

INTRODUCTION

The extensive interdisciplinary development of intercultural studies in recent decades has earned academic recognition which, despite lingering reservations, represents an unequivocal sign of acceptance of the importance of intercultural approaches to improving the quality of university studies.

To understand the importance of what is *really* at stake in interculturality, however, it is necessary to realise that this recognition of intercultural studies at the academic level would not be consistent – neither in philosophy nor in any other of the disciplinary fields in which it is developed – if, ultimately, the world and human history were not themselves, in their unfolding, sources of interculturality.

At this other level, which must be considered more fundamental than the academic level because it is the level of human life and history, interculturality constitutes the *expression* of the dimension of the gestation process through which the world and humanity develop over time the forms of historical reality and human coexistence that should elevate them to fuller ways of being, that is, to ways of being that give expression to their growth in contextually embodied universality. It can therefore be said that interculturality is the *substance*¹ from which the world and humanity literally *feed* in order to develop over time, and to be able to do so precisely

¹ Following one of the meanings of the word "substance" found in the *Dictionary of the Spanish Language* of the Royal Spanish Academy, I use the term "substance" here not in the sense of "essence" or "nature" of something, but in the sense of *a nourishing element*. This is, in fact, the first meaning listed in the *dictionary*, which describes it as follows: "Anything that increases and nourishes another thing and without which it would cease to exist".

in different ways. From this it follows, as its correlate and as will be shown in the pages of this book, that interculturality also represents the profound *language* of the world and of humanity; the speech through which they, in different places and with different accents, communicate that the real becoming of their universal unity takes place in diverse and plural ways.²

In other words:

As the *substance* and *language* of the diversity of the world and humanity, interculturality is a constitutive part of the organic process by which life and humanity give account of the singular manifestations of the multiple places that contextually contour the becoming of their living universality.

From this perspective, however, for us today, men and women who inhabit the world certainly from specific contexts, but who are at the same time mostly located in a civilisation that disguises its colonising hegemony with the qualifier 'planetary', interculturality means above all a challenge; a challenge that may come as something of a surprise to us:

I am referring to the challenge of awakening the need (and promoting the ability) to silence the functional language of the networks and information systems of the hegemonic civilisation that conditions our relationship with the world, so that we can listen to that other organic *language* of the *substance* of the world and humanity, paying special attention to its differentiated sonority because that is the living way in which intercultural events are revealed and communicated.

² It should be remembered that Hegel, despite the reproaches of "monism" and "totalitarianism" levelled at his philosophy, warned in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* that the diversity that makes differences and plurality visible in reality does not mean "contradiction" but "limit", the "frontier," where each thing "ends" and is consequently placed in front of what it is not, thus opening up the possibility of developing an awareness of the "organic unity" of the becoming of reality. Cf. G.W.F. Hegel, *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Fondo de Cultura Económica, Mexico 1966, pages 8 ff. See the original German in G.W.F. Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Verlag Ullstein, Frankfurt/M. 1970, pages 14 ff. On this question, see chapter three of this book.

This means that, in the current historical conditions, interculturality challenges us with a radical vindication of the *substance* and *language* of the world and of humanity.

This challenge, as I said, may seem quite surprising to us today. Because it so happens that the so-called media of and at the service of the hegemonic civilisation today design and disseminate the *image* that we are living in a time of celebration of plurality and differences; a time, therefore, that makes *more of the world* available to us than any other time in the past.

But if we look closely, I think it is not difficult to see that the discourses that spread the ideology of the plurality of worlds serve to hide the fact that what *actually exists* or what *actually happens* with the hegemonic civilisation – as suggested above – responds rather to the patterns of a civilising process which, due to its tendency to level the ways of dealing with reality, imposes a heavy superstructure on the worlds of life that obscures their value as necessary *modalities* for the full *expression* of the intercultural *substance* and *language* of the world and humanity.

From this critical perspective, it can therefore be said that only at first glance does the challenge of interculturality as a task of recovering the real plurality of the world and of life seem surprising. Because, as I said, if we look closely at what is happening today with our worlds of life and with ourselves as "beings-in-the-world", we see that what *we have in fact* is not an "excess of worlds"⁽³⁾ but rather an unbridled *excess of civilisation*.

We would thus be facing a new chapter in the long history of what Walther Rathenau, Edmund Husserl and Jürgen Habermas have criticised as "the colonisation of the worlds of life".⁴

³Roland Végsö, "On Acosmic Realism," in *Filozofski vestnik* 2 (2021), page 71.

⁴Cf. Walther Rathenau, *Zur Kritik der Zeit*, Fischer Verlag, Berlin 1912; Edmund Husserl, *Die Krise der europäischen Wissenschaften und die transzendente Phänomenologie*, Martinus Nijhoff, The Hague 1962; and Jürgen Habermas, *Theorie des kommunikativen Handelns*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt/M. 1988.

And therein lies precisely the meaning of the challenge that interculturality presents us with today.

This book deals with interculturality as a manifestation of the *rebellion* of the soul of the world and of humanity against a mechanistic and totalitarian civilisation that seeks to impose itself as the only alternative that *counts* today as part of the world and is recognised, in fact, as *human*.

Its pages, therefore, discuss interculturality in the context of the conflict with today's hegemonic civilisation, which is, in essence, a conflict in which the real, organic meaning of the world and humanity is at stake.

However, it should not be concluded that interculturality is discussed from an anti-civilisation perspective. For what lies at the heart of the *rebellion* expressed in interculturality is not the civilising processes of humanity but their *subordination* to a generalised mechanisation that seeks *to replace* contextual and organic inhabiting of the world with technical expertise and the skilful management of functions and applications.

In this civilising horizon, seen from the perspective of interculturality, there would be an irremediable loss of the world as a place of plurality of life and coexistence; and, with it, also a profound change in human self-awareness.

Therefore, in the chapters of this book, although with different emphases, two central lines of argument can be recognised:

The first, based on an awareness of the danger posed by the mechanistic superstructure of hegemonic civilisation to the intercultural *substance* and *language* of the world and humanity, seeks to explore aspects of the meaning of interculturality as a manifestation of humanity's *uprising* against the degradation of its contextual worlds of life into spaces of civilisational traffic and consumption, in order to affirm their meaning as settlements of life and, with that, as places through which the interculturality of the world speaks.

⁵ I note that when I write *human* or *humanity* in italics, this emphasises the ethical meaning, referring to the category of human dignity.

The second line of argument is recognised in the vindication of a humanism that, with the express intention of correcting the anthropocentric exaggeration that makes human beings 'the supreme being' for themselves, decentres human self-awareness by seeking to re-establish the ties that link humanity with the organic nature of life. In other words, it is a vindication not of humanism of human beings but of humanism *of human service* to the intercultural events of the world and humanity. I will call it the humanism of human beings with an awareness of finitude.⁷

It will also be seen that both lines of argument are intertwined by the fundamental concern to contribute to the awareness that the *mechanisation* of today's hegemonic civilisation represents, through the totalitarianism with which it advances, the greatest obstacle to *organic experiences* of the world and humanity. Thus, the excess of civilisation I spoke of earlier must be understood above all in the sense of an *excess of mechanisation*, as will be seen later.

An awareness that, as I hope will be shown in the following considerations, is understood here as the condition of possibility for practices of life and coexistence oriented towards the regeneration of the worlds of life as places of custody and cultivation of the intercultural *substance* and *language* of the world.

⁶With this statement, I am referring to Marx's thesis that "the critique of religion leads to the doctrine that *man is the supreme essence for man*." Karl Marx, "On the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction," in Karl Marx / Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family and Other Essays*, Editorial Grijalbo, Mexico 1962, page 4. Italics in the original. See the original in Karl Marx, "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie. Einleitung," in *MEW*, vol. 1, Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1971, page 385. The impact of this humanist tradition continues to this day. See, for example, Franz Hinkelammert, "Der Vorrang des Menschen im Konflikt mit der Idolatrie: Religionskritik, profane Theologie und humanistische Praxis," in *Concordia* 70 (2016) 3-31, especially pages 4 and 5, where Franz Hinkelammert quotes and interprets the passage from Marx to which I have referred.

⁷In this sense, the reflections in this book follow the *humanist* perspective set out in my works: *Con la autoridad de la melancolía. Los hu-manismos y sus melancolías*, Wissenschaftsverlag Mainz, Aachen, 2019; and *De la soledad. Para una filosofía del buen trato con la soledad*, Editorial Comares, Granada 2023.