PROPOSALS FOR

INTERCULTURAL CULTURAL DIVERSITY

IN THE ERA OF GLOBALISATION

Text written by Agustí Nicolau Coll as a contribution

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Introduction: the two faces of globalisation

At the beginning of the 21st Century, there are two predominant trends that appear to be contradictory: the **globalisation** process and a growing awareness of the **diversity of cultures and civilisations in the world**.

The process called globalisation can theoretically be analysed from different perspectives, considering its advantages and disadvantages. Notwithstanding the different opinions that may exist on the subject, one thing is evident: globalisation as such is to a large extent creating an *urbi et orbe* model, irrespective of the specific cultural adaptations that may form part of the process.

There is a real possibility that globalisation be nothing more than the final stage in the **cultural homogenisation** process that started with western modernity, not 200, but 500 years ago. The fact that this homogenisation has taken the form of different strategies (colonialism, developmentalism, globalisation), under different flagships (Christianism, modernisation, democratisation), essentially makes no difference: the dream of a single and universal human culture, as homogeneous and uniform as possible, as the only way of guaranteeing a decent and peaceful life for all societies.

Notwithstanding the profoundly different reasons and motives involved in this process (the wish to dominate and the wish to save others from their supposed inferiority), it is a fact that all those who have defended the process have considered cultural diversity as something secondary, or dangerous even, that was an obstacle for the enlightened process leading to mankind consisting of autonomous beings, either free from all cultural restraints or dominated by a single culture of a supposedly universal nature.

It has to be accepted that, thanks in part to some of the instruments created by globalisation, the need to acknowledge the value of cultural diversity has become an important contemporary imperative. It is no longer possible to reject the fact that the world is culturally diverse, even for those who dislike the fact or fight against it.

Mankind is faced with the dilemma of either **sacrificing cultural diversity** on the altar of globalisation or using **intercultural dialogue** to enrich the mutual knowledge of different cultures, a fundamental step towards guaranteeing the possibility of a fair world, in peace and harmony, making full use of some of the instruments that globalisation has developed.

This intercultural perspective should help us to overcome both the homogenisation that is resulting from the present globalisation model and the cultural fundamentalisms that, although they are presented as alternatives to homogeneous globalisation, are just as destructive.

This booklet presents a series of basic proposals, organised into two blocks:

- The first block contains a series of theoretical proposals related to the concepts of culture, cultural diversity, cultural pluralism and interculturality.
- The second block contains more specific proposals oriented towards the intercultural approach to cultural diversity.

I. PROPOSALS FOR THE CLARIFICATION OF FUNDAMENTAL CONCEPTS

Before considering the proposals aimed at establishing an intercultural approach to cultural diversity, we feel that we should first define the concepts of culture, cultural diversity, pluralism and interculturality. These four concepts are fundamental in this booklet, and they are defined in so many contradictory, and often incompatible, ways, that we feel that we should clarify the way in which they are used here.

1. On culture

We consider that culture should be defined with regards to its content, its different structural levels, its relation to reality and the profound structure that underlies different systems of values.

a) Culture is not one dimension among others

References to culture are usually related to intellectual aspects, customs or values, so it tends to be considered as one more dimension of reality, alongside economy, politics, religion, science, the legal system, etc. The preservation and promotion of cultural diversity through intercultural dialogue, however, requires us to consider culture as more than one more dimension of social reality.

If we really wish to promote cultural diversity through intercultural dialogue, culture can no longer be considered as one dimension among others, since it is the set of all the beliefs, myths, knowledge, institutions and practices with which a society establishes its presence in the world and ensures its reproduction and survival over time. In other words, a way of life that includes **the entire existential reality of the people and communities in a society,** and not only arts, folklore or beliefs.

To reduce culture to a mere dimension of reality (often called *the cultural dimension)* contradicts the desire to preserve and promote cultural diversity, because **all economic, political, religious, legal, educational, scientific and technological activities are cultural activities,** since they are part of a certain culture. Indeed, culture is not on one side of society, with the economy, politics, science, technology, religion, medicine, justice, social organisation, the arts and folklore on the other side, as if they were two separate and independent worlds. All political, economic, scientific, religious, legal, social, artistic, etc., acts are cultural in so much as they are expressions of a specific culture.

The question to be asked, then, is whether it is possible to promote cultural diversity and, at the same time, propose a single economic culture (market economy), a single political culture (nation state), a single educational culture (schooling and literacy), a single legal culture (confrontation and punishment), a single religious culture (secularisation of society in general), a single scientific culture (modern experimental science), and a single welfare culture (development)? Is it possible to ignore the knowledge and practices of other cultures, establishing a pre-defined way of life (modernisation and development), and at the same time preserve cultural diversity? In our opinion, the answer is evidently no.

When we refer to the preservation and promotion of cultural diversity, we must be referring to the preservation of the economic, political, social, scientific, religious, medicinal and educational cultures of each society and social group. And intercultural dialogue must therefore cover all these "cultural areas".

This is not just a question of semantics, since it implies a change of perspective, oriented towards full acknowledgement of the potential and capacities of all human cultures in all areas. In order to overcome our idea of culture as a mere dimension, we have to change the direction of the debate on cultural pluralism and interculturality: the former does not merely refer to multiple forms of a supposedly universal culture, and the latter is not a concept that is ultimately aimed at joining unity and diversity in a generally accepted homogeneous framework.

In this respect, we have to consider that, although all cultures and the result of cultural crossbreeding, this is not a single homogeneous process, but diverse and plural, since each situation in which there is contact between cultures is different and idiosyncratic. The fact of acknowledging cultural crossbreeding does not necessarily mean that we are searching for a homogeneous horizon. It is merely the acceptance of a phenomenon that takes place every day and in all cultures. The idea is not, then, to convert the objective reality of cultural crossbreeding into an ideology aimed at overcoming cultural differences, since these differences are not something to be overcome, but rather something to be accepted.

The search is for "Harmony not in spite of our differences, but thanks to our differences"[1].

But before considering cultural pluralism and interculturality, we have to clarify the issue of cultural dynamics themselves.

[1] *The slogan of the 30th anniversary of the* ***Intercultural Institute of Montreal,*** *held in 1993.*

b) The three structural levels of all cultures

We believe that there are three levels of reality, understood as the global way of life of a nation or society[2], in all cultures.

One level refers to the conscious or sub-conscious values and beliefs on which each culture bases and develops its way of conceiving and experiencing reality. These values and beliefs are not always related to reflexive awareness and the logos, but primarily related to the mythos, understood as beliefs that exist with no awareness of such beliefs. This is the horizon of intellect on which each human group bases its way of life. Using the tree analogy[3], we can say that values and beliefs are the roots. They are not always visible, but they are essential for the tree to live and grow.

A second level refers to the institutions that are established in the different areas of reality, as the structural version of these beliefs and values, and also as a framework of reference for concrete practices. These institutions can be of a more or less formal nature, irrespective of their importance. Returning to the tree analogy, the institutions are the trunk that gives a concrete and visible form to values.

Finally, we refer to concrete and daily practices in the different areas of reality (politics, economy, social organisation, science, territory, education, religion, etc.) that are normally the most visible aspects of cultures, and the first to be perceived. In our analogy, they are the branches and leaves of the tree. Unlike the trunk or the roots, they can be profoundly and rapidly changed.

It is all too often the case, when referring to intercultural conflicts and relations, that there is no mention of the level involved, and this means that it is much more difficult to search for solutions or means of understanding when faced with common conflicts and challenges.

c) Cultures are more than mere rationality

There is an excessive tendency to reduce cultures to a question of mere rationality: a culture is only the result of a rational calculation aimed at responding to material challenges. This perspective attempts to understand and perceive cultures, in all their complexity, only from a rational perspective, expecting to find a logical and rational coherence throughout. Anything

[2] This point follows the considerations developed by Robert Vachon (1995: 36-52)
[3] The tree analogy is inspired by Kalpana Das, director of the Intercultural Institute of Montreal, who uses it in her intercultural training courses and seminars.

that resists being reduced to mere rationality is considered to be irrational, magic or fruit of the imagination, and ignored as an element of significance and value.

Nevertheless, experience has shown us that all human reality, and reality in general, can not be considered merely from a rational viewpoint, since they are more than the result of the logos, although the dictatorship of the logos over reality in general reduces it solely to what can be thought: there is no other reality. But we can identify another two dimensions of reality, particularly in relation to cultures: the *mythical-symbolic* dimension and the dimension of *mystery*[4].

The *mythical-symbolic* dimension refers not so much to what is called unreal, fictitious, fantastic, transcendental, imagined...., but to what "(…) puts us in touch with reality". This is a deeper level of reality that cannot be reached by reflexive, conceptual and logical reasoning. If reason can be defined as *verbum mentis* (the word of thought), the *mythical-symbolic* dimension can be defined as *verbum entis* (the word of being).

The difficulty involved in understanding this dimension lies in the fact that it can not be defined or explained by reason, since it can not be defined, nor thought, nor spoken, but it is as real as the what we perceive from reason.

Finally, the dimension of mystery corresponds to what can be neither thought or defined, resisting all possible conceptualisation and symbolisation. This does not mean that myth can not be the vehicle of mystery and the logos its conceptual explanation, but taking care to identify them separately, since this is not an enigma that has to be solved, but the total freedom of reality that has to be lived to the full.

When we refer to interculturality and cultural pluralism, it is very important to take these dimensions, present in all cultures, into consideration. Otherwise, we are liable to reduce it all to the logos, thus continuing the trend for highly destructive and annihilating cultural ethnocides.

d) The divine, the human and the cosmic: three dimensions of all cultures

Finally, with regards to the values and beliefs on which all cultures are based (as mentioned in section 1.c), we can establish a direct relationship between each of them with at least one of

[4] For an in-depth analysis of these three dimensions and how they are established, see the article by Robert Vachon (1995: 34-60), and especially the diagram that illustrates the article (pages 62-63).

the three dimensions of Reality: the anthropological dimension, the cosmic dimension and the divine dimension[5].

In other words, all culture links a conception of the human, the divine and the cosmic, since reality itself consists of these three dimensions and *the relations between them. In this respect, it can be said that all cultural values are always related to at least one of these three dimensions.*

For a better understanding of the values of a culture, then, we have to be familiar with and understand how these three dimensions are established, and the relationships and hierarchies that exist between them.

2. Cultural diversity

We feel that we should refer to cultural diversity instead of cultural differences, since the term implies that there is a difference in relation to an established model, although this is not always intended. Cultural diversity, however, implies that we are not assuming the existence of a single pre-established model, but different models, all of which have their respective light and dark areas.

a)Why is cultural diversity important?

It is often convenient to explain what appears to be evident, even if only to refrain from ending up defending things that mean nothing. With regards to cultural diversity, it is assumed that a large number of individuals and groups concerned with the future of mankind, consider that it is something to be preserved. But this concern is not usually fully reasoned.

We consider that the importance of cultural diversity does not lie in the concept itself, since it is not an objective *per se*, but as a means and instrument to reach something that is far greater. When we refer to cultural diversity, then, we refer to individuals and human communities which, for very different reasons, have developed particular ways of life, creating not only material but spiritual, not only individual but shared meaning.

In other words, cultural diversity is the real expression of the most profound human creativity that attempts to arise at a certain time and in a certain place, without which

[5] Raimon Panikkar calls this three-dimensionality the "Cosmoteandric dimension". See PANIKKAR 1993

personal existence has no meaning. Cultural diversity is an expression of the will to exist, the configuration of a full life in communion with reality.

In this respect, a defence of cultural diversity is not limited to a defence of rights, since it implies the defence of human creativity in its search for fulfilment, which is ultimately not only of an anthropological nature. Cultural diversity does not so much pertain to the individual-general sphere but to the personal-community sphere. In this sense, a defence of cultural diversity implies a profound respect for what people and communities are, rather than an obsession with what one thinks they should be. It is respect for human complexity that does not admit uniform visions, or reducing approaches, and which puts no limits on life itself. Accepting cultural diversity is not an act of tolerance towards those who are different, but acknowledgement of these others (individuals and communities) in all their reality, contradictory, swollen with knowledge, know-how and practices that are the basis of a full life.

However, to be coherent with what we have said previously about the concept of culture, when we refer to cultural diversity, we are not only accepting a diversity of folklore, language, customs or "cultural productions", but also a diversity of economic, political, social, scientific, education, spatial cultures, etc.

b)Three positions on cultural diversity in the world

Summarising, we can consider that, in general, there are three main perspectives on the future of cultural diversity in the contemporary world.

In the first place, we refer to a perspective that foresees and/or desires progressive cultural uniformity, supported by the modern western socio-economic model of Euro-American design. In its most extreme version, it is the dream of spreading the *American Way of Life* all over the world. This perspective, which is still attractive to a large number of intellectual, political, economic circles, etc., is no longer defended openly, both because of the opposition that it creates and because of its practical impossibility due to manifest world-wide resistance. However, although it can not be applied in its entirety, work continues towards this goal, respecting "cultural peculiarities" as long as they do not hinder the growth of modern western economic, social and political cultures. To a greater or smaller extent, this perspective can be defined as ***A single one-colour world***.

In the second place, we can refer to a perspective that assumes cultural diversity as an undeniable fact, but at the same time considers the need for a single world-wide system that includes cultural diversity. From this perspective, this world-wide system is the basis for handling this cultural diversity, event though the system itself (democracy, human rights, single market, United Nations, etc.) is primarily the result of modern western culture. The reasons behind this perspective can be different, and even contradictory. We find the pragmatic position of Samuel Huntington (*The Clash of Civilisations*), who considers that it is the best strategy to guarantee the survival of western predominance in the world, and the UNESCO position, as defined in the world report called *Our creative diversity* (1994). This perspective can be defined as ***A single multi-coloured world***.

Thirdly, we can consider a perspective that accepts the culturally diverse nature of our contemporary world, but which is not initially concerned with the need for a world-wide system, with universal supra-cultural values, but with the need for exchange, relationships and dialogue between different cultures and civilisations, based on the fact that they are all genuine and can not be reduced in any way. Now these characteristics do not imply closing in on oneself, but opening oneself to others precisely as one is and not as one should be. This perspective can be defined as ***A world containing many other worlds,*** recovering this remarkable expression from the zapatista movement in Mexico.

3. Cultural pluralism and interculturality

a) Pluralism

Cultural diversity shows that no cultural paradigm is capable of explaining all of reality, since each culture is a specific concept in space and time belonging to the great adventure of mankind. Each culture is a view of reality, which is conditioned by its context and by history itself. Indeed, each culture is a perspective of reality that can never be global since a perspective, by definition, is of a partial nature. In other words, it can be said that each culture sees all of reality, albeit partially.

We are faced, then, with an absolute need for a pluralist attitude to cultural diversity in the world of today, so that the world can become a place of justice and peace. This pluralist attitude can be characterised as follows[6]:

[6] We are using the essential aspects of the considerations made in this respect by Raimon Panikkar (1998: 191-193).

i) Cultural pluralism is not restricted to confirming that there are multiple cultures, or wishing to reduce them to unity. It is evident that there are different cultures and that they can not become one. Cultural pluralism requires more than the mere acknowledgement of multiple cultures, and it also requires that we overcome our desire for unity.

ii) For pluralism, unity is not an absolute ideal, even if plural variations were admitted. Pluralism positively accepts the existence of cultural aspects that can not be reduced, without denying that there are possibly also aspects in common. Pluralism does not thrive on a eschatological hope that all cultures will finally become one.

iii) Cultural pluralism does not claim that there is a single truth or that there are multiple truths, since it accepts that the truth itself is pluralist, in as much as it expresses the pluralist nature of reality, as it exists in different cultures. The pluralism of truth is what prevents us from identifying it with either unity or multiplicity.

iv) Cultural pluralism as a perspective has no place for a universal system. A universal pluralist system would be a contradiction, since it is impossible to overcome the incommensurate nature of different cultures. In itself, this is not a negative characteristic that has to be solved, but a revelation of the nature of Reality itself: it is not represented in its entirety by any culture, however universal it may claim to be.

v) Cultural pluralism makes us aware of our own contingency and our limits, showing us that reality is not transparent, and accessible through thought and the logos. Even if a pluralist attitude attempts to enter in the dimension of the logos, it is also aware that the fact that cultures can not be reduced to the logos, since, as we mentioned earlier, they are both *mythos* and *logos*.

vi) Cultural pluralism as an attitude expresses faith in Reality, and accepts the polar co-existence, in tension, of different ultimate human convictions, based on different cosmologies and religions. It has neither the desire to eliminate evil or error, nor to make them absolute.

But cultural pluralism does not presuppose that cultures are either isolated or enclosed, but that an intercultural perspective admits each in the reality of the other.

b) Interculturality

The concept of interculturality, understood as a situation in which two or more cultures come into contact, can not be taken lightly as an easy and comfortable encounter, since it is in fact highly demanding on all levels. The following remarks are not intended to provide an exhaustive analysis of the subject, but they are a starting point for discussion[7].

i) The concept of interculturality can not be reduced to an encounter between majorities and minorities, or as mere "interethnicism", since it accepts the intercultural nature of all cultures, which does not mean that they are all the same.

ii) Interculturality can not mean the study of a culture or of the relations between two different cultures, based on the criteria and values of one of them alone, or from a viewpoint considered to be neutral and universal (acultural, transcultural or supercultural).

iii) Neither is interculturality a technique or strategy to better unify cultures under the predominant cultural ideology (position defended on behalf of the integration of the majority into the common public culture, related to modernity and development), from a political viewpoint, and temporarily, until the time of total de-culturisation (position defended by those who claim that we should become emancipated from culture, accepting the supposedly universal and apolitical values of the autonomous individual, rationality and objectivity (often seeking to overcome all cultures and religions). We are unaware of the cultural homogenisation, the tyranny of rationality or the alienation involved. There is no such thing as neutral reality, except in the fiction of conceptual abstraction.

iv) To express this in a positive fashion, we reserve the concept of interculturality for the encounter between cultures that takes place from the fundamental characteristics, matrices and unique aspects of each individual culture, on the common horizon that belongs exclusively to none of them.

v) Interculturality is the encounter, not only of the logic categories *(logoi)* of the systems of signs and representations of different cultures, but also of their practices, beliefs, symbols, rituals, myths, matrices and, indeed, the total existential reality that is unique to every one of them.

[7] We are summarising the points considered by Robert Vachon (VACHON 1995: 76-79)

vi) We prefer to use the word intercultural, instead of bicultural, pluricultural or plural, because these concepts are too dualistic.

vii) We are aware that the encounter between cultures and interculturality, in the above sense, leads to ruptures in their respective bases, inevitably causing a profound crisis relating to their symbols and fundamental myths.

viii) Ultimately, interculturality is a releasing experience for each of the cultures involved, and enables us to become aware of the limits that are inherent to our own cultures and worlds. But at the same time, we become aware of the infinite and transcendental nature of ourselves, our identities and our respective worlds**.**

II – PROPOSALS FOR AN INTERCULTURAL CULTURAL DIVERSITY

We consider that our proposals should be for an ***intercultural cultural diversity,*** because we are convinced that the future inevitably implies the establishment of relations between different cultures. It not a strategy, then, to evolve towards a uniform cultural crossbreeding, but to enrich and transform each culture by contact with others, but always based on what it is, and not what it should be.

We consider that the proposals for cultural dialogue should take into consideration different theme areas, in agreement with our remarks on the global concept of culture, and different contexts. This differentiation is neither banal nor gratuitous, since it responds to the need to define the proposals considering the subject concerned and the context in which they arise.

Considering that modern western culture is predominant in all areas of the current globalisation process, with varying intensity, the proposals are essentially centred on establishing dialogue with other cultures and civilisations.

4. Proposals for intercultural dialogue in different areas

As mentioned at the beginning of this document, cultural diversity affects all the dimensions of human reality in their entirety. We therefore go on to identify the greatest challenge that each of them faces with a view to achieving a true intercultural dialogue, which in most cases will arise within the framework of modern western culture and the cultures of other civilisations.

a) Fundamental universal values

One of the most important current problems is related to the definition of certain universal values associated to cultural diversity. It is usually established that the unquestionable basis for universal values are the Human Rights that should be the foundations for Universal Ethics.

Indeed, the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* approved by the United Nations in 1948, has become the first and ultimate point of reference for the protection and promotion of individual dignity. Notwithstanding their validity and utility, we have to accept that these Human Rights arise and carry the seal of the cultural context in which they were created, which is none other than modern western culture. When we accept this, we are not denying their value and utility, but, on the one hand, acknowledging their limitations, and on the

other, opening the door to making them intercultural, based on other social logics present in the contemporary world.

We present the following elements in order to show how they are conditioned from a cultural viewpoint:

- Some historical aspects of Human Rights
- Some aspects of the western nature of Human Rights
- Non-western social cultures

i) Political, philosophical and social aspects of Human Rights[8]

In the first place, we have to consider that Human Rights arose in a specific political, social and philosophical context. On a political level, the first Declaration of the Rights of Men and Citizens arose in the framework of the French revolution, as a means of defending individuals from the abuse and oppression of the predominant political power of the time in Europe, in the form of monarchical absolutism. They basically arise, then, as a system of defence.

As for their philosophical bases, we have to consider the growing importance that the western world gives to the concept of the individual, the legal formulation of which the sociologist Marcel Mauss and the anthropologist Louis Dumont identify as derived from the classic Latin-Roman world, which was taken up by Christianism. This accent on the individual dimension of man ultimately leads to it being conceived as a reality that is separate from the rest of the world. In a Christian universe, this separation leads to the establishment of a direct relationship with God. In secular western circles, the relationship is established with oneself, as the beginning and end of everything.

With regards to the social context, we have to consider that the social order in the western world is fundamentally conceived as something that is established outside the individual, influenced by the Abrahamic cultural universe where God, separate from the world that He created, is the supreme being to which we must all submit. The secularisation of the western world in the context of modernity led to replacing God by a system of rules and laws that define all that is good and just. This is based on the idea that a right is assigned to each individual by something that is external to him, whether it be God or the State, and that this right is exactly the same for all individuals.

[8] This section is based on Eberhard 1996: 8- 18.

However, we must also consider that Human Rights have evolved since they were first legally formulated in 1789 with the French Revolution. This first declaration can be described as defining individual civil and political rights, as an expression of predominant modern thought at the time, that conceives the possibility of no other kind of rights, or that rights can not be strictly of an individual nature. During the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, the economic and social rights configured were basically the result of the workers' demands when faced with the negative social and economic consequences of the Industrial Revolution. These first two generations of Rights, and primarily the first, will eventually configure the Universal Declaration of Human Rights approved by the UN in 1948.

The third generation of Human Rights refers to cultural rights and solidarity, as the result of the gradual acceptance of the cultural diversity of mankind. They have both a general and individual dimension and, unlike the first two generations, they are not part of the logic of the state, but are outside the state, and occasionally go against the state, when it prevents or hinders them from being exercised.

On the other hand, we must not forget the change in the function of Human Rights that has taken place over time. As indicated earlier, the fight for the acknowledgement of Human Rights started as a clear system of defence, in the sense that the fight was for an instrument aimed at the defence against the abuse of an absolute state, initially, and later against the abuse and injustice generated by the Industrial Revolution. Although this defensive function remains, a second radically different function has been progressively added, with some subtlety: the function of becoming the maximum, and perhaps only point of reference for the organisation of life in society throughout the world. In other words, we are increasingly faced with a dilemma summarised as *"Or Human Rights or barbarism"*.

This new function of Human Rights is of vital importance, since it is precisely where the conflict between Human Rights and Cultural Diversity arises. It is one thing to use them as a defence against the abuse of transnational corporations or states (both, incidentally, institutions of modern western origin) in different parts of the world, and quite another to use Human Rights to impose a way of organising social and legal culture around the world, ignoring other social and legal cultures.

ii) Some aspects of the western nature of Human Rights

Concentrating a little on the western nature of Human Rights, with reference to the myths and profound beliefs on which they are based, we can basically identify three aspects, with their corresponding intercultural criticisms (PANIKKAR 1982: 90-105).

The first is the belief in a *universal human nature*, which is reasoned to be a universal instrument of knowledge and which is fundamentally different from the rest of reality. This leads us to consider man as in control of himself, his destiny and the entire universe, in which he is therefore the "supreme legislator". An intercultural criticism to this would consider, on the one hand, that a universal human nature does not have to be separate from the rest of reality, because in this situation, it could well be considered that Human Rights are violating, for example, cosmic rights. On the other hand, all interpretations of human nature are necessarily individual.

A second aspect is that they proclaim the dignity of man, which must be defended, especially from the state and society. This aspect is based on the fact that individuals and society are separate, and that each individual is autonomous in relation to the cosmos as the supreme value. An intercultural criticism would suggest that man can not be reduced to the individual, since this is ultimately a mere abstraction. As Panikkar (1982: 100) says,

> *(...) "I" am also in "my" relatives, in "my" children, in "my" friends, in "my" enemies, in "my" ancestors, in "my" heirs. "I" am also in "my" ideas and feelings and in "my" possessions. If you hurt me, you also hurt my clan, and possibly even yourself.*

In other words, if we consider the individual as an isolated being, a person would be "*the entire fabric surrounding that being, so initially we are unable to define the limits of a person, since they ultimately depend on his personality"*. (PANIKKAR 1982: 92)

A third aspect refers to a democratic order, as a counterpoint not so much to a totalitarian order, but rather to a hierarchical order, which is based either on a divine law or of mythological origin. In the first place, democracy considers that society is a sum of individuals that form an association in order to achieve certain objectives that they could not achieve alone. In this sense, then, society is seen as something that is capable of abusing and oppressing individuals at any time. In the second place, this aspect implies that each individual has the same importance and responsibility with regards to the welfare of society. Thirdly, society is no more than a group of individuals who make

decisions on behalf of their individual sovereign wishes, irrespective of suprahuman reality and whether or not they believe that such a thing exists. In the fourth place, the limits of individual freedom are the limits of the freedom of other individuals, which rationally justifies majority government.

With regards to this definition of democracy, which may appear to be unquestionable, an intercultural criticism would propose several considerations. In the first place, the inconvenience of the supposed alternative between *democracy* and *dictatorship or totalitarianism*, since democracy is not the only non-totalitarian or non-dictatorial alternative capable of guaranteeing personal dignity. It may be the best means of defence against the abuse of the state, society or transnational corporations, but it may also be the worst way to make decisions that go against ecological balance, against people who are excluded from society or the democratic state itself (decisions made by democratic states that affect the inhabitants of other states), and against the minorities who are ignored by the democratic majority, etc.

iii) Non-western social cultures

As we have just seen, the concept of Human Rights is rooted in modern western culture, and specifically in a particular way of conceiving social culture. For a better understanding of the non-universality of this modern western culture, we will take a brief look at other cultures or social logics[9].

Within the framework of ***Confucianist thinking***, present basically in China, there is no acknowledgement of God the infinite creator in opposition to the finite human world, because there is no dichotomy between creator and creature. From this perspective, the world can not be conceived as governed by external laws, and it is spontaneously self-governed. This implies that individuals must function in agreement with this order, which would explain and justify the high value given to self-discipline, which is acquired through education and, above all, through the respect for the rites that lead to perfection. In the thinking and social practices influenced by Confucianism, the importance of law is relative and it is considered to be a minor element involved in the configuration of social relationships. Laws are perceived as models of conduct, since what is important is to respect the rites and the rules of behaviour (*giri*) that regulate different kinds of social

[9] This point is a summary of the study conducted by the anthroplogist and lawyer, Christophe Eberhard. See Eberhard 1996: 41-47 & 2000: 150-200.

relationships and to reach an agreement in case of conflict. It can be said that rights will always be used within a series of rites and models of behaviour, considering that the search is not so much for justice as for the re-establishment of the social harmony that has been broken, and which needs to be maintained and reinforced.

Within the framework of **animistic thinking**, which in general terms can primarily be identified with the so-called Black Africa and indigenous tribes throughout the world, we find the fundamental idea that the universe is the result of the movement of energies. The soul of the universe is regulated by these energies by means of constant complementary movements that tend to harmonise. This is a complementary plurality by means of which societies are often organised in a ternary structure. The basis of the Universe, which has arisen from chaos, is not One, but multiple, disorganised and unstable. The world is permanently created and re-created, and man plays a very important role in this, since he is responsible for guaranteeing universal harmony. From this perspective, the unity of a society can not be based on an external, uniform order, but on the establishment of different groups that depend on each other, since they are complementary. We must consider that, since unity comes from diversity, all systems of values or legal codes that tend towards uniformity will be perceived as destroying unity. Since there is no external order, man is responsible for his future, so the search for consensus and conciliation are fundamental when there are conflicts. Ultimately, as the world is conceived, so are individuals conceived, plurally with different levels (corporal, spiritual, ancestral and energetic) that dynamically form each individual. People are also associated to multiple social and family ties, which implies that their identities are basically determined by their functions in society. In western thought, and from a legal perspective, it is the same from birth to death, with an invariable and identical right or rights for everyone. Animistic thought is completely different, since individuals are manifest as multiple on all levels, and fundamentally of a changing nature.

> *The concept of legal personality does not belong to originally African laws. What they contain is the status determined by the functions performed: individual status becomes more important with age, with marriage, when children are born, when one becomes the head of a lineage,...* (ALLIOT 1989: 274)

In animistic societies, individuals are traditionally plural, as members of different communities and groups, which leads a plural nature to social organisation which, creating powers and counterpowers, prevented the establishment of a strong central

power, providing protection against possible abuse and exploitation, without the need for establishing ideal human rights for all.

The Indian world, including Hindu, Buddhist and Jainistic traditions, is based on a concept that is common to them all: *dharma*. This concept can only be understood by considering the cosmological vision on which it is based. From a Hindu perspective, the world has not been created from nothing by an external creator, but it is the manifestation, *srishti*, of what is not manifest, *Brahman*, in what is manifest. The purpose of the world created is the return of the manifest to the non-manifest, for which this plural world has a complex hierarchical organisation, based on the permanently changing balance between the principle of *prâna*, energy, and the principle of *âkâsha*, substance.

In this context, *dharma* is a plural and highly diverse concept. It is not contradictory, but it can be perceived, understood and experienced in very different ways.

> *Religious men will see dharma as the law of God; moral men will see it as the internal principle that provides a criterion for good and evil; lawyers will see it as the law (...); psychologists will discover tradition, custom and social spirit; philosophers will see the conscience of the species or the conscience of unity, the very nature of which will finally drive man to manifest goodness or a sense of unity; idealists will see it as the ideal; realists will see the law that is behind the scene of life; practical mystics will see the force that leads to harmony in unity. But really, dharma is the principle at the basis of all these manifestations, contained in all of them and underlying all these conceptions.* (Gualtherus Mees, quoted in Herbert 1988: 117-118)

It is fundamentally a principle of cohesion and cosmic force that is manifest in many ways, while remaining essentially unchanged, providing us with a better understanding of the fact that one of the basic aspects of Indian thought is the fitting together of all the elements that make up the cosmos. As Cristophe Eberhard says,

> *Indeed, what first attracts our attention in Indian thought is its tendency to assimilate and articulate everything: each system of thought, each philosophy is seen to be compatible with others, and as part of a system, certainly hierarchical but profoundly plural, which nonetheless preserves the ideal of the unity of the cosmos and of God.* (EBERHARD 2000: 192-193)

Dharma, which has legal, social and ethical implications, is not based on the individual, but on the entire cosmos, of which man is just one part. If he respects the *dharma*, he can

live in harmony with the cosmos, which helps us to understand what Raimon Panikkar says about the place that Law occupies in a society based on the idea of *dharma*.

> *A world in which the concept of dharma is at the centre, penetrating everything, has no interest in providing evidence of the "rights" of one individual in relation to another, or of an individual in relation to society, since it is primarily concerned with establishing the dharmic (just, true, consistent...) or non-dharmic nature of a thing or action within the entire cosmoteandric complex of reality* (PANIKKAR 1982: 106)

In this case, like animism, individual personality has a more functional and non-substantial nature, and the different status categories will determine the rights and duties of each individual. We also have to remember that, unlike Human Rights, *dharma* affects the entire cosmos, including all life forms, and not just human life. This means that the ultimate objective is to guarantee the harmony of the cosmos. In this respect, we understand the full meaning of Pannikkar's words "mankind only has the 'right' to survive in as much as it fulfils its duty of maintaining the world (*lokasamgraha*)" (PANIKKAR 1982: 108).

From this perspective, Human Rights are relative, without denying their importance, within the context of the entire cosmos, which means that they can only be accepted as a harmonious group and in relation to the structure of the universe, which also includes man, the cosmos and the gods.

We have, however, to consider that, although it respects the supremacy of dharma, Indian thought also recognises subsidiary elements that are important when it comes to defining what is just.

> *Religious aspirations do not monopolise human activities. To complete dharma (that which is good), there is artha (that which is useful) and kama (that which gives pleasure). Together with the science of dharma (dharma.sastra), is the science of 'artha' ('artha-shastra'), which is the science of what is useful, based on an assessment of the advantages to be obtained from an act, and which is illustrated in the politics and practices of princes, and on the other hand the science of kama, which is the science of pleasure and the means of obtaining it, which is illustrated in the Kamasutra*. (EBERHARD 2000: 197)

Finally, with regards to the Islamic world, the first significant aspect is that it shares with the west the paradigm of an external order to which one has to submit. But in the case of Islam, this order is not profane but deeply sacred.

As far as the law is concerned, this means that the laws are not established by the state but by God, which means that the *sharia*, or the law of the Koran, are the backbone of political power, the function of which is to lead society nearer to the divine ideal revealed by the Prophet, rather than to transform it.

From an Islamic perspective, the acceptance of Human Rights as absolute and unchangeable makes no sense, since only God is absolute, and it is His laws that govern us, not man's laws or human rights.

This pre-eminence of Koranic law does not automatically imply its fossilisation or unchangeability, since Islam accepts not only unity of principle, but the unity of God, the community of believers, the Umma and the Koranic message of the five pillars of faith, as other and greater points of references, with different rites and the interpretation of different schools that can vary a great deal. This means that Islam itself contains a large variety of interpretations and ways of living the religion, which is often manifest in the legal field.

* * *

At this point, and taking into consideration all the above, when resolving the dilemma between "universal values" and "cultural diversity", we believe that three fundamental principles must be taken into account:

- The definition of universal values should, fundamentally, meet the need to respond to universal problems that affect all cultures, within the context of globalisation. However, these universal values must not automatically replace the systems of values that belong to different cultures and civilisations, although they can question and enrich them.
- Universal values must be defined not on the basis of a particular code of values that may to a greater or lesser extent incorporate particularities and elements from other cultures, but on the basis of true and in-depth intercultural dialogue, in which no values system unilaterally lays down the rules and the scope of the dialogue.
- Alongside the definition of universal values, it is both necessary and highly educational to disseminate the values systems of other social cultures and rationales, with all their strong

and weak points, as a way to raise awareness of the profoundly pluralistic nature of humankind's different systems of values and beliefs.

b) Economic cultures

One contemporary proposal found within the framework of globalisation is that a single world-wide economic system can be set up that will automatically benefit everyone, regardless of their culture. As well as the negative effects of globalising this neoliberal economic system on the countries and regions located on the periphery of the dominant system, which countless critical analyses have been manifesting over the last few years, we are also faced with the fact that imposing this system carries three fundamental and interlinked implications:

i) the presupposition that it is currently possible that only one economic culture exist, with its own exclusive values, institutions and practices;

ii) the resulting devaluation of the values, institutions and practices of other economic cultures;

iii) the resulting loss of social and political self-reliance for many societies, due to the realignment of their own economic approaches and practices.

For better or worse, throughout the centuries and even now, in many societies economic activity is not independent from the other dimensions of society. Rather it is inextricably linked to them, because it is put at the service of the needs and wishes of the population. To put it more clearly: houses are not built for the economic and financial machine to work, but because houses are needed in which to live. Economic activities are not carried out so that the economy works: the economy works to respond to the needs and aspirations that are defined and required by the society, on the basis of its own life view.

Besides, economic activity is not restricted to strictly monetary and financial activities. It includes many other activities that are not taken into consideration by the dominant economic system, because they do not produce tangible financial profits written in black and white in the account books. One might say that the modern neoliberal economic culture is fundamentally a currency culture that excludes everything that is not countable, while traditional economies are essentially exactly what the etymology of the word indicates: oikos (house) and nemon (management, administration); in other words, household administration.

Another point to bear in mind, which relates to the degree of self-reliance of economic and production activity, is the fact that economies that do not have modern, western roots can

basically be considered "gift and reciprocity" economies. This means that any economic activity and exchange implies the creation and forging of personal ties and relationships between the parties involved in it. This is a comprehensive social activity that does not end at simply paying for a product or service rendered. But the gradually widening gap between modern economic culture and the other dimensions of a society has meant that this economic culture has become one of exchange, with no dimension of reciprocity or any of the elements implied in forging social relations.

The intercultural challenge for different economic cultures will, in general, be to find a way in this globalised world to make modern western exchange culture compatible with other economic cultures that may have very different systems of values, institutions and practices. More specifically, it will be about defining the real scope of modern economic exchange culture which as a general rule should not replace other economic cultures with local and regional roots, but provide them with what they are not able to develop. The positive aspects of modern economic culture should not be used to eliminate the positive points of other economic cultures: they should be used to make them more complete.

That which can be achieved by **a local and regional reciprocity culture** should never be substituted by a globalised economic exchange culture, because this brings a loss of decision-making ability regarding society's priorities, needs and wishes. In other words, we must enter into a dialogue and each start to express our values, exploring the scope of economic exchange culture and economic reciprocity culture, without the latter being replaced by the former.

c) Political cultures

On this point, the first thing that one must bear in mind is that, within the context of cultural diversity, the "democracy or totalitarianism" dilemma is not always true, as there are other political cultures that, although they cannot be strictly defined as democratic (at least from a western perspective) are not necessarily totalitarian.

Besides, the real decision-making power of what are known as liberal democracies, putting aside idealistic rhetoric, is in fact relatively limited. For example, has the current economic globalisation process been democratically discussed and decided? How often have the victims of supposedly democratic political decisions taken to defend their interests actually been able to put forward their opinions and decide on the issue themselves? What really is the decision-

making power of citizens in democratic countries on the main approaches of the economic system in which they are immersed?

These very basic examples should serve as a warning not to just write off those political cultures, with or without the instruments of state, that do not fit the parameters of liberal democracy that is dominant in modern western political culture.

In the great diversity of cultures the world over, there is also a great diversity of political cultures, with their own values, ideas and institutions that differ from those of democracy and the nation state, and with their own specific practices. The intercultural challenge in the field of political cultural diversity essentially involves acknowledging and accepting the diversity of political cultures, beyond the artificial polarisation between democracies and dictatorships/totalitarianism.

d) Social cultures

The fundamental approach to modern social organisation, in which divergent ideologies converge, is that of the **individual** and his or her **autonomy**. It is on the basis of the individual that modern social relations and the democratic political system itself have been built.

Even if we bear in mind that the primacy of the individual in modern western society is largely a reaction to elements in history, particularly against the absolutist monarchies of early modern times, we cannot presuppose that this is the only or even always the best way of building social relations. Indeed, not all social cultures are founded on the concept of the individual. In many, the basic element of social organisation is the community. However, modern thinking has more or less regarded the community as something that had to be overcome for the good of the individual, as has so rightly been pointed out by the political thinker Bertrand Badie (1992);

> *In the field of enlightened philosophy and in particular from the point of view of nineteenth century evolutionism, the individualisation of social relations has been thought of as emancipating and rationalising: it gradually liberates the individual from ties of communitarian fidelity, from the guardianship of the natural social group to which one belongs, leading to a freer and more critical socialisation; it distances the individual from the natural will carried by the group, which is replaced by a rational will, opening the door to calculation and evaluation. (…) According to this interpretation, communitarianism can be nothing more than residual, an inheritance from a tradition that must disappear: the governability of political systems demands that it be reabsorbed.*

One could say that in the social organisation system that has arisen from the modern western context, the notion of society is fundamental. But in many cultures, for better or for worse, the

cornerstone of social organisation is not society as the organisation of individuals but the community as an arrangement and expression of people. The community sphere is essential for ensuring a decent life, independently of whether or not it is contained in a wider social sphere.

In this aspect, the intercultural challenge is to find a way to make the community sphere compatible with the sphere of society as a whole, without the latter absorbing and cancelling out the former, and without the former cancelling out the people.

e) Scientific cultures

Modern science and, more specifically, technological science are the great triumphs of the modern-day West, because it is through them that the economic development and expansion of the West have taken place. Modern science, based on analytical/empirical/quantitative methodology, has taken ownership of the very notion of science, to the point at which science is exclusively identified with modern science. To talk of science, in most cases, is to talk of modern western science.

However, without detracting from the importance of its achievements as a system of knowledge, modern-day western scientific culture is not at all the only scientific culture possible. Other systems of knowledge have existed and still do that do not necessarily have to be classed as unscientific; the etymology of the word "science" in Latin means "to know", "knowledge".

One might say that modern-day western scientific culture is based on the following presuppositions:

- A separation between the subject and the object;
- A search for universal laws to explain and understand all natural phenomena;
- A reduction of reality into that which can be understood rationally;
- A desire to master nature

These suppositions are not universal. There are other forms of scientific rationale that are based on other assumptions. In spite of their diversity, these can be summarised into the following points:

- Non-separation between subject and object, and therefore no separation between human being and nature;

- Phenomena are above all singular, in spite of the fact that they may to some extent obey certain laws, so it is not so much a matter of searching for these laws but of understanding each phenomenon in itself;
- Reality cannot be restricted to that which can be rationally thought out; there is a large grey area of mystery that cannot be limited or eliminated by strictly rational thinking;
- A wish to forge a communion with reality.

The intercultural challenge in the scientific and technological arena will be to stop thinking of modern science as the only system or criteria for validating knowledge and each culture's way of knowing. We must, then, start to acknowledge the existence of other forms of scientific rationale[10], which can prove to be as or more valid and effective, even if their rationale is not always comprehensible according to the criteria of modern science.

f) Educational cultures

From a modern perspective, one tends to think of illiterate people as uneducated people, whereas in fact an illiterate person is simply an illiterate person, regardless of whether he or she is more or less knowledgeable. To a large extent, we now use illiterate as a synonym for uneducated, due to the fact that we restrict the idea of education to formal schooling. The force and omnipresence of school as an institution in today's world is so considerable that these limitations are bound to happen. But all societies have an educational culture that may or may not include institutional schooling, but which in all cases supersedes it.

Every educational culture is a vehicle for the values and beliefs of the society in which it is developed, so we can see that there is no single way of conceiving of or providing education. Educational culture cannot be separated from the rest of social reality because it is both the reflection of this reality and the instrument through which it is reproduced.

As well as transmitting more or less objective knowledge of reality, each educational culture (including modern-day western educational culture) also transmits values, behaviours and beliefs. With this in mind, the intercultural challenge in the field of education is to not think of schooling and literacy as the only possible ways of ennobling people. Out-of-school learning and the oral traditions of other educational cultures should also be considered valid and

[10] Cf. SCHEPS 1993.

necessary systems and valued as such. We might well speak of the existence of *other ways of learning* to fit different educational cultures[11].

g) Ecological cultures

In modern-day western culture, man's relationship with his environment is determined by the separation between subject and object as per his own scientific culture, as we have seen above. This separation basically means that nature is considered a resource at the service of man, who is its lord and master. This clashes head-on with other approaches, in which nature is an implicit part of human beings[12] and vice-versa, with all the environmental repercussions that this brings. In most indigenous and traditional cultures, the differentiation between nature and culture is much weaker, if not non-existent.

The intercultural challenge in this sphere is to resolve the dilemma on how to make ecological cultures in which nature and human beings are closely integrated compatible with modern-day western ecological culture, characterised by its strong differentiation and even rift between the two.

h) Religious cultures

One of the spheres in which the issue of intercultural dialogue is most commonly raised is the religious sphere, with inter-faith dialogue currently being one of the most strongly developed forms of dialogue. It can take two different approaches:

- An inter-faith dialogue in which the dialogue participants are essentially the leaders and hierarchs of the various religious institutions
- A dialogue among the faithful, regardless of whether this takes place on other levels

Inter-religious dialogue can be governed by two major motivations:

- To find paths to understanding and mutually enriching experiences between the different religious traditions
- To find answers to the great challenges faced by mankind

Whichever the participants or their motivations, in the context of globalisation, inter-religious dialogue must face the following challenges:

[11] Cf. BUREAU & SAIVRE 1988.
[12] Cf. COLLECTIF 1993

- To overcome the tendency to make religious and spiritual experiences exclusive, without implying the loss of religious identity.
- To open itself up to dialogue with the modern secular world, not to fight it, nor to adapt to it, but to work together for greater human dignity
- To open itself up to questioning and purifying religious beliefs and values.

5. Proposals for intercultural dialogue to fit the various contexts

a) Multicultural societies: towards a society of communities

By multicultural societies we mean those that are culturally diverse as a result of migratory flows. In most cases, the cultural make-up of these societies includes a dominant group that has typically generated its culture within the actual territory and more or less subordinate diverse social groups that have come from other places for various reasons (political, economic, social, and so on.)

Within this context, there are all different kinds of intercultural conflicts and relations at different levels, most of which can be characterised by a number of features:

i) Social and economic exclusion

Immigrants are more likely to suffer from the social and economic exclusion that is present in our societies. Whether it be with illegal hiring or with contracts but also insecure conditions, immigrants tend to work in job sectors that are rejected by the host country nationals, and this leads to a trend of dividing up the work market on ethnic or cultural grounds. Among other consequences, this results in an unstable integration into the labour market, which makes it difficult to forge and maintain ties with the rest of society.

ii) Xenophobic and racist actions and attitudes

As a result of the presence of immigrants, in all multicultural societies, to a greater or lesser extent, xenophobic and racist actions and attitudes occur. This encompasses both violent actions against immigrants and their property and implicit attitudes of rejection by a considerable proportion of the population.

iii) Absence of relations between people and communities of different cultural origins

By way of a generalisation, we might say that relations are not forged between people and communities of different cultural origins, except for in one-off, exceptional cases. At most there is a situation of mutual tolerance and co-existence, the sharing of a space, but with very weak inter-relationships and co-operation between the members of the different communities. This lack of relationship is a hindrance to overcoming the clashes that occur when different cultural communities come into contact.

iv) Legal frameworks

The legal frameworks of most states with multicultural societies are basically policing laws to control immigrants, not laws directed at integrating them into their new society. It is both paradoxical and shocking that in this age of globalisation, while goods, products and capital can move with total freedom, people still come up against obstacles and hindrances of all kinds.

There are various reasons behind this, and they are all interlinked. By way of a summary, we can highlight the following:

i) A narrow-minded and simplistic view of migration

In terms of current migratory movements, there is a number of approaches and points of view that we might categorise as highly simplistic, as they do not take into account a whole set of features that characterise them.

- ***The economic approach,*** by which immigrants are essentially perceived as a cheap workforce, forgetting that above all they are people. This contradicts the democratic principles and values of shelter, asylum, solidarity and respect for others. This utilitarian view as applied to economics stokes up the fears and stereotypes of the host country nationals (fear of invasion; they are poor and underdeveloped…) and discriminatory policies and policing.

- ***Seeing immigration as a problem,*** a view that is promoted by some political leaders and the media when they speak of immigration as a "problem". More in-depth analysis shows that immigrants do not generate the problems that they are often blamed for: immigrants reside in neighbourhoods and homes that are already sub-standard (it is for this very reason that they can gain access to housing); they find work in the black economy (precisely because it already existed prior to their arrival); and the same can be said of drug trafficking and prostitution.

- ***Lack of historical memory,*** when it is said that the so-called "cultural gap" hinders the integration of immigrant groups, forgetting that most societies are the result of the contributions made by people of different cultures. It is also forgotten that a large part of the population of European societies was forced to emigrate from the seventeenth to the twentieth centuries, in order to face up to the economic challenges and changes that occurred during this period.

ii) Monistic/unitarian approach to social cohesion

One of the arguments put forward for justifying the assimilation and invisibility of immigrants when they are culturally different is that that this helps to preserve social cohesion. This monistic y utilitarian approach to social cohesion confuses cohesion with consistency: for social cohesion to exist there must be cultural consistency. This is a perspective in which a pluralistic reality is seen not as a source of wealth, but as a threat.

iii) Mutual unfamiliarity between people of different cultural origins

The knowledge that societies receiving immigration have of the immigrant cultures is minimum and mostly stereotypical, emphasising their more folkloric and/or negative aspects, which reinforces prejudices and stigma.

Our belief is that the objective that one must work for in the multicultural societies that have arisen from migratory movements, in order to properly face up to the challenge of cultural diversity, is that of being truly intercultural. In this sense, cohesion and social harmony can come about as a result of difference, and not in spite of it. More particularly, in order to reach this goal, we believe that three more specific objectives must be attained.

i) Integrate the whole of society into a culturally pluralistic reality

Most discourse on and approaches to the notion of integration of immigrants see it as process by which these people are incorporated into a culturally homogeneous reality. This culturally homogeneous reality can be perceived in different ways, depending on the ideologies:

- Either a dominant national culture
- Or a supposedly cosmopolitan universal culture, such as that of social and political movements claiming to be leftwing and/or progressive.

The first case defends a national identity that is considered to be under threat of disappearing due to the presence of the cultural identities of immigrants. In the second case, the aim is to "liberate" immigrants from the chains of their traditional cultures. But deep down, neither view shows any interest in immigrants in themselves and even less in the wealth that they can bring to society as a whole.

This perspective seems to forget the original meaning of the word "integration", which refers to all the parts that make up a whole and that, each with their own presence and dynamics, keep it whole. From this point of view, we can consider integration as a process that

- Involves each and every person in a society and not just those that have immigrated;
- Implies facing up to a new social reality defined by growing cultural diversity, together and with an attitude of normality.

To better understand this approach to the concept of integration, it would be appropriate to refer back to the actual etymology of the word, as P. Grudzielski has done (1999: 7)

> *"Integrate" in Latin means "entire", "whole", "complete". Integratio, then, means the process by which an object, body, organism or society becomes complete. This kind of definition can evidently not be applied to a person. The idea of a person "becoming complete" is a contradiction. The word in question, then, applies to the whole and not to the part. So in social matters, integration should also concern society as a whole and not its members (people or groups). However, for some inexplicable reason, the meaning of this term has not been taken on board in immigration, ethnicity or race discourse and policy"*

J. Salt (1998), in the same line, states that we can consider an integration process successful only if it includes the following three elements:

- The adaptation of immigrants to the host society;
- The adaptation of the host society to the immigrants;
- The setting up of suitable communication between and within the two populations.

Integration is a process of mutual learning and forging of new intercommunity relations, as was already proposed several years ago by A. Perotti (1989), for whom the concept of integration is opposed to that of assimilation, because it displays the ability to confront and exchange values, norms, models of behaviour, both of the immigrant and the host society – in a context of equality and participation. Integration is, then, the gradual process by which

new residents become active participants in the economic, civic, cultural and spiritual life of their new society.

Undoubtedly, in this process of mutual integration one must take into account the fact that some cultural realities are much more deeply rooted in the area or region, either because they are more numerous or because they have been there longer. But in no case should this mean the exclusion of the other realities that are present in the area.

ii) Building social cohesion on community foundations

In the context of modern thinking, there is often a tendency to consider social cohesion as a reality that is based on individuals and then managed by the state apparatus, especially since the triumph of the ideas of the French Revolution, as has been pointed out by Bertrand Badie (vid 4.d))

Nevertheless, in all societies and in all eras, people have created networks of relationships on the basis of often very different criteria, thereby creating very varied community ties.

With regards to immigrants, this means accepting their community dynamics not as something exceptional that is sooner or later destined to disappear for the good of a supposed social cohesion based on the individual, but as a fundamental element of this social cohesion. For once and for all, we must overcome these fears that the community dimension seems to instil in certain people who see in it a threat of retrenchment in identity, of gregarism or ghettoisation. It is this very community dimension that allows people to really be what they are, much more than their citizen's status.

iii) The fight against all forms of exclusion

Although in economic boom periods, the host country view of immigrants as "job robbers" weakens, the fact is that they mostly do jobs and tasks that nobody wants to do and more often than not in very tough working conditions: exploitation, lack of any rights, almost total impossibility of professional promotion, and so on. These conditions are the elements that form the basis of social exclusion and economic inequality, which in turn lay the foundations for racism and xenophobia.

Currently, there are no real equal work opportunities for immigrants in comparison with the rest of society, not even in vocational training. The view of immigrants as basically

"cheap labour" limits the possibilities for society as a whole to benefit from their professional and intellectual capabilities. Without forgetting that the mechanisms of social exclusion and work instability also affect a considerable proportion of the host society, action must be taken so that the professional and intellectual competencies of immigrants can be valued and placed at the service of the whole of society.

To achieve these objectives, action must be taken at different levels of each society, but first and foremost it is necessary to develop the right mindsets for true intercultural dialogue, which we believe are the following:

i) Self-recognition

The populations of multicultural societies must recognise and accept that they live in a context marked with the stamp of cultural diversity, far distant from both closed and conservative monocultural worldviews and supposedly universalistic cosmopolitanism. Taking this reality on board would lead, for example, to the recognition of religious diversity as a feature of contemporary societies that is only going to increase. Some of the immigrants' children born in multicultural societies will take on their parents' religion (Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and so forth), but still consider themselves members of the societies in which they live.

This intracultural debate among all those who consider themselves members of any multicultural society should be founded on a concept of diversity as difference and not as inequality. At the end of the day, acceptance of difference does not consist in an act of tolerance of the other, but in acknowledgement of them (both on the personal and the community level) as a complete and contradictory reality (as we all are), a bearer of knowledge, of a way of being and a way of doing, thanks to which this individual is what he or she is.

ii) Acknowledging

Building a just society that acknowledges its own cultural diversity demands the active participation of all the groups that form part of it with no barriers. This in turn implies recognising the importance of community networks and the legitimacy of self-fulfilment on the basis of ones own criteria and not under the institutional guardianship of the state.

The dichotomy of *us and them* (foreigners, immigrants, etc.) must be broken, because maintaining it can only lead to confrontation and the different communities shutting themselves off from one another.

For this acknowledgement to be real and true, we need to move beyond this simplification of immigrants, sometimes done with the best intentions, into one or more of the following ideas (if not all three at the same time):

- As a problem that must be managed;
- As a set of needs that must be met;
- As an element that must be integrated into society.

Undoubtedly, it is true that immigrants

- Present problems that must be managed as best as possible;
- Present needs that must be met;
- Cannot remain at the margin of society.

But if we only take these realities into account without bearing in mind that immigrants

- Possess knowledge, a way of being and ways of doing;
- Possess numerous personal and community resources;
- Can enrich society with their community dynamics,

We are limiting them to a "void that must be filled", forgetting that above all they are actually "a wealth that must be discovered"[13]: not taking this on board will lead to the degradation of immigrants and, at the end of the day, of society as a whole, because it won't take advantage of all the wealth and skills of a considerable part of the population. Overcoming this tunnel vision that so limits immigrants requires:

- Abandoning a mercantilist interpretation (cost-benefit) to justify the presence of immigrants;
- Seeing the presence of immigrants as a positive factor in changing society.

iii) Mutual acknowledgement

Prejudice and stereotyping can only really be overcome if mutual acknowledgement is developed, which will be the result of frank, open relations and dialogue, and this is only

[13] These two expressions were coined a long time ago by Robert Vachon, of the Institut Interculturel de Montréal.

possible in a situation of equality. Anybody can become a member of a multicultural society, because there are no immigrant groups that are easier to integrate than others.

A negotiation and consensus-seeking process must be established between all the parties involved. Institutions must alter their criteria for acceptance and inclusion and apply criteria of co-operation and subsidiarity. We must no longer consider immigrants as a group of people that must be helped, but as actors who are able to take responsibility and to get involved at the same level as the rest of the population. But one cannot demand the same duties if they cannot exercise the same rights. Throughout this process, intercultural conflict may arise, and this will have to be managed peacefully and creatively, to find solutions that are not simply imposed by the strongest party.

b) Plurinational and multiethnic states

We define plurinational and multiethnic states as those that have been created to include different regional and/or ethnic groups within their borders[14]: groups that already existed prior to the creation of the state. Typically, the state has been created under the driving force of one of the country or ethnic groups that, to a greater or lesser extent, has imposed its own culture on the rest of the countries or ethnic groups.

In the face of this subordination, the right to self-determination has typically been put forward and demanded on the basis of the rationale modern-day western political culture. This right implicitly includes the creation of the political structures of a modern nation state, including the constitution of new independent states to ensure and facilitate this right. The intercultural challenge that is currently posed within the context of globalisation is that of allowing this right to self-determination of peoples to be exercised without having to:

- Create a new nation state, which carries the risk of worsening the intercultural conflict to be dealt with even further;
- Develop the political structures of a nation state, be it independently or otherwise.

This requires taking two elements into account when considering globalisation:

[14] The term "country or nation" is typically used to denote societies that subscribe to the western framework of civilisations and the term "ethnic group" to denote societies that do not subscribe to the western framework of civilisation. Thus, peoples such as the Catalans, Basques, Bretons, Scots, etc., are considered countries and the various indigenous peoples throughout the world as ethnic groups. The use made of these two concepts in this document does not presuppose the superiority or subordination of either of them.

- Firstly, the existence of regional and continental spheres that surpass the traditional nation state and in which the right to self-determination can be subscribed to without having to become a new nation state.
- Secondly, the different cultural views that may be held by different peoples and ethnic groups, especially non-western ones, on how to exercise the right to self-determination.

The consideration of these two points can help to exercise this right to self-determination, as an instrument to protect and develop collective cultural identities without the need to create and multiply new nation states.

c) International co-operation and international relations

A third context in which intercultural conflicts and relations arise is that of international relations, and more specifically North-South relations, within the framework of what is known as *international development co-operation.*

As its very name indicates, the notion of development is what marks and defines these relations, to the point at which it is used to divide humankind into developed countries and developing countries.

Development as a concept and practice has been subjected to severe criticism on the basis of the evident fact that its implementation, as a myth of a desirable and decent life, has been a resounding disaster. The few one-off benefits that successive decades of development have brought are counteracted by the enormous negative effects that have been generated, decade after decade. The promise of economic globalisation as a new mobilising myth will apparently not change the situation to any great extent. The problem of the concept and practice of development as a paradigm for a good, decent life essentially stems from two aspects:

- It puts economic activity outside the rest of social reality, so that it becomes self-justifying[15], founding itself on the rationale of permanent and exponential economic growth. From a development point of view, welfare can only be ensured through economic growth, even if this growth does have its negative outputs.
- It needs to widen its sphere of action, so that all the economic activity in the world starts on a development process, on the premise that development is intrinsic and in the very

[15] For example, some economic activities are not carried out in order to meet the needs or wishes of society, but simply for the economic machine to work. The activity of certain sectors is thus defended, such as for example the

nature of all economy activity. Once one gets into the development perspective, it can put up no spatial barriers, but has to absorb the economy on a world scale. The current globalisation of economic activity is the result of the development logic that has been emphasised over the last fifty years but that was started in the sixteenth century.

Since the end of World War II, the notion of development has become the key concept for defining human welfare. It is multipurpose term that encompasses numerous definitions, all of which have a number of basic features in common:

- Pre-eminence of rational and rationalising thought;
- View of nature as an external reality separate from humankind and consequently nothing more than a resource to exploit;
- A linear concept of time, leading to a historical and evolutionary approach to human reality, going from primitive man to modern, civilised man;
- Concept of welfare fundamentally based on the notion of wealth, understood here as the possession of material goods

The vast majority of non-western, traditional cultures have quite different views of reality. Without aspiring to give an exhaustive list or to consider them as a static whole, we can look at some points that they share:

- Mythical and symbolic thought is as important or more so than rational and rationalising thought;
- Nature is an intrinsic part of human reality;
- The concept of time and history are generally circular and in no way evolutionary;
- The concept of welfare includes non-material dimensions of reality, such as cosmic or spiritual aspects.

Bearing in mind that both the culture of development and other cultures all have their strong and weak points, so none of them can be considered as the bearer of solutions to all the problems currently faced by humankind, we need to establish an intercultural dialogue between the culture of development and other cultures.

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construction industry, not because new houses are needed, but because otherwise, the economic system would fall into a crisis. Ways are then found to persuade people to buy the new houses.

However, this dialogue cannot overlook the fundamental difference with the development culture, which is that it is intrinsically a culture of domination and imposition. Neither must one forget the fact that it is not a question of integrating certain aspects of different cultures into the culture of development to make it into some kind of cross-cultural myth and reality, but of establishing a deep dialogue between our respective views of the cosmos, of what is human and what is divine.

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