circles that privatize the public sphere.

Since being adopted as official policy in several countries, the ideology of multiculturalism has generated more negative than positive effects: social fragmentation, separateness of minority groups, and cultural relativism in the public sphere [3]. As a political doctrine it seems ever more difficult to put into practice.[4]

Our question is therefore as follows: can we envisage a solution of civil coexistence between different cultures which can avoid falling into the negative effects of ethnic-cultural relativism and the fall of a common public sphere that come together with multiculturalism? The humanity of civilization hangs in the balance.

Today, instead of multiculturalism, we speak of *inter-culturalism*. But this expression too seems more or less vague and uncertain. In this paper I will discuss the possible alternatives to multiculturalism, and in particular of interculturalism. I argue that, today, interculturality is subject to major deficiencies because it presents an insufficient reflexivity, both internal to individual cultures and in the relations between cultures. It lacks a relational interface between cultures. The subjects that are bearers of different cultures might coexist in practical terms, but when more relevant issues arise, they do

[2] Parsons, T.: *Christianity and Modern Industrial Society*. in Idem, *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*. New York: Free Press, 1967; SMITH, C.: *To Flourish or Destruct: A Personalist Theory of Human Goods, Motivations, Failure, and Evil*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014.

[3] For a thorough treatment of this line of inquiry, see DONATI, P.: *Oltre il multiculturalismo. La ragione relazionale per un mondo comune*. Rome-Bari: Laterza, 2008, pp. 27-49.

[4] Let us mention the case of Canada, which was the first country to constitutionalize the doctrine of multiculturalism. After forty years, an official Canadian report still speaks of the need to reconcile the different cultures: see BOUCHARD, G., TAYLOR, C.: *Building the future. A time for reconciliation*. Report for the Government of Québec, Montreal, 2008.

not possess the tools to manage the clashes between opposing values and conflictual ethical standards.

To overcome multiculturalism's shortcomings and the fragilities of present interculturality, a secular approach to the question of coexistence between cultures is needed – one that is capable of restoring life to reason through a new semantics of inter-human difference/diversity. Making reason more relational could be the best way to imagine a new configuration of society that will be able to humanize the processes of globalization and the growing migrations.

2. The root deficit of multiculturalism

If we want to understand what interculturality might be as a solution to cultural conflicts, we must examine the shortcomings of multiculturalism.

Multiculturalism is a theory that is reductive of encounter and recognition. At the root of its reasoning, multiculturalism expresses the need to find new avenues for the recognition of the dignity of the human person when we meet each other and perceive the differences/diversity that exist between us. In this, multiculturalism reflects what is surely a good thing. The assertion that we must recognize "the value and the dignity of all citizens, independent of their race, ethnicity, language, or religion" [5] recalls us to the Christian view of secularism in the early days of Christianity[6]: that is, the original dignity of every person, prior to and apart from every ethnic and cultural belonging, including the fact that the Christian is a citizen like the others. However, even if, on the one hand, it is true that multiculturalism represents a motive to rethink the character, quality, and characteristics of recognition of what is truly human, on the other hand it does not provide a sufficient answer to these questions. The multicultural solution is lacking because it does not succeed in filling the gap between *citoyen* (citizen) and *homme* (person). To assert that the citizen achieves self-fulfillment in the public sphere by means of the policy of human dignity and the corresponding legal rights (the policy of universalism), while the person achieves fulfillment in his or her own cultural community (the policy of difference), leaves empty what exists *between* these two spheres.

The doctrine of multiculturalism is ambiguous and ambivalent because, if on the one hand it underlines the uniqueness of the human person, on the other it renders the person incommunicable from the cultural point of view. Certainly its insistence on the *radical otherness* of the Other, which pushes toward a better understanding of what about recognition between human beings is different from the recognition that a human can give to a non-human entity. The point, however, is that multiculturalism promises a recognition

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[5] See the website of *The Canadian Heritage*.

[6] *Letter to Diognetus* (the Greek writer and recipient are not otherwise known).

that cannot be realized because it has a reduced and restricted conception of encounter and recognition. Multicultural recognition, in fact, is conceived as the unilateral act of a collective mentality that attributes an identity on the basis of an autocertification or an identity claim that satisfies neither a veritative criterion nor a criterion of recognition (appreciation). In social practices, on the other hand, we see that recognizing the Other (as an individual, but also as of another culture), is a human act if, and only if, it is an act of validation (that sees the truth of the Other) inscribed in a circuit of symbolic exchanges (gifts).

Multiculturalism fails to satisfy either of these two requirements. In multiculturalism, the act of recognition of an identity does not seek out the reasons that legitimate the difference, and does not establish that circuit of reciprocal gifts that is necessary to produce human civilization. To take this step, multiculturalism must adopt the reflexivity necessary to the processes of recognition. To go beyond the limits of multiculturalism requires the development of a reflexive reasoning that is not the technical or scientific reasoning that we have inherited from modernity. After deifying reason, the Enlightenment ran aground on the shoals of anti-humanism, in which reason appears mutilated and twisted. There are two alternatives: either we abandon reason as a veritative [7] criterion (of recognition), or we make an effort to "widen the range of reason." [8] In this paper I propose that we follow this second course.

3. In search of possible alternatives to multiculturalism: is interculturality a solution?

3.1. Culture vs rationality in dealing with differences

The search for alternatives to multiculturalism as an ideology and a collective imaginary should be aimed to solve two big issues. The first one is about the liberty of the human being towards the socio-cultural structures. The other issue is about the need to configure the public sphere, so it will be – at least in some fundamental values – a "common world" to its dwellers.

I maintain that these two issues are linked together, because a *shared* public sphere needs *liberty* of people. In its turn, personal liberty leads to the recognition of the principle of moral and juridical equality of people as human beings, and of their related rights of citizenship, to be assured.

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[7] The adjective 'veritative' can be referred to M. Heidegger's phrase 'veritative synthesis', which constitutes the essence of finite knowledge. It is a synthesis because all knowledge is a union of knower and known and it is veritative because, by reason of this union, the being-to-be-known becomes manifest, i.e. true, simply because it reveals itself as it is; see: Heidegger, M.: *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Indiana: Indiana University Press,1997.

[8] Let me recall that this expression is the title of a book by Maritain, J.: *The Range of Reason*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952.

The doctrine of multiculturalism, as already said, does not solve these two problems, because it considers the person as *embodied* and *embedded* in its culture of origin, and it does not pursue any common world, but only the respect and tolerance "at a distance" between cultures. Both those lacks refer to the deficit of relationality, proper of multiculturalism. In which direction should the alternatives to multiculturalism be sought?

Up to now, the solutions have been sought in two main directions. From the one side, there was the attempt to deal with the cultural difference by cultural means, i.e. adopting a (culturalist) position that searches for the convergence between cultures through new cultural forms. From the other side, there was the attempt to show that the meeting between cultures depends from the rationality of the individual actors. The first position generally suffers from a *hypersocialized* vision of the social actor, the second one of a *hyposocialized* vision of the human being. Let us see them.

(a) The *culturalist* (or conventionalist) *position*, according to which the moral feelings are culturally originated, believes that the solutions should be found in the preservation of cultures and in the building of a conventional common platform, permitting them to coexist, that is to come alongside with each other. The suggestions, somehow or other, consist in elaborating new conventions and pacts between social groups, to the various degrees of cultural conflicts. It is supposed to come to an agreement between the various cultures through "contracts", on the model of the international conventions. This position suffers from the same problems of multiculturalism, because it considers the actors and their choices to be *necessarily* defined by the cultural context, and that only a conventional consent "from above" could re-orient the single actors. In substance, it has a "holistic" and hypersocialized character. Those who adopt such position will sooner or later contradict themselves, since the idea of "translating" a culture into another so to achieve a full reciprocal understanding comes to be considered as impossible and rejected.[9]

(b) The *rationalist position* (radical Enlightenment, in various versions), instead, is the one according to which the moral feelings have a rational origin. Here, reason comes before identity (this is also asserted by A. Sen). In this way, the solution to the cultural conflicts should be found in the direction of a dialogue, based on the encounter of the individuals' "good reasons". Here is the perspective of interaction models and rules, which may lead to a lowest common denominator between cultures, thanks to the use of reason from the part of those participating in the situation. Such common denominator may be of different kind (it may appeal to human nature, natural law, recognition

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[9] Shimada, S.: *Le differenze culturali e il problema della traduzione*, in Monceri, F. (ed.), *Immagini dell'altro. Identità e diversità a confronto*. Roma: Edizioni Lavoro, 2006, pp. 211-243.

of the innate rights of persons and peoples or nations, or to something else). For the rationalists, the "common feeling" making cultures coexist must be an expression of the moral feelings of the individuals, and it must lie on individual motives of rational action.

Stated in the right terms, the debate between culturalists and rationalists has made no big steps forward. From the one side, the culturalist position has ended, not rarely, in nourishing various forms of anti-Humanism, of trans-Humanism or even fundamentalism. From the other side, modern rationalism, in its various expressions, has not been able to assure dignity to the human being, and to protect the human essence within the socio-cultural context (not only the human essence within the individual).

The search for solutions is stalemate. *It is evident when it comes about the theme of liberty of the human being (agency) towards the socio-cultural structures.* For the culturalists, the person is a product of the society; it is entirely socialized by the society, so that the cultural debate stops in front of the declarations of the different identities. For the rationalists, the person is a pre-social individual that socializes itself basing on its own internal tastes and options, so that the cultural debate takes place making the identities nominalistic.

The contemporary human being is needful to leave cultural determinism through reason. But reason at its disposal is insufficient. Multiculturalism undermines all the existing forms of rationalism: instrumental, substantial, procedural and deliberative. The Western rationality is put in crisis and cannot find any argument in front of the requests of the ones not recognizing it (that are not only abroad, but also within the West). Should we renounce to reason?

3.2. In search of a common world: the theory of interculturality

Today, there is a possible way out thanks to interculturality. With this term, we generally mean a coexistence way basing on dialogue and the open debate between different cultures, which renounce both to the dominance of one on another (assimilation or colonization) and to the division without mutual communication (balkanization). One appeals to the "intercultural communication".

Certainly, the intercultural communication has a lot of credits, but also some manifest limits. Its main credit is to affirm that there is an intermediate space between the "full comprehension" within every single culture, and the "complete non-involvement" between cultures. In this way, it avoids the idea that a common world is impossible because of the dualism between the full comprehension (reachable only *within* a single cultural community) and the

non-involvement (the complete alterity *between* different cultural communities), as claimed by the cultural relativists. Nonetheless, it has great difficulty – and sometimes being unable – in managing the borders between the three domains (*intra*-cultural, *inter*-cultural and *multi*-cultural), if not as pure communication.

Another credit of the intercultural position is to underline that the debate between cultures may constitute a positive and useful exercise of values' investigation (an exercise inside people's ability of axiological research). [10] But such axiological exercise, which may be considered as a way for persons to give themselves reasons for their lifestyles, does not explain how individuals may find some *common* reasons.

That is why some scholars claim that interculturalism is not a real alternative to multiculturalism. By examining some of the ways in which conceptions of interculturalism are being positively contrasted with multiculturalism, especially as political ideas, Meer and Modood [11] argue that, while some advocates of a political interculturalism wish to emphasise its positive qualities in terms of encouraging communication, recognising dynamic identities, promoting unity and critiquing illiberal cultural practices, some of these qualities are important (on occasion foundational) features of multiculturalism too. Having done a comparison between multiculturalism and interculturalism in four specific areas of issues, they conclude that until interculturalism as a political discourse is able to offer a distinct perspective, one that can speak to a variety of concerns emanating from complex identities and matters of equality and diversity in a more persuasive manner than at present, interculturalism cannot, intellectually at least, eclipse multiculturalism, and so should be considered as complementary to multiculturalism.

If interculturality should be a real alternative to multiculturality, the former should achieve a true and wide consensus on the common reasons shared by the different cultures. A sort of intercultural integration as "conviviality of differences".

My purpose is to show that the intercultural solution cannot be understood –as done by someone nowadays– as a sort of "mitigated multiculturalism", sweet, moderate, which looks for the agreement between cultures, pushing individuals towards common reasons that are just external and not internal to the single cultures.

To be effective, the intercultural solution needs a deeply reflexive reason, able of rooting the ultimate values to a solid and common ground. This is the real problem: where to find this reflexive reason?

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[10] Touriñan López, M.: "La educación intercultural como ejercicio de educación en valores", in *Estudios sobre Educación*, 10 (5), 2006, pp. 9-36.

[11] Meer, N., Modood, T.: "How does Interculturalism Contrast with Multiculturalism?" in *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 33 (2), 2012, pp. 175-196.

3.3. Intercultural comprehension needs a relational interface: the problem of boundaries between of differences

Cultures debate today within the public sphere, having no clue on how it is possible to have something in common apart from the mere interest. This happens because the different cultural identities are not able to dialogue between them in terms of identity.

The modern Western society invented some devices to treat the clashes of interest through the market, and the clashes of opinion through the rules of the political democracy. But *it has not found the instruments to treat the clashes of cultural values*. The latter must then be addressed within the framework of the relationships between religion and culture, because this is the context where the instruments to handle the clashes of values should be found.

The problem must be framed considering that, in a democracy, the single religions should be able to distinguish between their internal dogmatics and what they can and must submit to their reciprocal confrontation in the public sphere, namely in the civil society, which legitimates the democratic political system.[12] In such a frame, the key-problem is the one of boundaries between the different faiths (religions) and the public sphere. The public sphere needs a common reason, reachable only if the various religions are innerly reflexive enough to distinguish between *reasons* given to interlocutors in the public sphere, and their *faith* (their inner dogmatics).

This is not an exercise up to the individual persons, but it involves religions, thought as cultures. People's inner reflexivity is not enough, it is necessary to make religion reflexive, and so the culture in which it is embodied.

In other words, here there is a process of morphogenesis both of socio-cultural structures (the elaboration of new symbolic and relational patterns) and of *agency* (the self-reflexive activity of people in their free acting), through the interaction of the individuals. The intercultural theory may stand only if it is possible to realize such complex morphogenetic process.

To perform such operation, it is necessary that people put in action a Reason, which no religion (as a culture, not as a faith) can entirely possess all alone, going across them (it is trans-cultural). It is their own reason to exist as religions in the public sphere (i.e. particular systems of values), beyond every single faith that, being a faith, is innerly incomparable. The interstitial area between religious faith and public sphere is the area of religions, meant as cultures that have to be interpreted and acted by the human subjects. Multiculturalism stops on the threshold of this interstitial

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[12] Donati, P.: "Religion and Democracy: The Challenge of a "Religiously Qualified" Public Sphere", in *Polish Sociological Review*, 138 (2), 2002, pp. 147-173.

area. It supposes a coexistence between cultures (religions) without seeing how they can interact one another and act in the public sphere, as to contribute to shape a common reason.

To understand how it is possible, we must observe that, appearing as a culture, the religion depends, from the one side on faith (transcendental reality), from the other side on how the human nature (of the person) expresses itself in the life-world relations. The theory of interculturality may be a solution beyond multiculturalism, only with some assumptions.

Here are the main ones: first, it must be assumed that the culture does not absorb the human nature; second, it must be assumed that the citizenship cannot absorb the *homme*: third, it must be assumed that people's living experience in the life worlds may find some forms of agreement, empathy, comprehension, that, being pre-cultural and pre-political, may modify the cultural expressions (included religion as a culture, not as a faith). So, the faith in transcendental realities becomes a device helping meta-reflexivity (of the individual and the relational context altogether). In this way, the reason's reflexivity may exceed its purely reproductive ("communicative") and decontextualized ("independent") forms.

There are two alternatives: either we drop reason as a veritative principle (of recognition), or we should make efforts to "widen the range of reason". The so-called "limited rationality" is an empirical condition (of individuals and functional systems), it is neither the mankind's nor the civilization's destiny. That means that the expansion of reason may be rational, namely it may happen basing on matters related to *a more comprehensive reason*, not basing on dogmatic or extra-rational reasons. I will talk of it in the next passage.

4. Expanding the range of reason with "relational reason," as an alternative to multiculturalism and as a way of achieving a new "common world"

4.1. Which reason should be used to address differences/diversity?

The search for a new rationality appropriate to encounter and recognition between different/diverse people/groups requires semantics adequate to understanding and dealing with what makes difference and diversity. It is a fact that difference/diversity is, in general a mix of faith and reason, of motives of faith and rational motives, woven together. In ancient societies, which continue to be the benchmark for what is called 'classic culture', this interweaving had a solidity, which materialized in a common *ethos* (and from here the natural law, and the doctrine of a common ethic, which was dispelled by the modern

public ethic, which is no longer based on a shared *ethos*). Joseph Ratzinger [13] wrote that: "the original relational unity between reason and faith – although never unchallenged - has been torn […] Farewell to truth can never be definitive […]." In this expression is contained – in my view – the keystone of the issue. Nevertheless it must be noted that we are still very far from having understood what it means. I cannot pause here to discuss whether the laceration was produced (before or after, more or less) on the part of reason or on the part of faith. The question on which I focus my inquiry is this: what is meant by "relational unity" between faith and reason, and also between religion and culture? Certainly it is the unity of a difference. But how do we understand difference?

4.2. The semantics of difference, relational reason, and the common world

We must come up with a new theory of difference (in personal and social identity) which allows us to understand and handle it in a relational way. Since the distinction is a reflexive operation, we are directed back to the ways in which reflexivity removes and judges differences. I will make three fundamental distinctions: dialogical reflexivity, binary reflexivity, and relational (triangular) reflexivity.[14] They correspond to three different semantics of difference (see figure 1).

(I) The *dialectic and dialogical semantics*: conceives of difference as a margin, a distance, as a point of continuous conflict and negotiation, which can find an agreement or not. The cultural encounter between Ego and Alter is represented as a relationship at the border of their identities where they meet, discuss and try to accommodate their differences. The border is a real space, where negotiations can take place between Ego and Alter (differently from a binary semantics in which the border is conceived as a sharp separation, without any chance of successful communication). What is "in between" the people who meet is a sort of externality for one another. At the point of conflict, Ego and Alter remain estranged one from the other. The border is, by definition, a source of conflicts and moral contentions, because it is the object of the will to appropriate it by one or the other, the field where one tries to assimilate the other. It has to do with seeing which of the two can take possession of it, or, alternatively, in what way they can share it or at least turn it into a place of exchanges that are the outputs and inputs of one to the other. Between Ego and Alter there is no real mutual exchange; rather, there is assertion of

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[13] Ratzinger, J.: *Fede, verità, tolleranza. Il cristianesimo e le religioni del mondo.* Siena: Cantagalli, 2003, p. 166.

[14] On the issue of reflexivity and its different types, see Donati, P.: *Sociologia della riflessività. Come si entra nel dopo-moderno.* Bologna: Il Mulino, 2011.

two identities that stand each facing the other. The two may dialogue, but the agreement they may reach is entirely fleeting (in sociological terms, it is highly contingent, which means that it depends on many variables and can be always possible otherwise, i.e. possible in many different ways, including not to be). Here, reciprocity does not require the recognition of a common identity. A clear example of this semantics is given by Jürgen Habermas, according to which the common border is defined ('constituted') by civic values and a dialogue around them (what he calls 'constitutional patriotism').[15]

(II) The *binary semantics*: conceives of difference as discrimination and incommunicability. The border between Ego and Alter is a sharp distinction (division), is a separation, an irreconcilability, an impossibility of exchanging reciprocal inputs and outputs. This semantics stems from the theory of autopoietic and autoreferential systems, of mechanical, functional, and automatic character.[16] According to it, culture is a mere by-product of the communication among people, which consists of messages which are disturbances (noise) the one for the other. There is no possibility for a common world. What is common is the pure and simple common problematization of the world (to love one another simply means to recognize that the problems of ego are also the problems of alter, and vice versa), seeking to confront the paradoxes generated by the functional rationality of the system (in which Ego and Alter act without any chance to influence its operating structures). In this frame, the morally good and ethical is, as Niklas Luhmann has claimed, "polemogenous", "generating war", or, if not war, so at least generating moral strife. Society here is a paradox because becoming fellow (*socius*) does not mean to share something, but, on the contrary, it means to draw binary distinctions that divide some people (the in-group) *from* and *against* other people (the out-group).
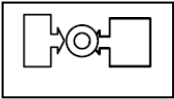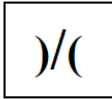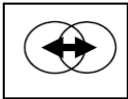
(III) The *relational semantics*: understands difference (the distance that separates Ego from Alter) as a social relationship (neither a simple border, nor a slash). The relationship is never just any, generic relationship, but is always qualified in some way. It is not a free interaction in the void. Nor is it a mere communication. It emerges from a context, and it has a structure whose shape is based upon the terms of the relationship, and can only come from it. Always under determinate conditions. The relationship is constitutive of *Ego* and *Alter's identities*, in the sense that the identity of Ego is formed through the relationship with Alter, and the identity of Alter is formed through the relationship with Ego. The border is an area of conflict, struggle, negotiation, but also of a reci-

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[15] In the book *Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theory* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), J. Habermas claims that "inclusion does mean neither assimilative engrossing nor narrowmindedness towards the diverse. Inclusion of the other rather means that *the community's boundaries are opened to everyone*: even – and above all – to those mutually extraneous and *willing to remain extraneous*".

[16] Luhmann, N.: *Social Systems*, Palo Alto CA: Stanford University Press, 1995.

procal belonging, which is constitutive of them both. The unity of the difference is a relational unity, that is, it is the unity of a real differentiation that exists because of reciprocal reference to a common belonging with respect to which Ego and Alter differentiate their own Selves. From here begins the recognition of a *real otherness* (and not –as many scholars claim– the recognition of an Alter-Ego, which is in fact an Alter as imagined, represented, depicted by Ego).

Figure 1- Semantics of difference between cultural identities.		
I (dialectic semantics)	II (binary semantics)	III (relational semantics)
Difference as a gap (border) between Ego and Alter in which there is at the same time a clash and a sharing between them (Habermas)	Difference as autopoiesis and incomunicability between Ego and Alter (Luhmann)	Difference as dissimilar way to live a relation, which is constitutive both of Ego and Alter (Donati)
Ego [diagram] Alter	Ego)/(Alter	Ego [diagram] Alter

The recognition of authentic otherness does not coincide with total strangeness toward the other, because relationship bespeaks *distance*, and even separation in some respects, but at the same time bespeaks *sharing*. The sharing is not between two mirror images, but between two distinct, unique entities. These entities, while they maintain their impenetrability without synthesis, reveal themselves by reference to a reality that joins them, their humanity, for example. The otherness is not irreconcilable contradiction, in the degree to which the Other is perceived as another Self and "Oneself (is perceived) as Another" (as Ricoeur says).[17] But this other Self is not the same (*idem*); rather it is unique (*ipse*). If Ego and Alter coincided and could be assimilated one with the other (*idem*), the relationship would vanish. If, on the other hand, the relationship was entirely external to Ego and Alter, the

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[17] Ricoeur, P.: *Oneself as Another*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992. According to Ricoeur, selfhood implies otherness to such an extent that selfhood and otherness cannot be separated. The self implies a relation between the same and the other. This dialectic of the Self and Other contradicts Descartes' cogito ("I think, therefore I am"), which posits a subject in the first person (an "I," or an ego) without reference to an Other. The dialectic of Self and Other may lead us to recognize that the self may refer to itself as not only itself, but as other than itself. This dialectic may be revealed as not only that of self and not-self, but as that of oneself as another, oneself and not another, another and not oneself, another as oneself. The dialectic of self and other may be dynamically changing.

result would fall into the two prior cases (semantics I and II). Cultural confrontation must therefore look at the relationship that is constitutive of Ego and Alter, though differently for each. The cultural difference can and must be seen as a different way to understand and configure this relationship, without being able to conceive of it as destined to a dialectical synthesis after the manner of Hegel.

4.3 The emergence of a relational semantics

Western culture has, until today, used the first two semantics, oscillating between the two. My conviction is that, in the climate of globalization, and in the wake of the flawed experience of multiculturalism, the third semantics is emerging. The third semantics, that of relational difference, interprets and understands cultural differences insofar as they are generated in reference to a "common world" (that which includes both Ego and Alter). The common world differentiates itself and is re-generated (re-differentiated) through forms of "relational differentiation," that is, of differences that are generated by different ways of articulating the founding relationships shared by the people involved in a context [18] (not the functions, the roles – that which is institutionally prescribed, as a specialization of actors and performances).

Secularism is the motive that justifies cultural pluralism, when it springs from the social relationships amongst human beings. Properly speaking, the secularity of the state does not consist in the fact that the state authorizes religious freedom, let alone rules based on political principles, like that of the juridical equality of religious denominations (this is entirely different from the equality of persons under the law, which is a fundamental principle). The state can be called secular in so far as it limits itself to recognizing the original liberty of persons in professing their faith, and it claims for its own those values and rules that emerge in a shared way from the public debated between the religions on the basis of rational argument. To go deeper into this point it is necessary to recall the relational semantics that allows us to see the unexplored aspects of human rationality: *relational reason*. What does it consist of?

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[18] On the 'founding relationship' see Donati, P.: *Sociologia della relazione*. Bologna: il Mulino, 2013, p. 124.

5. Relational reason: expanding reason through social relationships

5.1. The structure of relational reason

Relational rationality is the faculty by which the human person sees the reasons (the good motives) inherent to inter-human social relationships (not to individuals as individuals, nor to social or cultural systems). Certainly the being-together of different cultures stimulates the deepening of rational (axiological) individual choices, within individual reflexivity. But this does not suffice to configure the '*inter*' (what lies in between different cultures) as a social relationship. The 'inter' remains largely unexplored and unexplained. To turn the *inter* into a common world, the public sphere requires a rationality that takes into account the differentiation between cultures as a *relational differentiation*.[19] In other words, cultural identities are different for the different ways in which they interpret and live their relationship to values that are common to the human beings. The way refers to the instrumental and normative dimensions of reason, as well as concrete aims, while the values refer to the axiological (or teleological) dimensions of reason. The so-called policies of equality of differences, that neutralize relationships or render them indifferent, can only generate new differences, which find no rational solution, but only new forms of dialectic or separation.

The example of the role of religion in the public sphere speaks very well to this. The issue is: to what extent religions, their leaders and institutions (in so far as they are bearers of different cultural views) can have a right to intervene in the public sphere, where collective binding decisions are to be taken for the common good? We know that the confrontation between religions and secularized cultures in passing the laws is often a matter of conflict on relevant issues such as human life (abortion, euthanasia, genetic manipulations, etc.), the recognition of new civil rights, the declaration of a war, the legitimation of torture, etc. If a country allows a religion to conform the public sphere to itself, then we have a theocratic regime. On the contrary, if we split the religion from the public sphere fully, by saying that religion has no right to intervene since it is only a private affair, then we end up with an amoral society,[20] or, as some scholars call it, a 'post-ethical society'.[21] The 'good society' implies a certain kind of relationality between religions and the public sphere, one that should imply '*interchanges at a distance*' in order to accommodate religious and

[19] On the concept of 'relational differentiation' see Donati, P.: *Relational Sociology. A New Paradigm for the Social Sciences*. London: Routledge, 2011.

[20] Seligman, A.: *The Idea of Civil Society*. New York: The Free Press, 1992.

[21] Porpora, D. et al.: *Post-Ethical Society The Iraq War, Abu Ghraib, and the Moral Failure of the Secular*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

non-religious cultures all together. To configure this distance in such a way as to support a secular democracy we need a relational reason that looks at the good of the relationships in the public sphere (its relational goods!) without requiring a change in the internal 'dogmatics' of the different cultures.

Another example that speaks very well to this is the vicissitudes of the marital relationship. On one side, cultural differences may be relied upon by certain courts to exonerate a husband who beats his wife on the grounds that he comes from a culture that justifies a behaviour like that.[22] On the opposite side, differences can be considered discriminations and therefore to be erased. This is the case, for instance, of gender differences; if marriage is considered simply from the perspective of equality of opportunities for the individuals as such, leaving aside the quality of their relationships, gender identities are rendered indifferent, because their relationship (in particular the male-female relationship) has no reasons of its own to affirm and foster. It no longer makes sense to speak of male (e.g. paternal) or female (e.g. maternal) symbolic codes, because their relationship is cancelled out. The same goes for the difference between monogamous and polygamous marriage, or the new 'polyamorous arrangements', when these life styles are granted the right to individual equal opportunities. For those who support the *lib/lab* policies of equal opportunities,[23] these relationships are only different offers for a plurality of chances given to the individuals involved – nothing more than that. They do not touch on the meaning and consequences that these different relationships have on the flourishing or the withering of what is held to be properly human. From the relational perspective, when one asserts a right to a cultural difference, one necessarily supports different relationships that have different qualities and causal properties in enhancing or diminishing the human character of the relational good inherent to marriage.

The same holds true for other relations, such as the participation to the labour market, welfare benefits and civic activities.

To make social relationships indifferent, canceling out the discrete reasons that inhere in the identity of each specific kind of relationship, is to annihilate the value of relationships as *sui generis* reality. It is to nullify the principle of appreciation that the relationship contains.

Relationship is what –at the same time– joins, differentiates, and diversifies. For example, the conjugal relationship joins a man and a woman in

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[22] See the arguments of the so called 'cultural defense': Renteln, A.D.: *The Cultural Defense.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

[23] I call *lib/lab* policies those policy measures which are a compromise between liberalism (*lib* side) and socialism (*lab* side), or, in other words, a bargaining between the capitalist market and the state: see Donati, P.: *Beyond the Market/State Binary Code: The Common Good as a Relational Good.* in Schlag, M., Mercado J.A. (eds.): *Free Markets and the Culture of Common Good.* New York: Springer, 2012, pp. 61-81.

one flesh, but differentiates them in their roles and diversifies them in their identities with respect to the same relationship. The relationship of friendship joins two persons in a circle of symbolic exchanges, while it differentiates them with respect to what they can reciprocally give themselves to, and it diversifies them with regard to the quality of the friendship. In this way, different relationships are involved.

The reasons that are inherent to human relationships correspond to the dignity of the human person. They are latent and have morphogenetic potential. For this reason they can develop a critique of cultural deviations, be it of anti-humanism, or traditionalist fundamentalism.

To sustain an interculturalism capable of creating consensus on fundamental human values it is necessary to adopt a relational paradigm able to see and *articulate the reasons* that give shape to the inter-human, to that which is "between" individuals. The field of bioethics in a multicultural society offers many examples: the right to life, the rights of the human embryo, the right of a child to a family, the right to an education worthy of a human being, the right to a good death, to a healthy environment, and so on, are all *relational rights*, because they are rights to relationships (rather than to things or performances). Relationships have their own reasons, which the individuals involved may not even be explicitly (linguistically, conversationally) aware of, but which they comprehend to the extent of the type and degree of reflexivity they have; that is, to the extent to which they manage to see the reasons behind the relationships that human realities imply in the eternal dialogue between nature and culture.

The cultural mediation which is often talked about can only overcome the obstacles of prejudice and intolerance if people succeed in reasonably bringing values together, and giving them relational rationales.

Relational reason validates, rather than hides, differences. Precisely in this way it is capable of moving beyond the ancient configurations of relations between cultures (that is, the segmented differentiation in primitive societies, the stratified differentiation of cultures in premodern societies, and the functional differentiation of early modernity), which are all forms of differentiation incapable of arriving at shared public reason in a globalized society.

Relational reason gives us an alternative to these forms of differentiation, called 'relational differentiation', which in application signifies the creation of a public sphere that is not indifferent to transcendent values, but is 'religiously qualified', in that religions have a role in defining public reason, because they orient people toward a reflexive understanding of their cultural elaborations in their life-worlds.

This reflexive understanding supports and nourishes an expansion of reason. It is a way to get beyond modern Western rationality, which stopped at the threshold of the distinction between instrumental and substantial reaso-

ning. According to this distinction, the relationship to value (*Wertbeziehung* in Max Weber's theory) is non-rational, because values themselves are non-rational (from the Weberian viewpoint). Relational reason tells us the opposite. It indicates the different ways in which it is possible for Ego to relate to values, as it relates to the Other, not on the basis of purely subjective factors (sentiments, mood, emotions, irrational preferences) or acquired habits (*habitus*), but on that of reasons that are neither *things*, nor rules of exchange, but are goods (*values*) connected to the quality of present and future relationships. These are what I call "relational goods".[24] I propose that we take a new and radical look at the theory of rationality proposed by Max Weber, which profoundly (and negatively) conditioned the social thought of the twentieth century.[25]

Rationality cannot be reduced to the two modalities put forward by Max Weber – that is means-end, or instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) and value/belief-oriented rationality (*Wertrationalität*). To reduce human rationality to these two concepts is an operation dense with ambiguity and can be a source of great confusion. *Zweckrationalität* deals with the calculation of means to achieve an end, but ends can also become means, until it is no longer possible to distinguish what is a means and what is an end. The concept is unusable. *Wertrationalität* refers to a value subjectively understood by the social actor, but that value may be a good in itself, or a personal taste/preference. The reformulation of the Weberian distinction between instrumental and value-oriented rationality undertaken by various authors (for example Talcott Parsons and Jeffrey Alexander, which translated them respectively as *instrumental* and *normative* rationality), has been unsatisfying and insufficient.

I propose a redefinition of rationality as a faculty of human behavior that has four components or modalities (A,G,I,L see figure 2) that are interrelated and, combined in various ways, give rise to different forms of rational agency.[26]

(I) first, *instrumental rationality* deals with efficiency, and involves the means, therefore the adaptive dimension of thinking and acting (rationality of efficiency) (A); its analytic counterpart is the economic sphere, and its empirical, macrostructural counterpart is the market.

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[24] Donati, P.: "Relational Goods and Their Subjects: The Ferment of a New Civil Society and Civil Democracy". in *Recerca. Journal of Thought and Analysis* 14, April 2014, pp. 19-46.

[25] It is well known that Max Weber, notwithstanding his studies of rationality, did not hesitate to assert the absolute impossibility of scientific analysis of values, in this way helping to pave the way for the worst forms of irrationalism and other true monstrosities that afflicted the first half of the last century, and which today deeply wound social thought, modern epistemology, and afflict the life of many populations.

[26] From the perspective of relational sociology, it goes without saying that this framework applies also to social relations, meaning that the different forms of rationality can be attributed also to social relations as emergent from individual reciprocal actions.

(II) Second, *goal-oriented rationality* refers to situated objectives, and regards the achievement of defined goals and goal-attainment (rationality of efficacy) (G); its analytic counterpart is the sphere of power, and its empirical, macrostructural counterpart is the political system (the State).

(III) Third, the *integrative dimension* of reason, which coordinates the other dimensions of rationality (value, goal-attainment, and means) through ethical and moral normativity, and assures the autonomy of rationality against other kinds of actions and social relationships (I). I call this *relational rationality* (or, by striking a new word in German: *Beziehungsrationalität*), or *nomic rationality* (what is rational in the *nomos*, that is) in the norms of division and distribution, which at the same time divide and connect the parts in relation. Social relationships have reasons that belong neither to individuals nor to social systems. Reasons which the individuals and the systems may not know about, and in fact do not possess. As an analytic correlate, this dimension takes the sphere of social bonds, and as an empirical, macrostructural correlate, civil society inasmuch as it is an associational world.
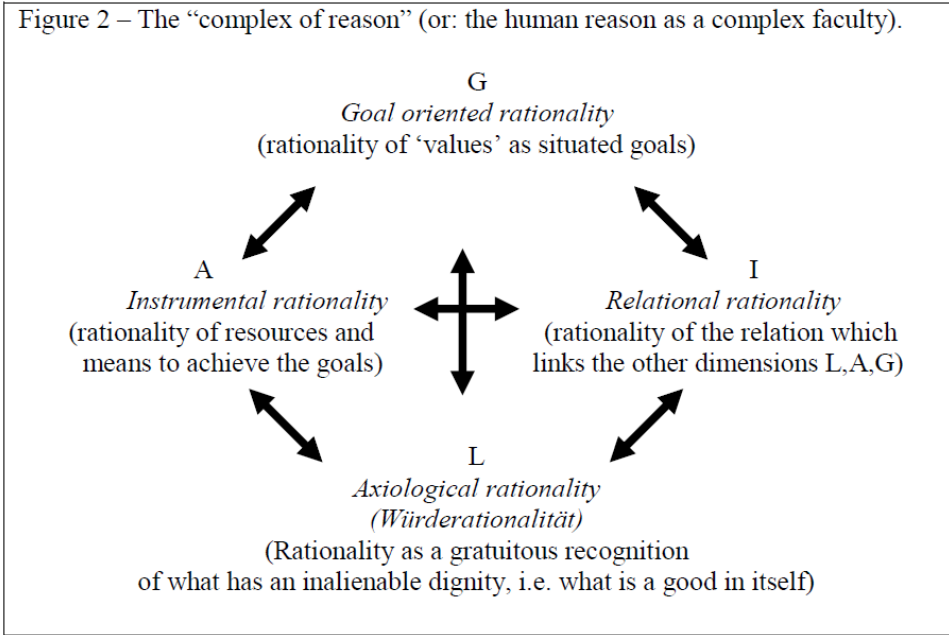
(IV) Fourth, the properly *values-oriented dimension* of reason, which corresponds to the distinction-guideline that points toward what is good in itself, what is an end in itself, what has worth in itself (that which lies at the depths of the *ultimate concerns* of the actor, which some call *ultimate values* in the sense of *ultimate realities*) (L). [27] That is, the rationality of value as good in itself. The rationality of that which has a dignity that is neither instrumental nor goal-oriented (*value rationality* or *axiological rationality*, or *Würderationalität,* or the rationality of dignity). It is important here to understand clearly that, in what I call *value-oriented rationality*, the value is not a situated goal that has a price, but is a "good without price," that no money can buy. Value-oriented rationality is not dependent upon the situation. It is inherent to the dignity of all which deserves respect and recognition, because it is distinctively human (as opposed to the non-human or in-human). Therefore, it regards in the first place the human person as such (and not because an individual behaves in a particular way). As an analytic counterpart it has the sphere of good in itself or for itself, the symbolic reference –and what is non-negotiable– to that which characterizes the good or a person and distinguishes that person from all the others. The empirical, macrostructural correlate of value-oriented rationality is the religious system –religion understood as a cultural fact distinct from faith (which transcends culture).

The four dimensions of reason (instrumental, goal-oriented, values-oriented, and relational) make up a *complex of reason*, or human reason as a complex faculty. From this angle, every component is essential so that human reason emerges in its fullness, be it as a theoretical faculty or a practical

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[27] Collier, A.: *Being and Worth*. London: Routledge, 1999.

one. The actions of recognizing, understanding, explaining and seeking what is rational are all needs of the complex faculty of human reason, as seen from the relational perspective.

Figure 2 – The "complex of reason" (or: the human reason as a complex faculty).

G
Goal oriented rationality
(rationality of 'values' as situated goals)

A
Instrumental rationality
(rationality of resources and means to achieve the goals)

I
Relational rationality
(rationality of the relation which links the other dimensions L,A,G)

L
Axiological rationality
(Würderationalität)
(Rationality as a gratuitous recognition of what has an inalienable dignity, i.e. what is a good in itself)

From the sociological perspective, reason is a faculty that exists as an emerging social phenomenon. There is no such thing as a purely individual rationality, in the sense of a faculty cut off from social relationships. Reason is a faculty that emerges from the workings of its constitutive elements, each of which has its own characteristics. The faculty which we call "human reason" is generated as an emergent effect of the togetherness, interaction, and interchange between the four fundamental dimensions that comprise it. Encounter and recognition are relational goods not because, as some believe, they carry with them a particular "human warmth," or a feeling of good will, or a special *pathos* (elements that in any event have their own weight and importance), but because they realize a relationship upon which depend the goods of those who participate in the relationship. I call them 'relational goods'. And this dependence is rational, or at least reasonable.

Those forms which we call "procedural rationality" and "deliberative rationality" are expressions of particular combinations among the above four dimensions (figure 2). Here I cannot comment upon these (and other) forms of rationality for lack of space.

5.2. How does relational reason operate?

Relational reason is that human faculty that operates:

(i) *with relations* (namely, in the perspective of relations, not of individuals or systems), in a contextualized way, in the perspective of culture as an expression of a community; it is made of relations that are put into practice or could be practiced basing on the values of such culture;

(ii) *for relations* (namely, in view of improving relations that promote some definite values of such culture);

(iii) *in relations* (namely, through relations, acting – practically and analytically – on existing relations, in order to create new ones).

On the whole, *relational reason comes into existence every time that the reason for action includes the good of common action.*

Relational reason is therefore the reason of a cultural mediation, intended not yet as "betrayal" or "paradoxicality" (the paranoia of J. Derida and N. Luhmann) of people's free natural acting, but as the expression of the need of the human living experience to be *naturaliter* contextualized within a relation, to be directed towards a mediation, to operate through a mediation.

Relational reason is that faculty, proceeding through four components (aims, means, rules, values), relating them inside and with their "environments". We may distinguish the relational reason when it operates inside (theoretical reason as a relational complex of subjective thoughts and intentions, with their mental means, logics, latent values) and outside (practical reason as a relational complex that has to combine autonomy and gratuitousness of action with heteronomy and instrumentality). [28]

In such a framework, values are necessarily on the border between reason and its transcendental environment (faith). On such border, reason, culture and faith necessarily interact. Values should be seen not as models to maintain and preserve (in an inertial vision of the social system, as done by Talcott Parsons), but as *propellers* of social relations. Cultural values are not only bonds and limits (with zero energy and maximum function of control), but also resources and perspectives of sense (having a proper energy, often more entropic than negentropic).

With his theory of incompleteness of formal systems, Gödel taught us two things: (i) each system needs to relate to an other than oneself, to find a situational and formal completeness [in the formulation of this Author, the formal needs the informal (intuition, creativity)]; (ii) the "total completeness" comes from the relation between all the systems (or rather, it lays on the relations between the systems' relations). This is worth also for reason, when considered as a system oriented to knowledge and practical action.

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[28]   See Donati, P.: *Relational Sociology. A New Paradigm for the Social Sciences*, op. cit., 227.

If we conceive of reason as a reflexive faculty of the human being, consisting on the ability of one's *I* to converse with its *Self* on its own I and the world, then to expand reason means to expand such reflexive ability (choosing aims, means, rules and values) through relations implied with the *Self* and the world, through its own *Self*. Thus permitting the person to root its own cultural identity inside its own human nature, expanding outside it in the culture, and interacting with it in the various spheres of life, where the *I* becomes *Me*, *We*, and *You*.

The Greek *Logos* says: "know yourself", as it was written in the front of the temple of Apollo at Delphi. The exortation *nosce te ipsum* (Saint Augustine) has become the focus of introspection in the Christian spirituality. Relational reason observes that such self-reflexive precept risks to fail and to fall off into subjectivism. It makes us understand that, without the Other, the *I* cannot know itself in a fully human way. Therefore, the *Logos* should make itself relational and recognize that: "*without You, who are Other than Myself, I cannot know myself*". Relational reason shows that there is no opposition between Me as the Other (*Idem*) and Me as a sole and unique being (*Ipse*), as claimed by some philosophers; instead, there is synergy, because the singleness of the person (*ipseity*) emerges from the background of what is common (*sameness*).

To talk of relational reason is to enter the reflected thought (reflexivity). It requires changing the observational point of view, being no more the one of the single terms or of a presumed "system", but that of a relationship. It means to enter into another order of knowledge (what I call "the order (of reality) of the relation").

Relational reason offers good reasons, *autonomally* understandable by everyone irrespectively of his/her specific religious faith, because they refer to the development of the human nature as a reality provided with *own* properties and powers as regards culture, even if culture should combine with nature. What makes "good" the agent/actor's reasons is their relational character as referred to the human, where "human" stands for what can be only an end in itself, never a means to other than itself, because it refers to the species-specific quality of the human person, perceivable and recognizable by everyone.

5.3. Relational reason offers the necessary mediations for a veritative recognition of the cultural identities

The citizenship we need must allow people, families, social groups and communities, belonging to it, to combine their own culture (and religion) with a growing differentiation of the individual (due to the various circles of identities intersecting in him/her). Thus, the individual should be put in the position to identify its own belongings and to determine the hierarchy of his/her ultimate concerns.

If everybody, whatever his/her culture/religion, may identify in the slightest of a common world, this world cannot consist neither of a state citizenship neutralizing social relations, nor of a multicultural citizenship making the relations between culture indifferent, because identity depends on relations.

The common world is the necessary mediation elaborated by the reason (commonly shared by the human beings), so that every single person may live in the public sphere, even being of different religion or faith. Only in the interface of the inter-subjective relation, reason recognizes the reasons of faith, and faith recognizes the reasons of Reason. Only through their relational values, Reason may open to faith and vice versa.

The lack of relational mediation puts all religions, and not only Christianity, into crisis. We may see it through the growing entropy of all the world's religions. Christianity is certainly the one that has absorbed and expressed the most the spirit of distinctions, thus the most differentiated inside as regards the use of reason. It is inside, and not outside Christianity, that anti-Humanism and trans-Humanism do generate (for the eastern religions, these terms have little or no sense).

The differentiating reason of western modernity produced multiculturalism as an ideology. Only relational reason may cure the consequent pathologies, drifts, deviations and implosions.

Secularity needed by multicultural societies consists of a *new spirit of distinctions*, which does treat social relations neither as dialectic oppositions, nor as binary ways to discriminate human persons. Such a spirit must transform social relations into an experience of recognition within a complex circuit of mutual gifts. This is a relational spirit, because it uses relational semantics of distinctions, as actions inspired by the rule of reciprocity. In this way, it generates a secularity, which is a recognition of the relation between different identities, as a free act of gift and acceptance of its responsibility (in fact, the gift is an answer to former gifts, and it leads to a reciprocation).

The question of the recognition of different cultures implies three steps, related between them: the attribution of an identity, its validation and a sense of gratitude (thankfulness) for its existence. These three steps represent the gift circuit that, differently from the animal realm, is a constituent of the human's sociability. Human recognition would not be possible if the identity was not a relational one, and if the common world was not relationally constituted.

Finally, it is clear that the biggest and more specific performance of the relational reason is the one of solving the inner difficulty of multiculturalism (namely, the problem of recognition), through the relational observation and relational action: recognition is observed and acted as a gift circuit.

The relational expansion of reason can be understood by all cultures, included the eastern ones, to the extent that these cultures adopt a relational (trinitary)[29] symbolism.

The adoption of this perspective allows society to exceed the limits of liberal tolerance. While liberal tolerance is without relations, a mature interculturality passes through relations and, therefore, is able to understand the sense of all faiths and religions, and of the relations that they can create between them by means of the human (lay) reason. Its reason lies on the fact that a principled tolerance may be flexible about means; it is a form of rationality able to combine value with differentiated rules and instruments, and by this way it can rescue *Wertrationalität* from its indeterminacy. This is, in fact, the relational reason.

The route of the relational reason does not assert neither a monistic uni-verse, nor a multi-verse without any order, nor an undifferentiated pluri-verse, but an ordered *inter-verse*, a world of diversities oriented to one another, on the standard of a reciprocal rationality, fit for a convergence on common experiences and practices, which are independent from the single culture as a symbolic product (included the language).

6. Conclusions and perspectives

The vicissitudes of multiculturalism show that we live in a world, in which the Hobbesian solution of the social order is no more suitable. Institutionalized individualism (individualistic liberalism), assessed by the Hobbesian solution, falls into crisis. There is no more a political power (Leviathan) that may guarantee individual liberties, neutralizing the cultural (and religious) conflicts within the public sphere. The ideology of multiculturalism is not a solution to the ethical void which widens in proportion to the fall of the Hobbesian national State. Is interculturality a viable alternative?

My answer is positive, provided that interculturality is fitted with a 'relational reason' to make different cultures meet and build a common world.

A "universal culture" is not thinkable as a *world culture* (corresponding to the *world system*) in a functionalist meaning. The current debate on the difficulties to achieve a theoretical universalism in culture [30] clearly demonstrates it. The Christian thought may certainly propose its own vision of universalism, but it is forced to confront other universalisms. So that, without a relational interface, the Christian vision (or even the Judaic-Greek-Christian

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[29] 'Trinitary' here means able to see 'the logic of the third': see Hofkirchner, W.: "The commons from a critical social systems perspective" in *Recerca. Journal of Thought and Analysis* 14, April 2014, pp. 73-91.

[30] Browning, D. (ed.): *Universalism vs Relativism: making moral judgements in a changing, pluralistic, and threatening world*. New York-Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publ., 2006.

view) is inevitably perceived as particularistic. A universal culture is possible, instead, as the spirit of an ethically qualified secularity, constituted as a common world, which may be drawn through the relational reason, in relationally differentiated social spheres.

Beyond the deficits of multiculturalism, the solution could be provided by a renewed secular sense of culture, as a common learning space through practices of daily life, where mutual recognition sets aside from the world of signs and cultural traditions, in order to grasp the primary experiential sense of the inter-human. In such a situation, the lay character could assume the connotation of an independent reason, looking at the sense of human relations, without depending on justifications based on the sole faith (namely, committed to dogmatics inside the single religion). In order to let such a secularity emerge, it is necessary that people and cultures learn to operate differences, no more in a dialectic or binary way, but through a relational symbolic code, according to which the autonomy of subjects is not a separation (or continuous clash between them), but a *choice of the "environment" to depend on*. Relational reason should have the task to avoid every kind of *conflation* in the cultural conflicts: top-down conflations (as in the case of French Jacobin assimilationism), bottom-up conflations (as in the theory of an unlimited community of discourse, as in the case of J. Habermas), and central conflations (peculiar of the relation*ism* that we find in the pragmatics of a coexistence understood as a conflation or hybridization of cultures, as in the case of M. Emirbayer).

When relationally understood, secularity promises a new coexistence between cultures, not based on the waiver to their content of civilization, but on its renewal, through the recognition that one's own identity is relationally constituted through the relation to the Other.[31] This idea is the backdrop of what I call *societal constitutionalism*.[32]

Today, many people are willing to recognize that the self-limitation of the "positivist reason" (even adapted to the technical ambit) implies a mutilation of the human being. Non-believer laymen, atheists and agnostics claim it too. Everyone, today, puts the evils of a globalized society down to the technical reason, and to the domination of an economy pushed forward by a science without ethics. Certainly, the positivist reason is neither universal, nor complete, nor sufficient to itself. The roots of reason are wider ones. It is shown by the fact that the globalization is stimulating new "local" cultures.

To see these roots, dipping in the man's nature, it is necessary to produce what has been called by Max Weber "cultural breakthrough". Christianity has done it during two millennia, getting done a qualitative leap of

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[31] As Weiler rightly points out, the fault lies in secularizing ourselves, while what is needed is the opposite: to find a dialogical relationship among communities of faith (Weiler, J.H.H.: *European Constitutionalism Beyond the State*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

[32] Donati, P.: *La cittadinanza societaria*. Bari: Laterza, 2000.

the world's process of rationalization. But today it is frozen. This is because the couple faith-reason is no more able to de-mythicize false idols. To do it, it should structure the unity of such difference in a relational way, through the relational reason. That is the only way for reason, which grew on the Judaic-Greek-Christian roots, to operate a new cultural breakthrough.

We need *new* roots to survive. We must find a new imagination, which is together sociological and transcendental, in order to support a meeting between cultures, being able to get to the root of man's dignity. To think of reason as a *Logos* may be helpful to the individual to provide a new access to culture, and to the intercultural debate, but it cannot be closed inside the religion of a Book. It must open up to historically contextualized human relations. It has to learn from everyday life practices in so far as they are enlightened by a reflexive reason fully relational.

There is a lot to learn from a reason able to expand itself towards those ultimate realities that cannot be reckoned, that are not technical-scientific, bringing inside them the deepest sense of the human. We should be aware that this target requires a relational development of reason. Social relations contain the reasons that operate the mediation between the religious faith and the public reason.

To understand such mediation, which is the keystone of the co-existence of so many and different "reasons" (cultures), it is necessary to resort to a reflexive semantics of difference (between the human reason and its supernatural environment, as between different reasons linked to different cultures), which is a relational semantics. This is the meaning of the claim according to which religious faith can and shall liberate reason from its blind spots.