



## DEVELOPING AN INTERCULTURAL VALUE-BASED DIALOGUE

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### Resumen

La convivencia pacífica y la inclusión no están únicamente sujetas a disfrutar bienes y sistemas del estado de bienestar. Construyendo valores compartidos se propone un nuevo concepto, lo valioso, como factor propedéutico del valor. Un diálogo orientado en valores empieza por ‘hacer hablar’ entre ellos los valiosos de que cada uno es portador de manera que todo actor pueda entrar en el punto de vista del otro para luego llegar a producir valores compartidos. Empezando desde lo valioso, el ensayo dibuja el recorrido de un nuevo modelo de integración: salvaguardar unos rasgos de la ‘diversidad’ (multiculturalismo) y crear unas ‘semejanzas’ (interculturalidad). Por el enredo semejanzas/diferencias tanto migrantes y grupos étnicos como autóctonos absorben algo de las creencias y de los valores de Alter, y al mismo tiempo consiguen conciencia de la complementaridad y interdependencia con Alter, núcleo de una mente de otredad y requisito básico del manejo de los conflictos. Siguiendo esta vía cada actor abraza una red siempre más amplia de Alter indeterminados (*linking bonds*) sin perder su propia identidad y pertenencia. Finalmente, el ensayo sugiere técnicas operativas que comprometan, como *game-changer* de una sociedad *posible*, la escuela y los servicios sociales, por un lado, y las entidades políticas locales y la sociedad civil, por el otro (democracia deliberativa).

**Palabras clave:** diálogo multi-intercultural, valor, valioso, identidad, método educativo multidimensional, democracia deliberativa.

### **Abstract**

Peaceful co-existence and inclusion do not depend solely on the availability of goods and welfare systems, but primarily on shared cultural values. In order to build shared values, we propose a new concept, the *worthy*, as the pull-factor of the value. A value-based dialogue begins from making each ones' worthies 'speak to each other' so each actor can enter into Alter's point of view to gain, afterward, a sharing of values. Beginning from the *worthy*, we outline the path of an innovative integrative model: safeguard some features of the 'diversity' (multiculturalism) and to build some 'resemblances' (interculturality). By this resemblances/differences trade-off both migrants, ethnic groups and autochthonous absorb something of Alter's beliefs and values, and at the same time gain awareness about complementarity and interdependency with Alter, the core of an otherness mind and the requirement to manage conflicts. By this way, each actor embraces a wider and wider network of Alter (linking bonds) without losing his own identity and belonging. Finally, this paper suggests operative ways involving, as *game-changers* of a 'feasible' society, school and social services from one side, and local, political entities and the civil society, from the other side (deliberative democracy).

**Keywords:** multi-intercultural dialogue, value, worthy, identity, multidimensional educational method, deliberative democracy.

### **PLURALISTIC AND INTERCULTURAL SOCIETY: WHERE DID IT GO WRONG?**

This paper focuses on cultural values, and how to develop a truly inclusive dialogue between dissimilar actors in order to increase the degree of social cohesion.

Let us start from the assumption that the educational system and society as a whole neglect the deep importance of the transmission of values. Towards this point, I will briefly mention a few rather crude facts taken from recent events. I refer to some thousands of European individuals, not only of Islamic origin, but also converts, who, hence, grew up in our societies, then rushed off as volunteers to join the ranks of the so-called ISIS caliphate, and to fight with ferocity against those same societies from which they came. Looking at such a phenomenon, we need to ask what exactly within the intercultural and pluralistic program of the society failed to function. Such a phenomenon sends

word that the values of freedom and tolerance that we persist in believing so fascinating and desirable for all – including for those arriving to our shores from far away – on the contrary, are not shared at all by another part of the world. Rather, this part deems our values as most oppressive, and to be contrary to their more intimate way of being a part of, and of understanding, a collectivity. Examining a less cruel event from recent history, the 2005 riots in the French banlieues, our considerations hardly change. This is because the protesters were third-generation migrants who had attended French schools, occupied French workplaces, and were enrolled in the French health system. They set fire to the symbols of the society in which they were born, such as cars, metro stations, luxurious shop-windows and stores, rubbish bins, etc., - symbols that French society offered them as visible pillars of common well-being and inclusion, - as evidence that they were demanding the fulfillment of historical and cultural French values, and not just to have access to its material goods.

Confronted with this series of phenomena, we have to ask what it was that didn't function in our intercultural and pluralistic policies. In my view, all of this suggests that the time is ripe to revise interculturality. To integrate cultures as well-differentiated internal subcultures or groups within the same society, we believed it was enough to encourage the adoption of social rights (housing, healthcare, work, etc.), cultural rights (school, education, etc.), political rights (voting in administrative and/or political elections), and neutral and universally accepted rules, able to ensure a peaceful way of living together. However, we ignored the fact that rights and rules are products of something else, namely, historical values, and that, for this reason, these rights work effectively only in the presence of those basic structures. To a certain extent, in our societies we made rights and rules rise to the rank of supreme values, losing sight of the inherent reason of why societies were born in the first place and continue: because a group of people living together share a deep common sense of belonging, as well as there existing psychological connections regarding enduring values<sup>1</sup>. As a result, immigration and the politics of hospitality (including the schools, educational system, and social programs) addressed to migrants and ethnic groups, as well as to the internal subsystem of integration politics, now in such fashion in our secularized world, drew inspiration from the dream of a pluralistic

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<sup>1</sup> It's important to emphasize that in various countries of Latin America (Nicaragua, Peru, Colombia, Mexico, Ecuador, Venezuela and, recently, Bolivia) there is a widespread political-cultural movement engaged to place side by side to the enjoyment of rights, the revitalization of beliefs and values from the bottom. Such educational politics – inspired by the intuitions of Fernando Ortiz - is defined transcultural education since it wants that the contact between different cultures could lead to reciprocal mutations, to new cultural synthesis avoiding subjugations and dominations (E.A. Sandoval Forero. 2013: 100-2).

and intercultural society which was, however, lacking in values – or was at least characterized by heterogeneous, disconnected, and interchangeable values – and free from obligations linked to ideals, forgetting, precisely, that historical values are the basis of law, rights, and rules. Our current post-modern societies do not invest in the sphere of values to the same extent as they do in the attempt to tie together their fragmented and blurred sub-systems. From here, a further notable error can be found in our attempts at intercultural education. Inviting subjects to follow rules and norms while at the same time pushing in the direction of emancipation from the weight of consolidated and responsabilizing values, our society induced people, little by little, into moral disarmament, a sort of navigation by sight in an ocean of offers of relative, casual, and contradictory values: a heterogeneous menu of values, poured out daily on our tables, none of them possessing valid nutritional qualities for the spirit, or the necessary authority for assuring a ‘place’ or a secure address regarding our experiences in the world. By acting in this way, secularized societies thought that they believed it unlawful to impose upon migrants any pillars of behavior based on what is considered good and what bad. Such pillars were not even suggested by these societies, either to autochthonous or to subcultural groups. On the contrary, our societies deemed such notions – maladroitly – as rubbish, and systematically deprecated any matter seen as moral and as a part of a tradition (religious faith, cultural heritage), hence something which should be worth transmitting. This means that integration of internal autochthonous groups and subcultures has failed also. Education, as well as every other subsystem of society, follows the common drift, and neglects any true effort to search for a ‘strong’ model guiding the fate of human beings toward greater heights of self-objectification. So individuals – especially young people – today embody, even unintentionally, life models frequently based on uncertainty and volatility as an irreversible destiny, on disaffection towards what is institutionalized and organized, on a sense of extraneousness towards others, on an unwillingness to considerably engage themselves in either study or in productive work. Consequently, a *quasi-subject* emerges with a probabilistic and possibilist nature (U. Beck et al., 2003).

In despite of all that, the urge to act based on values remains dormant<sup>2</sup>.

The object of this paper is that of promoting a re-enchantment with values, and of developing a value-based coexistence between different cultures.

I do not wish here to discuss the ongoing typologies of immigration politics

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<sup>2</sup> S. Hitlin, J. Allyn Piliavin, 2004.

in the UK, France, Spain, or the USA. Rather, my intention is to define values, how they arise and steadily develop, how they are passed on; referring to the transmission of values, I will attempt to actively involve educators, meant in the larger sense (teachers, cultural mediators, social workers).

### **WHAT IS A VALUE, ITS NATURE, AND ITS FUNCTIONS**

A value is much more than a positive ideal or an abstract ingredient of human society, distant from life; rather it is a conception regarding the common good, and a measuring rod by means of which one gives status and meaning to defined actions, purposes, and feelings, to oneself and others. A value is an enduring belief and feeling, an outlook of life concerning preferable ways and means of conduct within a given society; it has a self-propulsive strength, being endowed with a capacity both binding and prescriptive, proactive and emancipatory, coming, as it does, from the faith in irremissibility which it is able to inspire. Whoever adheres to a value finds remuneration simply in his adhesion to it, feels a sense of fulfillment, and a strengthening of his reputation among others, as well as in his self-esteem. Through this sort of psychological reward, the dichotomy between duty-constraint and pleasure-freedom, individuality and society, costs and benefits, disappears, so – as Durkheim termed it – the fulfillment of moral ends that society asks of individuals in a coercive manner is transformed into something desirable and manageable<sup>3</sup>.

It is necessary to dispel the misunderstanding which would have it that adopting values means to adapt oneself simply to what is already-given and to the authority which has decided what is praiseworthy, and that, therefore, adopting values is equivalent to conforming. On the contrary, whoever behaves in a way which follows a cultural code that he recognizes as valid, obtains as an initial result a sense of doing the 'right thing', since he is following conventionally-appreciated lines of action; and every time he does the 'right' thing as defined by the group, he draws to himself social recognition which affiliates him even more with the group. This belonging lends coherence and continuity to different parts of his original biographic path. Besides, as an inherent characteristic of our species, no human being is a mere passive receptacle of patterns of experience, but, rather, helps in the incessant reshaping of those patterns

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<sup>3</sup> E. Durkheim (1924); about a value in-depth conception, see among others J. van Deth and E. Scabrough, 1995; L. Sciolla, 2008

during his life trajectory. Once society embraces and disseminates values which become inherent to the cultural landscape, being standard and valid for everyone, each individual 'seasons' these values in accordance with his own needs, wishes, and expectations which are formed in determined life-contexts. He does not conform mechanically to standard models simply because while upholding them he wants to make them match his own dreams and beliefs; he does not manipulate codified values in order to profit personally; but he intends to personalize them by adding *something of himself*, to then re-introduce them into circulation within the wider society, enriched, precisely, with new and intimate nuances of meaning, being "creatively deviant", which then permit the society to evolve. Whoever incorporates cultural values increases his own degree of individual fulfillment, of independence and freedom from already-existent patterns. It is in this sense that we say it is the individual who builds values, and that values are not pre-shaped and abstract, irreversibly springing from a society (or a school) in a one-way direction toward the individual<sup>4</sup>.

Values become efficacious in the moment in which the subject recognizes that they represent the authority of society, and incorporates them as an essential part of his own motivational structures: complying with the sphere of values, the individual not only gains psychological reward, but, through his consequent behavior, he demonstrates respect and credibility toward the fast-held ideas of society. As subjects master the obligations of society, social cohesion is increased.

### **SYNTHESIS: FEATURES OF A VALUE**

a - Values are ruled by empirical and individual experience; b – whoever adheres to a value does not only receive psychological reward simply by the act of doing so, but also from positive feedback coming from those who adhere to that same value (e.g. I more easily adopt an ideal when I perceive a sense of pleasure in seeing others adopting it, too); c – the credibility of a value depends on the integrity and moral coherence of the transmitting source; d – adhering to a value creates an operative 'forma mentis', that enliven to further develop and make concrete what we think and feel, to make statement correspond with action; e – values strengthen cognitive abilities, and open up an almost sacred area of experience: an idea or a technology (e.g. how to

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<sup>4</sup> G. Simmel, 2008.

build a drone, or how to understand what the object “cross” or “black stone” represents in the history of ideas), if invested with value, carries special respect and transcends to a higher level of meaning, which makes it deserving of being preserved and passed on; f – value-oriented behavior inserts an action into a framework of higher social objectives, which makes the individual perceive himself as a part of a larger whole which carries an overarching history: values give coherence and structure to individual bits of knowledge and experience, and while they bind them into a unity and give them a common direction, they make the subject an heir of tradition; g – in virtue of their special strength, values are imposed on behavior as if they were something held dear, because one recognizes authority springing forth from society, i.e. a collective good that satisfies, at the same time, the individual good (interest); h - whoever embraces values spurs cultural innovation: inserting nuances of a personal nature into standard and conventional meanings, he enriches them and transforms them into new configurations.

### GENESIS OF VALUES

From what has been stated to this point, we have to abandon the well-known conception which would have it that values (e.g. tolerance, freedom, altruism, respect for the environment, peer relationships between the sexes, etc.) are something *already* defined, once and for all, identical at every latitude, having the only function of fostering conformity.

On the contrary, a value, although abstract and objective, is felt as in force in so far as the single individual discovers in it something common and superior which can ‘naturally’ be fitted into his own personal life project. Taking as an example the banner of a nation or a sports club, this object represents a value if the individual, who has already acquired its symbolic meaning, valid for everybody, recognizes in it *a part of himself* (a particular way of conceiving intra-group relations, creating expectations and dreams, etc.). Put another way: we construct-incorporate a value because we feel, even if in a vague and pre-rational manner, an ethical *consonance* with something *already personally* experienced as authoritative and trustworthy. This ‘something’, preliminary to cultural value, I define as a *worthy*<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> T. Telleschi, 2011. *Worthy* concept inspires to ideal values expressed in *Phaedrus* by Plato (1966: 274b-278e). The qualitative relationship between ‘outside’ and ‘insider’ is well represented by the notion of congruence. A dialogue is ‘true’ when there exists a congruence between statement and action (“being outside”)

The *worthy* is a natural and indefinite urge to bond to something (objects, other human beings, events, the environment, notions) which receives a definite shape in daily-life contexts (i.e. family, the classroom, a sports association, or a company): every context has its own typical rules fostering a particular cultural capital generating typical ‘worthies’<sup>6</sup>. As human beings, we wouldn’t have any possibility of living and of building our own life if we did not tie ourselves to *something* and did not perceive this bond as important. Each bond constitutes a *chance* of existence: I exist *within* the bonds with others, and in the act of forming the bond, I give existence to the *other-and-I*. As soon as I incorporate it within myself, I become, little by little, responsible for that *something*, and each time I ‘take care’ of it, I further strengthen my inclination to create bonds between me and myself, between myself and the Other.

The *worthy* assumes concrete form in ‘typical ways of...’ allocated in the most circumscribed relational contexts of life. For this reason, the *worthy* is not immediately recognizable, and can go unperceived among the banal and non-essential that springs from what has remained ‘unstated’ through time by a group, residing within certain ‘typical ways of’ or *typifications*. We may identify ‘typical ways of doing’ (manual hobbies, health practices or crafting activities, leisure activities involving the body, such as dance, wearing designer clothes, body-piercing, etc.); ‘typical ways of connecting’ (face-to-face relations, as well as the virtual contacts of social networks: from proxemic actions to how to ask for an aperitif at a pub or directions on a street, to how to talk on a cellphone or to participate in a chatroom); ‘typical ways of symbolically expressing’ beliefs and life-outlooks (rituals of religious or lay holidays); ‘typical ways of disclosing one’s feelings’ (taking care of objects and people: friendship, love, joy, aggression, a sense of death, etc.); ‘typical ways of saying and thinking’ (popular maxims, idiolects, stylistic items from cult literature); ‘typical ways of studying’ or ‘of making entrepreneurship’ (time-planning, choosing objectives, striving to realize dreams, the way of responding to failure and frustration, etc.), and so on. Among the possible *typifications* which the group makes available, some of them will be felt by each individual to be particularly attractive and important *for himself*, and to these he gives special attention, but only to the ones which hold some importance for his life.

The set of *worthies* constitutes the personal space of ethical virtues

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and feeling and thought (“being inside”): the subject becomes responsible for this fullness both towards himself and towards others.

<sup>6</sup> M. Granovetter. (1983), noted an opportune distinction between contexts, according to whether weak ties or strong ties are acting within them.



(*civiness*), the central focus of every experience which is the core basis of recognition, the litmus test, more or less faithful to, and truthful of, the life of the individual himself, so much so that when he perceives a fading within himself of a *worthy*, or the loss or misrecognition by others of some certain *worthies*, it will be felt as a real diminishment of a part of his own identity.

For this reason, I would emphasize that educators should add a *worthy*-based dialogical competency to compliment whatever others they have acquired.

### **SYNTHESIS: *WORTHY*/VALUE INTERLACING**

a – the *worthy* is a natural and ethical urge to create bonds; b – the *worthy* is contextualized: it springs from a given context, and each context (e.g, a classroom or a club, a company or a sports association, a prison or an immigration office) has its own peculiar rules of operation which are quite different from any other; c – one acquires a *value* by cultivating the fertile ground on which it germinated, hence by learning to recognize the *worthy* and implement it as a mental habit; d – Springing from an ethical base, a value does not have to be intentionally thought about or learned (through scientific knowledge, didactic techniques, etc.), but only demonstrated (through corresponding acts or services implementing what has been declared by words), and narrated and communicated *indirectly* (informal education via storytelling, metaphors and parables); a value may be learned in an unintentional way, through imitation of others' model of behavior; e - the genesis of value from the *worthy* causes this last to be the door through which to have access to the value itself: to understand one another, Ego and Alter have to exchange their respective values, and to do this they must open up the coffers of their own *worthies* just as each has constructed them day by day, living the most varied experiences in defined contexts.

We take note of the essential role played by the situational 'context'. Let us take here, as an example, the context of the classroom. Like every 'context', both the group-context and the classroom-context, have distinctive and autonomous rules of functioning, implicit or explicit, that are not limited to how what happens within the context is managed, but, rather, these rules organize what in the classroom is valid and important. As regards the classroom-context (or school-context), it has its own rules that tell us how to behave within that

context and how to understand each other. Among these rules: taking turns speaking, the hierarchical relationship of authority between teachers and students, the organization of the timetable and of the subject matter, the balance between classroom time and break time, the system of imposing discipline and the expedients employed to avoid this, even the negotiation of habitual aspects themselves, of expectations and order; those rules also define the school-context as apparatus and organization<sup>7</sup>.

From the idea of 'context' we draw that: a – an understanding and sharing of worthies comes from a deep knowledge of the 'typical' rules of a defined context, which has generated, reconstructed, or reformulated them; b - the prevention of emotional and relational problems (such as inability to communicate, isolation, bullying, interpersonal conflicts) hinges on the capacity to capture the interest of, and to create an aggregation of common worthies among, the students (common ethos, classroom atmosphere); c – the inclusion of disadvantaged subjects and the diminishment of scholastic isolation comes also from a reduction in the ethical differential between 'contexts' of life: between the classroom and the extra-scholastic environment, between oneself and the world.

### HOW DO VALUES TAKE SHAPE?

Concerning this matter, I would like to present, by way of example, the possible genesis of value 'in respect to the other', that I present coming from the 'typical way' (or ritual) of extending condolences to a next-door neighbor. The simple common expression that every one of us will have unintentionally 'imbibed' within everyday family life: "Oh, my dear little Charles, go tell Mrs. Brown how sorry you are about her missing her cat... you used to play with it so much... and it always came towards you meowing", murmured by a mother in a hushed tone as she moves toward her child, looking him in the eyes, and with a sorrowful gaze. This action allows us to learn unintentionally and emphatically a ritual behavior adopted by an individual belonging to a group to express participation in the pain of another of the group, and, in an implicit way, to classify corresponding emotions and actions as adequate and repeatable or as not adequate and not repeatable, as good or as bad. This 'typical way' of expressing condolences is not casually discovered by little

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<sup>7</sup> On the concept of rule, see: *Rass. It. Sociologia*, 1986.

Charles, but, appearing in that domestic life 'context', appears as a compass that will help him to enter, understand, and live within that selfsame context, and will obviate his having to invent, at each new occasion, an adequate key. In its turn, every 'typical way of' in force in this context is subject to the 'relevance system' (the code that determines the meanings, interests, and motivations of a group or a culture). So little Charles incorporates this 'typical ritual' into his daily experience as a worth typification if the circumscribed circle of his domestic environment recognizes it. If another circumscribed circle, such as a classroom or a group of friends, recognizes this same ritual, little Charles comes to conceive of the typification scheme of 'next-door neighbour' as a model of behavior for neighbourhood relations in general. In time, this scheme can, contagiously, join with other similar typification schemes (by familiarity, common emotional resonance, etc.), to then possibly extend to further Alter (nearby or distant acquaintances), creating in the end – by aggregation and selection – what we earlier termed as 'respect of the other' value. That worth typification, however, can join with other 'typical ways of' only for certain of its features, giving rise to schemes of a different kind. The creation of value follows no predefined blueprint: some worth typifications may stay unaffected by the force of contagion, either having lost some of their native properties (harmony, transparency, or genuineness,...) or having received incompatible encrustations or erosions that debilitate that force of attraction or diminish the relational charge to the point of remaining stationary and unutilized at the periphery of our experience, or even go lost altogether. As a result, in the final process, some typification schemes are enriched with an extra and unforeseen meaning, and placed in a cultural area of higher respect, almost sacred, becoming a value<sup>8</sup>.

What I'm attempting to underscore is the genesis of value from the worthy.

From the inextricable interlacing of worthy/value it derives that if an actor (an individual or a group) attempts to enter into and/or understand the values of Alter (or a culture that is 'other'), in a certain measure he has to enter into a dialogue with the roots of those values, that is, he has to have the worthies of which both he and Alter are bearers to "speak to one another", thereby making it possible, then, to ascend to the roots of the values and of identity. To enter into-understand the values of Alter and of ourselves implies moving in a backwards direction along the path followed by each individual in building

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<sup>8</sup> The glossary used here (typification, intersubjectivity, context, scheme, system of relevance...) comes from Alfred Schutz phenomenology and from Harold Garfinkel ethnomethodology (see: R.J. Anderson et al., 1985). See also G. Simmel (2008), for who values arise and develop in virtue of selection, condensation and time.

those values originally.

From what has been so far underscored, the priority task for the intercultural mediator emerges<sup>9</sup>. The intercultural mediator, to foster relationships between different subjects, adopts techniques and strategies able to confer on individuals the ability to understand the path through which each of them has generated worthies in different contexts over time, so spurring the following of a common pathway in which each one is able to hold dear the growing spaces opened up by different and divergent dreams, hopes, fears of Alter (all of which means to build a common ethos, a likeminded thinking).

### **HOW DOES A VALUE-BASED INTERCULTURAL AND PLURALISTIC EXCHANGE GO ON?**

An intercultural and pluralistic value-based dialogue (between individuals or between groups belonging to either similar or different cultures) begins from the sharing of worthies, it resides in the building of bridges between the worthies of different actors. After the intercultural mediator has identified the path by which each actor, either migrant or native, has built his own worthies, the mediator moves upwards from the worthies of the individuals to the values of the group (to the cultural code inscribed into the values). To accomplish this task, intercultural educators must be equipped with adequate techniques.

How? First of all, the intercultural mediator has each subject talk about his own beliefs, hopes, dreams, and fears to the others, thereby raising some similarities between the distinct actors, but also leaving in place some differences. As soon as this similarities/differences interlacement has formed, new configurations of worthies start to emerge in individuals, and an atmosphere of community begins to be created. Not only that, but the intercultural mediator will work to accustom the subjects to not close themselves up into an identity which is limited to other similar subjects: in this way, the internal cohesion of the “us” should increase, but also raising barriers in respect to the differences of “them”.

In contrast, if, as Simon Harrison (2006) teaches us, the intercultural mediator accustoms subjects to break the chain of similarities while maintaining some differences, then each actor absorbs something from and by the others,

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<sup>9</sup> Regarding the profile of the intercultural mediator, and on the concept of mediation, I will refer you to my own work (T. Telleschi, 2013).

diminishing misunderstandings and incompatibilities (living to bridging bonds). Through this similarities/differences intermingling, actors receive the awareness of a complementarity and interdependence with Alter. This is the sense of intercultural exchange: to implement a continuous rebalancing of similarities and differences, thereby interweaving broader connections with different Alter. By this method, the intercultural mediator enables actors to open to an identity in such a way as to preserve each one's individuality, as well as to make each one a part of multiple belongings, so that they embrace an infinite network of possible others (as is theorized in «the universalism sensitive to differences» of Habermas). This action brings about multiple results of evident sociological significance: it avoids the feared sense of communitarism among migrants and foreign ethnic groups in a separate cultural identity, often sectarian; it consolidates cohabitation and reinforces the current 'liquid' identity of the native population. In other words, each individual will become used to embracing an infinite network of possible others, creating vertical links among heterogeneous actors, dissimilar for composition, ideology, culture, and territory (linking bonds)<sup>10</sup>.

The action of the educational mediator has to go beyond the Aristotelian and Nietzschean saying "Become what you are!", which implies to draw out (e-ducere: to educate) from the subject his latent capacities, as if bringing up to the surface with a hydraulic pump what is already there, without changing anything: education must, on the contrary, make young people conscious of the idea that by virtue of their potential belonging to the group, they can become something new and fresh, thereby emphasizing the modern principle of individuality.

Like identity, interculturality is a temporary and unstable balancing of possible conditions: each balancing point between cultures constitutes a phase in a further configuration, as new as it is desirable. If society appreciates these new configurations, nurtures and defends them, then they receive extra meaning, and are elevated to the status of cultural values.

The model of dialogue founded on values nurtures the habitus to spread the interlacing network of similarities and differences. Such a higher relational density frees available resources also beyond the educational agencies (schools, social work). These assets are extendable to even larger social circles on the condition that civil society unites with those agencies. In such a way, teachers,

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<sup>10</sup> It was M. Woolcock and D. Narayan (2001: 13), in their studies on social capital, to have enlarged the types of social bonds highlighted by Hilary Putnam (2000: 20-24) formulating them in the trilogy here described: bonding, bridging, linking.

students, families and in-between agencies (universities, organizations of civil society, public and private associations, the Employers' Association or the Chamber of Commerce.....) can gather together in the public arena to debate worthy ideas and topics as inalienable common goods.

Such open discussions instill in the various actors in the territory a sense of ethical conduct and an awareness that each individual shares with others a bond of "something" higher than his own worthies and personal interests. These multiple and wide-reaching dialogues – "megalogues"<sup>11</sup> – become morals because they involve the actors in a constant reflexivity within their own reference group (school, family, parish, working or leisure contexts) regarding the reasons of respective adhesion to what they underscored as a value, and because those groups – now characterized by increased autonomy and propositional clarity – will from now on demand from the local political system a type of moral management and planning concerning the material and symbolic assets of the territory. These moral "megalogues" increase the possibility of personal realization while at the same time decentralizing decisional power; to a large extent they assure the individual right to satisfy needs (individualization) along with the right to participate in decisions regarding the ways in which that satisfaction should be realized in view of the collective good (deliberative democracy)<sup>12</sup>.

### **DUAL TRACK STRATEGY**

Returning to the school.

First track. School of otherness. From educators (multidimensional method): a - Demonstrative teaching (classes, laboratories, readings); b - Narrative method (Storytelling, Genogram, Transactional Analysis, Cooperative learning, Techniques of decentralization and of conflict management. Games as autobiographic prompts...); c - Ethnographic method (to grasp the 'rules' of the class context, to understand the cultural background to which the specific class context refers); d - Dialogical method (to assist the students to enter into the point of view of each of their classmates, to then move upwards to their values, and to build likeminded thinking). Main techniques: Participating Observation. Situational Climate. Video-feed-back.

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<sup>11</sup> See A. Etzioni, 2000.

<sup>12</sup> L. Gastil & P. Levine (2005).

Second track: Fulfillment of the policy of similarities. From the social environment (deliberative democracy): local bodies promote meeting opportunities (many discursive agora), supporting ethical experiences made in the classroom, so that the worthy doesn't get wasted, and, finally, nurturing a trust in institutions. Multiple actors and stakeholders (teachers, cultural mediators, councilors, parents, associations, professionals, citizens) will discuss in these various agora relevant topics in order to consolidate a cooperative habitus to move from the incorporation of worthies to public values, from intra-group to inter-community relations<sup>13</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> For more details on dual strategy, refer to my article (T. Telleschi, 2013). It was again Socrates who taught us to reflect on the reasons we give to sustain our convictions, with the result – explains Martha Nussbaum (2000) - of creating a democratic culture of reason and of argumentation rather than one founded on the authority and pressure emanating from a group of peers.

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