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**





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 (Photograph by Luca Pandolfi, 2007)

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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.

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

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Intercultural Education in Chile

A Critical Approach from Intercultural Philosophy*

Lorena Zuchel Lovera



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Abstract

This text will address the importance of interculturality within the social and political context of Chile, and then expand to demonstrate the challenges that arise in every place where cultural diversity is a daily fact. These challenges will be approached philosophically and then the text will venture a definition of intercultural philosophy that critically considers current relationships involving spaces of recognition of cultures in those territories where native peoples (as in Africa or America) have been made invisible or where the spread of migration in recent decades necessitates relationships that are far from being truly human. From here, interculturality will be presented as an object of philosophy followed by the presentation of some key ideas for critically advancing towards spaces where we are ready to recognize ourselves.

Keywords

Intercultural education – Intercultural philosophy – Chilean education – Object of philosophy - Recognition.

Lorena Zuchel Lovera, PhD in Philosophy at the University of Deusto, Spain, has taught Philosophy at several Chilean Universities and is currently an academic and researcher at the Technical University "Federico Santa María" of Chile. Her main research field is the philosophy of Ignacio Ellacuría and intercultural philosophy. She has written several scientific articles and co-edited the books: Contrabandos: Escrituras y Políticas en la frontera entre Bolivia y Chile (2016), La universidad chilena en los albores del siglo XX: Conceptos y experiencias (2016), Des-Hechos: lo que no se ve de lo tecnológico como desafío (2017) and Interculturalidad y Reconocimiento: escritos interdisciplinares (2019).

^{*} Translated from the original Spanish by Kathryn Baecht

There is a crack that greets and illuminates us, let us move forward through it, let us discover the wound, let us navigate its sores, let us find new paths between the scars toward the sea.

Elisa Loncón, 20211



The context of this paper

n October 25, 2020, a national plebiscite was held in Chile to determine if the citizens were in favor of beginning a constituent process to draft a new Constitution for the country. The plebiscite was preceded by approximately one hundred protests throughout the entire national territory the year before; protests that indicated the urgency to incorporate social rights into the Constitution – rights such as health, education, decent housing, a pension system, and the right to water, among others. These came amid demands also for recognition and the necessity for a change of direction in relationships between humans and with the ecosystem; specifically the recognition of indigenous peoples and along with that recognition, not simply a mention in the constitution, already present in other Latin American Constitutions without a decisive result², but the demand for the incorporation of seats representative all of the surviving indigenous peoples into the general drafting process of the fundamental charter. This implies their presence in the discussion of the political regime, the form of state, the justice system, constitutional principles, the economic model, and environmental or fundamental rights, among others, thereby including diverse visions and cultural practices in a form unprecedented in the country, as it would be that: 1) this discussion or dialogue be made with (or between) the different peoples, and 2) this discussion would form part of each of the axes that would support coexistence in the country. In effect, this grand table of 155 people elected to draft the new Constitution, known as the Constitutional Convention, was not only comprised of those who are recognized as Chilean, but also by representatives of the Mapuche, Aymara, Rapa Nui, Quechua, Lican Antay, Diaguita, Colla, Kawashkar, Chango and Yagán, indigenous peoples of the territory that today we call Chile.

Why begin with this small narration (conjunctural) within the framework of this paper? Because this is understood; it makes sense within the course of a series of dialogues that we have carried out in congresses, classes, studies, and writings that have tried to reveal in a critical way the paradoxes of Chilean reality, trying to make visible the importance of interculturality and recognition within the framework of the historical demands of the peoples themselves. In response to these demands, intercultural education has acted as a key space in recent decades, and we have to recognize that progress has been made on that long road, but in the scenario in which we find ourselves today, it is encouraging to be able to review and possibly reformulate the ideas that have unilaterally given rise to alternatives and regulations, opening the possibility of redistribution of power and access to a just system that ensures the dignity of life.

There is no doubt that coexistence and dialogue are some of the challenges that we have in the world today; Chile has not been the exception. Since the nineties, the idea of multiculturality and interculturality has been taken up by diverse governments in order to implement policies that contribute to the bridging of cultures; the reasons for this timeline have long been recorded: of key importance was the commemoration of the 500th anniversary of what has tended to be called and taught as the "Discovery of America", which bore demands of resistance from the original peoples; on the other hand, the increase of migration, with its geopolitical justifications and, similarly, the expansion of a neoliberal-globalization project on a global scale. In Chile, the nineties were also inaugurated with the restoration of democracy after 17 years of

military dictatorship; and in that process of hope - as presidential candidates were put forth (among whom would be the first president elected) - certain agreements were committed to with indigenous organizations that aligned with the recently enacted ILO Convention No. 169 concerning indigenous and tribal peoples through the New Imperial Agreement. These commitments (an elaboration of a legal framework for the development of indigenous peoples, constitutional recognition, and ratification of the aforementioned Convention No. 169) concentrated for a long time on the enactment of a single indigenous law that created the National Corporation for Indigenous Development (known as CONADI in Spanish), which remains in force to this day and whose mission has tried to promote, coordinate, and execute the law of the state in favor of the integral development of indigenous peoples and communities. The Convention No. 169 was ratified almost twenty years later (in 2008) and yet still has not achieved constitutional recognition. Since 2008 a series of measures have been implemented with the purpose of compensating the historical debt to those peoples, but also promoting recognition; but these promises, written in the opening pages of various government ministries, have done nothing more than discursively undertake a series of challenges without truly incorporating the different communities in the decisions that involve them. From there, even though talk of multiculturality or even interculturality has come into fashion³, there has been no real and necessary advance of intercultural recognition.



On interculturality as an object of philosophy

In the nineties, intercultural philosophy began to be spoken of in earnest, this appeared, as Raúl Fornet-Betancourt wrote in 1994, as "the historical alternative to undertaking the transformation of existing ways of thinking"4; that is to say, as he would write a year later, to invite us to assume the challenges of the times, moving from a thought that thinks and rethinks its tradition towards a thought that, knowing that there is not thought without tradition, invites one to make "their" tradition. On the other hand, it was a philosophy open to dialogue between cultures that critically examines the question of why it thinks as it thinks in order to make explicit the monocultural bias of its main concepts⁵. Among the meetings that emerged this decade, we find the International Congress of Intercultural Philosophy whose first event was held in Mexico City between March 6 and 10, 1995. Raimon Panikkar opened the event. In his lecture he presented interculturality as "the philosophical imperative of our time" because it had already become a fashionable concept and necessary to defend as a critical space, but also because he understood it as that which makes of philosophy a place of questioning about questions, that allows the perennial problematization of life and the world, forcing the movement of concepts and philosophy itself away from a simple experiment - how it is to approach ourselves, look at ourselves, and listen to ourselves and towards - towards themselves. Days later, another speaker, Josef Estermann, defined intercultural philosophy as an ongoing fact, as an experience lived voluntarily and of necessity in many parts of the world through migration⁷. Next, Dina Picotti demonstrated that interculturality gave philosophy a necessary challenge. This was demonstrated at the referred to meeting from the experience of abandonment and marginalization experienced in the American continent, but also in those situations common to any country that lives the negativity of different logics and ways of thinking arising from different languages and ways of knowing, of organization, of economics, and also of ethical sense and spirituality8.

As can be seen, the first congress of intercultural philosophy was inaugurated with the assimilation of a purpose from the movement, the experience, the questions, and actions that describe interculturality as a process open to diversity and novelty. The work of reflection that was inaugurated there has continued to be carried out in meet-

ings held every two years for total of 13, and even though there are new faces and themes, the objectives remain current. We know that it is not easy to move these ideas into government policies, for example into educational policies, because it is a critical gamble to understand that what may seem the best and most secure is possibly not, or isn't for everyone; from there, as the Chilean philosopher José Santos, "interculturality is always a risk, a bet: there is no insurance nor previous measures that guarantee a result"9.

In a 1981 text entitled, "The Object of Philosophy" Ignacio Ellacuría, a Basque-Salvadorean who was murdered in 1989, wrote that, "in difference to other ways of knowing, philosophy, in particular, is characterized by having an initial vagueness"10. Indeed, philosophy – we are told – in difference to the sciences for example, does not desire to identify an object in order to possess it, for in that act it becomes a "latent and fugitive" object, ephemeral and - rescued from a text by Zubiri in 1933 - "a useless passion"11. No, even if we were to realize at the end of a journey that we have still not finished, and therefore that finishing is not possible, "your own failure would in reality say much more than what other successes claim to say" 12. Seen this way, to refer to the object of philosophy will be to refer to all of that which is happening in historical reality¹³ and that practicing, which is a gerund, permits us to open ourselves to the possibility of the other. It is, it seems, fitting to accept the vagueness, the difficult work in a culture accustomed to domination. But the acceptance of the fugitive invites us to a passionate labor that not only contrasts concepts and theories, but also experiences and biographies, calls to criticism and creation; a criticism no longer purely academic but involved in reality. Because this, the place of enunciation - as it has been called by various Latin American philosophers - has become of radical importance, therefore there is no reality without context, there is no reality without history and without roots, that is, without, "a way of life from which one thinks" 14.

This was also stated on several occasions by the Chilean philosopher Humberto Giannini because for him philosophy could not be far from all the things that make the subject-philosopher what he is; that is: without everyday praxis¹⁵. For his part, the Argentinian Arturo Andrés Roig employed the term "a priori anthropological" 16 precisely to show that before all thought there is a cultural subject living the contingencies, their contexts; and that is precisely what makes it valuable 17.

However, to present interculturality as an aim of philosophy is to recognize diverse places, contexts, and subjects with the challenge of being able to access mutual recognition. In 2015, the German publishing house that has also published the minutes of the aforementioned congresses, published a book that commemorated and gave an account in an "institutionalized" way of the thirty years of work of intercultural philosophy (the institutional is emphasized since, as pointed out in that text, the experience of intercultural philosophy can be traced back to the beginnings of philosophy itself). Said book, entitled Zur Geschichte und Entwicklung der interkulturellen Philosophie (History and Development of Intercultural Philosophy), was written between various and diverse representatives of intercultural philosophy, which – as indicated by the Argentinian philosopher Alcira Bonilla - demonstrated the breadth of the movement and the will to "find historical antecedents for this way of understanding philosophy, to give an account of the languages in which that philosophy is written, of its canon (the authors to whom they turn), of its problems, and of its necessary link with the historical-cultural context 18. These texts showed a certain intention of intercultural philosophy or of those who have dedicated themselves to it as an issue of great relevance, but avoided the temptation to assume it to be the fashion that Raimon Panikkar warned of at the beginning of the International Congresses, and that Bonilla also highlights; we refer to the temptation to use the term and the efforts of so many as a sign of activity functional 19 for globalization and / or the difficult encounters between "some" and "others". In effect, it is a question of assuming the philosophical difficulty posed by the question of recognition and the encounter "be-

tween" traditions, which would provoke by the act various responses and positions. This dislocation, which we would call, "historical reality" in Ellacuría, is nothing but an open historical reality - the height of plural realities, diverse and different; just as, following Ram Adhar Mall, the values of this intercultural philosophy²⁰ are values that allow us to no longer speak of a universal philosophy, but, we believe, of the characteristics of a praxis that makes possible the "universality of horizons", since - as Bonila explains - we would no longer say, "'this is universal' but 'this is universal for us' and from there we launch ourselves into a dialogue"21, a dialogue of traditions.

Moreover, how to move towards the relation between traditions, from places of enunciation, of everyday life, without passing over the other, without imposing codes or rules in order to start relations? In these meetings, various alternatives have been given. The Chilean José Santo raised it in the following way in From Latin American to African philosophy: Clues for an Intercultural Philosophical Dialogue: "If a dialogue requires a prior regulation that makes it possible, where does it come from? Which of the future participants proposes it or imposes it?"22. And it is not easy to start a relationship without rules because to make those rules an agreement that was previously agreed to is needed, and so forth it goes backwards... or forwards; the problem would be settled by someone who decides, but if that is precisely what is at stake, the solution would be an example of the problem in question. The aporia described and debated in several of these congresses of interculturality ceases to be a problem if we stop presenting it as a logical-scientific one and we see it from the point of view of the experience that it provides historical reality and nothing more, since, in effect, intercultural dialogue about the object of philosophy, as described by Ellacuría, maintains its initial vagueness, and in this case, following Panikkar, we cannot know a priori if we are going to understand each other, but from the experience of having understood each other²³, one must say, along with Santos that, "intercultural dialogue presents as a space, a terrain of meeting and possible un-meeting, where the participants can arrive at understanding or not. Interculturality is always a risk, a gamble: there is no insurance nor previous measures that guarantee a result"24.

The key to establishing dialogues and encounters that do function has been the will, the disposition to approach, to know each other and recognize each other. From there we can venture to say that this simple action that some call "disposition" is the motor of interculturality, and it is a motor of philosophy, in so much as it permits us to be attentive to historical reality, to the multiple and various forms of reality. As Victoria González Prada proposes, it is necessary to newly cultivate this disposition to learn and to think; that is to say, to begin by recognizing our intercultural illiteracy and return to school so to speak, in order to read the world and our own history through the different literacies the diversity of cultures offer us²⁵. Without that, philosophy will have to speak in the abstract for a subject that does not exist.



Intercultural Education in Chile

ince 2010, educational establishments in Chile have been obligated to incorpo-Orate into their curriculum a minimum of one course entitled Indigenous Language (designed for Aymara, Mapudungún, Quechua and Rapa Nui languages). This alternative is offered at those sites where more than 20% of students are of indigenous descent²⁶. In 2017, according to the Ministry of Education in Chile, out of the 9335 establishments that included these students in their classrooms²⁷, 1,500 offered this course. The four-hour weekly course is given by a traditional educator who is responsible for imparting cultural and linguistic knowledge to the students of the establishment. The idea is to center the course on the rehabilitation of the historic present through the use and comprehension of the words in their respective languages, not presenting – as was done for decades – the history of these peoples as identities from the past but focusing on the current activities of the community. However, this instance presents at least three difficulties that I would like to highlight: in relation to place and context, on memory, and on immigration.

3.1 On place and context

The implementation of the aforementioned intentions cannot be achieved without feedback from the context that accompanies what the traditional educator does.

Although the willingness of some directors and families manages to encourage spaces with a commitment to interculturality, preparing appropriate sites for cultural ceremonies and other emblematic places for the imparting of tradition, as well as workshops and activities that are added to the official curriculum to reinforce the commitment to language and traditions, these are not enough to accompany the process since it depends completely on the will and availability of the communities, even more so when the national reality is not prepared to accompany them. This issue can be noted in the absence of an intercultural curriculum that encourages the general disposition of other school professionals, this due to the lack of adequate programs in the curricula of the country's pedological professions. For example, what from their respective subjects makes a math professor or professor of music or Castellano incorporate themselves into the intercultural dialogue in their school? Some schools inserted in the Mapuche communities, for example, allow the indigenous language course to be taught in a ruka (Mapuche house made with materials extracted directly from nature and usually in a circular shape) while other subjects are carried out in a" traditional" classroom that is usually built of concrete and square in shape. From this experience, a traditional Mapuche educator commented:

"The Mapuche has his kimün, 'knowledge', the other way around. The Mapuche does not have a square kimün like the corner of this house; it is not like that. The Mapuche has a round kimün, in the shape of a circle, so that is what we change here with lamngen María Isabel (mentor teacher). We must see if we can twist the hand, but not all at once, because we have to pass the plans and programs"28.

How to activate plans and programs are not the only processes that need to be understood in the transmission of the objectives promulgated in these state programs on intercultural education in Chile, but also a series of processes of management of ethnic differences. Among these, certain issues that seem non-negotiable allude to the education that traditional educators have received. Thus, the latter are chosen by the educational community and the families from the recognition of the wisdom that members of the community possess about their own traditions; ideas that are difficult to insert in the System of Competencies incorporated in recent decades in the Chilean education system, as also has been done in the rest of the world. Hence, stories such as those exemplified by the following case study appear:

"The intercultural competencies of the traditional educator of the ELI (School with Indigenous Language) are different. She has been described by educational actors as a great expert in the Mapuche culture and language, facets that motivated her election for the position. However, the director indicated that to practice teaching she still lacks mastery over non-Mapuche educational elements predominant in the teaching logic of this school, which is why he has encouraged the educator to finish her secondary education and, in that way, will be able to link both types of knowledge"29.

The need for educators to know the global system of education that is present in all schools, along with the methods and the global language, is evidence of an act of

insertion in a general system of teaching that the State of Chile has adopted from principally European contexts, accommodating the language of codes of teaching to the international requirements. On the other hand, those spaces demonstrate the need for translation of the traditional educator to the rest of the teaching staff, in such a way as to be considered and evaluated by the indicators established by the system. This action also happens in other Latin American spaces. On this, the author Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui comments:

"One time I told these "friends of the Indians" that they should no longer talk about the Indians, but with the Indians in their language, because the detail is in the linguistic asymmetry. If the one who has to translate to make their self understood is the indigenous person, then there is never really going to be a dialogue of equals. The Mestizo Creole should also be translated into Aymara or Quechua for the Indians, or a permanent simultaneous translation service should be available in public forums at least"30.

3.2 The past and memory

In the opening speech of the chairperson of the Constitutional Convention in Chile, the Mapuche academic (elected to a reserved seat by the native peoples), Elisa Loncón, highlighted the history, memory, and collective biography that representatives of the native peoples, but also the rest of the constituents of the convention, with their own cracks and pains and dreams, carry to this important meeting. In this speech, she said:

"When the people of my pueblo show up, they speak of those who have departed, of our elders. This is what we call kypalme. We also speak of the territories of origin the country of childhood, what we call tuwvn. In these last few days, I have been able to hear, dear constituents, the kvpalme and the tuwvn from each of you. How beautiful this palace sounds with all of our ancestors, with all of our territories, with all of our memories"31.

Loncón gave her speech in Mapuzungún, the Mapuche language. The first day, the representatives of the indigenous peoples defended speaking in their own languages; and so it was done, using translators that have even included sign language. It was important for her to make the past present, since there is no present in her culture without the traditions and the contexts that allow the emergence of words. The hope that is expected today in the drafting of the Constitution arises from the pain and wounds that illuminate dreams. "There is a crack that greets and illuminates us, let us move forward through it, let us discover the wound, let us navigate its sores, let us find new paths between the scars towards the sea"32.

Elisa Loncón continued her story by giving examples of the past to explain the present: children who until recently were punished until bleeding in their schools for speaking Mapuzungún, children who, when they grew up, took care of their children by inserting them into the official educational system for fear of being discriminated against. Hence, we need an intercultural education that can account for the debts of the past, of memory, in order to identify the realities that constitute what we call reality or the universe; and that rescues traditions in order to think and exist with these historic *presents* that make traditions.

We maintain, however, that an intercultural education cannot be focused on or directed to only those who seem diverse (different), but on the contrary, it must be directed towards the entire school system, public and private, because to the extent that we manage to unpin diversity from otherness, progress can be made in understanding that we are all diverse in multiple dimensions, and in this sense, to construct spaces of equality and recognition.

3.3 **Immigrants**

Intercultural schools must also tackle the challenge of immigration; however, the laws of Chilean education have not updated their measures for foreign children and adolescents (NNA in Spanish) and their recognition in the classroom. The challenge continues - after a decade of sustained waves of south-south immigration that has situated us among the countries with the largest growth of immigrants - to be whether these children can exercise the simple right to education. This situation occurs because they are poor children, and therefore, children who, although they can attend school, need their parents to carry out migration regularization so that they may have their level of advancement recognized and to promote them in their courses; without this it is impossible to access benefits. However, studies show that the main problems in these spaces are not these, but ones that pertain to the situation of discrimination which the students suffer daily from school professionals, from their friends or friends' families, based on the ascription of inferiority, such as the assignment of stereotypes and gender discrimination; ideas bound in the Chilean imagination, which has built racial categories in which being white-European has become a fundamental element for the symbolism of the nation and the distinction of classes and positions of power³³. "You are improving the race", the current president of Chile said a few years ago to a dark-haired woman carrying a blonde child³⁴. About this, the sociologist María Emilia Tijoux indicates that: "Moralizing speech is socially correct, but it does not change habits, and therefore, does not touch the deeper structures in which are sheltered violence against foreigners that seem dangerous"35.



On the dignity of life

What has been reported so far implies what Steffoni and Corvalán describe as the distance between theory and practice. There are studies that highlight models of schools, recognizing critical exclusionary, assimilationist, multicultural, or intercultural types³⁶, but even the latter, which attempts to confront the challenges with the principles of social justice and human dignity, is faced with the reality of the educational establishments without plans and concrete activities, nor policies of real recognition³⁷ that bet on the dignity of people. Most of the achievements depend on the willingness of the directors or teachers who find themselves involved in some of these projects.

Hence, intercultural philosophy continues to be an imperative of our time; this implies contradicting the ideas of what it is to be Chilean, of citizenship, of legality of nation, that generate exclusion and pain. As Raúl Fornet-Betancourt indicates, there is a need for an intercultural dialogue that affirms, "The pre-political fundamentalness of the dignity of the human being who has not been awarded a passport. Their 'credential' is their corporeal human reality38;" and from there, from the anthropological gamble - he added - will arise the challenge of weaving new principles that gamble on an intercultural legal status. This is the challenge that the Constitutional Convention in Chile has today, although, we know it is a challenge not only presented in Chile. Intercultural Philosophy invites us to practice a contextual anthropology that takes care of reality, carrying it, that is to say, easing the burden of those who have it the hardest in leading the way on the path to being human; as Raúl Fornet-Betancourt says, through hospitality and coexistence, through affection and tenderness, and we may add, through condolences for having to travel without wanting to, for having to learn a language by force, and for praying to an unknown god. A critical approach by intercultural philosophy to the events that still afflict us as humanity today means moving from tolerance to "seeing in others a source to enrich one's own world", which is "a practice of welcome and justice at the same time" 39.



Endnotes

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- Cf. L. Zuchel H. Samour, Para una interculturalidad critica, Reflexiones desde Raúl Fornet Be-2. tancourt e Ignacio Ellacuría, "Hybris, Revista de Filosofía", Numero Especial: Debates contemporáneos sobre Justicia Social, 9 (2018) I, 75-98.
- 3. I recommend the previously cited text, written together with the professor Héctor Samour of the Central American University UCA El Salvador, in which the emphasis on teaching the English language in order to participate in the international framework along with the constitutional recognition of the original peoples stands out as an intercultural measure of his country.
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