A Reflection on Identities, Culture Models and Power

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Abstract

We reflect on interrelationship patterns between cultures and identities, first focusing on what we mean by culture and then analysing four cultural models — monocultural, multicultural, intercultural and transcultural and their impact on identity construction. Pointing to the dangers of the monocultural model that promotes essentialist and homogenizing identity classifications, we discuss the specific weight of national identity in the multicultural paradigm. We also describe the fundamental characteristics of the intercultural perspective and the view of identities understood as a result of cultural hybridization. We conclude by considering a proposal for a transcultural perspective.

Keywords: *monocultural model, multiculturalism, interculturalism, transcultural model, identity, hybridization*

Introduction

One could easily say that the history of humankind is one of interculturalism. In other words, cultures have always communicated when different communities have come into contact. Even so, the concept of intercultural communication is a relatively recent one. In fact, it was not until 1959 that an anthropologist, the American Edward T. Hall, described the concept of "intercultural communication" in his famous work *The Silent Language*. Although we do not explore the historical context that gave rise to the concept and its subsequent consolidation as an object of study (Rodrigo 1999), we do note that this change of perspective regarding the phenomenon of cultural diversity and the resulting relationships had become necessary. The shift in perspectives arose from a changed vision regarding the dominant model, i.e., in how people saw themselves as members of a community, how they viewed members of other communities and what kinds of interactions resulted from these perspectives. Cultural frameworks are not only worldviews that help explain reality; they also help build personal frameworks of meaning, i.e., of identity. We therefore reflect on and explore the relationships established in four possible models of understanding culture and their implications for identity, namely, the monocultural, multicultural, intercultural and transcultural models. We move away from the cross-cultural tradition that emphasizes the comparison of cultures to focus, instead, on an intercultural perspective. We especially explore interpersonal conflicts between people with different cultural referents and the knowledge needed to understand the roots of conflicts and resolve them.

Culture and the personal production of meaning

Edgar Morin, in *L'esprit du temps. Essai sur la culture de masse,* defined culture as a complex body of rules, symbols, myths and images that penetrate the privacy of individuals, structure their instincts and direct their emotions (Morin 1962). This definition clearly signals the role of culture in the construction of individual identities. Later, Morin (1975) further developed the concept of culture, referring to it as a

framework for the production of meaning by individuals, which, at the same time, feeds and reinforces their sense of their culture. Culture is thus the framework used by individuals to make sense of their surroundings while making sense of themselves, at the same time as they reproduce and transform that same framework.

Culture, as a matrix for the production of meaning, "denotes an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life" (Geertz 1973: 89). Cultures are also self-referential texts, which, as they produce meaning, generate meaning and representations of themselves. These representations, as well as acting as schemas for organizing reality, are cognitive and emotional ways of perceiving reality, which, shared by different members of the group, structure social relations, even as they are transformed and reworked by group members (Santamaría 2002).

Ting-Toomey (1999) discusses the profoundly interrelated nature of culture and communication. Communication is clearly essential for the development of culture, whereas culture clearly operates as a matrix that produces the meaning that underlies communication. For Ting-Toomey (1999) cultural communication provides an ideal set of meanings that enable individuals to interact socially with other members of their own community. These meanings are not neutral, however. In reality, they imply a value judgement regarding one's own and others' behaviours. Implicitly and by default, 'normality' is built and, from this normality, everything elseis interpreted. Uncritical assimilation of this supposed normality is a clear example of how we adopt ethnocentric attitudes. We interpret all realities, even those most alien to our own cultural reality, from an ethnocentric position, but are not always able to recognize this (Stier 2010). In many cases, the ethnocentric attitude is concealed by the use of the "ethnic" label, thus depicting the ethnocentric dichotomy of normal versus ethnic. In other words, other groups are ethnic, whereas our own group is the norm, or rather, the group that sets the standards. So when we say that someone is "different", we often forget in relation to what they are different. This is because, when we make sense of a social reality, we simplistically prioritize one set of meanings over others (Castells 1998), without realizing that this is in itself a kind of value judgement.

The main pillar underpinning this article is that development of the discipline is leading to a growing interest in the relationships established between cultural frameworks and the ultimate existential question, namely, who am I? In other words, what role does culture play in the construction of an individual's identity? Intercultural communication is greatly determined by our perception of our own identity and our representations of "otherness" (Sandoval 2006; Santamaría 2002; Ting-Toomey 1999).

In focusing on the theme of identity we are addressing one of the most important issues of the historical moment we are currently living. We understand identity to be a social construct that refers to self-meaning narratives and self-referential modes and from which narratives about otherness are also derived (Schwartz, Montgomery & Briones 2006). However, it must be noted that identity is also a form of classification (of self and "others") and a way of ordering our inner and outer worlds, which García Gutiérrez (2007) refers to as a hierarchical construction of belongingness. A danger with classifications – and also with identity classifications – is that they eventually come to justify a social order and even identity violence (Delgado 2007; Maalouf 2001; Sen 2006). Therefore, it seems important to reflect on different models that attempt to explain the relationship between cultures, which is the relationship between oneself and cultural otherness. It seems particularly important to clarify this issue because if we are not clear about what the dominant model is, we may not be able to accurately understand the causes and consequences of cultural interactions, which, in turn, risks impairing our critical capacity.

Below we describe four theoretical models of the relationship between culture, identity and otherness coexisting today, and, as we shall see, also in the past, although with varying degrees of dominance depending on the historical time and place.

The monocultural model and uniform identity

The monocultural model has undoubtedly been the dominant model par excellence, at least since modernity. As Toulmin (2001) points out, the three great rationalist aspirations of modernity (a rational method, a unified science and an exact language) converge in the same tendency to achieve "pure", decontextualized knowledge of the historical and cultural realities of phenomena. For instance, national projects in seventeenth century Europe were based on a clear principle of uniformity, namely, *"un roi, une loi, une foi"* (one king, one law, one faith). Today we might add language as another element corresponding to the principle of uniformity. By imposing an official language, nation states impose monolingualism. The linguistic wealth of nations is seen as an obstacle to modernity and, although people may be multilingual, their communities are represented as monolingual. As Bauman (2013) notes, uniformity provides individuals with a sense of security, (apparent) certainty and homogenous identity. What is perhaps not so clear for many is that the principle of uniformity is also a source of discrimination and exclusion.

Modernity has gradually formed a monocultural vision, characterized by the search for a uniform identity and the view that difference is dangerous and divisive. Those who do not conform swell the ranks of the "semantically confusing and psychologically unnerving status of foreigners inside" (Bauman 2013: 34) and may easily be suspected of dual loyalty and be susceptible to an accusation of treason.

Another feature of the monocultural model is that it legitimizes the conquest of foreign territory under the pretext of the "duty to civilize" other cultures. This stems from the ethnocentric stance that the destruction of alien cultures and conversion of indigenous peoples benefits the colonized by bringing them close to the ideal of the modern human. Kapuscinski (2003: 13) gives the example of the Belgian authorities establishing the category of *"évolués"* to identify Congolese who were not quite "savages" but who could not yet be considered as truly "Europeanized". For Brussels, such Congolese were climbing towards the pinnacle of human development, at that time perceived as European.

In the monocultural model attitudes of the deepest intolerance and arrogance lead to forced cultural and religious conversion. Difference is rejected because it implies some lack or defect; there are no grounds for respecting otherness given that it is viewed as deficient. In short, the monocultural model is the substrate that feeds biological racism and also cultural racism, or "racism without races". For Cachon (2005), the pogroms that took place at different times in European history are clear examples of racism based on cultural differences (in this case, religious differences).

As regards identity, the monocultural model postulates a unique, essentialist, homogeneous and immutable identity or, in more relaxed versions, it highlights one particular aspect of identity as the most prominent feature. To be shared socially, identity must become a performance, an identification. Individuals must identify themselves and others for identity to produce social effects. Through identification, an individual's belongingness to a group is recognized, which it should be said, improves the social life of members of that group by strengthening links between members. The need to belong encounters a perfect refuge in national identity, constantly stoked officially by the nation state or informally by the stateless nation. The sense of security that arises from a rooted group outweighs any evidence of straitjacketing or the possibility of introducing personalized nuances and changes (Rodrigo & Medina 2009). At all times one must be able to define what one is and what one is not, that is, we are obliged to assume a monolithic identity on the basis of an ongoing exercise of exclusion of whatever it is that could essentially detract from one's identity. In exercising pressures to conform, historical amnesia plays a fundamental role in systematically overlooking hybridization and fostering a linear, selective and seamless version of a nation's history.

For the person who lives multiple identities, the lack of recognition of this fact leads to exclusion, rejection or surprise. The beginning of Amin Maalouf's (2001) *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong* is very illustrative in this regard (we will take up this point again later on in this article):

> *How many times, since I left Lebanon in 1976 to establish myself in France, have I been asked, with the best intentions in the world, if I felt more French or more Lebanese? And I always give the same answer: 'Both!' Not in an attempt to be fair or balanced but because if I gave another answer I would be lying. This is why I am myself and not another, at the edge of two countries, two or three languages and several cultural traditions. This is precisely*

what determines my identity. Would I be more authentic if I cut off a part of myself? (Maalouf 2001: 1).

The monocultural model, when the ethnocentric stance is extreme, may place the other at a subhuman level, e.g., as done in slavery and bondage. Once the other is stigmatized and dehumanized, options of extermination, expulsion or forced assimilation become less repulsive. Even without going to such extremes, the monocultural model promotes disinformation regarding the other, with the perception of one's own culture as being self-sufficient, accompanied by a disinterest and ignorance of the alien culture, which is, at best, reduced to a stereotype, if not actually stigmatized. It is easy to conclude that this construction of otherness seriously affects relations between cultures.

The multicultural model and visible otherness

Throughout the twentieth century, reflections emerging from postcolonial studies forced a change in perspectives. One outcome was that the multicultural model assumed predominance over the monocultural model. Globalization implied greater awareness of the multiplicity of identities, languages and cultures and also led to a dramatic increase in the information available about other cultures. However, although an increase in information about cultures increases visibility, it does not imply greater interaction between peoples.

An example of this greater visibility comes from the field of knowledge. The incorporation of a multicultural perspective obliged science to abandon the comfortable and traditional "ethnocentric" position that ignored other productions of meaning and to re-recognize these as legitimate knowledge. And, in turn, the other not only came to be included but also began to have a voice of its own and to speak from its own perspective. A multicultural perspective, after all, allows us to access the perspective of others regarding phenomena that seem familiar to us. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said (1978) denounced patronizing Eurocentric prejudices about Arab people and culture that served as justification for colonial domination. Likewise, Maalouf (1989), in The *Crusades Through Arab Eyes*, gives voice to the other party in the conflict using the testimonies of Arab chroniclers and historians of the period of the Crusades.

This reality of greater visibility introduces a significant shift in identity issues. We have already seen how the definition of one's own identity is a key element in attributing meaning to one's own actions and those of others. When the other is given more visibility, debate and reflection on the right to "be recognized" in their difference make their appearance in society. Recognizing the other is an incipient exercise in multiculturalism. However, as an exercise it is frequently dismissed, if not eliminated outright, by many nation states which, in claiming an exclusive past, continue defending the monoculturalism of their society in the form of a "cultural cleansing" that endeavours to uproot that which is appropriated and assimilated. As Burke (2009) warns, multiculturalism sometimes "self-segregates" and forces monoculturalism in a deliberate exercise to avoid what is viewed as contamination from outside.

Thus, one premise underpinning the multicultural model is that of being "together but apart". We endorse the words of Bilbeny (2010) regarding multiculturalism:

> *It defends recognition and, even more, support, in a pluricultural society, of different cultural groups or minorities who integrate it, so that they are present and participate in different public and private areas of this society. A country and its government institutions are multiculturalist if they admit that everyone has a cultural origin, that all cultures have valuable contributions to make and that they all deserve, therefore, respect. Democratic pluralism thus requires official support for different cultural identities (Bilbeny 2010: 114; translation by author).*

But we are also aware of the difficulty of the enterprise; indeed, a major difficulty is that, paradoxically, the multicultural model can strengthen identity. Stories about cultures reinforce identity myths (Said, 1978) and have also led to the construction of a deteriorated otherness (Rodrigo-Alsina & Medina-Bravo

2013; Sen 2006). The strengthening of national identity enhances the aggressive assertion of one national identity over another. Hence, it does not favour dialogue but becomes an *ex ante* definition of positions in opposition, a "we are" against a "they are". The construction of identities by opposition has been one of the constants of dichotomous thinking, with hegemonic Western thought conceptualizing reality from exclusive dichotomies (Rodrigo & Medina, 2006). A (national) community can only be maintained if, as well as remaining relatively small and separate, it sees itself as distinctive compared to other communities. It should reinforce the idea of the homogenous identity of individuals for their survival as a community that continues to be, as Bauman (2013) pointed out, a besieged fortress. The violence that always lurks beneath discourses that promote loyalty to a singular national identity is undeniable (Sen 2006). The emphasis on a "community" of individuals united by an essential identity fails, however, to reflect the fact that, in reality, each of us feels ourselves to be a member of a wide variety of groups. And forging a discourse of self-realization by a constrictively unique identity is, at the very least, a contradiction, and at its extreme, an exercise of violence in limiting freedom of choice.

When the concept of nation state begins to weaken, patriotic fervour and vociferous movements claiming national identity resurge, based again on defining an enriched identity exclusively in terms of national identity. This apparent paradox is explained by the fact that situations of uncertainty tend to awaken states of anxiety and crisis for which rapid solutions are sought. And transforming "origins" (always ambiguous, annealed and personal) into "roots" (always fixed, immovable and shared) is a strategy for dealing with new social, cultural and political ambiguities. The price to be paid (even if not fully realized) is that roots bind and immobilize, while origins are the representation of the past that gives meaning to the present. We have the notion that identity evokes a common historical origin, when the truth is that "identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves" (Hall 1996: 44). What underlies this approach, as Sen (2006) warns, is the false idea that people only define themselves in terms of one identity, that is, from membership of a single group. The tranquillity of the absolute certainty that underlies the multicultural model is actually a sign of poverty and constraint in the face of the complexity and plurality in terms of which an individual can potentially (re)think themselves. We have already discussed the role of social identity and the importance of belongingness when defining oneself and others, but it is important to note that identities are always a work in progress, of necessity "relational" and, therefore, unfinished (Grossberg 1996).

The multicultural model, rather than ensuring hybridization (Burke 2009), reinforces identity. Whereas the monocultural model implies homogenization of every manifestation of identity, the multicultural model represents centrifugation in relation to otherness, emphasizing differences. Thus, multiple productions of meaning begin to bloom in the same territory as multiple forms of cultural identity. While the monocultural model forces assimilation (Berry 1997), multiculturalism transmits a message of apparent integration understood as a two-way process that fosters mutual openness to the other's differences, interaction and possible adaptation. Nonetheless, the reality is less simplistic and integration does not always operate as a two-way process (Bilbeny 2010), since reciprocity is a complex exercise in cohabitation that requires empathy, equality and attention to others.

The intercultural model and hybrid identities

Multiculturalism, considered a *de facto* situation, refers to groups of people from different cultural backgrounds coexisting but not intermixing in the same territory. Interculturalism also defines this *de facto* situation but from a very different perspective. Whereas multiculturalism focuses on the coexistence of cultures, the focus of interculturalism is cohabitation, which implies interrelationship and, therefore, potential conflict. In multiculturalism, territory is the element that differentiates the self from others. In contrast, in interculturalism, cultures are not directly linked to a territorial identity; rather, the de-territorialization of culture (García Canclini 1995) is taken into account.

We could say that interculturalism focuses on one particular aspect of multiculturalism; thus, of interest in the intercultural model are not different cultures in themselves but contacts between different cultures, i.e., relational spaces (Silva Echeto, 2013), frontier places, in-between referents (Bhabha 1994),

hybridization, *mestizaje*, cultural appropriation, etc. As we can see, no single concept signals that interaction. Burke (2009) points out that "the variety of hybrid objects is more than matched by the number of terms that are current today in the writings of scholars describing the process of cultural interaction and its consequences. Indeed, far too many words are in circulation to describe the same phenomena" (Burke 2009: 34).

Beyond the broad range of terms available, as mentioned earlier, the intercultural perspective is concerned with cohabitation, unlike the multicultural perspective, which is more focused on coexistence. Also as mentioned, cohabitation has always implied interrelationships and, therefore, a potential for conflict. Suffice it to recall fifteenth-century Toledo (Spain) and the uneasy cohabitation between the Jewish, Muslim and Christian communities. Interculturalism encourages cultural exchanges, but also assumes the possibility of conflict. Conflict is viewed as a reality inherent to interpersonal and intercultural relations, which should not be ignored or dismissed but which should also not be seen as inevitable or irreversible. The emphasis is not so much on conflict as on conflict resolution; this highlights the importance of intercultural dialogue aimed at successful cohabitation – a dialogue that can only stem from the premise of recognizing the other as subject. In this sense, Sen (2006) posits two fundamental principles: the first is recognition that all identity is plural, and the second is that the weight given to any one facet of identity is not to deny the importance of other aspects. Faced with conflict, in a particular context the individual must decide which loyalty will be preeminent.

Thus, in a situation of intercultural dialogue, one must consider what aspect of identity to emphasize; in other words, one must choose what aspect of identity will interact with the other. This implies an acceptance that identities are plural, that there is no single identity discourse and that any homogenization that provides security at the cost of lessened complexity should be avoided. Further increasing the difficulty of dialogue is the fact that not everything ends with questioning which aspect of one's identity is visible. Immediately the other makes an evaluation regarding my identity, maybe recognizing it, maybe not. And what is truly difficult is developing the capacity (and power) to convince that our identity has more facets than the other attributes us with.

The main problem is not the identity I attribute to myself, but whether I have enough influence to ensure that that identity is recognized by others. Here, questions such as the following arise. In what category does the other place me? Will they relate to me from a category alien to my identity, but which they still attribute to me and from which they will relate to and evaluate me? They can, after all, contemplate me from the perspective of inherited tradition, from my religion, from my sex, from my political affiliation, my profession, my socioeconomic class, etc. And their perception of me and of the categories attributable to me are key issues in the interaction. To facilitate interactions it is fundamental that we recognize that our identity is multiple and changeable. And intercultural communication reminds us that this exercise in recognition should also be undertaken in relation to the identities of others. Exploring an idea which we already posed in a previous work (Medina & Rodrigo 2005), the culture in which we are born and in which we grow up provides us with a framework of emotional references that enable us to relate to others. However, beyond the particular referential context of each culture, the basic needs of each human being pass through the filter of needing to feel accepted and respected by others. This is a particularly difficult challenge in contexts where we have to accept positions that are not shared.

Dealing with the new challenges posed by interculturalism represents a more elaborate development of intercultural trust (Marandon 2003). In the intercultural model, culture is the result of hybridization and intermixtures that are always viewed as enriching and not as contaminants of a purported cultural essence. Burke (2009) rightly concludes that all cultures are hybrid and in a continuous hybridization process, most especially immediately after the cultural encounter.

Identity also is, in fact, plural and the outcome of hybridization. The intercultural model proposes not only assuming that reality but also seeking, finding and assuming hybridization – as in the example of Maalouf feeling himself to be both Lebanese and French.

Nonetheless, we would also like to highlight one very apparent paradox of the intercultural model: as mentioned, accepting hybridization is accepting it as enrichment not as contamination. As we have indicated, we start from the idea that cultures are different from one another as the outcome of their own

paths to hybridization. However, an apparent contradiction is that the intercultural perspective also [7] recognizes similarities. It could not be otherwise, given that we assume the reality of intercultural communication along with the possibility of rapprochement between people of different worldviews. That is, we are all the same yet different. It is this apparently paradoxical complementarity that gives rise to intercultural ethics. Accepting that cultural universals exist enables agreement regarding a basic conceptual framework that regulates moral sanction of our actions beyond our particular worldview (Bilbeny 2004; Toulmin 2001). In short, it is about seeking shared references that transcend differences. And this search invariably leads to the transcultural model.

The transcultural model: from identity declassification to identity without otherness

As pointed out above, the way we see the world is essential to how we represent both it and ourselves. The transcultural model stems from an epistemological rupture in that it questions the classical method of knowledge production and does so also in terms of identity and otherness. Admittedly, concepts are useful tools for understanding reality, but as Adorno pointed out, the utopia of knowledge would be to penetrate, with concepts, that which is not conceptual without accommodating the conceptual to the concepts (Adorno 1966). In addition, the history of identity classifications is also a history of violence, suffering and exile. As Sen rightly warns us (2006:16): "The insistence on (…) a choiceless singularity not only diminishes us all, it also makes the world much more flammable."

In this sense, the proposal of García Gutiérrez (2007) is truly interesting for its rupture with the pure knowledge of classical epistemology. This author suggests that all classification systems are contaminated by ambiguities and contradictions, even though identities and otherness are a system for classification that we use in order to try and organize and make sense of the real world. Given the classification system used by science to understand the world, García Gutiérrez (2007) proposes declassification as an exercise in uncovering the mechanisms of power that are concealed in classifications. This radical proposal suggests declassifying identities and minimizing their importance so as to facilitate mutual identification processes. Mutual identification is the basis for establishing a genuine dialogue that is not subject to the classified identities of those in dialogue, but is open to the mutual enrichment that derives from the assumption that we are all in ongoing classificatory transit.

However, this radicalism must be interpreted with care. We agree with Sen (2006) in the observation that, today, identity is not a concept that can easily be dispensed with; despite its potential for generating violence, it is also a crucial source of enrichment. In the short and medium term it may be difficult to think in terms of identity declassification. Perhaps, as the same author attests, we can already consider ourselves to be making headway if we emphasize the plurality of identity against discourses that advocate the uniqueness of identity.

We are of the opinion that maybe what needs to be addressed – reflecting the proposal by García Gutiérrez while taking heed of the warnings of Sen – is classification in terms of a global identity without human otherness. This identity would be based on all our resemblances and on the view of the other as my neighbour, my fellow human. Ultimately this would imply compliance with the principle of "all equal but different" mentioned above in relation to the intercultural model, in the sense that, as members -all of us- of the human species, we inevitably have "non-classifying identity features". By these we refer to identity characteristics that would not be grounds for classification. It is currently difficult to think of new non-classifying identity features, but consider the following example. Height cannot be used to define an identity, so we should not refer to people over two metres tall as giants. Height would thus be an identifying and not a classifying feature. In the transcultural model, identity elements that currently shape identities (language, religion, culture, etc) become non-classificatory identity features. This would, naturally, require a major effort to "strip" them of the identity force they currently possess.

We do not believe of course, that this model would easily be assumed in the short to medium term. Yet globalization processes and the intercultural model may lead us to the finding that, as members of the human species, we have far more in common than we have differences. Going beyond different cultures,

if we try to embrace the deeper meaning of their manifestations we simply discover the same principles and objectives, just staged in different ways. It therefore seems to us to be particularly relevant to consider a transcultural model that breaks with the classification system of humanity by highlighting our belongingness to a single community. The transcultural model defines us as beings belonging to a single species with the same identity, which is a hybrid and metalinguistic identity and the result of multiple cultural interactions.

Conclusions

That the twenty-first century will be the century of cultural identities (Castells 1998) might be too premature a statement as yet; however, we would assert that cultural identity is certainly a concept that the social sciences need to explore further. Increasing complexity sometimes confuses us and unstoppable uncertainty often disturbs us – and history has ample examples of how simplifying reality becomes a habitual and reassuring strategy. But as noted by Geertz (1983):

> *The world is a various place, various between lawyers and anthropologists, various between Muslims and Hindus, various between little traditions and great, various between colonial thens and nationalist nows; and much is to be gained, scientifically and otherwise, by confronting that grand actuality rather than wishing it away in a haze of forceless generalities and false comforts (Geertz 1983:234).*

It is not easy to let go of our prejudices, but it is even more difficult to modify our modes of thinking and our classificatory routines and to change our outlooks and perspectives. However, what seems clear is that we are living through a period of historic change that is leading to a shift in paradigms in cultural issues. In line with Touraine (2007), we consider that the new paradigm should also include movements of opposition, criticism, reform and defence against the dominant frame. Touraine (2007: 1) also confirms this need for a new paradigm for understanding the world, stating that "we must (…) be able to name the new actors and new conflicts, representations of the ego and collectivities, disclosed by a fresh look that reveals a new landscape before our very eyes."

Identity needs to be based on what we hold in common and on the view of what it is that makes of the other my neighbour, my fellow human. Ultimately it means taking on board the reality that we all experience plural identification processes; this emphasizes the continuing importance of individual identity while liberating it from monolithic rigidity. Identity is not a state, but a process; identity is not singular, but plural; identity is not a given, but is open to the possibility of change and of new nuances; and identity is not a preconscious assumption, but an exercise in freedom and will. Globalization and multiculturalism reveal that, as members of the human species, we are more alike than we are different. As mentioned, embracing deeper meanings we end up discovering the same principles and objectives, merely that they are staged in different ways. It therefore seems particularly important to consider a transcultural model that breaks with the classification system of humanity and that highlights our belongingness to a single community. The transcultural model defines us as beings belonging to a single species with the same hybrid identity that is the outcome of multiple cultural interrelations. Perhaps the initial task of transculturalism stems from the intercultural proposal of individuals viewing themselves from their own complex identity and simultaneously being able to recognize and interact with the complexity of the other.

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