

Education in Multiculturality Education to Interculturality

In Ecclesiastical Institutions of Higher Education
and in Formation Communities
for Catholic Consecrated Life in Italy

Edited by
Enrica Ottone – Luca Pandolfi



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Enrica Ottone, Luca Pandolfi (eds.)
**EDUCATION IN MULTICULTURALITY
EDUCATION TO INTERCULTURALITY**
**In Ecclesiastical Institutions of Higher Education
and in Formation Communities for Catholic Consecrated Life in Italy**

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Front cover
Pavel Égüez, *Grito de los Excluidos*, mural en cerámica.
Cotacachi, Ecuador 2001
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“

Diversity always proves a bit frightening, for it challenges our securities and the status quo. [...] In the face of cultural, ethnic, political and religious diversity, we can either retreat into a rigid defense of our supposed identity, or become open to encountering others and cultivating together the dream of a fraternal society.

”

POPE FRANCIS

Speech to the Hungarian Episcopal Conference
Apostolic visit to Budapest, September 12, 2021

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Living in Multiculturality, Learning Interculturality in Catholic Higher Education

❖ Cristina Montoya



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Abstract

This paper presents the Sophia University Institute in Italy as a case study. From the analysis carried out and from what the students emphasised, it is clear that placing a circuit of mutual gifting at the centre of the educational project can give rise to a relationship of communion that forms the basis and foundation of intercultural dialogue. Starting from an experience of brotherhood there is then dialogue, mutual questioning and learning. This relationship becomes the very place of thinking that then favours the emergence and unfolding of one's identity, together with a more complex and richer vision of reality. This journey can be facilitated by participation in spaces and scenarios of meta-communication, marked by relationships of trust and symmetry, which offer everyone the reciprocal gift of the language with which they are able to reveal the uniqueness and treasures of their own culture, and able to make themselves understood by others. Finally, discovering oneself to be part of a broader historical project, such as that of universal brotherhood, and knowing oneself to be called to wisdom, as well as to knowledge, supplies greater meaning and strength with which to face the challenges that cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue entail.

Keywords

Converging identities – Communion – Educational pact – Interculturality – Meta-communication – Catholic Higher Education

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* Translated from the original
Italian by Polly Brooks

Introduction

The harsh experience of the limit has always presented itself to us in its dual valence of limen or limes, of frontier or threshold, of wound or slit¹. Opening up to diversity means breaking through the wall, opening up the horizon, risking the unprecedented possible in order to find, beyond the acrid taste of fear, the reasons for hope. Investing in an intercultural education certainly means recognising the intrinsic value of diversity, the possibility we are given by the other from a culture different from our own to discover aspects of reality that would escape us, but it is also humble and wise awareness that the questions, challenges and limits that the other, in his unfathomable otherness, will pose are a gift; limits that can become borders to cross in order to get to know new worlds, in growing awareness of the perennial incompleteness of our own thinking².

Intercultural education is an irreplaceable tool for social coexistence and for the formation of the individual in the understanding, appreciation and respect of different cultures and the plural, rich and multiple context in which they find themselves. It can also be a fundamental element in fostering the construction of societies that are more cohesive and more aware of the treasure that the great variety of cultures of which they are increasingly composed represents³.

1

A point of observation

These pages constitute a small part of the research on intercultural training in universities, and looks specifically at the experience of those charismatic and prophetic realities that have arisen in the bosom of the Catholic Church, which are the ecclesial and lay movements⁴. A particularly plural reality, that of the Focolare Movement⁵ with its global presence and 23 distinct vocations of all generations is, in the awareness of the differences between them, presented here as a case of analysis. One could say that the entire Focolare Movement can be seen as a single global pedagogical project, with one focus: “Learning to live together”⁶. Of particular interest is its fledgling university: the *Istituto Universitario Sophia* (IUS)⁷, in the province of Florence.

This paper brings together a plurality of voices, as it is intended to be anchored in the experience of the students and their words on the subject; it has therefore been left to them to highlight the discoveries and challenges that this second and third cycle educational pathway brings with it. We wish, however, to emphasise the awareness that this is a university still at the beginning of its life and therefore attended by small groups; but that perhaps, precisely at the root of the charismatic thrust from which it draws its origins, it allows us to glimpse hermeneutic traces and keys for re-thinking higher education from the perspective of interculturality.

Since its foundation in 2008, the Sophia University Institute has presented itself as an academic space where, on the one hand, the heritage of the Focolare’s educational experience in the world and, on the other, the work of schools of thought developed within it in the fields of politics, economics, social sciences and theology, converge. This makes it a university institution open to plurality, whose aim is to develop a path that combines life and thought, as the main way to encounter Wisdom. All this with an interdisciplinary approach (as a basis and goal), as demonstrated by the very nature of its first academic proposal whereby the only degree awarded was the Master’s Degree in the Culture of Unity. Despite the distinction of the individual disciplinary pathways, which arose subsequently, the first degree maintained a space of its own and the interdisciplinary approach spread to other areas.

Even though from the very first cohort it showed itself to be a multicultural academic community – given that the students come from all five continents – it could be

said that it is moving towards an educative ecology in the training of interculturality, not presenting it as a given, but as the very purpose of its institutional mission, so that it is able to “arouse and cultivate intercultural *formae mentis*”⁸; while still requiring constant updating and consequently to be expressed in the design of the programme of study, the composition of the teaching staff and in the spaces for academic discussion.

2

Astonishment⁹

The question of one’s own identity becomes pressing in the – often painful – experience of otherness: when one discovers another, close to oneself, an *other* who expresses themselves in a way that is difficult to understand, who acts in a different way, who tells a story of the world that begins with other words and gives priority to other names, or when their presence and their actions somehow lead one to question one’s own certainties.

The first experience is therefore one of surprise, astonishment or uncertainty; this is experienced at Sophia from the outset, both in the completely international daily life of the residencies, and in lessons. At the end of the course, and precisely during the defence of her degree thesis, A. from Burundi recounts: “during the first year of my master’s degree, in the intercultural communication class, the lecturer asked a Hungarian student whether she identified more with Hungarian nationality or with being a European citizen. Without hesitation, she replied: ‘I feel more European than Hungarian. This answer really shook me. The concept of identity had always been so narrow in my understanding of it and meant something close to me, a family, a nation and a culture. Europe seemed like a huge continent to me, which for my Hungarian classmate, was actually something close enough to signify her identity...!’”¹⁰.

From this the realisation that recognising the value of the other is what gives rise to the opening of the ‘door’ of our being. In fact, identity, that which gives meaning to existence and tends to bring out the inherent uniqueness of every human being, is fundamentally a relational fact, as is made clear by the intense words of Giuseppe Maria Zanghì: “The identity of me with myself I construct, therefore, in the relationship with the other. The diversity I have to cross to reach myself is not empty space, but is *others*. Without others I will never be myself”¹¹. In fact, the initial amazement gradually led A. not only to discover a new dimension of identity – as a world of dialogue that builds itself and reveals itself in encounter and acceptance – but also that dimension that Castells calls *planning*, as it allows one to ‘compose’ one’s own history¹². This experience has, in fact, led A. to direct their course of study, as well as their life commitment, in the work they have undertaken in favour of African integration and in the contribution they are making to it by building networks and training young leaders in the countries of that continent.

When the experience of interculturality becomes communitarised and shared throughout the academic community, it is noticeable how ‘convergent identities’ emerge, uniquenesses that, when faced with the risk of confrontation with otherness, instead of becoming entrenched in defence of its own identity, glimpse therein the relational space of the encounter:

“The fixed core on which this identity rests is not determined by a particular custom or symbolic manifestation, but by the force itself, the power that comes from the relationship. Everything can change, as long as the relationship remains. Not any relationship, but that which ranges from recognition to appreciation, to mutual giving”¹³.

3

At the centre is the relationship

The core of the educational proposal lies in placing the relationship at the centre, but not just any relationship; rather, a relationship of communion, in which knowledge, exchange and dialogue are then sought, in the awareness that for this to exist, as Donati states: “Cognitive, evaluative and symbolic operations are needed that are relational, and specifically capable of establishing a circuit of reciprocal gifts”¹⁴.

From the very first days at Sophia, a proposal is made that characterises the educational pact¹⁵. A pact that is signed by all the members of the academic community the moment they become part of it and that could be expressed in the following words of Chiara Lubich: “I felt that I was created as a gift of love for you and you were created as a gift of love for me”¹⁶. This entails being open to a positive relationality of mutual recognition and esteem, fostered by the places of meeting and listening and by academic life as a whole¹⁷. Identity dynamism is explained by a new grammar; in which, not only *I am because you are*, but *I am so that you may be*, and this forms the core of the relationship between all members: students, professors and staff, each in their own role¹⁸.

In addition to the personal commitment to a corresponding practice, the Pact is supported in particular by an exercise known to all as *Sharing*. Twice a week the academic community gathers, and from an initial cue – pages from Holy Scripture or wisdom texts from different cultures¹⁹, put forward and illustrated by one of the participants – each person has the opportunity to resonate with what they have heard, relating it to their own life, their experience or culture of origin, their religious background or the life of the Institute itself. In this way, teachers, students and staff foster a space for reciprocal listening, but above all they take the courage to make their own voices heard, breaking, in the realm of interpersonal relations, asymmetrical patterns that – if for no other reason than their roles – might prevail in an academic environment. Thus, in reciprocity and diversity, they have a transformational experience²⁰.

This same experience is recorded in the words of H., a Muslim, Yemeni student who recently obtained a doctorate in pedagogy:

“The most important aspect for me was the reciprocity with both the other students and the lecturers [...]. Being of the Islamic religion, this was particularly important for me, as I too was able to make my contribution through meeting and sharing. A contribution that was valued and welcomed as a positive contribution, just as it was valuable for me to listen to others, their thoughts and experiences, always with a view to mutual respect, knowledge and enrichment”²¹.

This reveals the fruitfulness of giving life to meeting spaces explicitly devoted to profound mutual knowledge²² and meta-communication²³, whose coordinates are symmetry, trust and the reciprocal gift of words.

4

Letting oneself be penetrated by the demands of the other

Learning the “*capacity for decentralisation*”: this implies as Portera indicates: “A serious investment in the area of empathy, understood as the capacity to put oneself in the other’s shoes (without losing oneself, but rather remaining in touch with oneself), congruence (internal and external) and unconditional *positive acceptance* (of oneself and of the other)”²⁴.

And in this regard we report here the voice of an Australian student: TG. She recounts her experience while participating in a meeting on the formation of human communities in the digital world: while the focus of the discussion on the digital age was emphasising the latest frontiers of artificial intelligence and questioning the

weight of technology in individualisation, and the issue of cyber security and privacy, some students from Madagascar had quietly introduced questions that seemed to her not to be random. These questions had aroused a certain unease in some participants. The questions were: “Where are the poor and the discarded in society in this vision we are being shown that looks like the big picture of the digital revolution?” Coming from a background in sociology and mass media studies, she allowed herself to be traversed by that question uttered almost in a whisper, and to be profoundly challenged by those views to the point of feeling it all so strongly that subsequently all her studies were focused on the theme of recognition in the digital world. From this encounter and deep, empathetic listening came the subject of her thesis in the political studies department: more than a category of thought, it was the need to recognise the vital experience that became the object of study.

Reciprocity gives rise to a communion that, in addition to qualifying the intercultural relationship, somehow becomes the locus of thought and enhances the re-signification – starting from this profound anthropological experience – of many concepts, but above all of the very reality of the world that surrounds us and that, through university studies, we want to look at and understand. That emerging relationship that arises from the encounter when what takes the floor is gifting and esteem, that ‘between’, that somehow defines the place of thinking²⁵.

Underlying this is something more than intercultural education: promoting a relationality that makes it possible to have a more complete and complex view of reality; encouraging – as Martha Nussbaum indicates – the development of a rationality that allows us to read the role of our nation in history, entails a better knowledge of ourselves²⁶; and in a “particular way a critical capacity and a propensity for self-criticism”²⁷; we can thus distinguish what is essential to our cultural practices, from what is superfluous, enabling a greater elaboration of our own tradition in its authenticity. Not, therefore, through an operation of reduction and analysis, but rather through an awareness of our common interdependence.

Openness to dialogue therefore implies openness to complexity, that is, to this way of looking at reality that keeps the different dimensions of existence linked, albeit distinct, and recognises that technology and care, development and history are intimately intertwined and must be looked at together; just as equal weight must be given to the multiple types of rationality and intelligence, sociability and management of relationships that characterise any given people, since culture is also and above all the way each human group relates to others, to itself, to God and to the cosmos, as well as the institutions, products and norms that flow from it.

5

Wisdom as a shared horizon²⁸

Another central element of intercultural education at Sophia University Institute is the shared search for a common horizon that is expected to emerge from the continuous interweaving of reflection, study and concretisation that leads to a manner of living that enlightens, and, in the words of the young Argentinean theologian Lucas Cerviño, “Gives form and ignition to a knowledge that springs from participation in the ultimate foundation of reality. It is therefore a knowledge that goes beyond a merely scientific or sensory knowledge, which involves the whole person”²⁹.

When the student representative, a young Belgian, was asked at the beginning of the academic year what the assumption that at Sophia thought and life are in mutual relationship meant to him, he expressed himself as follows:

“It is a continuous realisation that we are participating in a project that is bigger than ourselves, that goes beyond our limited way of looking at things (...) we learn to look at the relationships that were there before us and we learn to look

at the relationship as a horizon to be found in everything, in seeing the other, society and everyday life. The answer to the question of the encounter between life and thought is therefore not in the what, but in the how, and it is always to be re-discovered. Sophia teaches us that the encounter is always possible, it makes our eyes fresh and alert, in anticipation of the encounter that conceals a novelty, that wishes to narrate itself beyond the immediate and superficial limits that we sometimes find within us”³⁰.

Evident in this testimony is the development of what has been called relational reflexivity, i.e. in that one becomes capable of looking at the relationship, and of behaving with conscience towards it and taking care of it³¹.

Wisdom is thus presented as a horizon of meaning and a point of convergence. And as much as it can be an ongoing conquest, what Cerviño says is found to be true: “Intercultural dialogue can even become a spiritual experience, in the exchange of gifts, in openness to mystery, in intersubjective openness”³². because, as Pope Francis says, “when we experience the mystique of approaching others with the intention of seeking their good, we enlarge our interiority to receive the most beautiful gifts from the Lord”³³. Every time we encounter a human being in love, we put ourselves in a position to discover something new about God.

6

Prospects/challenges

If we affirm with Gardner that “intercultural education aims at the promotion of all the intelligences of all the pupils present in the classroom: body-kinesthetic, musical, social, interpersonal, intrapersonal-emotional, transcendental, aesthetic”³⁴, we cannot fail to recognise that our universities were born primarily in a European, Western, modern cultural matrix, centred in a type of rationality, in the verb, in writing, in transmission, individual-centred, and that, therefore, they still struggle to understand tribal or community-centred humans, symbolic and highly sensitive men and women; those who have what is known as spiral thinking and emotional intelligence; those who must use mainly images, tears and songs to express themselves.

In our view, what is needed are processes of training and reflexivity, new practices and new languages that run through the whole of teaching and that, for example, in performing evaluations take into account processes together with results; or, indeed, emphasise the connection between concepts and the life of society. Perhaps all this can be fostered if the multicultural dimension is more prominent within the teaching staff, the research groups, the staff, and if that reflectivity that makes the deepening of the intercultural dimension possible is promoted.

Conclusion

From the analysis carried out and from what the students emphasised, it is clear that placing a circuit of reciprocal gifting at the centre of the educational project can give rise to a relationship of communion that forms the basis and foundation of intercultural dialogue. We start from an experience of fellowship and then there is dialogue, reciprocal questioning and learning. This relationship becomes the very place of thinking that then favours both the manifestation and unfolding of one’s own identity, but also a more complex and richer vision of reality. This journey can be favoured by participation in spaces and scenarios of meta-communication, marked by relationships of trust and symmetry, which allow everyone the reciprocal gift of the word with which to reveal the uniqueness and treasures of one’s own culture, and make oneself known to others. Finally, discovering oneself to be part of a broader historical

project, such as that of universal brotherhood, and knowing oneself to be called to wisdom, as well as knowledge, provides more meaning and gives us the strength to face the challenges that cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue entail.

In conclusion, it seems illuminating to us to quote the words of the student representative again: “Both life and thought lead us to de-construct ‘useless’ constructs that we all hold at the level of personal life experiences, structures of thinking, cultural conditioning (...), things, which we discover to be burdensome and, at times, obstructive, until they are transformed by the encounter” so that we are convinced that it is precisely the university that is a privileged place for training in interculturality, and the case examined we believe has shown how higher education, characterised by a strong culture of encounter, does not only concern people, but the disciplines and cultures themselves.



Endnotes

1. “It is about discovering the meaning and forms of the limit in which one exists, of the limit that one is, in order to find in it and from it the way to the encounter – to which we are irresistibly called – with which/with whom one is beyond one’s own limit. Without the limit in which one exists being destroyed”. Translated from the Italian original: P. CODA, *Il limite come questione. Un’introduzione*, “Sophia. Ricerche sui fondamenti e la correlazione dei saperi” 3 (2011) 2, 157.
2. Cf. D. FARES, *Note per un pensiero ‘incompleto’*, “Civiltà Cattolica” (2022) I/4117, 82-89. It is becoming more and more evident today that “a true evangelical hermeneutic is needed in order to better understand life, the world, men, not a synthesis but a spiritual atmosphere of research and certainty based on the truths of reason and faith. Philosophy and theology allow one to acquire the convictions that structure and fortify the intelligence and enlighten the will... but all this is fruitful only if one does it with an open mind and on one’s knees. The theologian who is complacent in his complete and concluded thought is mediocre. The good theologian and philosopher has an open, i.e. incomplete, thought, always open to the maius of God and truth, always developing, according to that law that St Vincent of Lérins describes in this way: ‘*Annis consolidetur, dilatetur tempore, sublimetur aetate*’”, “*Commonitorium primum*” 23, PL 50, 668 in FRANCESCO, *Veritatis gaudium*, (29/1/2018), n. 3.
3. Cf. UNESCO, *Investing in cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue*, Paris, UNESCO, 2009 [https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000184755].
4. “By their practice, charismatic gifts can generate affinities, proximity and spiritual kinship through which the charismatic heritage, starting from the person of the founder, is shared and deepened, giving rise to true spiritual families. Ecclesial aggregations, in their various forms, present themselves as shared charismatic gifts. Ecclesial movements and new communities show how a specific original charism can aggregate the faithful and help them to fully live their Christian vocation and their state of life in the service of the ecclesial mission”. Translated from the Italian original: G. MÜLLER, *Lettera Iuvenescit Ecclesia ai Vescovi della Chiesa cattolica sulla relazione tra doni gerarchici e carismatici per la vita e la missione della Chiesa*, (15/5/2016), n. 16. “The character of a ‘movement’ distinguishes them in the ecclesial panorama as strongly dynamic realities, capable of generating a particular interest in the Gospel and proposing an idea of Christian life, that would involve every aspect of human existence. The aggregation of the faithful and an intense sharing of existence, in the pursuit of an increased life of faith, hope and charity, well expresses the ecclesial dynamic as mystery of communion for the mission and manifests itself as a sign of the unity of the Church in Christ. In this sense, these ecclesial aggregations, arising from a shared charism, tend to have as their purpose ‘the general apostolic purpose of the Church’”, translated from the Italian original: *ibid.*, n. 2.
5. Approved in 1962 under the official name Work of Mary, it has spread to over 180 countries with over 2 million adherents. The message it wants to bring to the world is that of unity. The goal is therefore to cooperate in building a more united world, driven by Jesus’ prayer to the Father “that they may all be one” (Jn 17:21), while respecting and valuing diversity. And to achieve this goal, dialogue is favoured, in the constant effort to build bridges and relationships of brotherhood between individuals, peoples and cultural spheres. Cf. https://www.focolare.org/chisiamo/; https://archive.is/jgbE7.
6. J. DELORS, *Learning: the Treasure within; Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century*, 1996, 81.
7. “The Istituto Universitario Sophia (IUS) [Sophia University Institute] is an expression of the Work of Mary (Focolare Movement), born in 1943 thanks to the impulse of Chiara Lubich (1920-2008) and now present throughout the world thanks to the adhesion of people of all ages, social strata, cultures, states of life and professions. The vast and consolidated current of life and thought animated by the Work of Mary draws on the ‘charism of unity’, an original illustration and incarnation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in the history of our time. This charism has shown itself to be

singularly effective, from the very beginning and over the years, in its integral and unified promotion of the person in his constitutive relationship with God, with his brothers and sisters, and with nature. Hence, in particular, the commitment to build bridges of encounter and places of communion between persons, peoples and cultures in the perspective of the unity invoked by Jesus in the prayer addressed to the Father in the imminence of his passion, and towards which, he himself became the universal path of realisation through the abysmal stripping endured in the abandonment on the cross". P. CODA, *The 'Sophia' University Institute: Project and Programme*, "Sophia. Research on the Foundations and Correlation of Knowledge" 1 (2008) 2.

8. Translated from the Italian original: H. GARDNER, *Formae mentis. Saggio sulla pluralità dell'intelligenza* [Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences], Feltrinelli, Milano 1987, 132.
9. "According to Plato and Aristotle, 'astonishment' (thaûma, in Greek) is – famously – the attitude from which philosophy is born: that is, all knowledge and any decision that risks taking on a new beginning in terms of the experience and interpretation of Truth and the transformation of historical reality in the light of that Truth", translated from the Italian original: P. CODA, *Chiara Lubich: Discorso inaugurale di Sophia. Analisi e interpretazione, "Sophia Ricerche sui fondamenti e la correlazione dei saperi"* 2 (2013) 187.
10. A. KANANIRA, *Political Communication in Enhancing East African Collective Identity: Promotion of Swahili in Burundi and Uganda as Case Study*, Sophia University Institute, Loppiano (FI) 2021. As UNESCO points out: "There has been a tendency to equate cultural diversity with the diversity of national cultures. Yet national identity is to some extent a construction, grounded in a sometimes reconstructed past and providing a focus for our sense of commonality. Cultural identity is a more fluid, self-transforming process, to be seen less in terms of a past inheritance than of a future project. In a globalizing world, cultural identities often derive from multiple sources; the increasing plasticity of cultural identities reflects the growing complexity of the globalized flows of people, goods and information" (UNESCO, *Investing in Cultural Diversity*, 9).
11. Translated from the Italian original: G.M. ZANGHÌ, *Identità e dialogo*, "Nuova Umanità" 4-5 (1979) 13.
12. Cf. M. CASTELLS, *Il potere dell'identità*, trad. it. di G. PANNOFINO, Università Bocconi Editore – EGEA, Milano 2014.
13. Translated from the Italian original: A.C. MONTOYA, *In-Comunicazione. Una prospettiva generativa e relazionale*, Città Nuova, Roma 2021, 156.
14. Translated from the Italian original: P. DONATI, *Oltre il multiculturalismo. La ragione relazionale per un mondo comune*, Laterza, Lecce 2008, 134.
15. Cf. C. LUBICH, *Inaugural speech at the Sophia summer school "Per una cultura dell'unità"*, "Sophia. Ricerche sui fondamenti e la correlazione dei saperi" 1 (2008) 18.
16. C. LUBICH, *The Spirituality of Unity and Trinitarian Life*. Conferral of an Honorary Doctorate in Theology to Chiara by the University of Trnava in Slovakia, 23/6/2003.
17. "The Institute's formation project envisages, as a priority, that study and daily life should meet and blend harmoniously together, so that one can access both scientifically educated knowledge (but made sapiential by being grafted into life nourished by the Gospel) and the intensity of wisdom (but developed by scientific research in the various articulations of knowledge). The intent being to overcome the risk of an education that is not also – and first and foremost – integral formation of the person. This is why the cycle of studies is inseparably divided into founding moments of life experiences in the light of the charism of unity and into lessons that are both theoretical and practical. The two moments refer to each other reciprocally: the lessons arise from the spaces opened up by the life experience of unity and this acquires its strength as a cultural proposal in the moment, theoretical and practical, proposed in the lessons", *ibid.*, 8.
18. Analysing Lubich's inaugural address, Coda emphasises: "You will therefore find yourselves to be, as Jesus wishes, equal among all, brothers. This is the Trinitarian relationship that is established, through mutual love, between teachers and students. It is not a uniform, undifferentiated equality: precisely because it is a 'Trinitarian' relationship, like that which exists between the Father and the Son in the Holy Trinity. "The teachers", Chiara explains, "will be like the Father and you like the Son. You will therefore have to let yourselves be 'generated' by them, but you will also have to respond with your love", P. CODA, *Chiara Lubich*, 200.

19. From the words of Pope Francis at the audience with the IUS: "For us Christians, Wisdom is Jesus crucified and risen, but his light illuminates all men (cf. Jn 1:9): all religions, all cultures, all authentic exercises of humanity". Address of the Holy Father Francis to the academic community of the "Sophia" University Institute of Loppiano, (14/11/2019), (https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2019/november/documents/papa-francesco_20191114_loppiano-univ-sophia.html; <https://archive.is/YQaje>).
20. The intercultural training processes at the IUS have a crucial agent, created specifically for the construction of an intercultural academic community, Community Life. It is a working group with its own office which is always open and at the service of the students, and which accompanies their training process in an integrative manner, taking particular account of the aspect of living the experience that each person has in his or her own residence while sharing time and space with people from different nations; but not only that, it also generates scenarios and spaces for interaction, offering the entire academic community moments of mutual understanding.
21. H. ALSAKKAF, *Esperienza a Sophia*, (9/11/2021).
22. "Thus the development of intercultural competencies should not be limited to the classroom but must extend to the 'university of life'" (UNESCO, *Investing in Cultural Diversity*, 17).
23. "In order to acquire a certain intercultural cognitive competence, it is necessary to put meta-communicative processes into practice. It is necessary to metacommunicate. That is, to be able to explain what we mean when we say something. In intercultural communication, pre-suppositions or assumptions have to be explained. This leads to a communication that is certainly less agile. However, in any case, a stricter control over the interpretation of others is indispensable. We should not take for granted that our interlocutor will interpret our message in accordance with the meaning we give it", translated from the Spanish original M. ALSINA, *Comunicación intercultural*, Anthropos, Barcelona 1999, 239.
24. Translated from the Spanish original: A. PORTERA – M. MILANI (eds.), *Competenze interculturali e successo formativo. Sviluppo di un modello nel contesto universitario*, Edizioni ETS, Bologna 2019, 132.
25. Cf. M. MARIANELLI, *Il luogo dell'Entre: una via per ripensare la modernità*, in ID. (ed), "Entre". *La relazione oltre il dualismo metafisico*, Città Nuova, Roma, 2020, VI.
26. Cf. M.C. NUSSBAUM, *Los límites del patriotismo*, Paidós, Barcelona 1996.
27. COUNCIL OF EUROPE, *White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. Living Together with Equal Dignity*, 2 May 2008.
28. Translated from the Italian original: "It is interesting to note that by resolutely indicating Wisdom as the aim and main object of the school, Chiara in fact enacts a sort of peaceful revolution that brings the university back to its original inspiration [...]. It is a change of axis and intention, which questions the commitment of the professors and that of the students at the root. First one must teach and learn Wisdom, then the various disciplines: or rather, the two must go hand in hand, and never one without the other. One studies, yes, the various disciplines, but the horizon, the source and the ultimate goal of everything must be Wisdom" (P. CODA, *Chiara Lubich* 192).
29. Translated from the Italian original: L. CERVIÑO, *Vangelo, pluralismo e dialogo interculturale*, "Nuova Umanità".
30. A. SIMON, Intervento in occasione della visita della Vice Gran Cancelliere presso lo IUS, Loppiano, novembre 2021.
31. Cf. A.C. MONTOYA, *Comunicazione ed enigma della relazione*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2019, 1.
32. Translated from the Italian original: CERVIÑO, *Vangelo, pluralismo e dialogo interculturale*, 69.
33. FRANCESCO, Esortazione Apostolica, *Evangelii Gaudium*, Città del Vaticano 24/11/2013, n. 272.
34. GARDNER, *Formae*, 132.