Intercultural Education as a Phenomenological Paradigm of Responsibility and Care

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Published: April 5, 2018

Abstract

The social sphere today returns the atomistic imago both of the person and of the same reality, as if only the solipsistic and narcissistic dimension of subjectivity was the paradigm to be adopted to live in harmony with oneself and with society, denying the relational dimension, the cornerstone of educational care. The other is increasingly seen as a problem to avoid, not as a person to meet, to know, a subject with whom to establish fruitful correspondence. Pedagogically, each person is continually educated and trained in relationships with others, and this educational relationship is productive as the other person or other people of the relationship in turn receive educational benefits and training requests from this encounter of mutual recognition and proficuous hybridisations. Identity and recognition are two different elements which, however, become complementary because the recognition becomes a symmetrical function of the personal identity and the same identity becomes concrete and real only through the recognition.

Il sociale oggi restituisce l'imago atomistica del soggetto e della stessa realtà, come se solo la dimensione solipsistica e narcisistica della soggettività fosse il paradigma da adottare per vivere in sintonia con se stessi e con la società, negando la dimensione relazionale, fondamento cardine della cura educativa. L'altro è visto sempre di più come problema da evitare, non come persona da incontrare, conoscere con cui stabilire feconde corrispondenze. Pedagogicamente, ciascuna persona continuamente si educa e si forma nella relazione con gli altri, e questa relazione educativa è produttiva in quanto anche l'altra persona o le altre persone della relazione a loro volta traggono benefici educativi e istanze formative da questo incontro di mutui riconoscimenti e di importanti ibridazioni. Identità e riconoscimento sono due elementi differenti che tuttavia divengono complementari, nel senso che il riconoscimento diviene una funzione simmetrica della stessa identità personale, nei termini che la stessa identità diviene concreta e reale solo attraverso il riconoscimento.

Keywords: Intercultural Education; Person; Phenomenology; Responsibility; Care

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Globalization of economy has triggered deep processes of deculturation, the main effect of which has determined a homogenization of extensive regions of the world dictated by the logic of capitalist economy and its system of socially shared values. The logic of the market and that of profit have completely wrought society towards economic interest. The devastating effects of the economic crisis in the west have completely upset the economies of single countries that have been sucked up in the vortex of the global crisis (Aliber & Kindleberger, 2015, pp. 28-31). The most paradoxical aspect is that market economy is founded exclusively on productivity, remaining substantially indifferent towards typically human circumstances such as communication and interpersonal relations, deep bonds, affection, spirit of service, and the very life of man. The real needs are those of people who continually meet, discuss, and enter into relationships even if they have been educated and brought up in different cultures. Because of this they have different ways of looking at the world and interacting with it:

> Awareness of cultural differences is essential in favoring mutual respect which in turn is the essential premise to the building of productive dialog. The main causes behind the rejection of those who are different are in fact, ignorance and the belief that one's own habits are by nature valid. (Nussbaum, 1998, p. 79)

If the present presents to us a model of global, planetary economy, why can we not conceive a intercultural education that makes us interact, relate in a fruitful and positive manner, and recognize all individuals as persons, independently from their original culture, social class or political and religious convictions?

1   Intercultural education as care for the other person

The solipsistic closure of the individual and his interior uncertainties related to attitudes of absolutism of one's own imago, typically childish and adolescent, tend to bring about a lack of self-consciousness of one's personal identity, particularities and potentials, but also limits these attitudes resulting in the lack of recognition which only authentic relations can give. If the individual is incapable of knowing himself and discovering his identity, he will never manage to recognize the identity of the other, and will thus see the other as a potential threat to his integrity. More so, this issue is greatly confirmed if the other belongs to a culture that differs from ours, or comes from distant countries and lives according to existential customs differing from the subjective ones. In this case the closure will be even stronger, and in the same way, the barrier built to exclude the other will be further reinforced. This argument may appear simplistic or superficial but imposes itself with realism. The individual negates and disclaims the other, and refuses any contact or dialog, firstly because he does not know himself, his identity as a unique and unrepeatable person.

> The stranger is inside us. And when we escape or fight the stranger, we fight our own subconsciousness — this «improperness» of our impossible «properness». Freud delicately and analytically does not speak about strangers: he teaches us to discover the stranger within us. Perhaps this is because it is the only way to not persecute it outside. (Kristeva, 1991, p. 165)

Pedagogically, interior and exterior relativity cannot be avoided inasmuch as it is native to and an essential trait of the human being (Mattei, 2009, pp. 82-87). We cannot imagine, for example, having a dialogue with the other if we ourselves are unable to do so with ourselves. Likewise, we cannot know the other if we do not really know ourselves. Disavowal or repudiation of the other is the reflex effect of closure or the lack of consciousness of ourselves. Socrates' advice, mediated by the delphic motto, "know thyself" as cited in various contexts by Sigmund Freud (1923/1990, pp. 44-59) at the turn of the 20th century, reaches down to us as an offspring of post-modernity and globalization, and a great need to defeat the profound evils of our time — the lack of sense, nothingness and existential nihilism, reification and rampant indifference to the others, and the evils of the world. Self-knowledge is not a process but a search that lasts a lifetime, even if we have to specify that no one will ever get to know himself completely, and rise fully to the awareness of his personal identity. More than ever today, consumerist and globalized society offers behavioral styles and existential trends that through comprehensive paradigms, try to obliterate the personal effort which the search for oneself necessarily implies, proposing as an alternative, high-performing competitive models.

Care for oneself, we must specify, can exist only in the presence of a relation. Care for oneself and care for the "other" or the others can be accomplished only through relationships, a profound bond, a dialectic *motus*, and an essential openness. We cannot imagine care in situations of complete closure with respect to oneself or in conditions of personal alienation or estrangement. Likewise, as in a mirror, with respect to the others, care may be offered only when there are conditions of relations or links of some kind, between oneself and the other. What is fundamental is the relationship with reality: the interior and the exterior, that of the world, of others. The element which characterizes this proceeding is the deep bond the person has established with himself and the others (Scheler, 1928/2009, pp. 31-39). Pedagogically speaking in fact, we cannot think of the subject as capable of giving or returning something he does not possess and which is not part of him. Consider for example, the educator/disciple. The educator may concretely teach his pupils only what he knows. It would be paradoxical to ask a teacher to teach subjects he does not possess knowledge of. Likewise, care for or knowledge of the other will be directly proportional to the knowledge the subject has of himself. It would be illusive to think that a person who does not know himself, or his interior dimension and identity, is able to recognize the other in his authenticity. The educational act accomplished by the teacher with regard to his students is a radical educational process of care, characterized first of all by the teacher's capacity to take charge of, comprehend — *cŭm prehendere* — take on himself, and assume the responsibility of caring for his students, so as to conduct them towards knowledge of themselves and towards inculturation.

Unfortunately, as we have noted, the social sphere today pays back in an ever totalizing and pervasive manner, the atomistic *imago* of the individual and of the same reality, as if only the solipsistic and narcissistic dimension of subjectivity was the paradigm to be adopted in order to live in harmony with oneself and society, negating in an implicit way the relational dimension which is the main foundation of care. The "other" is regarded more and more as a problem to be avoided, and not as a person to encounter, to get to know, and with whom we could establish fertile relationships. This solipsistic closure leads the individual to live in an awkward situation of estrangement above all with himself, the others, the surrounding reality and the entire world. Negating the other as such and eluding relationships which life continually offers is a source of alienation for the individual, and an interior suffering. Should this egoistic closure and dimension of non-acceptance of others and dialectic relationships be prolonged, it may became pathologic and also lead to personality and mental disorders. Numerous studies and scientific research works indicate the etiology of mental illnesses, above all disorders of the relational types (Livesley & Dimaggio, 2016; Muskin, 2014; Dobbert, 2010). Relating with others is an essential element of the person, and we could not imagine the human being deprived of the relational universe which is naturally connected to existence. As we said, the cornerstone of relationships is care. We can indicate two main ways in which care can be expressed. The first, taking care of oneself, *cura sui*, is the preparatory and fundamental passage for the revealing of one's personal *proprium,* the identity that characterizes the human person as a unique and unrepeatable being. The succeeding passage regards the care of the other person, which is the fundamental element of civil coexistence, as we shall see further on (Bruzzone, 2012, p. 70).

2   The recognition as ontological instance of responsibility

In considering human development — as the process of interior growth unravels in time with life's seasons and existential space marked by interpersonal relationships, it becomes evident that education is above all, care that allows us to guide the person towards self-fulfillment in an ethical orientation, as much as humanely possible. Modern man's encounter with the other may be historically traced to the great travels undertaken in the 14th century, aimed at exploring the confines of the world. Most often, however, these adventures to the unknown ended in bloody conquests. It would suffice to recall 1492, a memorable date and the year of the discovery and conquest of America, an event that within a few decades turned into an atrocious genocide (Todorov, 1999, pp. 11-14). Starting from this dramatic experience, the encounter with the other being was most often tragically marked by suppression and savagery. For the first time in humanity's history, man came face to face with the other man, his *alter ego*, but unfortunately was not recognized by his otherness and thus fought and destroyed him (*ibidem*, pp. 39-48). The problem that emerges from these events regards an educational dynamics and radical pedagogy that is recognition. But we could extend the *focus* of observation to thousands of other examples regarding encounter, dialog, ways

of perception, viewing and interacting with the other. We can point out the need for recognition as a fundamental need of existence, secondary perhaps, only to the instinct of self-preservation. The discovery of the "I," the revelation and rise towards self-awareness and acquisition of one's *proprium*, the unique and unrepeatable identity of the person, and also the complex and articulate dynamics of recognition, are mediated by "you", by relationship. The "with" is the radical and founding element that constitutes man, continually in relation "with" the others, and continually refers to the entire human existence, the seasons of life from birth to advanced old age, and being with the others which Heidegger calls *Mitdasein*, the constitutive ontological structure significantly expresses the entire educational and development process (Heidegger, 1927/2008, § 26, pp. 191-201). As such, being-in-relationship belongs essentially to our entire existence with all the complex dynamics related to recognition. Through this prime and continuous being-in-relationship with others, and through recognition, which is fundamental for my development as a person and which the other returns to me, we can easily deduce that pedagogically, it is as if the relationship with the "other" and the others, authentically restores me to myself, helping me to determine myself as a personal self, in my identity and characteristics. It is only through the "you" and the others, that I receive the recognition which makes me become, and recognize in myself, what I am (Buber, 1923/2013, pp. 14-17). Recognition or the opposite, non-recognition, are factors highly correlated to characteristics distinguishing the person and, in a more or less important measure, describe the identifying *proprium*, or others interrelated qualities. Identity and recognition are two different factors which become complementary, however, in the sense that recognition becomes a symmetric function of the same personal identity, and the same identity becomes concrete and real only through recognition (Bossio, 2012, p. 82). Socrates' recommendation to know oneself is not intended only as an archeological digging into one's interior self to know and thus be able to possess the most hidden and profound cores of oneself. It should be taken also as the capacity to question and test this identifying *proprium* with the others, so as to show it entirely and make it so objective as to reveal it to the others and be recognized by them. Recognition mainly implies that the objectification others confer on me is the identity of my person in a deep and authentic awareness of myself. This objectification of self (self-consciousness), of one's own identity, is made possible by the recognition the other returns to me by recognizing me in my peculiarities and characteristics (Hegel, 1807/2017, pp. 149-160). In *The Phenomenology of the Spirit,* Hegel highlights that those who bravely undertake the "battle or struggle for recognition of one's own," thereby putting their lives at stake and exposing themselves to alienation, can ascend self-recognition as objectified identity, thus becoming aware of themselves. Only through this clash against the other, the self can overcome the 'circular' reference of awareness and then avoid the risk of solipsistic identity, which is not recognized by the other and is not objectified. Hegel affirms that the recognition of the self is an unavoidable need in the confrontation with the other and the others, that helps the individual disclose his or her personal identity in reality. Individuals cannot close in on themselves without any relations, or confrontation with the other; to summarize we cannot exist for ourselves if we do not exist for the others. Only by means of a tortuous process of encounter with and clash against the other, personal identity can emerge and be recognized with all its specificities and features.

> The link between the experience of recognition and the relation with the self is the result of the *intersubjective structure* of personal identity: individuals develop as a person only by learning to relate to themselves from another's perspective that accepts them and encourages them as beings positively characterized by some qualities and talents. The proportion of such talents and, thus, the degree of positivity of the relationship with themselves increase along with any new form of recognition that the individual can ascribe to himself or herself as a being. (Honneth, 1992/1996, p. 192)

In the thought of Honneth, the human person would not be able to rise to full awareness of his objectified self, without the recognition from others who in recognizing him, continually confer reality and authenticity to his being and his actions. I am able to recognize myself in my *proprium*, in my identity, inasmuch as the other has recognized me as such.

> If I had to name the category that corresponded to the categories of imputation and responsibility, I would choose the term recognition, so dear to Hegel [...]. Recognition is a structure of the self reflecting on the movement that carries self-esteem towards solicitude and solici-

tude towards justice. Recognition introduces the *dyad and plurality* in the very constitution of the self. (Ricœur, 1990/1995, p. 359)

Subjective identity is not an immediate fact, the original self is not self-determined, but it is the result of a continuous relation between the ego, that Ricœur defines as the self, and the other. The identity of the individual constitutively implies the recognition of otherness.

> It is not indeed in my most authentic identity that I ask to be recognized? And if, by chance, should it occur, shouldn't my gratitude be aimed at all those who, in a way or the other, have acknowledged my identity, thus recognizing me? (Ricœur, 2004/2007, p. 5)

Ricœur identifies two main meanings of the word 'recognition,' depending on whether it is meant in the active form of the verb "recognize" or the passive "being recognized." Recognition, however is an emancipative dialectic that is fundamental for the self and the other.

Thus the other becomes co-substantial to myself, a founding and essential element of my identity. And so personal identity hybridizes with the other, becoming intersubjective just as intersubjectivity constitutes self-consciousness. Recognition opens subjectivity to otherness, up to the deep sharing of self-consciousness. Recognition of the other also implies welcoming and respecting the other's peculiarities and characteristics, conferring the dignity as an individual and the same moral stature which thanks to him, I am able to give to myself. Recognition is therefore a process that arises in the ethics of respect for the other, and the others as for myself, and is the foundation itself of civil cohabitation.

> The face breaks through the form that nevertheless *delimits it*. Which concretely means *the face speaks and invites me* into a relation. (Levinas, 1961/2011, p. 195)

Levinas underlines that the relationship between the self and the other develops as relational dynamics, implying responsibility for the other, or the others. The "phenomenology of the other's face" is a radical ontological element in the relation with the other: the sight perceives the other's face as a sign of my being (*ibidem* pp. 189-211). In the "ethical relation," conducted and experienced through the encounter of "the other's face," Levinas sees the epiphany of the self as an authentic meaning of existence, the taking care of and being responsible also for the Other. In other words the "ethical relation" concretely becomes an *ante litteram* pedagogical relation and an educational *motus* between the Self and the Other that are first of all recognized as individuals.

> The Other faces me and puts me in question and obliges me to take a position towards them [...] I am immediately responsible for what could happen to them up to the point I feel myself obliged to put myself in their position. (Levinas, 1974/2010, p. 79)

Lèvinas underlines the fundamental issue of ethics as responsibility for the others. The Other constantly puts me in question with his face and asks me to be conscious of myself and to be ready to listen to and understand *his* otherness that is just in front of me; the other looks at me and in doing so, he makes me responsible. The ethics of responsibility is meaning above all, insofar it confers authentic sense to the actions of people ethically oriented to the good; it is teaching in terms of unavoidable educational and pedagogical effort, as well as the foundation of any form of education should necessarily be oriented to an ethical dimension of good. It is also justice insofar individuals think, feel and act not only thinking about themselves, but taking into account the consequences of their actions which should, in no way, be addressed to the detriment of the other or others. From this perspective, ethical action becomes the basic element not only of the recognition of the other, but also of social justice.

The incidence of the "other," during the development of the ego, is almost a statute of human existence. It is a norm dictated by its own nature, and to avoid the dimension of relationships would not only mean that we are heading towards an ontological and existential aridity. But even more, in dying to man's own ideal, we are negating one of the components that make the human being what he is, elevating the person to that fascinating mystery he himself has yearned to know and reveal more than anything else, since the dawn of his existence (Portera, 2016, pp. 85-93).

3 The being-with as phenomenological paradigm of the person

The phenomenological aspect is primarily characterized as an interpretative paradigm of reality as it is. In particular, the phenomenological investigation is based on a double principle of evidence and transcendence: nothing seems useless, however not everything manifests itself immediately (Husserl, 1973/2006, pp. 75-77). It is important to carefully analyze and describe the profile of things in their uniqueness and expression and we should try to grasp their essence which is exactly expressed through these modalities without being exhausted in none of them. Indeed, we should "allow ourselves to be led beyond appearances by the appearances themselves" (De Monticelli, 2003, p. 57), towards what it is essential in them. From a pedagogical perspective, it is necessary to start from the factual reality of the things by means of direct experience, a radical and fundamental element, and — at the same time — it is important to regain the intuition of the essence that manifests itself in that reality.

Martin Heidegger, in analysing the fundamental dynamics of modern philosophy, which has its roots on reflections and studies on the subject, recognised in each instance as a privileged entity around which all things should gravitate, expresses his ideas defining the orientation followed by philosophy in modernity, as a nihilistic one (Heidegger, 1961/2002, pp. 45-51). In the models of "modern people," the subject — *subjectum* — i.e. "whatever is subject to — as Martin Heidegger writes — lies at the bottom, and refers to himself in a unique manner. Starting from Descartes onwards, in metaphysics, the individual, that is the human self, predominantly becomes the subject" (*ibidem,* p. 57). The subject/*subiectum* establishes himself and his central role in the world, as the origin and the end of existence and, therefore, of his intrinsic autonomy and independence, thus acting and dominating reality through his mind and actions.

> Western history has now begun to enter into the completion of that period we call the modern, and which is defined by the fact that man becomes the measure and center of beings. Man is what lies at the bottom of all beings; that is, in modern terms, at bottom of all objectification and *representability*, the *subjectum.* (*ibidem*, p. 61)

In other words, Heidegger considers the abstract vision of the subject as the founding element of reality around which everything is generated and expires, as the most detrimental bias of modern philosophy. According to him, the dualistic contrast between subject and object cannot be considered, not even in abstract terms. The subject is continuously in relation with the others and this relational aspect implies that the subject contributes, even if minimally, to the construction of reality; reality, in turn, affects more or less significantly the internal development of the subject. Such an hypertrophic subjectivity, starting from modern philosophy, can lead us understand the hypertrophy of the ego and, at the same time, the denial of the other and alienation that are features of reified and globalized western societies.

Of all contemporary philosophers, Emmanuel Lèvinas, more than all the other thinkers, set the *focus* of his reflections on "otherness" as the key element to every authentic human relationship (Levinas, 1961/2011, pp. 84-111). Lèvinas calls the real manifestation of absolute otherness "face". We consider "face" as the way the other presents himself, which surpasses the idea of the other in me (*ibidem*). Through the "face," according to Lévinas, the more radical "other" presents himself to me, enters into a relationship with me, makes use of my existence, invigorates it with meaning and confers it with responsibility. The other annuls dualism, the dichotomy of appearance (form)-content (essence) but continually cross-referring to the more authentic dimension of the person, simultaneously revealing the original dimension of "selfsame" that is myself, and that of the "other," my interlocutor (Levinas, 1974/2010, pp. 49-68). In other words, thanks to the encounter, recognition and confrontation with the other, "I" can authentically ascend to "my" truth, the essence that characterizes me as a unique and unrepeatable person. We furthermore have to consider that the virtual communicative contexts we find ourselves immersed in, offer us encounters and relationships that are increasingly brief and inauthentic, (consider the rapidity of the new forms of telecommunication or of the complex world of the social network). It is not easy to disentangle the crux of the matter since in times of plurality, complexity and globalization, the term "otherness," often scares us, catches us unprepared, and disorientates us neither is it easy because speaking of human relationships and encounters carries the risk of taking refuge in common places and stereotypes, and prudery is always very high (Kearney & Semonovich, 2011, p. 18). However, we need to talk about relationships, and we absolutely need to stop and reflect on the significance of the relationships we have in our lives, and it would

be worthwhile to do so consciously. As much as modernity tends to exalt the myth of independence and self-sufficiency, none of us can do without the other and stand alone (Bertolini, 2001, pp. 98-99). It would be impossible to think of man singularly without setting him within the historical, cultural and interpersonal context he lives in and where he experiences the world; every form of closure with others cannot but lead to estrangement and personal and social impoverishment. Man becomes an "I" on coming in contact with "you" (Buber, 1923/2013, pp. 28-32). Recognition and acceptance of the other is the first step to socialization, and therefore, to human development (Gennari, 2014). The conquest, the rise, the ascent, and the unveiling of his identity lead the individual to interact in a different way, especially with himself and then with the others who recognize his particular traits, and who in turn he recognizes. In other words, the moment a person discovers his identity and starts recognizing himself as a unique and unrepeatable guardian of quality and particular traits, he acts coherently according to his interior moral statute, and will not let himself be influenced by or diverted towards other existential goals, and remains faithful to himself and his project in life (Tarozzi, 2015). Vitality flows down to the person from authenticity of being and the choices undertaken but also from the vital interest for an existence oriented towards the good and joy of encountering and relating with the others (Mari, 2014, pp. 27-31). The depth of the person is rooted in his identifying truth which pushes him continually to overcome the appearance of things or situations to ascend to their deep and complete essence (Bellingreri, 2013).

Heidegger intends the existence of man in relation with the others in a dimension of openness and care of the other. Man's life authentically expresses in the relationship with himself and the others, in that "there is no subject without world" and there is no "isolated ego without the others;" 'being' is openness towards the world and the otherness: "taking care of the others" is a fundamental structure in the relationships among human beings (Heidegger, 1927/2008, pp. 274-288). The act of taking care of the others can take two different forms: "it can *subtract* to *others their care*, or it can help them to be free to assume *their care*" (*ibidem*). In the first case the "being together" is accomplished, i.e. an inauthentic form of coexistence in that the subject takes care of the others by supporting their material needs and neglecting their intimate sphere and interiority. The second case, instead, contemplates great openness towards otherness, i.e. "authentic coexistence," which — conversely — determines a true relationship with the self (*ibidem,* pp. 315-323). According to Heidegger, the care displays the *Dasein*, it expresses the Being, the existence of man in the world; a man that questions himself in taking care of the others and responding to an inner spur that suggests him to look for the most authentic sense of his existence. In its most authentic and radical meaning, the care represents human inclination to receive, to *cum-prehendere* and support the other and, since taking care of the others is an original structure of human relations, care for the self is the symbol of growth, maturation and the demonstration of the most intimate nature of the human being.

The person constantly reaches out towards self-improvement and effort to help others to personally evolve, and in so doing extends the sphere of his own conscience and matures interiorly. This maturation comes about continually through dynamics of recognition, and as we saw earlier, of relationships with others.

> The person is essentially "with" the others. Being singular plural — means: the essence of being is, and can only be a *co-essence*. [...] We are not dealing with being as prior and foremost, and to which "with" is added because being is always "being-with" and sets "with" in the heart of being. (Nancy, 1996/2000, p. 40)

Only by bringing to light the more authentic dimensions of human nature dwelling above all in identity, relationships and recognition, can we face the challenges modernity sets before us today, an insidious and complex modernity which, however, if viewed in its more positive aspect of opportunity and encounter, may lead the human being to blossom as a person, and open out to himself, the other, and the world (Bruzzone, 2016). From these premises it is necessary to devise for the person a new active citizenship as a virtuous union of educational instances together with a political project (Tarozzi, 2005, p. 170). The person is firstly in contact with himself, his truth, that is, the identity we defined as a personal truth, and precisely by proceeding from himself, he steers his life into an ethical and valued existence that places him in a condition of openness towards the other and the others (Xodo Cegolon, 2014). He thus lays down an existential project that is continually expressed in his actions, and operates continually in total respect of

the others and the rules of civil coexistence. On this basis, the individual's independence is expressed above all, in the affirmation of his own particular traits which make him a person amongst persons.

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