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# RELATIONSHIP AS A SPACE "IN BETWEEN" - A TRANSCULTURAL AND TRANSDISCIPLINARY APPROACH TO ACADEMIC TEACHING MEDIATED BY DIALOGUE -

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# Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to Valeria Solesin and Giulio Regeni, two Italian PhD students who could not complete their doctoral program. They were killed while they were conducting their research: Valeria in France, Giulio in Egypt. Valeria was one of the victims of the terrorist attack of November 13, 2015 in Paris. Giulio was executed in Cairo after having been kidnapped on January 25, 2016, and tortured to death. His body was discovered on February 3, 2016, and there are still no details on his murder. The international community asks for justice and truth on Giulio's execution.

Although they did not know each other, and their histories are different, they have in common a tragic epilogue. But this condition cannot be their sole heritage, as they were both passionate about their study. Valeria was conducting her doctoral research in sociology, particularly focused on family and women's condition, while Giulio was investigating social and economic development in the Middle East, especially in Egypt. During the writing of these pages, across the whole 2016, I have taught several PhD students in Italy and abroad, and many of them have reminded me of Valeria and Giulio's passion and involvement in their research. In every course, I mentioned Valeria and Giulio to the students, as our contribution in honoring their memory.

I wish to think that Valeria and Giulio's dedication to research, their "love of wisdom", as the term "philosophy" of *Philosophiae Doctor* literally indicates, has not finished with their death. They could not achieve their effort and accomplish their doctoral program. They will not be able to complete much more. But their sacrifice is not vain, and their study, as well as their life, may continue through the work of several other young researchers, who may pick up their baton and complete what they could not conclude.

# Acknowledgements

I wish to thank the University of Bergamo for having offered me the opportunity to participate to the doctoral program on Intercultural Humanistic Studies coordinated by prof. Alessandra Violi. I am especially grateful to the professors who supported me in this dissertation, as supervisor - prof. Gianfranco Dalmasso - and as co-supervisor - prof. Enrico Giannetto.

I would like to particularly acknowledge prof. Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, who supported me in every step of this study. She has encouraged me since the beginning of my teaching activity, and her competent and generous presence has often inspired me. In addition to her knowledge and experience in intercultural dialogue and in communication, I benefited from her patient and crucial aid with English. She has been a model of teaching also in her comments and suggestions on this dissertation, and I hope to be able to do the same with my students.

The writing of these pages provided me the occasion to walk through the traces of this teaching approach which I started to explore in 2007-2008, together with and thanks to the support of several mentors. They have been essential for my study, as I would have not developed this approach without their suggestions, and I would have not carried it on without their encouragements.

This study would have not been possible without my students, who have been, are, and continue to be my inspiration and challenge. Their feedback and contributions, their suggestions and encouragements, moreover, their presence, over these several years, have taught me much more than I could imagine to teach them.

I would like to express my gratefulness to these scholars and to my students in these pages and through them. This dissertation, therefore, may be also read as a collection of faces, encounters, and dialogues. The first space of relationship, in fact, has been among, across and beyond ourselves, our cultures and disciplines.

A special and "non-conclusive" acknowledgement is addressed to my family and friends, who have strongly endorsed this study. They often seemed likely to believe in this research more than me, and their support provided me the courage which I was looking for and the trust to present it.

# Notes

**APA style®**

The style of the text (quotations, references, punctuation, footnotes) follows the American Psychological Association style guidelines, the APA style®, which is generally the most common in international academic publications. In particular, this text uses the quotation marks according the American style, the double and the single ones, rather than European quotation marks, which are not used in English (American or British) grammar. Furthermore, in APA style®, generally, footnotes are not used, or they are very few and limited to basic information. Thus, this study presents very few footnotes. APA style® does not use the Latin abbreviations in text citations, such as *cf* or *ibidem,* therefore, they do not appear in these pages.

**Etymology, meaning and synonyms**

The translation, the meaning and the synonyms of terms refer to the *Cambridge dictionaries online*. Retrieved from http://dictionary.cambridge.org/ The Latin etymology of terms refers to: *Online etymology dictionary*. Retrieved from http://www.etymonline.com; *Dizionario etimologico online*. Retrieved from http://www.etimo.it/, and *Treccani online*. Retrieved from http://www.treccani.it. The links to online sources are retrieved from the latest update, which refers to December 15, 2016.

**Page numbers of references**

The online sources of this study refer to websites, e-books, and chapters in pdf (Portable Document Format) version. The page numbers were not always indicated, or they were one-page sources, or sometimes the page numbers do not correspond to the printed version. I have specified these cases in the footnotes and, when present, I have indicated the number of the paragraph related to the citation.

**In-text citations**

When an author used a capital letter in the original, I have indicated "capitalization in original" in the in-text citation; if the author italicized some terms, "emphasis in original" is specified in this citation.

# Summary

This study aims to propose a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue. It focuses on a transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective, rather than on the two as separate, thus on the approach to cultures and disciplines together. In particular, it presents the approach to academic teaching on the basis of the relationship among cultures and disciplines, moreover, among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. They are the meanings of the Latin prefix *trans,* of "transcultural" and "transdisciplinary", according the perspective of transdisciplinarity, proposed by Basarab Nicolescu, contemporary Romanian physicist and philosopher, to which this study refers.

Furthermore, this research is focused on the relationship in terms of "a space of relationship" among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. This space is provided by dialogue, according the perspective of the philosophy of dialogue, a branch of contemporary Anglo-European philosophy founded by Martin Buber.

This study describes the application of the transdisciplinary perspective to academic teaching mediated by the philosophy of dialogue. This implies the investigation of dialogue as a space *of* relationship, rather than *for* relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. In this perspective, dialogue and relationship may become the same, as they are linked to each other, thus, this proposed approach to teaching aims to explore also the reciprocity between dialogue and relationship.

The proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue at the basis of this study is investigated mainly through academic teaching. In particular, during this doctoral program, thus between 2014 and 2016, I documented teaching experiences with this approach in two contexts: courses on transcultural dialogue with undergraduates drawn from different cultures while on an Italian philosophical-theological faculty (the "St. Peter's Philosophical-Theological Institute" of Viterbo, Italy), and courses on the communication of scientific research (CSR) for young scientists drawn from different disciplines and cultures at invitation of Italian (the universities of Brescia, Milan and Viterbo) and Czech (the University of West Bohemia of Pilsen) universities.

This approach to teaching seems rarely investigated, as I did not find indications in prior literature of a similar perspective, with the exception of a few notes on teaching materials for a transcultural approach or for a transdisciplinary one, but these perspectives are not explored together. A trace of the need for applying a transdisciplinary and transcultural approach to knowledge, according to the vision suggested by Nicolescu appeared recently, but not in relation to academic education, nor referring to the possible reciprocity between them. Therefore, this approach to teaching is presented in detail: the study describes each course of the two contexts (chapter 2) and the findings (chapter 3) drawn from the students' feedback and their contributions to this proposal. The analysis of the findings may provide evidence of this approach, and suggests its possible implications in teaching (chapter 4), and also beyond the academic context. The additional aim of this study, in fact, is to consider dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines which may be applied, far more broadly, to everyday life.

This description summarizes the keywords of the study, in particular: "cultures" and "disciplines", "dialogue" and "philosophy of dialogue", "relationship", "space of relationship" and "reciprocity", "transdisciplinarity", "inter- and trans-cultural teaching", and "transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching".

Chapter 1 introduces each of these keywords, which allow us to understand the teaching approach which stands at the basis of this study. In particular, it describes the theoretical foundation of this research, the relationship according Martin Buber's perspective (section 1.1), starting from the analysis of Buber's essay *I and Thou* (sections 1.1.1.2 and 1.1.1.3), and the meaning of dialogue as a space of relationship (section 1.1.2). Furthermore, this chapter illustrates Buber's perspective on dialogue investigated in communication and in teaching, and it introduces the meaning of "dialogue among cultures" according to the transcultural perspective proposed in this study, thus a transdisciplinary approach to dialogue among cultures. This chapter firstly outlines the notion of intercultural dialogue (section 1.2) and three fields of research related to it: intercultural communication (section 1.2.1), intercultural teaching (section 1.2.2), and intercultural philosophy (section 1.2.3). These historical and theoretical notes may clarify the sense of an intercultural orientation to communication, education and thinking, necessary to understand the proposal of a transcultural approach.

Then, the notion of "dialogue among disciplines" is introduced according the transdisciplinary perspective proposed by Basarab Nicolescu (section 1.3). In this approach to knowledge, the term "discipline" refers to the "field of study", rather than to "academic discipline".

I illustrate the difference between multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to knowledge according to this perspective (section 1.3.1), the historical and theoretical basis of transdisciplinarity (section 1.3.2), the methodology (section 1.3.3), and the possible application of the transdisciplinary approach in education (section 1.3.4).

The dialogic perspective in teaching proposed by Buber and "transdisciplinary education" according to Nicolescu's approach may help in understanding the sense of dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines at the basis of this teaching perspective. Therefore, I present the transcultural and transdisciplinary proposal mediated by dialogue, starting from the preliminary study I conducted before this doctoral program, and which this research aims to substantiate (section 1.4).

Chapter 2 illustrates the materials and the method of this research, thus the details of this approach to teaching: the basic aspects and the measurement of this study (section 2.1), the two contexts in which it was conducted (section 2.2), and the teaching materials (section 2.3) I developed for each course.

This study derives from the combination of qualitative and quantitative research, and I describe it to clarify the sense of the "validity" of this study. Furthermore, this chapter presents the content and the structure of each course (sections 2.3.1. and 2.3.2) and the tools for the students' evaluation according a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach (section 2.3.3), and for their assessment of this teaching proposal (section 2.3.4).

Chapter 3 describes the findings which emerged from each course: it presents the main outcomes (sections 3.1 and 3.3), follow-ups (sections 3.1.5 and 3.3.4c), and the connections among them (section 3.3.4d). Furthermore, it illustrates the analysis of these findings (sections 3.2 and 3.4) and their meaning (section 3.5). In particular, between 2008 and 2015, I offered twelve courses at the philosophical-theological Institute, to 175 students from about 20 cultures. Between 2007 and 2016, a variety of teaching experiences in the communication of scientific research were offered to more than 500 young researchers drawn from several fields in the "natural", social" and "human"

sciences.

The findings are described from four perspectives, which are the parameters I detected in both contexts of teaching and which allowed me to orient this teaching approach, to collect the findings and to interpret them. I have defined these criteria as the "potentials and challenges" of this approach to teaching, as I have developed them as an attempt to enhance the potentials and to overcome the challenges, and to adapt the content to the students' needs. These four "potentials and challenges" are related, thus, each of them depends on the others; they are not in order of importance:

1) the cultural and disciplinary richness of each context, which serves as basis for the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching. Nevertheless, this diversity implies a constant effort in creating and maintaining a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines, requiring students to face their "cultural and disciplinary burdens", as I have called them. Therefore, I named this "potential and challenge" as "human, cultural and disciplinary richness";

2) an approach to dialogue accessible to the students, which allows them to understand the proposed perspective while they apply it, and vice versa, since what they experience permits them to comprehend the content. This implies developing this teaching design with a "theoretical and practical approach to dialogue", which is what I called the second "potential and challenge";

3) a program of study which may help the students to achieve the most common challenges at academic level: especially, learning and improving in writing, speaking, studying and conducting research. Thus, I labeled this "potential and challenge" as "main challenges for the students";

4) the ability to promote an increasing awareness of this teaching design among the students, who may experience a space of relationship among themselves, in addition to their cultures and disciplines. I have named the fourth "potential and challenge" an "awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach".

Since the beginning of my teaching activity, I have developed the same teaching design in both contexts, with a similar structure of the courses, the materials and the tools: I elaborated an approach to content virtually unknown for the students, with lecture notes in the form of keywords and presented starting from etymology. Then, I supplemented

this content with written and oral contributions by the students, individually and in groups, which allow them to apply this proposal of practicing dialogue. These assignments help them to concretely experience the making of a space of relationship among themselves, in addition to their cultures and disciplines.

The findings and their analysis provide evidence of the hypothesis of reciprocity between transcultural and transdisciplinary approaches to dialogue, and between dialogue and relationship. Moreover, the findings indicate that the students' comprehension of transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective mediated by dialogue does not depend on culture, choice of life (religious or lay students) or discipline, it is mediated by dialogue and is based on human experience. The findings, in fact, suggest an increasing awareness of the meaning of dialogue among cultures and disciplines as opportunity to meet the other, which interests almost three quarters of the students I have met. The result is a growing responsibility towards this teaching approach and themselves, which some students aim to explore in further study or in their choices of life.

Chapter 4 illustrates the implications (section 4.1) of this approach to teaching and the conclusions of this study (section 4.2). The findings suggest that dialogue and relationship are connected: dialogue needs relationship to be realized, and, at the same time, dialogue creates relationship. Dialogue may become the relationship itself. Therefore, the space of relationship is not necessarily a common ground, as dialogue and relationship may provide the space in which cultures and disciplines meet. This space between, across and beyond cultures and disciplines implies a call for dialogue as a "lifestyle", thus, an attempt to apply this approach in everyday life, in addition to academic teaching (section 4.1.1). I describe some "seeds" of dialogue (section 4.1.1), as I called the examples of this application in one's own choice of life, work and research. They derive from experiences of religious students and young researchers, and from lectures I held in conferences addressed to educators drawn from different cultures.

The implications of this research suggest that the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching mediated by dialogue may continue, and may be applied also beyond the academic context. For this reason, I prefer to label the conclusions of this study as "non-conclusions" (section 4.2), which is generally the term I use during my last lesson in each course. Furthermore, as this approach to teaching seems rarely investigated, I

thought the term "non-conclusions" would be particularly appropriate as this study has just started to trace a way forward.

During the last lesson of my courses, I suggest a final keyword to the class, considered as a last trace for the students' walk. At the "non-conclusions" of this study, I propose a last keyword as well, which is related to the one I propose especially in teaching experiences on communication of scientific research. This keyword refers to Sisyphus and Prometheus (section 4.3). They may be considered as the metaphor for fatigue which is not vain or for its own sake, as it is addressed to the other, and it aims to promote an attitude - dialogue as a "lifestyle" - either in academic teaching, or beyond it, and far more broadly, in everyday life.

# Chapter 1. Introduction

*The purpose of this research*

This study aims to propose a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue. It focuses on a transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective, rather than on the two as separate, thus on the approach to cultures and disciplines together. In particular, it presents the approach to academic teaching on the basis of the relationship among cultures and disciplines, moreover, among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. They are the three meanings of the Latin prefix *trans,* of "transcultural[1]" and "transdisciplinary", according the perspective of transdisciplinarity, proposed by Basarab Nicolescu, contemporary Romanian physicist and philosopher, to which this study refers.

Furthermore, this research is focused on the relationship in terms of "a space of relationship" among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. This space is provided by dialogue, according the perspective of the philosophy of dialogue, a branch of contemporary Anglo-European philosophy founded by Martin Buber.

This study aims to apply the transdisciplinary perspective to academic teaching mediated by the philosophy of dialogue. This implies the investigation of dialogue as a space *of* relationship, rather than *for* relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. In this perspective, dialogue and relationship may become the same, as they are linked to each other, thus, this proposed approach to teaching aims to investigate also the reciprocity between dialogue and relationship.

The proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue at the basis of this study is investigated mainly in academic teaching. In particular, during the period of this doctoral program, thus between 2014 and 2016, I documented teaching experiences with this approach in two contexts: courses on transcultural dialogue with undergraduates drawn from different cultures while on an Italian philosophical-

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theological faculty (the "St. Peter's Philosophical-Theological Institute" of Viterbo, Italy), and courses on the communication of scientific research for young scientists drawn from different disciplines and cultures at invitation of Italian (the universities of Brescia, Milan and Viterbo) and Czech (the University of West Bohemia of Pilsen) universities.

The students' feedback and their contributions to this teaching approach are essential components of the findings of this study. The analysis of these findings aims to provide evidence of this approach, and to present its possible implications in teaching, and also outside of the academic context. The additional aim of this study, in fact, is to consider dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines which may be applied, far more broadly, to everyday life.

The description of the purpose of this research project contains the keywords of this study, therefore I thought to present it at the beginning of this dissertation. In particular: "cultures" and "disciplines", "dialogue" and "philosophy of dialogue", "relationship", "space of relationship" and "reciprocity", "transdisciplinarity", "inter- and trans-cultural teaching", and "transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching".

In this chapter, I introduce each of these keywords, as they allow us to understand the perspective at the basis of this study. Then, I present the materials and the method of the research, thus, the details of this proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching mediated by dialogue (chapter 2). In particular: the basic aspects of this research (section 2.1), the context (section 2.2), and the teaching materials (section 2.3) I developed for each course which I conducted.

Afterward, I describe the findings which emerged from these courses (chapter 3, sections 3.1 and 3.3), their analysis (sections 3.2 and 3.4) and the meaning of these teaching experiences (section 3.5). Finally, I illustrate the implications (chapter 4) of this proposed approach for teaching, with the further aim to apply it also beyond the academic context. In this chapter, I describe the theoretical foundation of this research, the relationship according Martin Buber's perspective (section 1.1), starting from the analysis of Buber's essay *I and Thou* (sections 1.1.1.2 and 1.1.1.3), and the meaning of dialogue as a space of relationship (section 1.1.2). Then, I introduce a few notes on Buber's perspective on dialogue investigated in communication and in teaching. These notes allow me to describe the meaning of "dialogue among cultures" according the transcultural perspective I propose in this study, thus a transdisciplinary approach to dialogue among

cultures. I firstly outline the notion of intercultural dialogue (section 1.2) and three fields of research related to it: intercultural communication (section 1.2.1), intercultural teaching (section 1.2.2), and intercultural philosophy (section 1.2.3). I introduce a few historical and theoretical notes about each of them, which may clarify the sense of an intercultural orientation to communication, education and thinking, necessary to understand the proposal of a transcultural approach.

Afterward, I introduce the notion of "dialogue among disciplines" according to the transdisciplinary perspective which stands at the basis of this teaching perspective. In particular, this point of view indicates an approach to knowledge, through which the term "discipline" refers to the "field of study", rather than to "academic discipline".

I present the transdisciplinary perspective proposed by Basarab Nicolescu (section 1.3), which allows me to introduce the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach. I outline the difference among the multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches to knowledge according to this perspective (section 1.3.1), the historical and theoretical basis of transdisciplinarity (section 1.3.2), the methodology (section 1.3.3), and the attempts of application of this transdisciplinary approach, especially in education (section 1.3.4).

The approach to teaching inspired by Buber's perspective and "transdisciplinary education" according to Nicolescu's view allow me to introduce the sense of dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines at the basis of the teaching proposal which characterizes this study. Thus, I present this transcultural and transdisciplinary proposal, starting from the preliminary study I conducted before this doctoral program, and which this research aims to substantiate (section 1.4).


## 1.1 Relationship, the theoretical foundation of this research

The relationship, understood according to Martin Buber's perspective, is the theoretical foundation of this study, focused on the proposal of an approach to academic teaching based on dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. The relationship is the key to the interpretation of this research, the lens through which I may observe and analyse it: in particular, the relationship among different fields of study within intercultural dialogue, linked to the investigation of Buber's perspective in communication and in education (section 1.2), and the relationship

between a transcultural and a transdisciplinary approach (sections 1.3 and 1.4). My relationship with students is central, as this study investigates academic teaching among, across and beyond their native cultures and disciplines (chapters 2 and 3). Furthermore, this research explores the reciprocity between dialogue and relationship, which may become the same thing in this proposed approach, thus, relationship as dialogue, and dialogue as relationship, and which may be applied also beyond the academic context (chapter 4).

Before presenting Martin Buber's perspective on relationship, I introduce the terms "relationship" and "reciprocity" considered according their etymology. The original meaning of these terms, in fact, may help to clarify their current sense, therefore, the keywords described in this study will be presented from their Latin or ancient Greek etymology.

The term "relationship", as "relation", derives from the Latin[2] *relatio*, originated from *referre,* which means "to report", in the sense of "bringing back, restoring". Thus, "a report, proposition", which is still one of the current meaning of this term, literally "the act of telling". The definition in which we are interested for this study is another: "the connection, or correspondence, between two (or more) elements".

This original sense is maintained in the current meaning and grammar in several languages derived from Latin, such as English, German, Spanish, French, and Italian[3]. In addition to English, in fact, in French and in German is *relation* (with a different pronounce)*,* in Spanish is *relación,* in Italian is *relazione*.

The term "reciprocity" derives from the Latin *reciprocus*, which indicates "returning the same way, alternating", composed of *recus* (*re-* means "back") and *procus* (*pro-* means "forward"). These two parts may have developed from the verb *procàri,* which means "going forward and back, returning, ebbing", or *reciperàre*, "regaining, giving and taking back". The etymologic sense of "reciprocity" remains in the current meaning: "that which is reciprocal", "mutual". But, while "mutual" indicates a choice "of people (or groups)

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who feel the same emotion, or doing the same thing to or for each other", it does not necessarily imply a return, which is explicit in the term "reciprocity".

These original and current definitions suggest that reciprocity is a result of either "a reaction to the other" or "receiving a reaction from the other", and it involves at least two persons (or groups). Thus, reciprocity implies the choice to establish a connection, a relationship, with the other, every other, every "You", according to Martin Buber's perspective.

### 1.1.1 Relationship in Martin Buber's perspective

Buber's definition of relationship is connected with his perspective on encounter and dialogue. He is, in fact, considered the founder of the philosophy of dialogue, which is traditionally associated with his essay *I and Thou,* in which he presents what he calls the "dialogical principle" (Buber, 1930). In his perspective, dialogue is at the basis of the encounter, and of the relationship with the other: these three terms – relationship, dialogue and encounter - are inseparable. Furthermore, this condition, according to him, is primary and belongs to every human person. For this reason, it is a "principle", thus, literally, something which it is not possible to demonstrate, as it is fundamental to the theory. I introduce this perspective, starting from a few notes on Buber's life and thought, which are inseparable, and also from his writing. Then, I present the essay *I and Thou,* which contains the definition of relationship, encounter, and dialogue according to his vision.

### 1.1.1.1 On the "narrow ridge"

It has been a challenge and an inspiration to investigate Buber's perspective on relationship. It has implied entering into relation with him, therefore to encounter him, his life and his thought. They are intertwined in Buber, as a result of a continuous and coherent weight towards a unity among them. It has implied the need to enter into dialogue with the man, who is inseparable from the philosopher, the Jewish theologian, the writer, the poet, the professor, the educator, the polyglot philologist, and much more. It has implied also entering into dialogue with his net of relations: with several languages, thus, with the word; with Jewish mysticism, thus, with an intimate and ardent relation with God; with several disciplines, thus, with the unity in knowledge which crosses all his life and study.

It has implied, above all, to measure myself with the "narrow ridge", as Buber defined his "standpoint":

> I wanted by this to express that I did not rest on the broad upland of a system that includes a series of sure statements about the absolute, but on a narrow rocky ridge between the gulfs where there is no sureness of expressible knowledge but the certainty of meeting what remains undisclosed. (Buber, 1947, p. 184)

Buber's main biographer and friend, Maurice Friedman, considers the expression the "narrow ridge" to be a synthesis of Buber's life and thought, as he describes in his first biography:

> It expresses not only the 'holy insecurity' of his existentialist philosophy but also the 'I-Thou', or dialogical, philosophy which he has formulated as a genuine third alternative to the insistent either-or's of our age. Buber's 'narrow ridge' is no 'happy middle' which ignores the reality of paradox and contradiction in order to escape from the suffering they produce. It is rather a paradoxical unity of what one usually understands only as alternatives - I and Thou, love and justice, dependence and freedom, the love of God and the fear of God, passion and direction, good and evil, unity and duality. (Friedman, 1955/1960, p. 10[4])

Friedman also chooses these terms for the title of a volume on Buber, *Encounter on the Narrow Ridge: A Life of Martin Buber* (Friedman, 1998). The "paradoxical unity" among alternatives, or "contraries", is, according to Buber, "the mystery at the innermost core of the dialogue":

> According to the logical conception of truth only one of two contraries can be true, but in the reality of life as one lives it they are inseparable. The person who makes a decision knows that his deciding is no self-delusion; the person who has acted knows that he was and is in the hand of God. The unity of the contraries is the mystery at the innermost core of the dialogue. (Buber, 1948, p. 17)

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[4] The version of this book is electronic, it is in Portable Document Format (pdf), and the pages indicated may not correspond to the pages of the print edition.

The "narrow ridge" has been (and it still is) for me the key to the interpretation of this research, and the opportunity to orient it in this perspective. The study of relationship is a "narrow ridge", and the application of Buber's perspective to a teaching proposal focused on dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. Furthermore, the relationship with students is a "narrow ridge", and the analysis of the findings which emerge from them. Finally, the implications of this teaching proposal are a "narrow ridge", especially in relation to the further aim of applying this approach to dialogue also out of the academic context.

The idea of standing on a "narrow ridge", therefore, might be extended to an existential condition and becomes a paradigm of the choice to enter into relation with the other, the "You". In particular, in this section my "You" is Buber, and the "narrow ridge" derives from the choice to encounter him, to enter in relation with his perspective on relationship, and to dialogue on dialogue with him.

This choice has been the challenge of this study, as the ancient Greek term for "ridge" suggests: *krī́nein,* which means "to choose, to decide, to discern", but also "to separate, and to investigate". The root of the term *krinein* is the Indo-European *\*krei-,* and it literally means "to sieve, to discriminate, to distinguish". In addition to the ancient Greek, it is maintained in the old English *hriddel,* which indicates the "sieve" (from which "ridge"), like the Latin *cribrum,* with the same sense, "sieve", from which *crimen* "judgment, crime," and *cernere*, past participle *cretus*, "to sift, separate". In old Irish is *criathar*, in old Welsh is *cruitr*, which means "sieve", and in middle Irish is *crich*, indicating "border, boundary".

The etymology of *krinein* refers to the word "crisis", which is another frame of mind of the awareness of standing on the "narrow ridge". As the root is Indo-European, the terms derived from it are probably maintained in meaning and grammar in the main languages spoken in the world. It may imply that either in the past or currently, in different periods and cultures, the senses of "ridge", "crisis" and "choice" connect, somehow, to a common and ancient condition.

In these pages, I try to put into practice the verbs related to the original term *krinein*, which become actions, moreover in the choice to enter into dialogue with Buber. Furthermore, I try to listen to him, with an "obedient listening", as Friedman defined Buber's capacity for listening. It implies "to listen so faithfully and respond so fully as to

make alive for others the truth that has been made one's own" (Friedman, 1988, p. xvi). I try to describe this encounter, which crosses his life and thought, and, therefore, mine, as every dialogue and relation do, according to Buber's perspective.

### 1.1.1.2 *I and Thou*

The work which mainly describes Buber's vision on relationship is the essay *I and Thou*. He published it in 1923, in German, as *Ich und Du*, after a few years of incubation and further corrections, starting from 1916. Buber wrote the essay at the age of 45, in the central period of his life (1878-1965), and this work remained fundamental for him during the rest of it.

Friedman summarizes Buber's emphasis on unity in *I and Thou*, which is not an "isolated or discontinuous" moment of his philosophical investigation, but the product of "seemingly divergent streams [which] converge":

> Meeting and "mismeeting", politics and economics, mysticism and Hasidism, and the philosophy of realization, the World War and the breakthrough to dialogue, crisis and revolution, socialism and peace, education and politics, the world as word and the overcoming of the subjectivization that robs life as a real otherness - all of these find their mature and unified expression in *I and Thou*. (Friedman, 1988, p. 328)

This sentence contains the principal themes of Buber's life and thought, serving as the basis of his essay and of the following works on philosophical and pedagogical matters, which are a further explanation and remark on them.

In the encounter with Buber and *I and Thou* towards a comprehension of his perspective on relationship, I cross some of these milestones, starting from the text, which is intertwined with his life and thought. Life, thought and text are in dialogue, in relation, and they are inseparable. Furthermore, also the language of the essay is part of this indivisible relationship. The choice of German and the style may be better understood through the knowledge of some details of his life, as outlined in his autobiographical writings (Schilpp & Friedman, 1967) and in the *Postscript* to *I and Thou* (Buber, 1993), which describes the history of the essay.

Buber knew nine languages, which he learnt mainly thanks to his paternal grandparents, with whom he spent his childhood in Galicia, a region between Poland and Ukraine. His

parents consigned him to his grandparents and then they divorced, and moved to different towns, both of them remarrying. Buber was three years old, and suffered from his parents' premature abandonment, especially the one from his mother, who left him in that circumstance and disappeared. This wound remained open during his whole life and influenced his idea of "mismeeting", as a lost opportunity of encountering the other. The term "mismeeting", in fact, was coined by Buber to indicate "the failure of a real meeting between men" (Friedman, 1988, p. 5).

On the other hand, in his grandparents' love he found the primal and fundamental experience of meeting, which inspired his thought and work. Buber's grandfather was a "true" philologist, as Friedman noted, in the etymologic sense, of "lover of the word", and his grandmother's love for the "genuine word" touched him "even more strongly: because her love was so affected and so devoted" (Friedman, 1988, p. 7). From his grandmother derives especially his love for German language and the attention to the correct word, spoken and written. This "polyglot background" was important for Buber, not only as "a translator but as a predominantly German author" (Friedman, 1988, p. 8). His philological competence allows him to deeply interpret different languages and to report their words and meanings into German.

From his grandparents Buber derived also his love for the holy word, the one of the Bible and of Jewish tradition. The fundamental experience of encounter and relationship among men, and with God was in his grandparents' town, Leopolis, where he discovered the joyful, daily and shared religiosity of Eastern Jewish mysticism, Hasidism. Buber's writing is founded on his love for men's and God's life and language, together with a capacity for listening, like Friedman notes: "He employed long-familiar turns of speech with especial attentiveness and lent a customary grammatical function a fresh, deeper significance. This entirely unselfconscious quality of attentive listening characterized his writing as well" (Friedman, 1988, p. 8).

These lyric traces may be detected in *I and Thou*, which is philosophical and poetical. Buber wrote it in a sort of "creative ecstasy" that was "impelled by an inward necessity", like himself states in the *Postscript* to *I and Thou,* available in the second edition in English of 1958 (Kramer, 2003, p. 6). Buber continues: "This clarity was so manifestly suprapersonal in its nature, that I at once knew I had to bear witness to it" (Kramer, 2003, p. 6). Friedman refers to Buber's ecstatic condition while writing *I and Thou* "in which

he did not choose a language but 'what was to be said formed it as a tree its bark'" (Kramer, 2003, p. x). The result is language which seems to choose a personal way of expression: it is said to the reader, is spoken and takes place, enters into relation with the reader.

In the *Preface* to the first English translation, Ronald Gregor Smith describes *I and Thou* as "a philosophical and religious poem" (Buber, 1937, p. vi). There are plays on words, coinages and elements of style which are not always immediate for the reader, as they are not mediated only by mind, they "evoke intimate emotions", just as the etymology of the term "lyrics" suggests. Furthermore, the lyrical and philosophical essay is not always immediately clear even for the translator. Among the translations of the essay available in almost every language, I consider, in particular, the two into English: the first one made by Ronald Gregor Smith in 1937, and the second one in 1970, by Walter Kaufmann, who added a prologue and notes. Buber co-worked with Smith on the translation, and for this reason, Smith's translation seems to be closer to the original version than the one by Kaufmann (Kramer, 2003, p. ix). Kaufmann describes the effort and the beauty of working on a new English translation after Buber's death, requested of him by Buber' son, Raphael, who collaborated on this work. In the *Prologue* of his translation, he clarifies his need for notes, which are absent in Smith's translation and in the original version:

> How can one translate the untranslatable?
> By adding notes. By occasionally supplying the German words. By offering explanations.
> But now the text seems much less smooth. One is stopped in one's tracks to read a note. One is led to go back to reread a paragraph. And having read the book with so many interruptions, one really has to read it a second time without interruptions. (Buber, 1970, *Prologue* p.44)

The effort of the translator is huge. Before concluding that the text is "untranslatable", he states:

> Buber ought to be translated as he translated. The voice should be his, the thoughts and images and tone his. And if the reader should cry out, exasperated, "But that simply isn't English," one has to reply: "True, but the original text simply isn't German." It abounds in solecisms, coinages, and

other oddities; and Buber was a legend in his lifetime for the way he wrote. He makes very difficult reading. He evidently did not wish to be read quickly, once only, for information. He tried to slow the reader down, to force him to read many sentences and paragraphs again, even to read the whole book more than once. (Buber, 1970, *Prologue* p.42)

The metaphor which Kramer uses in the introduction of his *Martin Buber's I and Thou: Practicing Living Dialogue* may help to better understand the translators' and the reader's fatigue: "Reading *I and Thou* for the first time can be likened to walking into a foreign film halfway through without knowing the language of the subtitle" (Kramer, 2003, p.6). In his work he also tried to compare the two English translations to help the reader to decode some passages.

The study of these authors and the discovery of their effort to put themselves into dialogue with Buber's work and thought encouraged me to approach to *I and Thou* and to read the essay by trying to enter into the text, to stand in it and to let it speak to me. In every sense: although I do not know German, in fact, I also tried to approach to some key terms of the essay in this language, with the help of the Italian and English translations and commenters, and considering their Latin origin. These words are, in fact, the original ones, thus were chosen by Buber and, in some cases, also coined by him. My aim was to listen directly to him, when possible, and this was a further "narrow ridge" for me.

I have particularly investigated what Buber intends for relationship, how it is, when it happens and where, and what it implies in everyday life. I mainly refer to the first part of the essay, and to the contributions by Friedman (1955/1960 and 1988) and Kramer (2003), by trying to compare excerpts of the two English translations by Smith (1937) and Kaufmann (1970).

### 1.1.1.3 The "*I-Thou*" relationship

The essay consists of three parts, which may be summarized as follows: the first part is "an extended definition of man's two primary attitudes and relations: '*I-Thou*' and '*I-It*'" (Friedman, 1955/1960, pp. 67-72); the second one is a description of the so-called "word of *It*" and mutuality as necessary requirement for relation with the *Thou* and for life in a community *(*Friedman, 1955/1960, pp. 73-81); the third one is a definition of the so-called

"*eternal Thou*", the one of God, "the *Thou* that by its nature cannot become *It*" (Buber, 1937, p. 83) and its relation with the *I* (Friedman, 1955/1960, pp. 82-89).

We focus on the first part, dedicated to the definition of "*I-Thou*" and "*I-It*" relationships at the basis of Buber's perspective on relationship:

> The primary words are not isolated words, but combined words.
>
> The one primary word is the combination *I-Thou*.
>
> The other is primary word is the combination *I-It*. (Buber, 1937, p. 3)

> The basic words are not single words, but words pair.
>
> One basic word is the word pair I-You.
>
> The second word pair is I-It. (Buber, 1970, p. 53)

We are on the first page of the essay, soon after the lead, and we soon encounter the "primary" or "basic" words, which are not "isolated" or "single", they are "combined", as a "pair". Relationship begins with a word, rather, with a combination of words, at least two, a pair, therefore, the word cannot exist separately. The two "words pair" appear to us: they stand in front of us and we meet them, "*I-Thou*" (or "I-You") and "*I-It*". Buber declares his intent graphically, with the hyphen between "*I*" and "*Thou*"/"*It*" instead of the conjunction "and", to enforce the idea of "combination": it is a bond. The hyphen between the pronouns suggests to me the image of the chemical bond between two atoms: each atom cannot exist separately, but needs to be linked to another one. We might say that the atoms share a "space of relationship" which balances them. The result of this sharing is a new product, different from the original: they are no longer two (atoms), but one (molecule). I still use this example to introduce the "words pair" to students. Both translators choose to maintain the capital letters for the pronouns, but, while Smith uses the old English second person singular *Thou* and indicates all of them in italics, Kaufmann decides in favour of "You", without italics.

As Smith states in the introduction of his translation, the *Thou* is used in the language of prayer, therefore "it keeps the whole thought in the personal and responsible sphere in which alone it is truly to be understood" (Buber, 1937, p. vi).

For the opposite reason, actually, Kaufmann chooses to use "You":

I-You sounds unfamiliar. What we are accustomed to is I-Thou. But man's attitudes are manifold, and Thou and You are not the same. Nor is Thou very similar to the German *Du*.

German lovers say *Du* to one another, and so do friends. *Du* is spontaneous and unpretentious, remote from formality, pomp, and dignity. What lovers or friends say Thou to one another? Thou is scarcely ever said spontaneously. Thou immediately brings to mind God; *Du* does not.

And the God of whom it makes us think is not the God to whom one might cry out in gratitude, despair, or agony, not the God to whom one complains or prays spontaneously: it is the God of the pulpits, the God of the holy tone. When men pray spontaneously or speak directly to God, without any mediator, without any intervention of formulas, when they speak as their heart tells them to speak instead of repeating what is printed, do they say Thou? How many know the verb forms Thou commands? (Buber, 1970, *Prologue*, p. 14-15).

Kaufmann's choice is criticized by Friedman and Kramer, who prefer and use *Thou* for the same reason expressed by Smith. Kramer considers it "especially inadequate when *Du* refers to the '*eternal Thou*'". He explains the reason: "reading through *I and Thou* it becomes clear that Buber's dialogical stand is inseparable from his view that God not only can be glimpsed in genuine dialogue, but also reaches out to humans by penetrating the realm of the between" (Kramer, 2003, p. 24).

This is a further example of a "narrow ridge" for me, as I had to decide which version I should use in this research and in the following pages. Moreover, the choice has implications for the sense I give to the other, in addition to Buber's or his translators' intent. I decided to maintain the old English *Thou*, taking inspiration from Smith's suggestion. Furthermore, I like to think that the capital letters for all the pronouns grant the same importance to individuals, rather than only preserving the German grammar for personal pronouns.

### *The primary words*

Soon after the previous clauses, Buber describes the difference between the two "primary words":

> Primary words do not describe something that might exist independently of them, but being spoken they bring about existence.
>
> If *Thou* is said, the *I* of the combination *I-Thou* is said along with it.
>
> If *It* is said, the *I* of the combination *I-It* is said along with it.
>
> The primary word *I-Thou* can only be spoken with the whole being.
>
> The primary word *I-It* can never be spoken with the whole being. (Buber, 1937, p. 3)

> Basic words do not state something that might exist outside them; by being spoken they establish a mode of existence.
>
> Basic words are spoken with one's being.
>
> When one says You, the I of the words pair I-You is said, too.
>
> When one says It, the I of the words pair I-It is said, too.
>
> The basic words I-You can only be spoken with one's whole being.
>
> The basic words I-It can never be spoken with one's whole being (Buber, 1937, p. 53-54).

The "words pair" are "primary" or "basic", which in German is *Grundworte*, literally, "ground word", because, when spoken, they "constitute primary life stands – *I-Thou*, *I-It*, which are most fundamental and most meaningful" (Kramer, 2003, p. 204). This means that the "act of speaking" establishes a "mode of existence", the "words pair" exist, simply because they are spoken, as soon as they have been spoken. But "the two *I*'s are not the same" (Friedman, 1955/1960, p. 67), only *I-Thou* can be spoken with the "whole being", and this is essential information required to start understanding the difference between the two "primary words": "The speaking of *I* and the existence of *I* are one and the same thing. When the primary word is spoken, the speaker enters the word and takes his stand in it" (Buber, 1937, p. 4); and "Being I and saying I are the same. Saying I and one of the two basic words are the same. Whoever speaks one the basic words, enters into the word and stands in it" (Buber, 1970, p. 54).

"Speaking" (or "saying") and "existence" (or "being") are the "same thing". Thus, the act of speaking is the same of the act of "bringing about existence" for Buber, the speaker "enters into the word" by saying the "primary word". It seems that also existence and word are the same. When one says the "basic words", she/he enters into them, and stands,

takes her/his stand. The term "stand" links to different meanings, as Kramer notes: "stand, *Haltung* in German, refers to one's position, stance, or bearing in the world, in the presence of a dialogical partner, or nature, or spirit becoming form" (Kramer, 2003, p. 205). Buber's use of "stand" as a result of "entering into the word" and later "into relation", reminds to me the chapter of Genesis, in which God "brings about existence" by pronouncing the words. God creates (and therefore "establishes a mode of existence") by speaking. Thus the word is fundamental, basic, primary. Also the expression "to take his stand in the word" recalls for me the verb "to abide" of the Bible which indicates God's dwelling among men, in both the Old testament (Genesis 28:10-22) and New (John 6:35, 55-56). We deepen this aspect in a few pages of this essay, by analyzing the quote "in the beginning is relation" (Buber, 1937, p. 18).

### *Relation and relationship*

From the word, to relationship. In the following sentences Buber indicates relationship as "the real determinant of the primary word in which a man takes his stand. It is not the object which is over against him but the way in which he relates himself to that object" (Friedman, 1955/1960, p. 67): "When *Thou* is spoken, the speaker has no *thing*; he has indeed nothing. But he takes his stand in relation" (Buber, 1937, p. 4); and: "Whoever says You, does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation" (Buber, 1970, p. 55).

In the former sentence, the speaker "enters into the word and stands" by speaking the "basic words", now Buber introduces us to the relation, we might say into relation: in fact, whoever says *Thou*, "enters in relation", and "takes his stand" in it. If "being *I*" and "saying *I*" are "the same", therefore "speaking" and "existence" are the same, when the *I* says *Thou*, it enters into relation and takes place in it.

Buber uses two German terms for "relationship", to enforce the difference between the two conditions of its occurrence: *Beziehung* and *Verhältnis*. The *I-Thou* relationship is *Beziehung*, while the *I-It* relationship is *Verhältnis*. As Kramer notes, *Beziehung* indicates "a mutual presence that embody a past, a present and a potential for the future. Relationship refers to a close human bonding in which both partners affirm, accept and confirm each other" (Kramer, 2003, p. 204). *Verhältnis,* otherwise, "expresses a relation of proximity or location that does not involve the whole person" (Kramer, 2003, p. 204).

In English this difference may not be expressed by diverse words, and the term "relation", probably, cannot describe the nuances which Buber intended. In fact, as reported in its definition, relation indicates "the connection between two elements (people or things)", but this term does not specify the nature of this correspondence. Instead, "relationship" means "the way in which two people (or groups) feel and behave towards each other", thus it may clarify this connection a bit more. For this reason, I prefer to use the term "relationship" instead of "relation" to describe Buber's perspective and, consequently, the theoretical foundation of this study, which is based on it.

Buber slowly discloses the nature of the "words pairs" *I-Thou* and *I-It,* their characteristics and the differences between them, and allow us to comprehend the nature of relationship: "the primary word *I-Thou* establishes the world of relation" (Buber, 1937, p. 6), while "as experience, the world belongs to the primary word *I-It*" (Buber, 1937, p. 6). But "the man who experiences, has no part in the word. For it is 'in him' and not between him and the world the experience arises" (Buber, 1937, p. 5). Therefore, the experience, the "world of experience" remains "on the surface" (Buber, 1970, p. 55-56), as it is not connected with relationship.

 *I-Thou* is referred to "the world of relation", while *I-It* to "the world of experience". The German term for "experience" is *Erfahrun,* and "refers to perceiving the phenomenal word through sensations and concepts, in order to use, analyze and classify" (Kramer, 2003, p. 203).

The "world of relation", instead, "arises" into "three spheres" (Buber, 1937, p. 6), which may be considered three stages of relation: "first, our life with nature"; "second, our life with men"; "third our life with intelligible forms" (Buber, 1937, p. 6) or "spiritual beings" (Buber, 1970, p. 57). Buber will return on this division in the essay, and he soon introduces all three to the reader: in the first "sphere", the relationship "remains beneath the level of speech" (Buber, 1937, p. 6) or "below language" (Buber, 1970, p. 57). In the second, "our life with men", the relationship "is manifest and enters language" (Buber, 1970, p. 57), or, it is "the open" and in the form of speech" (Buber, 1937, p. 6). In this condition "we can give and receive" (Buber, 1970, p. 57) the *Thou.*

The third "sphere" is where the relation "is clouded" (Buber, 1937, p. 6), but "reveals itself; it lacks, but creates languages" (Buber, 1970, p. 57) and he explains how: "We perceive no *Thou*, but none the less we feel we are addressed and we answer – forming,

thinking, acting. We speak the primary word with our being, though we cannot utter *Thou* with our lips" (Buber, 1937, p. 6); and "We hear no You, and yet feel addressed. We answer: creating, thinking, acting: with our being we speak the basic word, unable to say You with our mouth" (Buber, 1970, p.57).

How can we express the primary words "outside" language, if we are not able to say *Thou*? The rhetorical question by Buber introduces us to the "eternal *Thou*":

> In every sphere in its own way, through its process of becoming that is present to us we look out toward the fringe of the eternal *Thou*; in each we are aware of a breath from the eternal *Thou;* in each *Thou* we address the eternal *Thou* (Buber, 1937, p. 6).

> In every sphere, through everything that becomes present to us, we gaze toward the train of the eternal You; in each we perceive a breath of it; in every You we address the eternal You, in every sphere according to its manner (Buber, 1970, p.57).

As Kramer notes, "the eternal *Thou* happens by grace" (Kramer, 2003, p. 203) and "it is not to be regarded as a separate being who is brought into the relationship. The eternal presence of God is glimpsed in the immediacy of the relationship itself." (Kramer, 2003, p. 24- 25).

### The relationship, "the cradle of real life"

Buber unveils further aspects of the *I-Thou* relationship, in which relationship stands, even if the one to whom we say *Thou* cannot hear or be aware of it. The relationship may take place also in this case, and in this condition is the centrality of existence, according to him:

> I do not experience the man to whom I say *Thou*. But I take my stand in relation to him in the sanctity of the primary word. Only when I step out of it do I experience him once more. In the act of experience, *Thou* is far away. Even if the man to whom I say *Thou* is not aware from it in the midst of his experience, yet relation may exist. For *Thou* is more than *It* realizes. No deception penetrates here. Here is the cradle of Real Life. (Buber, 1937, p. 9, capitalization in original)

> The human being to whom I say You I do not experience. But I stand in
> relation to him, in the sacred basic word. Only when I step out of this do I
> experience him again. Experience is remoteness from You.
> The relation can obtain even if the human being to whom I say You does not
> hear it in his experience. For You is more than It knows. No deception reaches
> this far: here is the cradle of actual life. (Buber, 1970, p. 60)

In relationship there is everything we need to know, that it is "the cradle" of "real", or "actual", "life". It is the beginning of existence, a "basic", "primary" condition, and the main, the fundamental, the core of life. After a few lines, Buber enforces this conviction with relentless questions and immediate answers: "What, then, do we experience of *Thou*? Just nothing. For we do not experience it. What, then, do we know of *Thou*? Just everything. For we know nothing isolated about it anymore" (Buber, 1937, p. 11); and: "What, then, does one experience of the You? Nothing at all. For one does not experience it.

What, then, does one know of the You? Only everything. For one no longer knows particulars" (Buber, 1970, p. 61).

We may know "just everything" of *Thou*, as by saying it we enter in the relation and we stand in it. This is the "cradle of real life", therefore, the only thing we need to know. We cannot experience it, as *Thou* brings to the "world of relation" not to the one of experience. For this reason, we cannot experience anything of *Thou*.


### "*All real living is meeting*"

In the following phrase, we are introduced more deeply to the concept of relationship: when, why, and how it takes place, and what brings it into existence. It is crucial for its definition and understanding, thus we report the complete proposition before analyzing it:

> The *Thou* meets me through grace - it is not found by seeking. But my
> speaking of the primary word to it is an act of my being, is indeed *the* act of
> my being.
> The *Thou* meets me. But I step into direct relation with it. Hence the relation
> means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one (…).

The primary word *I-Thou* can be spoken only at the whole being (…).

I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*.

All real living is meeting (Buber, 1937, p. 11).


The You encounters me by grace - it cannot be found by seeking. But that I speak the basic word to it is a deed of my whole being, is indeed my essential deed.

The You encounters me. But I enter into a direct relationship to it. Hence the relation is election and electing, passive and active at once (…).

The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one's whole being (…).

I require a You to become; becoming I, I say You.

All actual living is encounter (Buber, 1970, p. 62).

The "meeting", or "encounter", with the *Thou* occurs "by grace", it is not a result of seeking. The German term for "grace" is *Gnade,* and "refers to the spirit of 'the between' which arises from, generates, and supports genuine, interhuman meetings" (Kramer, 2003, p. 203). That is why relation means "being chosen" and it is an "election": it is a gift which we receive, not something for which we are searching. It is unexpected and surprising. But, what may happen "through grace", asks suddenly for a choice: "to speak the primary words".

Our election in meeting the *Thou* is a call, which soon requires an answer from us: to pronounce the "basic words". This seems to suggest a choice: to speak or not to speak. For this reason, relation is "being chosen and choosing", "election and electing", "passive and active at once". If being chosen may not depend on us, we are immediately involved in the action, to whom we have to decide to respond with our being. In fact, it is an "act of our being", "a deed", and Buber enforces his proposal: it is "indeed *the* act of our being", as it is "essential" for our existence. We may speak it only with our being, thus, with whole of ourselves. If we decide to say the "primary words", while we speak, we enter in relation with the *Thou*, a "direct" relationship. It is so "direct", that "the I becomes the *Thou"*.

When we choose for the relation, we might say, we bring about the other's existence. We become the other, by speaking *Thou*. Furthermore, Kramer notes: "I become wholly, uniquely, personally myself through engaging others. Through a real meeting with a

*Thou*, I become an *I!"* (Kramer, 2003, p. 43). It is an "essential deed", a unique requirement, as it cannot happen with a single word, thus, without the meeting. Only by speaking the "primary words" *I-Thou*, does the I become *Thou*.

We might say that the meeting is "the fortuitous event" which allows us to deeply enter into our existence. The idea of something that happens apparently by chance, but requests a choice from us, which implies effort and action, reminds me of an expression from Giuseppe Dossetti, Italian jurist, politician, theologian and Catholic priest (1913-1996). In a 1993 speech on spirituality and politics, he referred to his short and intense political experience (1945-1951), as a "fortuitous gift", which "happens almost without consciousness and awareness, particularly in politics". He was elected vice-secretary of the main Italian party of that period, and was a member of the commission in charge of drafting the new Italian Republic Constitution. This speech offered him the occasion to reflect on the sense of politics as a "fortuitous gift", which, according to him, derived "in a sense from God", and may happen "by chance", but may do "something of value" for the citizens, and should never be related to "personal career or success[5]" (Dossetti, 1995, p. liii).

The encounter offers to us the opportunity to stand in direct relation with the other, which is no longer a fortuitous experience, as we choose it. The result of this decision changes our existence: we become the other. This "essential deed" completes our life, thus making it whole, in fact it is in the meeting that we "really", "actually", live. According to Kramer, the adverb "really", or "actually", enforces the idea that the encounter happens in "the present moment" (Kramer, 2003, p. 43):

> By 'meeting' (*Begegnung*), Buber means the event that actually takes place
> when one steps into a mutual 'relationship' (*Beziehung*) and reciprocally
> meets *Thou* in the present moment, whole person to whole person. Indeed,
> the living actuality of meeting always takes place in the present moment.
> (Kramer, 2003, p. 43)

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[5] As I translated the excerpt from Italian, I quote the original sentence, as it appears in his work: Dossetti G. (1995). *Scritti politici (1943-1951)* [Political writings (1943-1951)], Genoa, Italy: Marietti Ed.:
*Ritengo che possa accadere per me, per dono fortuito in un certo senso di Dio (Dio fa sempre dei doni che sono, a modo loro, fortuiti), quasi senza coscienza e senza consapevolezza, particolarmente in politica, di fare qualcosa che non è destinato al puro insuccesso, anche se non si deve mai cercare il successo personale. Non si chiede a priori di volere l'insuccesso; può accadere per caso, in modo del tutto fortuito, inconsapevole, di fare qualche cosa che ha una sua validità.* (Dossetti, 1995, p. liii)

The German term for "meeting" is *Begegnung,* referring to "engaging interaction or a direct communication between our innermost being and who/what present itself to us. The word *Begegnung* only signifies the actual occurrence of engaging and being engaged" (Kramer, 2003, p. 203).

In the phrase "all actual life is encounter" we may find traces of Buber's first and fundamental experience of meeting, the one with his paternal grandparents (Friedman, 1988). At the same time, this definition may help to better understand Buber's coinage of the word "mismeeting", which indicates "the failure of a real meeting between men" (Friedman, 1988, p. 5). The term suggests a lost opportunity, with life, in addition to the encounter, as we miss the occasion to enter in relation with the *Thou,* and thus, we might say, with "an actual life".

As Buber described in autobiographical writings, the term "mismeeting" was inspired by the failure of his relationship with his mother, who left him when he was three years old, as previously mentioned. After a few years with his grandparents, Buber returned to live with his father, but he was unable to meet again his mother, who did not search for him any longer, as she had moved to Russia. He suffered from this abandonment for his whole life, and mentioned an episode, during his childhood, which remained fixed in his memory: he was in his grandparents' home, with a girl, older than him, who had to look after him. In a dialogue with her about his mother, she asserted that Buber's mother would never come back. He remained silent, as he felt that she was telling the truth. This was, according to Friedman, a "decisive experience" in Buber's life, "the one without which neither early seeking for unity, nor his later focus on dialogue and with the meeting of the *'eternal Thou'* is understandable" (Friedman, 1988, p. 5).

Buber met his mother again only once, when she visited him to encounter his new family. In thinking about this encounter, described as another lost occasion of relation, he coined the term "mismeeting":

> When after twenty years I again saw my mother, who had come from a distance to visit to me, my wife and my children, I could not gaze into her astonishingly beautiful eyes without hearing from somewhere the word *Vergegnung* as a word spoken to me. (Friedman, 1988, p. 5)

*"Relation is reciprocity"*

Buber specifies the characteristics of relationship between *I* and *Thou* and the conditions for its occurrence:

> The relation to the *Thou* is direct. No system of ideas, no foreknowledge, and no fancy intervene between *I* and *Thou*. The memory itself is transformed as it plunges out of its isolation into the unity of the whole. No aim, no lust, and no anticipation intervene between *I* and *Thou.* Desire itself is transformed as it plunges out of its dream into the appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means is collapsed, does the meeting come out. (Buber, 1937, p. 11-12)

> The relation to the You is unmediated. Nothing conceptual intervenes between I and You, no prior knowledge, and no imagination; and memory itself is changed as it plunges from particularity into wholeness. No purpose intervenes between I and You, no greed, and no anticipation; and longing itself is changed as it plunges from the dream into appearance. Every means is an obstacle. Only when every means has disintegrated, encounters occur. (Buber, 1970, p.62-63)

There are no mediators in relationship; for this reason, it is "direct". As Kaufmann specifies, the German term for "unmediated" is *Unmittelbar*, which is close to "immediate", but in this context, he suggests it was necessary to maintain the "negative" sense of the German word, as "'direct' suggests more forcibly the absence of any intermediary than does 'immediate' with its primarily temporal connotation" (Buber, 1970, p. 62, note n° 7).

All the means which Buber lists are obstacles to the relationship: "conceptual", "prior knowledge", and "imagination", but also "memory", "purpose", "greed", "anticipation", and "desire". No past and no future, this list seems to suggest, but only the living moment may assure the occurrence of the encounter, which may happen when every means is "collapsed", even "disintegrated". For this reason, the meeting between *I* and *Thou* "cannot be found by seeking" and but only "through grace".

The distinguishing character of the *I-Thou* relationship is mutuality, or reciprocity. Smith chooses the first term, Kaufmann the second one: "Relation is mutual. My *Thou* affects

me, as I affect it" (Buber, 1937, p. 15). "Relation is reciprocity. My You acts on me, as I act on it" (Buber, 1970, p. 67).

In both translations, whether "relation" is identified with "mutuality", or "reciprocity", they are in fact one thing, the same thing: we find a copular verb, used to join an adjective ("is mutual") or a noun complement to a subject ("is reciprocity"). Both choices express either that the subject and its complement mean the same thing (relation and reciprocity) or that the subject has the property denoted by its complement ("relation is mutual"). "Mutuality" and "reciprocity" are considered synonymous in this essay, and the German term chosen by Buber, *Gegenseitigkeit*, "refers to the full, spontaneous and reciprocal participation of each partner in genuine relationship" (Kramer, 2003, p. 204). I would also add two more meanings of the term "reciprocity" to complete its definition, which exist in Italian, but I did not find in English and German: *scambievole* and *vicendevole*. Although they are synonymous with "mutual", they express two more nuances, related to the time and the type of the reaction in reciprocity. *Scambievole* refers to a "mutual exchange", from the Latin *cambiare,* which means "to exchange", and it recalls the Latin sense of *munus*, the gift which obliged the person who received it to respond with another gift, generally bigger or more precious. In reciprocity the exchange, therefore, the reaction, the answer, is mutual, as a result of a choice from both persons (the one who offers and the other who receives), not a duty.

*Vicendevole,* from the Latin *vicenda,* which means "each other", refers to the period of the action, thus the reaction and the answer. It indicates a correspondence between them: their action is mutual because it is repeated or happens at regular intervals of time. It implies that reaction time is not important, who acts before and when the other may or will answer. In addition, the type of the reaction is not important, just the choice to establish a connection with the other.

The "full, spontaneous and reciprocal participation" characteristic of a mutual relationship is extended to all "the universe": "We live our lives inscrutably included within the streaming mutual life of the universe" (Buber, 1937, p. 16). "Inscrutable involved, we live in the current of universal reciprocity" (Buber, 1970, p. 67).

Mutuality is what makes "fully real" the *I-Thou* relationship, as Friedman summarizes:

> To be fully real the I-Thou relation must be mutual. This mutuality does
> not mean simple unity or identity, nor is it any form of empathy.

Though I-Thou is the word of relation and togetherness, each of the members of the relation really remains himself, and that means really different from the other. (Friedman, 1955/1960, p. 71)

Reciprocity differentiates the *I-Thou* relationship (*Beziehung*) from the *I-It* relation (*Verhältnis)*, which cannot be mutual, as previously mentioned.

Buber once more adds meaning to the definition of the *I-Thou* relationship, which is unexpected, unmediated, direct, mutual and not permanent:

But this is the exalted melancholy of our fate, that every *Thou* in our world must become an *It.* It does not matter how exclusively present the *Thou* was in the direct relation. As soon as the relation has been worked out or has been permeated with a means, the *Thou* becomes an object among objects – perhaps the chief, but still one of them, fixed in its size and in its limits. In the work of art realization in one sense it means loss of reality in another. (Buber, 1937, p. 16-17)

This, however, is the sublime melancholy of our lot that every You must become an It in our world. However exclusively present it may have been in the direct relationship - as soon as the relation has run its course or is permeated by *means*, the You becomes an object among objects, possibly the noblest one, and yet one of them, assigned its measure and boundary. The actualization of the work involves a loss of actuality. (Buber, 1970, p. 68)

It seems to be a paradox, as Buber brought us only towards the occurrence of the *I-Thou* relationship and he unveiled "the mystery of reciprocity", which leads to the "real" meeting, moreover, to the "actual life". Indeed, it is just for this reason that the "genuine contemplation" cannot be durable, and it "means loss of reality in another". Even love does not "persist in direct relation":

Genuine contemplation is over in a short time; now the life in nature, that first unlocked itself to me in the mystery of mutual action, can again be described, taken into pieces, and classified -  the meeting-point of manifold systems of laws. And love itself cannot persist in direct relation. It endures, but in interchange of actual and potential being. (Buber, 1937, p. 17)

Genuine contemplation never lasts long; the natural being that only now reveals itself to me in the mystery of reciprocity, has again become describable, analyzable, classifiable - the point at which manifold systems of laws intersect. And love even cannot persist in direct relation. It endures, but only in alternation between actuality and latency. (Buber, 1970, p. 68-69)

Buber uses an image to express the continuous "interchange" or "alternation", between "actual" and "potential being" which characterizes the *I-Thou* relationship: "The *It* is the eternal chrysalis, the *Thou* the eternal butterfly" (Buber, 1937, p. 17). The adjective "eternal" disappears in the second edition of the essay of 1958, and it is absent in Kaufmann's translation, which is: "The It is the chrysalis, the You the butterfly" (Buber, 1970, p. 69).

The *It* is the "potential being", thus, the chrysalis, which has to wait for its metamorphosis; the *Thou* is the "actual", thus the butterfly, which already realized the metamorphosis, we might say the encounter, the relationship.

But the butterfly flies away "as soon as" this event "has run its course", as Friedman notes: "What at one moment was the Thou of an I-Thou relation can become the next moment an It and indeed must continually do so. The I may again become a Thou, but it will not be able to remain one, and it need not become a Thou at all" (Friedman, 1955/1960, p. 68). Only in the "eternal *Thou*" does this "interchange" or "alternation", between "actual" and "potential being" arrive at a complete end.


*"In the beginning is relation"*

There is nothing apart from relationship, according to Buber. He enforces this conviction with a statement, soon after the metaphor of the chrysalis and the butterfly which closes the former phrase: "In the beginning is relation" which is the same in both translations (Buber, 1937, p. 18; Buber, 1970, p. 69). On this sentence, Friedman notes:

Buber's statement is not an alternative to the Johannine 'In the beginning was the Word', but a restoration to it of the biblical dynamic and mutuality of the word as 'between'. The true beginning of relationship is the speech of God which creates and addresses man. The world really becomes through God's word and the world takes place and becomes real for man in the world. Speech is thus the face-to-face existence of the creatures and pure creation coincides

with pure speaking. That we can say Thou is to be understood from the fact

that Thou is said to us. All speech therefore is answering, responding".

(Friedman, 1988, p. 313)

"In the beginning" seems to be closer to the "primary words", the primitive and, thus, "basic" moment, as it is created by word and relationship, and takes place into the word and the relationship. Later Buber adds: "In the beginning is relation – as a category of being, readiness, grasping form, mould for the soul; it is the *a priori* of relation, the *inborn Thou*" (Buber, 1937, p. 27); "In the beginning is relation – as a category of being, as readiness, as a form which reached out to be filled, a model for the soul; the *a priori* of relation, the *innate You*" (Buber, 1970, p. 78).

The "*inborn Thou*" refers to the first "contact" with the *Thou*, like the one of a child with the world around him, even before learning to speak. His primal "instinct" of mutuality is "tenderness" (Buber, 1937, p. 28; Buber, 1970, p. 79). According to Kramer, the "*inborn*", or "*innate*", *Thou* refers to "the human proclivity toward relationship called forth by the parents who responds to the child's reaching out. Buber calls it 'human birthright'" (Kramer, 2003, p. 203).

When the child starts to speak, his "tenderness" evolves, "the product is 'personified' and the 'conversation' begins" (Buber, 1970, p. 79). The child "loses his relation with the Thou and perceives it as a separated object, as the It of an I which has itself shrunk to the dimensions of a natural object" (Friedman, 1955/1960, p 71). Furthermore, Friedman adds:

Thus in the silent or spoken dialogue between the I and the Thou both

personality and knowledge come into being. Unlike the subject-object

knowledge of the I-It relation, the knowing of the I-Thou relation takes place

neither in the 'subjective' nor the 'objective,' the emotional nor the rational,

but in the 'between' -- the reciprocal relationship of whole and active beings.

(Friedman, 1955/1960, p 71)

The "between" is where the relationship takes place: between the I and the Thou, between "subjective" and "objective" knowledge, between "emotional" and "rational" knowledge. It is "a third dimension", as Kramer observes: "it becomes clear that *I-Thou* moments consist not of experiences dwelling distinctly in two persons, but in a third dimension, the dimension of 'the between', in which shared experience enlivens the I-Thou relationship"

(Kramer, 2003, p. 24). This space belongs neither to the *I,* nor to the *Thou*: it is between them, in what Buber calls the "sphere of between" (Buber, 1972, p. 116), in German *das Zwischenmenschliche*, as *das Zwischen* indicates "the between". The relationship occurs in this space, and also the encounter, at the basis of a "real" or "actual" "life". Buber uses an image to help us to understand the space "in between": "Spirit is not in the *I*, but between *I-Thou*. It is not like the blood that circulates in you, but like the air in which you breathe" (Buber, 1937, p. 39). This vital and essential space is where the "primary words", relationship, and encounter, take their stands.

We are almost at the end of the first part of *I and Thou*, in which Buber creates the basis for the definition of relationship - the characteristics and the difference between *I-Thou* and *I-It* relationships - and meeting - the realization and concretization of existence. These notes conclude the analysis of the essay, as this part is the most important for the theoretical foundation of this research, based on Buber's perspective on relationship.

I did not yet mention dialogue, which may be the frame and the background of this painting, if we imagine relationship as a painting.

### 1.1.2 Dialogue as a space *of* relationship

In *I and Thou* Buber uses the same German term for "dialogue" and for "speaking", *Gespräch,* which indicates "an open-ended conversation with another that happens on an equal basis between persons" (Kramer, 2003, p. 204) and "happens in open, direct, mutual, present communication, silent or spoken" (Kramer, 2003, p. 202). Whether silent or spoken, in fact, dialogue is the result of the *I-Thou* relationship, as previously noted. When the *I* says *Thou*, it enters into relation and stands. When the *Thou* encounters the *I*, it immediately enters into relation with it and, as the relationship is mutual, when *Thou* is said, the *I* of the combination *I-Thou* is said along with it. Speaking and existence are the same, as are meeting and existence. The encounter, as well as the relationship, occurs in "the between", in the space between the *I* and the *Thou*. In the space of the relationship, which is between them: in the hyphen, we might say. The space of relationship - the "sphere of between" - might be in the hyphen and, far more broadly, may be the hyphen itself. It is the space which does not belong only to one part, to the single word – the *I* or the *Thou* – but is between them.

We may better understand "the between" as a space in which dialogue also may take place from two essays which Buber wrote after *I and Thou*: *Dialogue* and *What is man?*[6] The first was written in German in 1930, the second in Hebrew in 1942. They were translated into English and collected in the same volume, *Between man and man*, which contains also other essays (Buber, 1947). As previously noted, the writings of philosophical and pedagogical matters after *I and Thou,* contain explanations and remarks of it. Buber indicates it in the *Foreword* to the essay *Dialogue,* which intends "to clarify the 'dialogical' principle presented in *I and Thou*, to illustrate it and to make precise its relation to essential sphere of life" (Buber, 1947, *Foreword* p. ix). The German term which Buber uses either for the title or in the text of *Dialogue* is *Zwiesprache*. I found a note[7] by the Italian translator about this term, which may help to understand the reason of his choice:

> Although *Zwiesprache* literally corresponds to dia-logue, conversation "between"*,* it contains a more personal and intimate nuance which is absent in the term *Dialog*. The best approximation in Italian might be "interlocution", but it currently has another meaning and it does not express the sense of *Zwiesprache.* (Buber, 1993)

We may perceive Buber's preference for this German term, considering the definition of "the between": the space between the *I* and the *Thou*, in which the relationship arises and stands, is *das Zwischen,* therefore, *Zwiesprache* might indicate "the speech which takes place 'in the between'". It is - or may be - the dialogue which occurs in "the sphere of between", in which the *I* meets the *Thou* (Buber, 1972, p. 116). This dialogue, as Buber writes in the essay *What is man?* takes place "between them, in a dimension which is accessible only to them" (Buber, 1972, p. 117). This is "genuine" dialogue, as he explains in the essay *Dialogue*:

> I know three kinds of communication in life: there is genuine dialogue – no matter whether spoken or silent – where each of the participants really has in mind the other or others in their present and particular being and turns to them with the intention of establishing a living mutual relation between himself and

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[6] In this study I refer to the Italian translation of the essay *What is man? Il problema dell'uomo* (Buber, 1972).

[7] As I translated this note from Italian, I quote the original sentence: *Il termine tedesco che Buber predilige non è* Dialog*, ma* Zwiesprache*: pur corrispondendo letteralmente al dia-logo, discorso "tra", esso suona più intimo e personale che* Dialog*. Non è possibile rendere questa sfumatura in italiano; il termine che forse si avvicina di più a* Zwiesprache*, come "interlocuzione", ha infatti assunto un significato diverso* (Buber, 1993, p. 184).

them. There is technical dialogue, which is prompted solely by the need of objective understanding. And there is monologue disguised as dialogue, in which two or men, meeting in space, speak each with himself in strangely tortuous and circuitous ways and yet imagine they have escaped the torment of being thrown back on their own resources[8]. (Buber, 1993)

The essays *Dialogue* and *What is man?* seem to suggest that, as relationship and meeting, dialogue also may be considered a "space in between". Some scholars of communication who take a dialogic approach note that in these essays Buber's vocabulary tends "to shift from I-Thou and I-It to dialogue" (Anderson, R. & Cissna, 2012, p. 134).

The etymology of "dialogue" seems to enforce this suggestion: it is literally a "speech" (*logos*, in the sense of "oral talk") "between" (*dià*), at least, two persons. The dialogue takes place in the relationship, during the encounter, within the *I-Thou* relationship. It may be, therefore, "open, direct, mutual, present", as the relationship - and meeting, which originates relationship - since it is strictly related to both them. There would not be dialogue without relationship and meeting. Even dialogue, therefore, might be considered "the hyphen" between the *I* and the *Thou* in which they meet, enter in relation, and stand.

The proposal for a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching put forth in this study aims to consider dialogue as more than "strictly" linked to relationship: it may be one with relationship, and becomes a space *of* relationship, in addition to a space *for* relationship.

Buber's perspective may be the key to the interpretation for dialogue as a space *of* relationship in this study. In fact, relationship may become the connection between transcultural and transdisciplinary approaches to academic teaching, and with, across, among, beyond the students, their cultures and disciplines. Furthermore, relationship may become reciprocal to dialogue, and dialogue to relationship, in an approach which may be applied also beyond the academic context.

These aspects are connected to relationship, we would say that they are related to relationship, which is the *trait d'union* among them. In every sense: the *trait d'union* is

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[8] As I translated this note from Italian, I quote the original sentence: *Conosco tre specie di dialogo: quello autentico – non importa se parlato o silenzioso – in cui ciascuno dei partecipanti intende l'altro o gli altri nella loro esistenza e particolarità e si rivolge loro con l'intenzione di fare nascere tra loro una vivente reciprocità; quello tecnico, proposto solo dal bisogno dell'intesa soggettiva; e il monologo travestito da dialogo, in cui due o più uomini riuniti in un luogo in modo stranamente contorto e indiretto, parlano solo con se stessi e tuttavia si credono sottratti alla pena del dover contare solo su di sé* (Buber, 1993, p. 205).

the element of connection among the parts. In French it indicates the typographic character, which corresponds to the English "hyphen". The relationship, therefore, may become the hyphen in this space "in between" which this study aims to investigate. In the next sections, I will describe these connections by deepening the idea of dialogue as a space of relationship among cultures and among disciplines. I will present a few notes on the historical and theoretical backgrounds of intercultural dialogue and of transdisciplinarity, to better understand the notions of dialogue among cultures and dialogue among disciplines in this study. In this overview, I will introduce other fields of study, related to intercultural dialogue: intercultural communication, intercultural teaching, and intercultural philosophy. I will try to put them into relation, and this will allow us to present the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue at the basis of this study.

If we can imagine dialogue and relationship as a painting, these fields provide the frame for, and the background in, the painting.


## 1.2   Dialogue among cultures

Buber's perspective becomes a reference point in several disciplines which investigate a dialogic approach to the other, in addition to the philosophy of dialogue (also known as philosophy of the other, or of the encounter), which traditionally considers Buber as its founder. Some scholars of philosophy and religion, communication and literature, economics, history, and politics, psychology and psychotherapy, for instance, explored their areas of research by taking inspiration from Buber's perspective. Friedman collected their contributions in a volume dedicated to *Martin Buber and the human sciences* (Friedman, 1996). Furthermore, a scholar of communication based in the United States (U.S.), Kenneth N. Cissna, described his dialogue with Friedman, mainly through e-mail, as an example of "dialogically speaking" inspired to Buber's approach and between scholars of different disciplines, communication (for Cissna) and philosophy (for Friedman) (Cissna, 2011).

In particular for this research, which proposes a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue, I focus on studies on communication and on education which take inspiration from Buber's dialogic perspective. Above all, I refer to a branch of communication dedicated to dialogue among

cultures, intercultural dialogue. In this section, in particular, I describe three fields of study related to intercultural dialogue: intercultural communication, intercultural teaching and intercultural philosophy. These approaches allow me to clarify the sense of an intercultural orientation to communication, education and thinking, necessary to understand the proposal of a transcultural perspective at the basis of this study, and I introduce a few historical and theoretical notes of each of them.

Before presenting a few notes on intercultural communication, intercultural teaching and intercultural philosophy, I define the terms "culture", "dialogue" and "intercultural dialogue", around which the next pages are focused. These definitions seem likely to be under construction, and the explanation runs the risk of occasionally delimiting them. The effort made here, therefore, is to present their meaning without closing them in a cage, by trying to gradually deepen their sense.

*Culture*

The term "culture" links to two main meanings derived from the Latin verb *colere* (Baldwin, Faulkner, Hecht, & Lindsley, 2006, p.5): one connects to the individual, and indicates the activities which allow the "cultivation" of the human soul "through education"; the other is related to the group, as the "collective customs and achievements of a people".

In the main languages derived from Latin, these two meanings are maintained in the current usage, and the term is similar also in grammar and pronunciation: French and English has *culture*, while Spanish and Italian *cultura*, and German uses *Kultur*. Both meanings imply a dynamic condition, which evolves over time and requires continuity, as "the repetition is an essential component of the activity itself and can only be realized with great effort" (Chen, 2010, p. 61). This condition is related to the past - thus, to the personal history of an individual, and to social, political, economic, but also religious and linguistic, aspects of a group. It is also connected with the present - of the individual and the group, and with the future, as the changing in culture(s) assures the conditions necessary to life, in many cultures also to survival.

Moreover, both definitions refer to the identity of the individual and the group, based on: language, traditions, religion, beliefs, values, education, in addition to history, politics, economics, and social background. Culture and identity, therefore, are related. The

original meaning of "identity", is, in fact, "something which is the same (*idem* in Latin) as something else". We may then talk about a "cultural identity", which indicates the common characteristics shared by individuals of the same culture. We can also talk about an "intracultural identity" (in Latin *intra* is "within"). The term "cultural identity", in fact, is most often used to refer to national, racial, ethnic, or religious identities, although recently the phrase has been applied to a wider variety of groups (including gender, age, sexual orientation, etc.).

We may now see the risk to defining, thus delimiting, the term through a meaning which currently seems anachronistic. In particular, for "culture", one would wonder what are nowadays the common aspects of one culture, or within a culture, if they are present, and if we may still consider a "cultural" or "intracultural" identity.

The current meaning of this term, actually, may be clearer considering culture's dynamic condition, as culture evolves, either in individuals, or among them, thus in groups. Above all, it changes in (and thanks to) the interactions among the individuals (in Latin *inter* is "among or between"). Therefore, we would do better to talk about an "intercultural identity" (Chen, 2010, pp. 54-64), which is referred to the common aspects among cultures, as a result of their interactions. It seems a contradiction: how can we talk about "identity" if there are several cultures, what really mean - or may be - "identity" and, thus, "culture(s)"?

A first answer to these questions comes from Franz Martin Wimmer, Austrian intercultural philosopher. His perspective may help to better understand the complex definition of the term "culture", which will be deepened in the section dedicated to intercultural philosophy (section 1.2.3). Wimmer proposes a distinction between "created culture" (in Latin *cultura creata,* in German *Kulturzustand*) which refers to a "cultural condition", and "culture which creates" (in Latin *cultura quae creat,* in German *Kulturhandeln*) which indicates a "cultural action" (Chen, 2010, p. 62, Wimmer, 2000, para[9]. 12). The "cultural condition" is static, related to "memory" (Chen, 2010, p. 61), thus to the history and written tradition of a group and to a personal background. The "cultural action" is dynamic and "creative" (Chen, 2010, p. 61), and it refers to the evolution and changes of culture(s) during the time. Wimmer suggests a third way, which

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[9] This is an online one-page source, so the page number is not indicated, but it has paragraphs, thus I quote them.

is complementary to the two and may replace this distinction: "a created culture that creates" (Chen, 2010, p. 62, Wimmer, 2000, para. 15). In this perspective, we might also include "intercultural identity", which, as well, may become "creative", in the sense that it might include what already exists in cultures and among them, and what is created and is creating through their interactions.

*Dialogue*

The etymology from the ancient Greek suggests that dialogue is "speech" (*logos*) "between" (*dià*), at least, two persons. Like "culture", dialogue is similar in meaning and grammar in the main languages which derive, or maintain elements, of ancient Greek and Latin: in French the term is *dialogue* (with a different pronounce from English), in Spanish and Italian it is *diálogo*, in German it is *Dialog*. Like "culture", furthermore, the definition needs to be extended to better understand its sense in this study. The "constitutive" characteristics of dialogue are synthesized in a volume dedicated to different dialogic approaches to communication inspired to Buber's perspective, *Dialogue: Theorizing Difference in Communication Studies* (Anderson, Baxter, & Cissna, 2004). In particular, in the *Foreword* to this volume, Julia T. Wood, a U.S. scholar of communication, defines dialogue, which in this context is synonymous with "communication", as "not linear, nor even merely interactive. It is a fluctuating, unpredictable, multivocal process in which uncertainty infuses encounters between people and what they mean and become" (Wood, 2004, p. xvi). This definition relates to Buber's unmediated relationship, which "happens by grace" (Buber, 1970, p. 62), as "every means is an obstacle. Only when every means is collapsed, does the meeting come out" (Buber, 1937, p. 12).

The "uncertainty" of dialogue makes it "emergent (rather than preformed), fluid (rather than static), keenly dependent on process (at least as much as content), performative (rather than representational) and never fully finished (rather than completed)" (Wood, 2004, p. xvii). Also the "fluidity" and "incompleteness" of dialogue recall Buber's perspective on relationship, which occurs - we may say emerges - "in the between" (Buber, 1972, p. 117), thus in a space which does not belong to only one part; for this reason, it may be considered "fluid" and not "preformed".

The fluid dialogue which occurs "in the between" is described also by John Shotter, a British scholar of communication, in relation to the "joint action". This type of relationship derives from "people's further growth together, and the ways in which, in the course of that growth, they account for their behavior to one another" (Shotter, 1987, p. 226):

> As all human action, whether autonomous or joint, has an *intentional* quality to it, it always seems to 'point to', or 'to indicate', or 'to be related to' something other than or beyond itself'; in joint action, however, something is created that is not 'in' any of the people involved, but is apparently 'in' (or 'of') the situation constituted between them. (Shotter, 1987, p. 227, emphasis in original)

The relationship which characterizes the "joint action" provides "a new 'us', an enclave within the larger 'us' of which they [people] are already a part, an 'us' in which they themselves can be further psychologically and morally transformed" (Shotter, 1987, p. 226). In this perspective, the "new us" is "*relative* to which and in terms of which they [people] can account for themselves to each other (and to themselves)" (Shotter, 1987, p. 226, emphasis in original). The "new us" of the relationship, which arises "in between", adds to the characteristics of dialogue previously described, thus, its fluidity, unpredictability and incompleteness. These aspects may be completed by another one: the "tension" among the participants engaged in dialogue. This attribute is "inherent in and integral to dialogue" (Wood, 2004, p. xvii), as it is related to the perspectives on "ourselves, others and the world" derived from our "beliefs, opinions, values, assumptions, interests" (Wood, 2004, p. xvii). This "tension" is also described by the U.S. scholars John Stewart and Karen Zediker, who refer to dialogue as a "tensional and ethical practice" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). In their view, in fact, Buber's perspective is "neither simply monologic nor simply dialogic but dualistic or polar, highlighting human reality as the continuous management of the tension between monologue and dialogue" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 227). Buber's aim, in fact, is to "understand dialogue as a special and particular quality of relation, an identifiable option, a concrete and life-enhancing possibility, a potential that exists in tension with the potential for monologue" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 227). This distinction allows Buber "to urge his listeners and readers to make the ethical choice of changing their dominant monologic communication patterns

toward more dialogic ones" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 227). In this view, Buber's perspective is dialogic "primarily because of the ethically laden content of the tensions that the participants are negotiating moment-to-moment" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 231). This "tension", therefore, implies a choice among the participants involved in dialogue, an ethical and practical decision. When we enter into dialogue, in fact, we "allow – perhaps even embrace – tension between our perspectives and those of others which may challenge and change our own" (Wood, 2004, p. xvii). This remind me of Buber's dialogic principle: "The *Thou* meets me. But I step into direct relation with it. Hence the relation means being chosen and choosing, suffering and action in one" (Buber, 1937, p. 11).

The "tension" in dialogue and the openness to be changed recalls another contribution by Kenneth N. Cissna and Rob Anderson of a decade before their volume *Dialogue: Theorizing Difference in Communication Studies*: "dialogue implies more than a simple back-and-forthness of messages in interaction; it points to a particular process and quality of communication in which the participant 'meet', which allows for changing and being changed" (Cissna & Anderson, 1994, p. 10). The "elective and election" dialogue, as Buber calls relationship, implies the unpredictability of dialogue in which "we do not know exactly what we are going to say, and we can surprise not only the other, but even ourselves" (Cissna & Anderson, 1994, p. 10). This changing is continuous, for this reason dialogue is a "process", as "identity emerges in and through communication. Whoever we are before we enter into dialogue, those are not the selves that exist during, after and because of dialogue" (Wood, 2004, p. xvii). Consequently, it is not necessary to "idealize or seek common ground in dialogue", as the search for it "may thwart, rather than facilitate, genuine dialogue, because almost inevitably the dominant culture defines what ground is common or legitimate" (Wood, 2004, p. xvii). Dialogue, in fact, "should not be understood as the attempt to *make common* certain ideas or items of information, but as the effort of two or more people to make something *in common",* thus to create something "new together" (Bohm, 1996, p. 2, emphasis in original). For this reason, dialogue needs differences more than a common ground: "rather than the reproductive goal of finding the 'common ground' or to 'resolving differences', dialogue allows differences to exist without trying to resolve, overcome, synthesize and otherwise tame them" (Wood, 2004, pp. xvii-xviii).

The "tension" not to resolve differences through dialogue, but, instead, to allow their existence (and coexistence) is crucial in this study. The basic idea, in fact, is not to overcome differences, in the sense of going *over* them, but in the effort to go *beyond* them. This is a different approach from other dialogic perspectives in communications which consider dialogue as a tool to solve disagreements. Among them stands the so-called "argumentative dialogue" approach (Greco, 2015, p.1), which aims to a find a "reasonable solution" to diverse opinions "through weighing arguments pro and against each position in a constructively critical fashion" (Greco, 2015, p.1). In such approaches, therefore, dialogue provides the basis *for* the relationship, which may be established in a common ground.

The transcultural and transdisciplinary approach which this study proposes, instead, focuses on dialogue as a space *of* relationship; for this reason, it does not seek a common ground among cultures and disciplines.

Two more characteristics related to dialogue complete this overview and introduce the intercultural perspective: listening and openness to the other's call. Listening without "being driven to find common ground" opens "new ground – new ways of understanding self, other, and the social, symbolic and material world" (Wood, 2004, p. xviii). This "new ground" implies that "dialogue does not necessarily preclude standing one's ground firmly, but it does require that in doing so one remain open to the call of the other" (Wood, 2004, p. xviii). If we remain open to this call, we are "realized in the *process* of dialogue. Points of view, relationships and selves are not static. Rather, they are fluid processes that are continuously open to be (re)formed largely through interaction between people" (Wood, 2004, p. xviii, emphasis in original).

### *Intercultural dialogue*

The study of the connections and the interactions among cultures characterizes intercultural studies. They differ from multicultural ones, which aim to detect the presence of several (*multus* in Latin) cultures which do not necessarily interact. The Latin prefix *inter* allows comparison of two or more situations, in this case cultures, which, therefore, may inter-act. *Multus* indicates the presence of at least two cultures, which are close, but not necessarily related and not supposed to be compared, or to interact. *Inter* may be considered a further step of *multus* in the relationship, in this case, among diverse

cultures: there would not have been an intercultural dialogue without a multicultural reality, and the interaction among cultures may arise only when they are different. The term "intercultural dialogue" has been used since the 1980s, especially as a technical definition by international organizations. The most cited is the one given by the Council of Europe in 2008:

> Intercultural dialogue is a process that comprises an open and respectful exchange or interaction between individuals, groups and organizations with different cultural backgrounds or worldviews. Among its aims are: to develop a deeper understanding of diverse perspectives and practices; to increase participation and the freedom and ability to make choices; to foster equality; and to enhance creative processes (Council of Europe, 2008, p.10).

We also report the definition which appears in the *International encyclopedia of language and social interaction* by Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, director of the Center for Intercultural Dialogue located in the United States:

> Intercultural dialogue stands at the nexus of language and social interaction and intercultural communication. Unlike other forms of interaction, intercultural dialogue assumes participants come from different cultural (ethnic, linguistic, religious) contexts, implying that they will have divergent assumptions about, and rules for, interaction (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2015, p. 860).

The interaction at the basis of intercultural dialogue "typically requires both language and intent, being a deliberate verbal exchange of views" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2015, p. 860). It implies that dialogue is "the specific goal" of intercultural dialogue, which aims to "achieve understanding of cultural others as an immediate goal, taking the more advanced steps of achieving agreement and cooperation as potential later goals" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2015, p. 860). For its technical usage, mainly by international organizations, intercultural dialogue is considered a "practical tool used to prevent or reduce conflict between cultural groups, instead fostering respect and tolerance. Thus it is treated as a potential technique for building or maintaining peace" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2015, p. 860).

Within communication, indirect and direct approaches to this field of research have been used starting from the 1980s. In indirect approach, intercultural dialogue is not the specific object of study. Instead, scholars are interested in studying intercultural contexts and require dialogue among participants, but the intercultural dialogue itself is not the

primary goal. Among the indirect approaches are cross-cultural studies, which involve comparisons of two cultural groups using methods such as the ethnography of communication.

As it will be illustrated in section 2.1.2, "ethnography" was originally the term used to describe the method for studying the biological, cultural and social aspects of humans by anthropology. It indicates, in fact, the systematic study (*graphia* in the ancient Greek means "to write") of a group of people (*ethnos* indicates "people"). Over time, ethnography has gradually been adapted outside anthropology by those disciplines interested in the study of cultures and groups of people from other perspectives, such as historical, political and economic, including sociology and communication. As the English term "cross" suggests, cross-cultural studies aim to compare and to describe diverse styles of communication, models, theory and practice, not necessarily the interactions among people or cultures.

Indirect approaches to intercultural dialogue also include cognitive approaches to language and social psychology, which use the term "intergroup dialogue" rather than intercultural communication or intercultural dialogue. As it will be presented in section 1.2.1, "intergroup dialogue" refers to groups of individuals who interact, rather than single persons, and typically adherents study groups which differ in several aspects, such as age, gender, culture, religion, or language, for instance.

Also intercultural communication and intercultural teaching often do not explicitly examine what actually occurs during interactions among cultures and people. In fact, intercultural communication most often has focused on "what people think occurs, or the participants interact without the requirements of dialogue, that is, not deliberately privileging attention to learning about the other" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2015, p. 865). Intercultural teaching refers to education integrating intercultural communication, which can be quite different from the study of the theory and practice of intercultural dialogue. Finally, indirect approaches may include those interested in examining conflict, negotiation, and/or mediation. Although they overlap with intercultural dialogue and focus on dialogue as a specific goal, these approaches rarely focus on intercultural elements specifically.

The examples of a direct approach to intercultural dialogue are quite recent, and may be detected in language and social interaction studies, mainly in Europe and the United

States. As dialogue among members of different cultures is its specific aim, the direct approach is often the result of connections among scholars of different cultures and fields of research involved in this discipline. For this reason, one of the main associations dedicated to communication, the National Communication Association, lately addressed the topic of intercultural dialogue. In 2009, this association promoted a Summer Conference in Istanbul (Turkey), and the following year the Center for Intercultural Dialogue was born, with the aim of "encouraging research", but also "bringing international scholars together in shared dialogue about their work" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2015, p. 866). Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz was the organizer of the Summer Conference in Istanbul, as chair of the International and Intercultural Communication Division of the National Communication Association at that time. Since then, she has been promoting the birth of a network of scholars drawn from different cultures and fields of study, through the Center for Intercultural Dialogue, which she founded in 2010 and has directed since then.

I participated in this conference in 2009, and I belong to this network of scholars. Together over the past few years, we have tried to approach intercultural dialogue from different cultural and disciplinary perspectives, as it will be described in section 3.6. The definition of the terms "culture", "dialogue" and "intercultural dialogue" allows us to better understand the historical and theoretical backgrounds of three fields of research related to intercultural dialogue: intercultural communication, intercultural teaching and intercultural philosophy.

### 1.2.1. Intercultural communication

The earliest strands of intercultural communication may be detected around the 1940s in the United States (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2014, p.17). We briefly outline the conditions which led to the birth of intercultural communication in the U.S. and its further development. They may help to understand its pioneering activity in this field and the consequential risk of a "dominant U.S.-centric thinking and theorizing" in intercultural communication (Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2014, p. 6).

The term "intercultural communication" appears for the first time in a volume published in 1959, *The Silent Language,* by the U.S. anthropologist Edward Hall. It seems that Hall's contribution to the birth of intercultural communication is related to the specific

historical situation of the United States and it may be understood considering this perspective (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2014, p.17). Between the late half of the 1940s and the first half of the 1950s, the Foreign Service Institute of the U.S. Department of State requested that Hall, and colleagues drawn from anthropology or linguistics, prepare training for diplomats who had to travel abroad. They needed concrete and immediately useful details for the main aspects of the cultures they would enter, and were not really interested in theoretical discussions drawn from anthropology or linguistics. To respond to this specific request, Hall and his colleagues "narrowed the focus of study from culture as a general concept (macroanalysis) to smaller units within culture (microanalysis)" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2014, p. 18).

Hall was the first to propose to "enlarge the concept of culture to include the study of communication", through "interaction between members of two or more cultures" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2014, p.18). These two insights were a basic contribution to the origin of intercultural communication, to its development and also to the contemporary research in this field, which was deeply influenced by the choices made by Hall and his colleagues. As anthropologists and linguists, they started by using tools and terms drawn from their academic orientation: "culture" and "ethnocentrism", for instance, and "proxemics", "kinesics" and "paralanguage", aspects of nonverbal communication which were included in later research on communication partially as a result of Hall's activity. We present just a few notes about each: "ethnocentrism" means to judge models, people, history of different cultures on the basis of one's own cultural group, including values and traditions, which implies a related belief in the inherent superiority of one's own culture. "Proxemics" is a term coined by Hall himself to indicate the study of spatial interrelationships among human individuals, in particular the relationship of distance - proximity - as a form of communication. In a later volume published in 1966, *The Hidden Dimension*, he proposes four levels of distance in relationships of communication, which depend on culture, education, and gender (Hall, 1966). Space as a form of communication is hidden from most people's understanding, but may influence it nonetheless. "Kinesics" is the study of the body movements which includes gestures, and facial expressions, such as winking and shrugging. "Paralanguage" describes the nonverbal elements of speech, such as intonation, vocal quality, loudness, and sounds that are not words (such as "um" or "huh"). These all affect the meaning of a word or utterance and

thus belong to communication, but they are not generally considered to be part of the language system. Some of the scholars who had begun developing kinesics and paralinguistics belonged to the group of anthropologists and linguists who worked with Hall to respond to the request of the Foreign Service Institute (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1987, p. 2). Among them, in particular, were the anthropologist Ray L. Birdwhistell, who developed kinesics, and the linguist George L. Trager, who developed paralinguistics. They chose to include these aspects in the study of communication, and they realized that communication depended on culture, and that also these "silent" elements might influence the interactions among individuals of different cultures. Now the title of the volume marking the origin of intercultural communication may be clearer: *The Silent Language*. It indicates that some elements of language are "silent", since they are nonverbal. Despite this, they affect communication substantially, as Hall himself notes: "If this book has a message it is that we must learn to understand the 'out-of-awareness' aspects of communication. We must never assume that we are fully aware of what we communicate to someone else" (Hall, 1959, p. 38).

Thus, the nascent study of intercultural communication was considerably influenced by anthropology, as an answer to a concrete request by the U.S. Department of State. For this reason, the original focus was on practice and activities, more than on theoretical research. Hall and colleagues, in fact, were interested in training and teaching rather than establishing a new field of study: they decided to work with students of native and non-native cultures, and observed the interactions between their cultures (Hall & White, 1960). Hall intended to "extend the anthropological view of culture to include communication" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2014, p. 27). Culture and communication overlapped, as he noted in *The Hidden Dimension*: "Culture is basically a communicative process" (Hall, 1966, p. 89) and he proposed in *The Silent Language* "the complete theory of culture as communication" (Hall, 1959, p. 41).

During the 1960s, intercultural communication evolved as a research strand and it developed separately from anthropology in the following decades, during which the studies in this field expanded (Gudykunst, 1983). In particular, it drew close to international and development communication (Rogers & Hart, 2002). These three areas of research - intercultural communication, international and development communication - became gradually autonomous and incorporating contributions from interpersonal,

intergroup and global communication, in addition to media studies. I shortly define each of them, to provide an idea of their development within communication as currently distinguished fields of research.

"International" refers to communication studies interested in what occurs across international borders. It is called also "global" or "transnational" communication, as it is related to globalization and its political, economic, and social aspects, in addition to the cultural ones. "Development" communication investigates the theoretical and practical activities of communication which may allow and promote social development, in particular, the sustainability of development. "Interpersonal" communication is focused on the study of the exchanges between at least two persons, typically interacting face to face which may be influenced by social, cultural, psychological, environmental, and relational aspects. "Intergroup" communication refers to groups of individuals who interact, rather than single persons, as it will be described in section 1.2.2. Finally, "media studies" is a branch of communication which investigates the content, the history, the type, the creation and the effect of media on people.

Between the 1980s and the 1990s, the interest within intercultural communication research shifts towards the study of cultures in relation to communication theories, and away from descriptive aspects of people and groups. The anthropological orientation originally proposed by Hall returns with greater force around the end of past century and in these last years, as the need for a more integrated approach to culture and communication has become clear (Mowlana, 1996, p. 200).

The relationship between Buber's dialogic approach and culture in intercultural communication is evidenced in an early book of 1978, *The cultural dialogue: An introduction to intercultural communication,* by the U.S. scholar Michael H. Prosser, a founder of the academic field of intercultural communication. In this volume dialogue is indicated as "a metaphor for cross-cultural communication" (Anderson, Baxter & Cissna, 2004, p. 8), and Prosser explicitly mentions that he took inspiration from dialogic thinkers, in particular Buber: "the central idea is that existence is communication - that life is dialogue…Communication is dialogue, and dialogue, I-Thou meeting, is not just in the sense of two people talking, but of real efforts of mutual understanding, mutual acknowledgement, mutual respect" (Prosser, 1978, p. 227).

Between the 1970s and the 1980s, the philosophy of dialogue is introduced in teaching by some scholars and thinkers. Only in the 1990s does theorization of dialogue become a field of study, starting from the investigation on communication in everyday life at cultural, social, academic and political levels. The birth of some research strands related to a dialogic approach to communication, such as practical philosophy and public or civic journalism, starts at this time, and also takes inspiration from Buber's dialogic principle (Anderson, Baxter & Cissna, 2004, p. 10).

Between the end of the 1980s and the 1990s, some non-Anglo-European scholars complain about Anglo-European-centrism in intercultural research. Among them, Molefi Kete Asante, an African American scholar of communication, suggests a "cultural approach to dialogue", by proposing The "Afrocentric idea" (Asante, 1987). This approach "should not displace European ideas in multicultural settings, but would instead seek to coexist dialogically with them" (Anderson, Baxter & Cissna, 2004, p. 9). The volume The global intercultural communication reader, to which we referred in the historical overview on intercultural communication, has the same intent. It is coedited by three non-Anglo-European authors: Asante for the African, while Miike (who is Japanese) and Yin (who is Chinese) argue for the development of a similar "Asiacentric" perspective based on Asante's Afrocentricity. In the introduction to this volume, the editors wish for greater emphasis in recent approaches to study "intercultural 'personhood', a 'third space' through cultural hybridization and creative 'in-betweeness' of marginality" which were proposed initially by a variety of other scholars and "may highlight complex realities in which we all live" (Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2014, p. 6).

Edward Wadie Said, a Palestinian-American writer active within English, history and comparative literature, is another scholar who complains about Eurocentric idea, as a cultural inheritance of European domination and Enlightenment (Torri, 2002). He coined the term "orientalism" to express the Anglo-European vision of Eastern cultures, and dedicated to this perspective a homonymous essay (Said, 1978/1994).

In these last years, the need to consider the complexity of intercultural communication and to study it from multi-layered dimensions related to culture(s) and identity(ies) has grown considerably. During this last decade, in particular, the number of references dedicated to investigating the epistemology of these research strands (Stier, 2010) increased, as well as the one oriented to positioning it with regard to intercultural dialogue

(Ganesh & Holmes, 2011). Also the so-called "critical studies" of intercultural communication have expanded (Halualani, 2014). "Critical", in this context, means that such studies aim to contextualize intercultural communication within historical, political, institutional, and economic frames.

These fields of research are a few examples of the current themes and trends of study in communication. The list of publications is increasing together with the desire to bring intercultural communication scholars of different cultural and disciplinary perspectives into dialogue with one another. Among the attempts of building bridges of dialogue among international scholars of communication are those promoted by the World Communication Association, established in 1985, and based in the United States. First addressed to Asian and North American scholars of communication, over time this network has gradually expanded to the point that it currently includes Latin American, African and European scholars drawn from different fields of communication in intercultural contexts. It aims to "make a world of difference" worldwide, as Jeffery Auer, U.S. scholar of communication and the first president of the World Communication Association, notes in his "brief history" of this association (Auer, n.d.). I participated in the conference of the World Communication Association held in Portugal in 2015, which was dedicated to intercultural themes, and I collaborated with a scholar in its network, as will be described in section 3.6.

### 1.2.2 Intercultural teaching

Buber's dialogic principle is a referential point also in education, as he was an educator and wrote about the philosophy of education (Buber, 1988, 1993). As previously noted, Buber's writings after *I and Thou* remark upon and extend what he already expressed in this essay. It is the same for his contributions on education, based on the dialogic principle and aimed to better explain and apply it in teaching.

Buber's perspective on education takes inspiration also from his ideal model of educator, the *zadik*, the Hasidic community's religious and moral guide (Marchetto, 2013, p.19). As formerly mentioned, Buber's discover of Hasidism, during his childhood, influenced his life and thought, as it was the first experience of a deep encounter with the other, the *Thou*: God and individuals, those in the Hasidic community. The *zadik* guides the community, he is responsible for its members and promotes their spiritual, intellectual

and moral education. Starting from this model, Buber's vision of education cannot be separated from responsibility, and consequently for him, from the answer. Moreover, he feels that education is the answer to the other's call, and it implies a responsibility towards her/him. I outline the characteristics of Buber's educational relationship, as this study investigates an approach to teaching mediated by dialogue, according to his perspective.

### *The educational relationship according to Buber*

In the essay *Dialogue,* Buber clarifies his ethics of responsibility (Buber, 1993, p. 201), which affect one's own behaviour (*ethos*, in ancient Greek) and everyday life. As their Latin etymology suggests, the terms "answer" and "responsibility" are close, as they refer to the response: "responsibility" derives from the verb *respòndere* ("to respond")*,* and *bilem* (which indicates to be "accountable for one's actions"). The responsibility, therefore, is the answer of someone who "grants something", and implies a commitment, from the Latin *spondère* ("to vow"), referring to the effort, the burden, of this answer. For this reason, whoever answers this call is "responsible", thus, reliable, trustworthy, capable and deserving the other's trust.

Buber uses the German words *Antwort* for "answer", and *Verantwortung* for "responsibility". In addition to the similar Latin sense, the German utterances are connected, as they incorporate the same term, *Wort*, which means "word". This enforces Buber's vision of responsibility, which refers to the I-Thou relationship: it is the answer, the word, which the *I* says to the *Thou.* They enter into relation by speaking, thus, by mutually answering each other. There cannot be responsibility apart from the answer, according to Buber. At the same time, as responsibility and answer are in relation, there can be no answer to the other, if we do not assume the responsibility of her/him (Buber, 1993, p. 201, note n°8).

In the educational relationship, according to Buber, the responsibility of the educator towards the student is deeper, because education prepares them for life "in common", thus "in communion", as a human and social community. This idea becomes a world vision, as he expresses in the essay *Education and World-View* (Buber, 1988): its aim is solidarity, not only tolerance, and communion in addition to freedom, values which need to be learned and taught, not only lived and studied (Buber, 1993, p. 170). Furthermore, regarding solidarity, Buber considers it in relation to freedom: the German term which he

uses for "solidarity" is *Verbundenheit*, derived from the verb *verbunden,* which literally means "to bond together" and indicates a link among people. This bond is a result of individuals' free choice, as they decide to mutually help each other (Buber, 1993, p. 170, note n° 8). The German term he uses for "freedom" is *Freihals*, which literally means "free man", to enforce the idea that freedom provides the opportunity for every individual to be open, bond with the other and, thus, to share solidarity.

Education, therefore, for Buber is a way to build community, but also the space in which students and educator may meet, the space in which their relationship may occur. As relationship governs Buber's life, thought and work, the relationship should be mutual also between the educator and the students, to create a "genuine dialogue" (Buber, 1993, p. 205) and to establish a "real" encounter among them. But the educational relationship, according to him, cannot be mutual between the teacher and the student, as it is not supposed to be, or to become, friendship (Marchetto, 2013, p. 60). The space of Buber's educational relationship is based on another fundamental: "inclusion" (Buber, 1993, pp. 176-177). The "inclusion" implies something more than to understand the students and something different from the empathy and the identification with the other's needs, such as emotion, personal history, and culture, in our case.

The German term chosen by Buber is *Umfassung,* derived from the verb *umfassen*, which has several meanings: "to embrace", "to include", "to comprehend", "to contain". Buber's intent is to consider all these meanings in a polysemic term: the educator should, in fact, "embrace" the student, as she/he accepts all her/his being, by experiencing oneself and simultaneously perceiving the other in its singularity. At the same time, she/he should "include" the student in the educational process, thus take her/him out of her/himself (from the Latin etymology of "to educate", *ex ducere*). Furthermore, the teacher should "comprehend" the students, thus to understand and "to perceive" them, according to the Latin etymology *cum prendere,* which literally means "to seize, or take in the mind". It indicates also "to take together", "to unite", with a close sense to the verb "to include". Finally, the educator should "contain" the students, thus, "control and limit" the actions to the educational role, and avoid a mutual relationship, which cannot take place. The "inclusion", in fact, according to Buber, is a capacity of the educator, it cannot be reciprocal, as the student is not able to practice it towards the teacher (Buber, 1993, p. 180).

As previously noted, it is hard to express the richness of Buber's usage of language. The English term "inclusion" does not really suffice, but Smith considered it as having the closest sense to the German original. Also the Italian choices of the translators are not able to indicate all the nuances which Buber intended: *comprensione* (Marchetto, 2013, p. 60) and *ricomprensione* (Buber, 1993, p. 176).

We may better understand the sense of Buber's "inclusion" by referring to his attitude to listening as an "active attentiveness to another's words or actions, engaging them as though they are directed specifically at us" (Gordon, 2011, p. 207). For Buber, listening is essential for dialogue, thus, also for encountering the other and for entering into relation with her/him. Therefore, listening plays an "essential role in initiating many dialogues by creating a space in which two people can embrace each other as complete individuals" (Gordon, 2011, p. 207).

The inseparability between the responsibility and the answer in Buber's definition of "inclusion" may be now clearer: the educator is requested, at the same time, to be involved in the relationship with the student and to control it, to embrace it, by listening with concrete effort, and to limit her/his role to respect and promoting the student's singularity. In the conclusion of his essay on education, Buber defines responsibility as a "fruit of freedom" (Buber, 1993 p. 182), which does not indicate the opposition to rules or their absence, but, rather, the condition of realizing a common project, to promote students' own vision of the world. It is, again, a call for responsibility, and a call for reciprocity, which, even if it may be not mutual, as it is based on freedom of choice, becomes an answer to this call, whether for the educator or for the students. Buber specifies that freedom of choice for the educator does not mean "neutrality" in education, as the teacher includes in her/his activity also her/his world vision and interpretation. But he argues that the intention to remain consistent with reality allows an intellectually honest approach to the truth (Marchetto, 2013 p. 61).

The following sentence by Buber on teaching seems to me the best synthesis of his approach to the educational relationship, as it expresses it with an image:

> I have no teaching. I only point to something. I point to reality. I only point
> to reality of something that had not or had too little been seen. I take him who
> listens to me by hand and lead him to the window. I open the window and
> point to what is outside.

I have no teaching but I carry on a conversation (Buber, 1967, p. 693).

*Intergroup dialogue: "bridging differences" in teaching*

Buber's dialogic educational relationship inspires every level of education in different ways. In this research we focus, in particular, on an approach to academic teaching, for undergraduate and postgraduate students, drawn from different cultures and different disciplines. In this section, we outline teaching in intercultural context, in section 1.3 we will consider the inter- and transdisciplinary perspectives, and in section 1.4 we will introduce the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching.

All these levels of teaching (among cultures and among disciplines, with *inter-* and *trans-*cultural and disciplinary approaches) are characterized by the same intent: "bridging differences" through dialogue (Nagda, 2006). This expression was proposed by a U.S. scholar of social work, Biren A. Nagda, to indicate the dialogic approach to teaching as a way for "breaking barriers, and crossing borders" (Nagda, 2006).

Since the end of the 1980s, together with colleagues, he has been investigating a teaching approach which aims to go beyond differences, especially the ones which occur in a classroom, and to consider them as opportunities to build bridges among the students. They propose the use of "intergroup dialogues" as a "pedagogical method to address cultural diversity and social justice issues" (Nagda et al., 1999, p. 433), in particular in U.S. high schools. The intergroup dialogues are "facilitated, face-to-face encounters that cultivate meaningful engagement between members of two or more social identity groups with a history of conflict or potential conflict" (Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002, p. 7). Examples of these social identity groups include, for instance, ethnicity, languages spoken, religious belief, and gender.

This approach to dialogue fosters "opportunities for engagement across line of difference" (Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002, p. 7), by encouraging "open and reflective communication about difficult topics, especially issues on power and privilege" (Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002, p. 7). Through gradual steps of interactions, the participants of each group - in the proposal by Nagda and colleagues, the students – may "build skills for developing and maintaining relationships across differences and enhance their ability to work together towards social justice" (Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002, p. 7).

The students learn to collaborate, to listen to each other, to discover their differences and to begin to share them, through talking, readings, role-play activities, personal reflections, and written works in class. Then, with the help of the teacher, they progressively move from dialogue to action, with concrete activities and interventions, that may maintain the conditions for dialogue among them (Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002).

Just as happened decades before with Edward Hall in intercultural communication, the educational proposal of intergroup dialogues comes as part of an answer to a concrete need in the U.S multicultural context. More than at Hall's time, perhaps, this context currently provokes interracial discussions and conflicts among the students, to defend, protect or impose, their cultural identities.

The application of intergroup dialogues to teaching is one example of the potentials of this approach to dialogue, as Benjamin J. Broome, a U.S. scholar of communication, describes in its definition for The SAGE *Encyclopedia of Intercultural Competence*:

> Intergroup dialogue is a deliberative and structured process for enhancing understanding, promoting empathy, and dealing creatively with differences between conflicting groups. By bringing the disputing parties together in a safe space, channels of communication can be opened across the psychological, social, and/or physical divides that separate the groups. Intergroup dialogue is often facilitated by a neutral third party, someone who is not a member of either group and who is able to guide the process in an unbiased and fair manner. By coming together for facilitated discussions, participants who otherwise live in disconnected worlds can develop personal and working relationships, and they can explore possibilities for cooperation and reconciliation (Broome, 2015, p. 1[10]).

This approach to dialogue recalls the "constitutive" characteristics introduced previously, in particular, as a "form of discourse that emphasizes listening and inquiry, with the aim of fostering mutual respect and understanding" (Broome, 2015, p. 1). Dialogue is a "dynamic" process, focused on the "quality of relationship" among participants (Broome, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, dialogue does not "preclude disagreement", rather, it offers "an opportunity for individuals to navigate their differences in ways that can help them better

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[10] This reference is in Portable Document Format (pdf), and the pages indicated may not correspond to the pages of the print edition.

understand the complexities of their perspectives" (Broome, 2015, p. 1). It requires "special attitudes" to the participants involved, such as: the willing to take the "risks" that their perspective might be "altered or changed" (Broome, 2015, p. 1), the awareness that "engaging in dialogue can affect their identity", and the consciousness of "the unpredictable nature of dialogue", as it is a "nonlinear, emergent process" in which tension "is unavoidable" (Broome, 2015, p. 1).

These aspects may lead to "creative ideas or new ways of approaching problems, helping groups achieve a synthesis of positions that serves the needs and interests of the participants, in most cases better than their initial stance" (Broome, 2015, p. 1). These aspects become opportunities especially when dialogue involves parts in conflict or in "the context of social and structural inequalities" (Bowen, 2014, p. 1), as in intergroup dialogue. Nevertheless, for achieving these "creative ideas and new ways of approaching problems", it is not sufficient bringing together individuals from the opposing sides of a conflict.

The intergroup dialogues requests further characteristics, as Broome notes: "inclusiveness" of voices and perspectives from each part involved (Broome, 2015, p. 2), which allows the participants to be represented in dialogue, as each of them has the same "chance" to offer their ideas, and consequently needs to listen and to be listened "with respect" from the other (Broome, 2015, p. 2); "openness", which helps the birth of "creative outcomes"; "focus", which may grant to remain centred on the most relevant aspects of the discussion (Broome, 2015, p. 2). Furthermore, intergroup dialogue should be based on: "connectedness", as dialogue is more "powerful when it helps participants explore the linkages between different aspects of a conflict" (Broome, 2015, p. 3); and "dynamism", which allows to reach "unexpected places" (Broome, 2015, p. 3), as a result of the increasing interaction among the participants.

Two more aspects are integral to this approach to dialogue, "commitment" and "sustainability". The first is related to the effort of the participants to involve and being involved in intergroup dialogue, which implies "tenacity and reflexivity, and a willingness to learn" from one's own mistakes, and the ability to turn the page, even when the process of dialogue seems interrupted or broken (Broome, 2015, p. 3). The second, "sustainability", refers to the time requested by this approach, as conducting dialogues over a long period may allow participants to achieve the "full potential" of the process,

and such dialogues often expand to include "a critical mass of people working for change" (Broome, 2015, p. 4).

Intergroup dialogue may create the basis for "bridging differences" especially in the contexts of conflict and social inequalities. The long-term goal for dialogue is "to become entrenched in the very fabric of everyday life" (Broome, 2015, p. 4), and to be considered "the modus operandi for a society, entrenched in schools, communities, business organizations, and political campaigns. There are significant challenges to moving even part of the way toward that goal, but each successful intergroup dialogue keeps alive that ideal" (Broome, 2015, p. 4). This long-term aim for dialogue is essentially the same as that of this study, which applies this approach to dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines, far more broadly, to "the very fabric of everyday life".

Intercultural teaching has evolved, mainly within the Anglo-European context, as an answer to a concrete need in education, just as intercultural communication was developed earlier in answer to a concrete need in diplomacy. Their substantial expansion as distinguished fields of study including theoretical contributions and original research investigations is quite recent, with the greatest development occurring during the 1980s-1990s, and the decades since. I have previously described both from a dialogic perspective inspired by Buber's contribution.

The section which follows presents dialogue from the point of view of intercultural philosophy, with the idea (and ideal) of a *poly*-logue, in addition to a *dia*-logue, incorporating different voices, especially of non-Anglo-European traditions.

### 1.2.3 Intercultural philosophy

The historical strains of intercultural philosophy may be detected in a period close to the initial development of intercultural communication, around the 1950s, as described in the journal *Philosophy East and West.* This publication is considered "the first systematic effort in establishing a forum for comparative philosophy in which members of non-Anglo European traditions could participate on an equal footing" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p.9). "Comparative" thought is the initial definition of an

approach to philosophy which aims to search for common aspects among different traditions.

Since this preliminary strain, three stages can be delineated: in the first one, some attempts are made "to make the 'East' understandable to the 'West'" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p.9), by investigating the meaning of an "Eastern" philosophy, and the differences with a "Western" one. Only in the second stage is a more structured approach to this field of study developed, with the birth of methodologies and techniques of comparison aimed to detect "a common space for comparisons" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p.9). In some contexts, a "cross-cultural" orientation to philosophy starts to take place, with the aim to escape from the "philosophical neocolonalism" of Anglo-European traditions (Wiredu, 1998, p. 153).

The pressure of "Western" thought over the non-Anglo-European philosophies continues to worry comparative philosophers also in the third stage, in which Anglo-European and non-Anglo-European scholars begin to map out "the socio-political ramifications of the insights developed in the preceding stages" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 10).

In the recent years, the term "intercultural philosophy" has gradually come to be preferred to "comparative" philosophy, even if they have the same sense: "'intercultural' is used to emphasize the philosophical underpinnings of inquiry in general. In this view, philosophy is a human phenomenon, which cannot be restricted to specific cultural traditions" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 19). In particular, the term "intercultural" qualifies philosophical activity oriented to different cultures and traditions, which distances from "the traditional mode of comparative philosophy during the colonial era" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 19).

In these pages, we return to some concepts presented previously - such as "culture", "*inter-* and *intra-* cultural", Anglo-European "hegemonic" or "dominant" tradition - and their initial definition will be extended and deepened as a result of adding in intercultural philosophy. Again in this case, as for intercultural dialogue and intercultural communication, the meaning is complex and its understanding has only recently been clarified.

*Polylogue*

The concept and the term "polylogue" comes from Franz Martin Wimmer, the Austrian intercultural philosopher previously mentioned in the definition of "culture" (section 1.2). This term indicates multiple voices involved in dialogue, with the intent to "reject every possible form of cultural centrism" in philosophy (Chen, 2010, p. 54), especially the Anglo-European orientation. He considers polylogue "as a general principle guiding cross-cultural comparisons" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p.15), which indicates "an open-ended, historically informed, philosophical attitude (and in this sense a methodology) rather than a technique, or method, to be adopted" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p.15). Wimmer does not consider dialogue obsolete, rather, according to him, "philosophizing is a permanent activity" (Chen, 2010, p. 54), therefore, the polylogue is a "continual process in which voices from different cultures are taken into consideration equally" (Chen, 2010, p. 54). According to Wimmer, in fact, the polylogue should allow "wherever possible, a transcultural overlapping of philosophical concepts and theories, since it is probable that well-founded theories have developed in more than one cultural tradition" (Wimmer, 2007, p. 8).

The term "polylogue" is used also in other contexts and it risks seeming ambiguous, a chaotic situation, like Babel, in which everybody speaks, even in her/his own language, and nobody listens. For instance, Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian-French linguist and philosopher, chooses this word as the title of one of her books (Kristeva, 1977) dedicated to a "multiple logics, speeches, and existences" (Chen, 2010, p. 55). She intends to "reveal polylogic meanings of dynamic signifying processes that appear in various practices, such as language, discourse, literature, and paintings" (Chen, 2010, p. 55). The definition by Kristeva takes inspiration from Mikhail Bakhtin, Russian philosopher and literary critic, who considers dialogue as a "constant exchange of meaning" and a "multi-leveled continual communication" among authors and their works (Chen, 2010, p. 55). The perspective of the "polylogue" in intercultural philosophy, instead, is a model of sharing in which every voice is equal and needs to be listened to (Chen, 2010). According to Wimmer, in fact, "dialogues or polylogues do not take place between cultures, political units, or religions, but between human beings trying to argue either for or against propositions, theories, and so on" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 28). It brings to mind Buber's "in between" (Buber, 1972, p. 117), the space in which it is

possible to meet the other in a "genuine dialogue" (Buber, 1993, p. 205). Buber's dialogic principle puts the accent more on the condition in which the word takes place, *dià*, than on the number of actors involved in it, *poli* or *two*. For this reason, polylogue and intercultural philosophy are related to a "open-ended, historically informed philosophical attitude" to inhabit dialogue.

Since 1998, Wimmer and other intercultural philosophers of different cultures and disciplines have been publishing *Polylog*, a biennial journal dedicated to intercultural philosophy, edited by the Institute of Philosophy of the University of Vienna, with contributions in German, in printed and online editions. From 2000 to 2005, the discussion of polylogue continued also in the *Polylog forum,* an open space of online interaction among scholars of intercultural philosophy, which contained the first issues of the printed edition (from 1998 to 2000). Although this forum has been inactive since 2005, the contents are still available; they are mainly in German, but some materials are also in Spanish and English.

The first issue of the *Polylog forum,* in 2000, introduces the characteristics of what an intercultural approach to philosophy is and may become, according to its founders. It contains articles published in the *Polylog* journal in 1998 and reedited in 2014. We focus, in particular, on those dedicated to the definition, to the method and the implications of this concept.

*Attempts at definition*

In the introduction to the first issue of the *Polylog forum,* Bertold Bernreuter, German intercultural philosopher, indicates the intent of their network of scholars: "Thus, for us, intercultural philosophy is a new *orientation* and *practice* of philosophising: a philosophising that requires and presupposes an attitude of mutual respect, of listening and of learning" (Bernreuter, 2000, para.7[11], emphasis in original). He clarifies the meaning of this "new orientation": "philosophical claims to general validity have to prove themselves interculturally where a consciousness about the cultural situatedness of philosophy has been established" (Bernreuter, 2000, para.8). Furthermore, he also specifies the sense of what he calls a "new practice" of their approach to philosophy: "this

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[11] The articles published on the *Polylog online forum* which I quote in this section have no page numbers, but they have paragraphs or sections, thus I quote them.

consciousness demands a diversion from an individually, monoculturally, and often ethnocentrically anchored production of philosophy. Instead, it aspires for a dialogical, processual, and fundamentally open *polyphony* of cultures and academic disciplines" (Bernreuter, 2000, para.8, emphasis in original). According to this network of scholars, therefore, intercultural philosophy aims to situate philosophising in a space which does not belong to one or more cultures (and disciplines), but to an "open polyphony*"* of them. Bernreuter defines this condition as "being in between", as it "characterizes the focus of intercultural philosophy, in between philosophies, cultures, disciplines, traditions, religions, and worldviews" (Bernreuter, 2000, para.1).

Another German intercultural philosopher in this network, Hakan Gürses, uses a similar expression to define intercultural philosophy, as "a philosophy of difference", which "aims at dealing with social, cultural, ethnic differences" (Gürses, 2000, para.1). In this perspective, it is "necessary and possible to identify another reference point than culture in order to point out that philosophy is always 'situated', as the term 'culture' reduces the plurality of individual differences to a single (entire) difference" (Gürses, 2000, para.1).

Ram Adhar Mall, Indian intercultural philosopher and honorary president of the Society of Intercultural Philosophy, describes a way of intercultural philosophising and outlines the method, the attitude, and what intercultural philosophy is not and may be. The method of investigation is based on comparative studies, in particular, on the comparison of cultures and their philosophical traditions, as "philosophy is a product of culture and every culture carries philosophy within it" (Mall, 2000, sect.1, para.1).

Like Wimmer and other intercultural philosophers, Mall deepens the definition of culture in relation to the orientation to philosophising: "the intercultural perspective is not different from the intracultural view; it is also within a specific culture that various epistemological, ethical, and political models exist" (Mall, 2000, sect.1, para.6). It recalls the definition of "*intra-* and *inter*-culture" proposed at the beginning of this section. Furthermore, intercultural philosophy expands this meaning, as it "enlarges and diversifies the range of models, and it points to principal similarities and enlightening differences. Hence, the intercultural perspective frees us from the constraints of our cultural viewpoint" (Mall, 2000, sect.1, para.6).

This idea of "liberation" from the constraints of cultural viewpoint is enforced by other intercultural philosophers: "Cultures are perceived as evolving entities, which adapt to

situations and possess (at least some) powerful beliefs that are capable of convincing people, regardless of where the latter are located" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014 p. 32). Furthermore, Raúl Fornet-Betancourt, Cuban intercultural scholar, proposes a "culture of origin" for one's own culture, which is "a point of support (*punto de apoyo)* for conceptions of identity that, whether individual or collective, must always be *free*, i.e., the result of a process of discernment, critical appropriation, and choice" (Fornet-Betancourt, 2000, para.15). This "culture of origin" is not static or fixed, is not "the individual's ineluctable destiny", but, rather, her/his "original historical situation" (Fornet-Betancourt, 2000, para.16). It is, we would say, an existential root, which "undoubtedly defines the individual as a person *belonging* to a world with its own social, political, religious, axiological, and other codes, which constitute that person's 'inheritance' from and with which the person begins to be" (Fornet-Betancourt, 2000, para.16, emphasis in original).

Mall outlines a list of definitions of intercultural philosophy, starting from what it is not, according to *Polylog's* network of scholars: intercultural philosophy is not "the name of a particular philosophical convention, be it European or non-European", nor "an eclecticism of various philosophical traditions" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.1 para.19), and it "must not be reduced to a political construct born of mere necessity" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.1 para. 20). He also specifies its intent, which "is not to aestheticize in a romantically enthusiastic and amateurishly-exotic fascination with the extra-European", as intercultural philosophy is not "the locus of compensation, i.e. an attempt to find in the other that of which you are deficient" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.1 para. 21).

Mall clarifies *Polylog*'s vision of the meaning of the prefix *inter* of "intercultural" philosophy which "in spite of the necessary centers of the various philosophical traditions (origins of philosophy), is located, but trans-locally so" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.1 para.19). He specifies the reason for preferring the prefix *inter* to the prefix *trans*: "Intercultural philosophy is not trans-cultural, as far as this term is meant to refer to a fixed pivotal point, an entity exterior to or above the manifold philosophical traditions" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.1 para. 22). He explains the sense of the prefix *trans* in this perspective: "In my view, the only meaning of the prefix *trans* that corresponds and does justice to the orientation of intercultural philosophy is that of an attitude not positioned outside cultures or philosophies, but within these and going along with these" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.1

para.22). As I will outline in the section 1.3, the intent to "go along with these" (cultures, philosophies, and also disciplines), thus going *beyond* them, is the meaning of the prefix *trans* which characterizes this research and my teaching proposal.

Then, Mall describes what intercultural philosophy is, and may become, according to this network of scholars. It firstly aims to identify a mental and philosophic attitude. Mall evidences the need for a "moral commitment" of the intercultural philosopher, as "the precondition of cross-cultural philosophizing" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014. p. 16). Fornet-Betancourt uses the Spanish term *recapacitación* to indicate the intercultural philosopher's mental change. It has a double meaning: "'to reconsider', in the sense of 'consider again' the human person as she/he really is; 'to make the other able' to gain new human abilities, which may lead to better human practices" (Fornet-Betancourt, 2006, p. 40[12]).

This mental attitude guides and defines also the methodology of intercultural philosophy, which "proceeds in such a manner that it does not privilege any conceptual system without cause, and that it aims at harmonizing concepts" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.2 para. 24). At the same time, "it is equally cautious of those cross-cultural comparisons that tend to explain away all differences between traditions", and it focuses on "the common ground or the conceptual overlap between traditions" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, 2015, p. 1). The need for considering all the cultural traditions "equally" and without any "privilege" indicates, according to Mall, "a conflict in tandem with a claim" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.2 para. 25). It is a "conflict" as an effect of the "long-neglected cultures of philosophy, that have been misunderstood and oppressed due to ignorance, arrogance, and various factors external to philosophy, sue for equal rights in today's world-context of philosophy" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.2 para. 25). The "claim" is a consequence of it, as "the non-European philosophies and cultures want to offer solutions by reflecting problem-settings that are particular to them" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.2 para. 25). We would assume that one of the challenges of intercultural philosophy consists in the balance between conflict and claim. Among the definitions provided by Mall, in fact, he specifies that "intercultural philosophy advocates unity without uniformity. The transcultural nature of the formal,

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[12] The reference for the term *recapacitación* is in a volume originally in Spanish translated into Italian. I did not find an English version of it, therefore I translated the excerpt into English and I report the original in Italian: "*Il termine spagnolo "*recapacitación*" ha due significati: 1) Ripensare, ossia riconsiderare realmente ciò che l'uomo è; 2) Rendere capaci, ossia far acquisire nuove capacità umane per essere in grado di pratiche umane migliori*" (Fornet-Betancourt, 2006, p. 40).

technological, and scientific conceptual apparatus should not be mistaken for the spirit of interculturality" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.2 para. 27). In relation to it, this orientation to philosophy should finally "promote a sense of modesty with regard to the own epistemological, methodological, metaphysical, ethico-moral, political, and religious access to the regulative One of many names" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.2 para. 27, capitalization in original).

The characteristics of intercultural philosophy outlined by this network of scholars are expressed also in the definition of "comparative philosophy" given in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy:*

> Comparative philosophy does not lead toward the creation of a synthesis of philosophical traditions (as in world philosophy). What is being created is not a new theory but a different sort of philosopher. The goal of comparative philosophy is learning a new language, a new way of talking. The comparative philosopher does not so much inhabit both of the standpoints represented by the traditions from which he draws, as he comes to inhabit an emerging standpoint different from them all and which is thereby creatively a new way of seeing the human condition (Littlejohn, 2005, para. 4[13]).

*Objects of investigation*

Intercultural philosophy would promote the emancipation from the "dominant paradigms" of Anglo-European tradition (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 25), and, at the same time, "should seek to establish a 'living continuity' with the philosophical past to make it relevant to the intellectual concerns of the present" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 25).

Mall proposes a four-fold perspective in cross-cultural comparison, to allow a mutual understanding among the traditions, which may help "to decenter" the dominant ones: "a) Europe's self-understanding, b) its understanding of other traditions, c) the self-understandings of other traditions, and d) the way they understand Europe" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 16). Mall explains each aspect of this perspective:

> First of all, this is about an understanding of Europe by Europe. The inner disparities notwithstanding, Europe has – largely under the influence of

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[13] It is an online source, and there are no page numbers, but this definition is at the end of the paragraph n° 4.

factors exterior to philosophy – presented itself to non-Europeans in a unitary image. Secondly, there is a European effort to understand the non-European cultures, religions, and philosophies. The institutionalized scientific fields of oriental studies and cultural anthropology bear witness to that. Thirdly, there are the non-European cultural spheres (*Kulturkreise*), who now also present the way they see themselves, rather than leaving it to others. Fourthly, there is the understanding of Europe as present in the non-European cultures. This situation raises the question as to who understands whom, why and how in the best way. It may come as a surprise to Europe that in our day Europe itself has become interpretable (Mall, 2000, sect. 2 para. 8).

According to some intercultural philosophers, this four-fold mutual recognition and knowledge implies also the needs for using local languages. The translations into a "dominant language", in fact, tend to silence "authentic" philosophical voices and positions (Rosemont 2004, p. 52). The "linguistic hegemony" of English, in fact, "has established the agendas for intercultural dialogues" themselves (Rosemont 2004, p. 52), and "the emancipatory effect of philosophizing in local languages cannot be categorically denied" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 26).

Mall clarifies his view of "intercultural hermeneutic", in which "the willingness to understand and the wish to be understood go together and constitute the two sides of a single hermeneutic coin" (Mall, sect. 2 para. 11). In fact, "where everything is subordinated to the wish to be understood, the Other is not taken seriously in its own right" (Mall, sect. 2 para. 11, capitalization in original). He enforces this conviction in the conclusion of his contribution, with the invitation to "adopt the culture of interculturality, in order to create the conditions for a possible philosophical conversation conducted in mutual respect and tolerance" (Mall, sect. 6 para. 80). In fact, "comparative philosophy goes blind without the intercultural philosophical orientation; intercultural philosophy goes lame without comparative philosophy. They both belong together" (Mall, sect. 6 para. 80).

The invitation to "belong together", to avoid the risk of being "blind and lame", becomes an "imperative", thus urgent and necessary, "to look beyond our traditions to improve our philosophical problem-solving by our own lights" (Brooks 2013, p. 254). This implies

the need to try to combine the effort of emancipation from Anglo-European tradition with the living continuity between the past and the present, thus, of daily life.

These are the two main paths of investigation pursed by the intercultural philosophers: some of them, in fact, "attempt to ascertain the conditions under which certain global epistemological and moral values can be meaningfully postulated" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 29) and look for values shared in a "global intellectual culture" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 29). Others follow the second path and "direct their attention towards the way comparative thought relates, and resonates with, daily life" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 29).

The values globally shared might be: tolerance, mutual respect, human dignity, rights, justice. But also truth, reasonable belief, rational consensus, and knowledge (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 30), and for some authors also civility, courtesy, reciprocity, respect, affection, honesty (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 31). These values, actually, also characterize daily life, but the philosophers of the second path of investigation in intercultural philosophy belong to the so-called "global South" and focus more on their responsibilities "for addressing the ethical and political problems associated with the poverty, domination, and exclusion of large sectors of the population, especially in the global South" (Dussel 2009, p. 514). Among these authors there are Raúl Fornet-Betancourt and Enrique Dussel, Argentinian philosopher, for Latin America, and Amartya Sen, Indian economist and philosopher, for India.

*Towards a "confluence of world philosophies"*

Some intercultural philosophers mentioned in this section live and teach in German-speaking countries and are members of the Society of Intercultural Philosophy, based in Cologne (Germany). Their activities and contributions are converging in a recent publication, a bi-annual, international journal dedicated to comparative thought, *Confluence,* one of the main references of this section.

In the first issue of 2014, the vice president of this Society, Monika Kirloskar-Steinbach, Indian intercultural philosopher, with other colleagues, introduces the themes and the intent of their journal, dedicated to "world philosophies", as it would "weave together a seamless body of thought, which can integrate the important insights of *all* relevant world-views" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 48, emphasis in

original).

This intent clarifies their choice of journal's title: "Like a confluence of two rivers, whose actual territory is often hard to pinpoint with the bare eye, we would like to intensify, complexify, and transform the ideas and perspectives prevalent in philosophy today" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 47). The confluence of rivers implies also "to facilitate a movement of ideas", which requests "to learn to discern the multiple strands in the flow of one's investigation" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 47). The name chosen enforces its aims, as expressed in the colophon of this journal: to develop "the contours of a philosophical understanding not subservient to dominant paradigms and provide a platform for diverse philosophical voices, including those long silenced by dominant academic discourses and institutions". This intent is in continuity with the intercultural orientation of the authors of *Polylog*, who collaborate with *Confluence*. Among them, for instance, stands Ram Adhar Mall, whose concept clarification of intercultural philosophy opens the series of articles of this first issue.

Another objective of *Confluence* is "to serve as a juncture where specific philosophical issues of global interest may be explored in an imaginative, thought-provoking, and pioneering way" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, pp. 47-48). This "juncture" is also between the two main paths of investigation in intercultural philosophy, the emancipation from the "dominant" traditions, and the need for exploring topics related to daily life. Finally, they aim "to create a liberal atmosphere unhindered by disciplinary constraints. We realize that cultural and philosophical explorations, like disciplines, have their own boundaries; and yet one needs to transcend them through mutual conversation in order to make progress" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 47).

The need to go beyond the cultural and disciplinary boundaries seems likely to be an appropriate conclusion to this paragraph and to the whole section, as it refers to the main themes we presented and introduces the content of the next section, dedicated to dialogue among disciplines.

Intercultural dialogue aims to propose an approach to different cultures mediated by dialogue, as a tool, thus a means, to "bridge differences" among cultures (Nagda, 2006). A practical and theoretical tool, as the intercultural perspective on communication wishes to realise. The theory and practice of dialogue as a means to overcome conflicts, in the

sense of going beyond them, finds a further application in intercultural education, as we noted, by focusing in particular on the dialogic aspect of teaching in intercultural contexts. Furthermore, intercultural - and world - philosophies aim to search out the common aspects among different cultural and philosophical traditions, in continuity with the comparative approach to thought. Among them: values, historical and philosophical strains, perspectives and views related to daily life. The focus, therefore, is on what may connect them, and give voice to their "*polyphony*", in the condition of "being in between", (Bernreuter, 2000, para.8). The mental and moral attitude which this philosophical orientation implies aims to converge, thus to create a confluence, bringing about shared and common directions of investigation and praxis.

These research strands seem to me necessary to understand the past and the present of dialogue as a space of relationship among cultures (and in the next pages we will see also among disciplines), which I observe in particular in academic teaching. Therefore, my research takes inspiration from the approaches described thus far. It perhaps has become clear in these pages, that, in addition to cultures and disciplines, the focus of this study is on dialogue, which is - and may become - the space of relationship among, across and beyond them. Even, the relationship itself. Therefore, dialogue - and thus relationship, we assume in this study – may offer the space in which cultures and disciplines are able to meet. It is not necessarily a common ground, as it aims to be a space among, across and beyond cultural traditions and disciplinary perspectives. The encounter does not need and search for a convergence, instead, it may happen just because all the means "are collapsed", as Buber suggests (Buber, 1937).

As previously noted, some intercultural philosophers evidence the need to transcend cultural boundaries, as cultures are "highly complex and multi-layered entities", and, therefore, "cannot be said to possess rigid boundaries" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 17). This orientation to philosophy also aims "to create a liberal atmosphere unhindered by disciplinary constraints" (Kirloskar-Steinbach, Ramana, & Maffie, 2014, p. 47), which need to be transcended too. The aspiration to go beyond cultural and disciplinary boundaries characterizes this study, based on a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue.

## 1.3 Dialogue among disciplines

The definition of the term "discipline" seems likely to be under construction, like the keywords of this study previously presented: "relationship", "culture", and "dialogue". We start from its Latin etymology and try to deepen it, to better understand its current meaning, the role in this research, and its connection with the keywords already mentioned.

The etymology refers to a "branch of instruction, or education", as *disciplina* originally indicates the "instruction given, teaching, learning, knowledge." Another meaning is "the order necessary for instruction", which implies a "treatment that corrects or punishes". The word currently maintains the same, or close, grammar and senses in the main European languages derived from Latin: it is *discipline* in French, *disciplina* in Spanish, and *Disziplin* in German.

We focus on the first meaning, which refers to "discipline" as a "field of study", "a particular branch of knowledge or of learning". It recalls the original definition of "science", which literally means "knowledge acquired by study". The primal sense of the Latin *scientia,* in fact, derives from the verb *scire*, which means "to know". This verb indicates "to separate one thing from another, to distinguish", related to *scindere,* which means "to cut, divide", derived from the Indo-European root *\*skei-* with the same sense. Also in the ancient languages originated by this root we find a close meaning: in ancient Greek is *skhizein,* "to split, rend, cleave", in Gothic is *skaidan*, in Old English is *sceadan,* "to divide, separate".

In the late XIV century, the term "science" is used to indicate, in particular, the "experiential knowledge" and "a skill, handicraft; a trade". From this period, the meaning of "science" has been related to a "collective human knowledge (especially that gained by systematic observation, experiment, and reasoning)". In XVII and XVIII centuries, this term commonly is called "philosophy", while "sense of 'non-arts studies'" is attested from the 1670s. The "modern" definition of "body of regular or methodical observations or propositions concerning a particular subject or speculation" has been confirmed from 1725.

The historical and semantic evolution of the term "discipline", therefore, is strictly related to that of "science". The "modern" acceptance of it, as we intend it now, originated during the XVII century, especially in Europe, with Galileo Galilei. His distinction between

"natural", or "hard" sciences, and "human", or "soft" ones, allows for disciplinary knowledge to acquire a scientific character. This separation affects the vision of the world, both at that time and in the following centuries, thus the cultural and social aspects of human life.

They were called "hard" sciences, as they were supposed to approach knowledge (the natural phenomena, thus "natural" sciences) through the validation of observations, in particular, the "sense-experience sets before our eyes" and the "necessary demonstrations" which prove them (Galilei, 1615, p. 4, [268-269][14]). Therefore, to be called "sciences", disciplines need to be observable, detectable, measurable, and, moreover, replicable, as only through measures and experiments it is possible to test the hypothesis and to establishes the theory (Dietz Moss, 1984).

Those called "soft" sciences, were supposed to investigate "philosophical" knowledge, related to aspects which cannot be directly validated and measured, as they belong to "human" life (thus they are also "human" sciences).

Galileo's contribution was essential, as the separation among disciplines made possible the development of modern science. His open, non-dogmatic, and objective definition of science (Dietz Moss, 1984) has since developed over the intervening centuries, and the "natural" and "human" disciplines have evolved in autonomous ways. Especially from the second half of the XX century, as well as over the first decades of the XXI century, the original distinction by Galileo risks becoming anachronistic. Even some "human" sciences require a quantitative approach to research which make them "hard" as well, for instance the "social" sciences, such as economics, sociology, psychology, and communication. Furthermore, the number of new fields of study continually has increased: at the end of 1980s, for instance, they exceeded 8.500 (Crane & Small, 1992, p. 197).

This hyperspecialization of areas of research is often associated with a technical language which is inaccessible, even among closely related fields. We achieve a "fragmentation of knowledge" (CIRET, 1987, para. 2[15]), which lost, and continues to lose, its unity. The original need for the "objectivity" of science which Galileo identified, during these last

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[14] This reference is in pdf version and it indicates the lines' number of the document, therefore I reported them.
[15] CIRET is the acronym of "The International Centre for Transdisciplinary Studies and Research". Its website contains the basic documents on transdisciplinarity to which we refer in this section. They are online sources, and often one-page texts, thus without the number of page, but when present, I quote the paragraph number.

decades has been brought to dramatic consequences by the fragmentation of knowledge. This has been responsible for a "dehumanisation" of science, in which, "the human being became an object - an object of the exploitation of man by man, an object of the experiments of ideologies which are proclaimed scientific, an object of scientific studies to be dissected, formalized, and manipulated" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.3).

The concern for these "extreme consequences", even to the point of "a potential danger of self-destruction of our species" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.2) has caused the development of a different approach to disciplinary knowledge, transdisciplinarity. It has been proposed by scholars of diverse fields of study and countries, mainly in Anglo-European countries, since the end of the XX century. In the following pages we outline, in particular, the historical and theoretical strands of transdisciplinary approach according the perspective of Basarab Nicolescu, Romanian physicist and philosopher. Nicolescu focuses on the epistemology of this approach to knowledge, thus on its foundation. In this perspective, he considers the term "discipline" using the original sense of "branch of knowledge", rather than "academic discipline", as it has been intended since the end of XIX century, with the development of the modern concept of universities. He also refers to the application of this approach to knowledge in academia and higher education, when he proposes a "transdisciplinary education", as it will be described in section 1.3.4.

### 1.3.1. *Multi-*, *inter-,* and *trans*-disciplinarity

As for the definition of *multi* and *inter*cultural, these Latin prefixes suggest an evolution in two steps: from *multi* (or *pluri*) to *inter*-disciplinarity. Pluridisciplinarity or multidisciplinarity, in fact, "concerns itself with studying a research topic in not just one discipline only, but in several at the same time. Any topic in question will ultimately be enriched by incorporating the perspectives of several disciplines" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 3). He specifies the nature of the relationship among these disciplines: "multidisciplinarity brings a plus to the disciplines, but this 'plus' is always in the exclusive service of the home discipline" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 4). Therefore, "the multidisciplinary approach overflows disciplinary boundaries while its goal remains limited to the framework of disciplinary research" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 4).

Interdisciplinarity has a different goal from multidisciplinarity: "it concerns the transfer of methods from one discipline to another" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 4). Nicolescu clarifies

the sense of this "transfer of methods", with examples related to his background in quantum physics. He distinguishes, in particular, three degrees of interdisciplinarity: "a degree of application", an "epistemological degree", and a degree of "the generation of new disciplines*"* (Nicolescu, 2002[16]). The first one is related to praxis, and he gives the example of the methods of nuclear physics transferred to medicine which lead to the appearance of new treatments for cancer (Nicolescu, 2002). The second degree of interdisciplinarity is related to the comprehension of the theoretical fundaments of each discipline, for example, transferring methods of formal logic to the area of general law, which may generate analyses of the epistemology of law (Nicolescu, 2002). The third one, which leads to the "generation of new disciplines*"* may be related, for instance, to methods from mathematics transferred to mathematical physics, which may generate physics, or when they are transferred to meteorological phenomena or stock market processes they may help in the development of chaos theory (Nicolescu, 2002). According to Nicolescu, "it is through the third degree that interdisciplinarity contributes to the disciplinary 'big bang'" (Nicolescu, 2002), thus to something really and deeply new, which first arises and, second, innovates. Nevertheless, "its goal still remains within the framework of disciplinary research" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 4), like multidisciplinarity, although both of them overflow the disciplines. Transdisciplinarity allows for going beyond disciplines, as "it concerns that which is at once *between* the disciplines, *across* the different disciplines, and *beyond* all disciplines" (Nicolescu, 2002, emphasis in original).

We now retrace the historical steps of this transdisciplinary approach, according to the perspective of Nicolescu and other scholars.

The term "transdisciplinarity" was proposed for the first time in France, in 1970, by Jean Piaget, Swiss psychologist, Erich Jantsch, Austrian-American astrophysicist, and André Lichnerowicz, French mathematician, at an international workshop: *Interdisciplinarity – teaching and research problems in Universities*.

The definition of transdisciplinarity is reported in the proceedings of this conference, by Piaget[17]:

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[16] This is an online one-page source, so the page number is not indicated.

[17] The original definition was in French: *Enfin, à l'étape des relations interdisciplinaires, on peut espérer voir succéder une étape supérieure, qui serait 'transdisciplinaire', qui ne se contenterait pas d'atteindre des interactions ou réciprocités entre recherches spécialisées, mais situerait ces liaisons à l'intérieur d'un système total sans frontières stables entre les disciplines* (Piaget, 1972, p. 144).

> Finally, we hope to see succeeding to the stage of interdisciplinary relations a superior stage, which should be 'transdisciplinary', i.e. which will not be limited to recognizing the interactions and/or reciprocities between the specialized researches, but which will locate these links inside a total system without stable boundaries between the disciplines. (Piaget, 1972, p. 144)

For the first time, is introduced here the fact that "stable boundaries" among the disciplines are not necessary, as a consequence of a "transdisciplinary stage". Piaget refers to two meanings of the Latin prefix *trans*: "across" and "among". According to him, "the interactions and/or reciprocities" among disciplines might be "located" in a space across and among them. This space would be "superior" to interdisciplinarity, as he notes, as it overcomes the boundaries among disciplines, which are no longer "stable". "Stable" refers to a fixed position, thus to an unchanged and unchangeable state. The lack of "stable boundaries" implies that the transdisciplinary space might be open and borderless, according to Piaget. It recalls Buber's "space in between" of relationship (Buber, 1972, p. 117), which cannot be fixed, stable, unchanged and unchangeable, as it does not belong only to one part: *I* and *Thou* for Buber, the disciplines for these scholars.

Transdisciplinarity would be a "superior stage", according to Piaget, also because it might bring to an integration, in addition to an interaction, among disciplines. As the etymology of the term "integration" suggests, in fact, it literally means "to make whole", thus "adding what lacks", from the Latin *integrare*. The integration among disciplines is a further stage compared with their interaction, as it would allow them to become entire, complete. For this reason, Piaget includes this stage in a "total system" which he defines "superior". Also "total" means "entire, whole", which "derives from the sum of several parts".

This definition of transdisciplinarity as a "superior" stage resulting in a "total system" seems contradictory, and "opens the trap of transforming transdisciplinarity in a super- or hyperdiscipline, a kind of 'science of sciences'" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 1). This meaning risks to lead to "a closed system, in contradiction with Piaget's own requirement of the instability of boundaries between disciplines" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 1). Nicolescu suggests to overcome this contradiction by considering the third meaning of the Latin prefix *trans*: "beyond", not "above", as Piaget intended. In a transdisciplinary perspective, in fact, the space among and across disciplines is also beyond them, and for this reason they may

complement each other. According to Nicolescu, Piaget "was fully conscious of this alteration of transdisciplinarity, but the intellectual climate was not yet prepared for receiving the shock of contemplating the possibility of a space of knowledge *beyond* the disciplines" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 1). Also the term "transdisciplinarity", in fact, risked confusing participants, and for this reason the organizing committee did not include it in the title of the workshop (Nicolescu, 2007). Even though the first contribution to the definition of transdisciplinarity is still focused on a disciplinary perspective, for Lichnerowicz, or was not yet oriented to the idea of going beyond disciplines, for Piaget and Jantsch, their effort has been fundamental to introducing this approach's novelty (Nicolescu, 2007).

One earlier attempt to a different approach to knowledge for "a more unified science of man" may be detected during the 1950s, among some U.S. scholars of different disciplines within the field of general systems theory related to human behavior. One of them, Roy R. Grinker, U.S. neurologist and psychiatrist, synthesized the contents of their initial group discussions conducted between 1951 to 1956, in the volume *Toward a unified theory of human behavior*. As John Gillin, U.S. anthropologist, noted in the review of this volume, these scholars were focused on "how to reconcile the conceptual criteria developed by different disciplines and points of view regarding the respective systems with which they wish to deal" (Gillin, 1957, p. 1092). This group developed a definition of "system" related to human behavior which has similarities with the one proposed by Piaget and colleagues: "A 'system' is considered to be some whole form in structure or operation, concepts or functions, composed of united and integrated parts. As such, it has an extent in time and space, and boundaries" (Grinker, 1956, p. 370). This initial attempt of approaching disciplinary knowledge was characterized by "reaching agreement and mutual understanding with respect to fairly abstract propositions and points of view" (Gillin, 1957, p. 1092).

The need for "fluid" boundaries among disciplines, rather than "solid", has been evidenced more recently also by some scholars of communication, in particular in relation to academic disciplines (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012, p. 4). For some of them, communication may play an important role in making these boundaries more "fluid". Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, for instance, notes that "conceptualizing boundaries as fluid rather than solid implies enlarging the context of the topic under investigation, most often either in terms

of time or space" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012, p. 4). She uses a metaphor to better explain the implications of this expansion, related to "the need to incorporate at least some knowledge of the history of a discipline (what might be labeled *grandparents*), cognate disciplines (*neighbors*), and the same discipline as studied in other countries (*cousins*)" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012, p. 4, emphasis in original). This may also suggest that "scholars in subdisciplines are *siblings*, complete with all the rivalries typical of siblings" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012, p. 4, emphasis in original). This implies that "we should pay attention to our grandparents, neighbors, cousins and siblings, rather than ignore them" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012, p. 4), and, consequently, that academic disciplines "serve best as temporary constructions, useful for socializing a new generation of researchers, rather than as limits placed upon mature scholars" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012, pp. 5-6). If disciplines are "socially constructed", then the boundaries between them also "must be recognized as constructs. That is, like disciplines themselves, the boundaries between disciplines are not natural, but made. Since they are made, they could have been made differently, and may yet be revised in the future" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012, p. 6). In this perspective, in fact, "holding too rigidly to the territory within the boundaries of a single discipline is unreasonable since it is unsustainable" (Leeds-Hurwitz, 2012, p. 6).

The transdisciplinary perspective proposed by Nicolescu aims to overcome these boundaries and the possible "rivalries among relatives", as the metaphor suggested by Leeds-Hurwitz. "Overcome" the disciplinary boundaries implies the sense of going beyond them, without losing the identity and singularity of each field of study. This approach to knowledge, in fact, is not "antagonistic but complementary to multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity research" (Nicolescu, 2002). There would have not been a transdisciplinary perspective without an *inter*, and also *pluri*, disciplinary visions. Furthermore, "transdisciplinarity is nevertheless radically distinct from multidisciplinarity and interdisciplinarity because of its goal, the understanding of the present world, which cannot be accomplished in the framework of disciplinary research" (Nicolescu, 2002). This complementarity implies that "it would be extremely dangerous to absolutize this distinction, in which case transdisciplinarity would be emptied of all its contents and its efficacy in action reduced to nothing" (Nicolescu, 2002). He uses an image to enforce his conviction: "*disciplinarity, multidisciplinarity, interdisciplinarity*

*and transdisciplinarity are like four arrows shot from but a single bow: knowledge*"
(Nicolescu, 2002, emphasis in original).

A few years after the first definition by Piaget, in 1985, Nicolescu proposes the inclusion of the third meaning of the prefix *trans* to complete it*,* and, since then, this transdisciplinary perspective has continued to develop. In 1986, the term is used in the first institutional document, *Venice Declaration*, considered one of the basic documents of transdisciplinarity (CIRET, 1986). In 1987, Nicolescu founds the International Centre for Transdisciplinary Research (CIRET), dedicated to the coordination of research, literature and education on this topic. It is a non-profit organization located in Paris, which today counts over 150 members from 26 countries. In 1994, together with other scholars of different disciplines and countries, including Edgar Morin, French sociologist, and Lima de Freitas, Portuguese painter and writer, Nicolescu co-authors the *Charter of Transdisciplinarity*, which is adopted by the participants of the First world congress of transdisciplinarity (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 2).

We have now outlined transdisciplinarity's historic milestones, and will return to the *Charter of Transdisciplinarity*, among its basic documents. But, before that, we introduce the theoretical foundation of this perspective, which complements the historical one.


**1.3.2 The theoretical foundation of transdisciplinarity**

The theoretical approach of transdisciplinarity has been developed by Nicolescu on the basis of his background as a scientist in quantum physics. As he states, it might seem "paradoxical that it is from the very core of exact sciences that we arrive at the idea of limits of disciplinary knowledge" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 2). At the same time, "after a very long period, disciplinary knowledge has reached its own limitations with far reaching consequences not only for science, but also for culture and social life" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 2). His concern, therefore, is related to his human, scientific and theoretical experience, first as individual, then as scientist and philosopher.

As previously noted, generally a field of study originates as a solution for a concrete need. A new perspective, thus, arises as an attempt to answer to a question, often more than one. In transdisciplinarity, the question is related to the approach to knowledge, which affects own one's existence, as human beings, as "Subjects", suggests Nicolescu, using the capital letter. He states, in fact, that "the crucial point" to understand the theoretical

grounding of transdisciplinarity "is the status of the Subject" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 2).

Among the "extreme consequences" brought about by the fragmentation of knowledge, he holds the "ideology of scientism", the conviction that "the only knowledge worthy of its name must be scientific, objective; the only reality worthy of this name must be, of course, objective reality, ruled by objective laws" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 2). The result is dramatic in this vision, as all knowledge other than scientific knowledge is "tolerated at most as a meaningless embellishment or rejected with contempt as a fantasy, an illusion, a regression, or a product of the imagination" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.3).

Nicolescu is convinced that scientism is responsible for "the death of the Subject", who is transformed into an object when objectivity is "set up as the supreme criterion of Truth" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.3, capitalization in original).

Nicolescu argues that the quantum theory "radically" changes this situation, as the scientific and philosophical notions it introduces "necessarily" lead the founders of quantum mechanics "to rethink the problem of the complete Object/Subject separation" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.3, capitalization in original). We may just mention a few notes about the quantum physics, to better understand this statement and, consequently, the theoretical basis of transdisciplinarity.

As the Latin suggests - *quantum* literally means "how much" - quantum physics refers to the study of the behavior of the minimum amount of any physical entity involved in an interaction, called the "discrete unit", or "quantum" of matter and energy. The branch of contemporary physics which takes this name investigates the quantum at molecular, atomic, nuclear, and even smaller microscopic levels. It develops in the early XX century, when it is discovered that the laws that govern macroscopic objects do not function the same in such small realms, and they distance from the ones of the physics known before it, so-called "classic". Among the authors who contribute to its development is Werner Heisenberg, to whom we refer in particular.

Nicolescu pinpoints the theoretical origin of transdisciplinarity to Heisenberg's contribution to the quantum theory, *The Uncertainty Principle,* of 1927. It introduces the "indeterminism" in this field of study, as Heisenberg demonstrates that certain pairs of physical properties of a particle, such as "position" and "momentum", cannot both be exactly measured simultaneously (Hilgevoord & Uffink, 2014, para. 1). Heisenberg's *Principle* evidences, for the first time, "the fundamental limit" in the "simultaneous"

determination - thus, not only in measure, but in knowledge - of the position and the speed (we would say) of such small particles (Hilgevoord & Uffink, 2014).

This uncertainty may be applied also to the "Object/Subject separation", according to Nicolescu, and he refers to a volume by Heisenberg on philosophy, written in 1942, but published only in 1984[18], in which the concept of "objective" and "subjective" designate "two different aspects of one reality; however we would make a very crude simplification if we want to divide the world in one objective reality and one subjective reality" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.3). This distinction, according to Heisenberg, "comes from the wrong idea that concepts describe perfectly the 'real things'. […] All true philosophy is situated on the threshold between science and poetry" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.3).

Nicolescu agrees with the observation by Heisenberg, and notes that "'beyond disciplines' precisely signifies the Subject-Object interaction. The transcendence, inherent in transdisciplinarity, is the transcendence of the Subject. The Subject cannot be captured in a disciplinary camp" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.3). The "Subject-Object interaction" specifies this transdisciplinary perspective, according to him, and distinguishes it from other definitions proposed over the years by different authors. According to Nicolescu, in fact, although other meanings for transdisciplinarity do not exclude the sense of going beyond disciplines, they are often more focused "on solving problems pertaining to the science-technology-society triad", which "reduces transdisciplinarity to the interaction of disciplines with social constraints" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.4). He assumes that "the unconscious barrier to a true dialogue comes from the inability of certain transdisciplinary researchers to think the *discontinuity"* (Nicolescu, 2007, p.4, emphasis in original). The "discontinuity" among the boundaries of disciplines relates to physics, like the concept of uncertainty. He uses an image to explain the meaning of discontinuity, and to clarify the diverse perspectives on transdisciplinarity among scholars:

> For them, the boundaries between disciplines are like boundaries between countries, continents and oceans on the surface of the Earth. These boundaries are fluctuating in time but a fact remains unchanged: the continuity between territories. We have a different approach of the boundaries between disciplines. For us, they are like the separation between galaxies, solar

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[18] The volume originally in German was translated into French in 1998, Heisenberg, W. *Philosophie - Le manuscrit de 1942*. Paris, France: Seuil. It does not seem to exist in an English version (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 24). We will refer, therefore, to Heisenberg's quotation made by Nicolescu in English in this article of 2007.

systems, stars and planets. It is the movement itself which generates the fluctuation of boundaries. This does not mean that a galaxy intersects another galaxy. When we cross the boundaries we meet the interplanetary and intergalactic vacuum. This vacuum is far from being empty: it is full of invisible matter and energy. It introduces a clear discontinuity between territories of galaxies, solar systems, stars and planets. Without the interplanetary and intergalactic vacuum there is no Universe. (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 5)

The discontinuity, as a "vacuum far from being empty", crosses the parts: of the Universe, of the Earth, among the disciplines, in this example, and also among cultures, as previously mentioned. It reminds me of the space of relationship, which we might assume has discontinuity and uncertainty as well, as it does not belong to only one part, but is "in between" (Buber, 1972, p. 117). Furthermore, it suggests to me also the attitude of the intercultural philosopher of "being in the between" (Bernreuter, 2000, para.8), which might be applied also the transdisciplinary approach according to the perspective proposed by Nicolescu: "our formulation of transdisciplinarity is both unified (in the sense of unification of different transdisciplinary approaches) and diverse: unity in diversity and diversity through unity is inherent to transdisciplinarity" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 5).


### 1.3.3 The methodology of transdisciplinarity

Nicolescu specifies the need for a methodology of transdisciplinarity, as "in the absence of a methodology, it would be just an empty discourse and therefore a short-term living fashion" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 6).

The term "methodology" indicates "the study" (*logos*) of "the method", therefore, literally, it means an investigation into the "way of doing anything". This implies that the methodology of an approach is singular, while methods may be multiple. It is the same also with transdisciplinarity, which is based on an "axiomatic" methodology (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 6). The "axiom" is the basis of a theory, which, therefore, "cannot be demonstrated" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 7), and "it is not a theorem", as he specifies: "axioms have their roots in experimental data and theoretical approaches and their validity is judged by the results of their applications. If the results are in contradiction with

experimental facts, they have to be modified or replaced" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 7). For this reason, an axiom is called also a "pillar" and "principle" of a theory.

As Nicolescu clarifies, a methodology has to "limit the number of axioms (or principles or pillars) to a *minimum* number. Any axiom which can be derived from the already postulated ones, has to be rejected" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 6, emphasis in original). He firstly refers to the three axioms formulated by Galileo in *Dialogue on the Great World Systems,* which we repeat in order to better understand the transdisciplinary methodology and its three axioms:

1. *There are universal laws, of a mathematical character*
2. *These laws can be discovered by scientific experiment*
3. *Such experiments can be perfectly replicated.* (Nicolescu 2007, p. 6, emphasis in original)

Transdisciplinary methodology does not directly derive from these three axioms, as "bridge can be built between science and ontology only by taking into account the totality of human knowledge. This requires a symbolic language, different from mathematical language and enriched by specific new notions" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 6). These "new notions" are related "once again, to the irreducible presence of the Subject, which explains why transdisciplinarity cannot be described by a mathematical formalism" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 6). Mathematics, in fact, is "able to describe *repetition* of facts due to scientific laws, but transdisciplinarity is about the *singularity* of the human being and human life" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 6, emphasis in original).

Also the methodology of transdisciplinarity is based on three axioms, which Nicolescu formulated and shared within the international community between 1976 and 1985*:*

*i. The ontological axiom: There are different levels of Reality of the Object and, correspondingly, different levels of Reality of the Subject.*

*ii. The logical axiom: The passage from one level of Reality to another is insured by the logic of the included middle.*

*iii. The epistemological axiom: The structure of the totality of levels of Reality is a complex structure: every level is what it is because all the levels exist at the same time.* (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 6, capitalization and emphasis in original)

As he summarizes, "the first two get their experimental evidence from quantum physics, but they go well beyond exact sciences. The last one has its source not only in quantum physics but also in a variety of other exact and human sciences" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 7).

### *The ontological axiom: the levels of Reality*

The first axiom introduces the "key concept" of transdisciplinarity, as Nicolescu describes it, "the concept of *levels of Reality*" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 7, capitalization and emphasis in original), and for this reason he names it the "ontological axiom". He specifies that "the meaning of the term 'Reality' is pragmatic and ontological at the same time. By 'Reality' we intend first of all to designate that which *resists* our experiences, representations, descriptions, images, or even mathematical formulations" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 7). This is the "pragmatic" definition of it, according to his perspective. The "ontological" is related to nature: "as Nature participates in the being of the world, one has to assign also an ontological dimension to the concept of Reality. Reality is not merely a social construction, the consensus of a collectivity, or some inter-subjective agreement" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 7). He first clarifies the nature of the "levels of reality", as a "set of systems which are invariant under certain laws" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 8). Then comes the passage from one level to another: "two levels of Reality are different if, while passing from one to the other, there is a break in the applicable laws and a break in fundamental concepts" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 8). This "break" is the result of a "*discontinuity* in the structure of levels of Reality, similar to the discontinuity reigning over the quantum world" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 8).

As previously mentioned, Nicolescu derived the idea of "levels of reality" from quantum physics, in particular from Heisenberg's *Principle*. Moreover, the novelty introduced by the terms "uncertainty", "discontinuity" and "levels of reality" may be extended to all the reality, in the transdisciplinary perspective. In fact, before Heisenberg's *Principle,* the knowledge of reality was perceived at three levels: macroscopic (the one we feel with our eyes), microscopic (the one which requires optical tools and electronic equipment), and cyber-space-time (the one related to the dimensions known in "classic" physics). The "indeterminism" proposed by Heisenberg, instead, suggests the existence of further levels of reality, as we cannot be sure any longer about the simultaneous determination of the position and the speed (we would say) of quanta. The "space-dimension association (three

dimensions of space and one dimension of time)" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 8) changes in transdisciplinary approach: "the quantum realism is associated with a space-time whose number of dimensions is bigger than four. The introduction of the levels of Reality induces a multidimensional and multi-referential structure of Reality" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 8). The "multidimensional structure of reality" is related to "discontinuity", which may be applied to this transdisciplinary vision, as he notes: "the discontinuous structure of the levels of Reality determines *the discontinuous structure of transdisciplinary space*, which in turn explains why transdisciplinary research is radically distinct from disciplinary research, even while being entirely complementary" (Nicolescu, 2002, emphasis in original).

Nicolescu describes the difference between the disciplinary (*pluri* and *inter*) and the transdisciplinary perspectives on the basis of the "levels of reality": "*disciplinarity concerns, often, one and the same level of Reality*" (Nicolescu, 2002, emphasis in original), in most cases, it only concerns "fragments of one level of Reality" (Nicolescu, 2002). On the contrary, "*transdisciplinarity concerns the dynamics engendered by the action of several levels of Reality at once*" (Nicolescu, 2002). These "dynamics" clear up also what is and may imply a transdisciplinary approach to knowledge: "while not a new discipline or a new superdiscipline, transdisciplinarity is nourished by disciplinary research; in turn, disciplinary research is clarified by transdisciplinary knowledge in a new way. In this sense, disciplinary and transdisciplinary research are not antagonistic but complementary" (Nicolescu, 2002).

Nicolescu completes the description of the first axiom by asserting the existence "of different levels of reality of the Object and of the Subject" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 9), which "are accessible to our knowledge thanks to the different levels of perception which are potentially present in our being. These levels of perception permit an increasingly general, unifying, encompassing vision of Reality, without ever entirely exhausting it" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 9). The difference between the "levels of reality" of the object and the ones of the subject lies in the diverse "perception" of them, as he notes: "in a rigorous way, the 'levels of Reality' are, in fact, *levels of Reality of the Object, and* 'levels of perception' are, in fact, *levels of Reality of the Subject*" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 9, emphasis in original). This further and apparently quibbling specification is actually related to the importance of the

"status of the Subject" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 2), and Nicolescu's concern to "rethink the problem of the complete Object/Subject separation" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 3).

The first axiom provides the basis to understand the other two, and all of them are related, but there is no hierarchal order among them: like "the levels of reality", these axioms also "are what they are because all of them exist at the same time", as the third one states.

### *The logical axiom: the included middle*

The second axiom introduces the so-called "logic of the included middle", and, for this reason, Nicolescu calls it "the logical axiom". He explains it by starting from the "classical" logic, founded on three axioms as well:

1.  *The axiom of identity*: A is A

2.  *The axiom of non-contradiction*: A is not non-A

3.  *The axiom of the excluded middle*: There exists no third term T ("T" from "third") which is at the same time A and non-A. (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 13-14, emphasis in original)

The "classical" logic used to exclude the coexistence of pairs (Nicolescu, 2007), therefore a third element, T, which, at the same time, can be A and non-A. The quantum physics, with Heseinberg's *Principle*, introduces an indeterminism which also affects the third axiom of "classical" logic. In fact, if there is an uncertainty in the simultaneous determination of the position and the speed (we would say) of a small particle of matter, we are no longer able to exclude a third term which, at the same time, is A and non-A. The third one should now be included.

According to Nicolescu, Heisenberg "was fully conscious of the necessity of adopting the logic of the included middle" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 14), as himself states:

> It is especially one fundamental principle of classical logic which seems to require a modification. In classical logic it is assumed that if a statement has any meaning at all, either the statement or the negation of the statement must be correct. Of 'here is a table' or 'here is not a table', either the first or the second statement must be correct. *Tertium non datur*, a third possibility does not exist. It may be that we do not know whether the statement or its negation is correct; but 'in reality' one of the two is correct.

In quantum theory this law *tertium non datur* is to be modified. Against any modification of this fundamental principle one can of course at once argue that the principle is assumed in common language and that we have to speak at least about our eventual modification of logic in the natural language. Therefore, it would be a self-contradiction to describe in natural language a logical scheme that does not apply to natural language. (Heisenberg, 1962, p. 125[19])

The logic of the "included middle" may be understood by considering the "levels of reality". Nicolescu clarifies its meaning with an image: "a triangle in which one of the vertices is situated at one level of Reality (T) and the two other vertices at another level of Reality (A and non-A). The included middle is in fact an *included third*" (Nicolescu, 2007, pp. 14-15, emphasis in original) among the two particles. This logic assures "the passage from one level of reality to another", as the axiom asserts, and this "induces an open structure of the unity of levels of Reality" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 15). The consequences of this "open structure" are "considerable for the theory of knowledge, because it implies the impossibility of a self-enclosed complete theory. Knowledge is forever *open*" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 15, emphasis in original).

The "logic of the included middle" does not "abolish the logic of the excluded middle: it only constrains its sphere of validity" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 15). And it may be applied to practical aspects of existence, it does not have to be thought of as "an abstract, logical tool, it becomes a living reality touching all the dimensions of our being" (Nicolescu, 2007, p.16). This becomes important in education and learning, according to this perspective, as we will explain in the following paragraph.

This logic reminds me of "the narrow ridge" by Buber, which is "a paradoxical unity of what one usually understands only as alternatives" (Friedman, 1955/1960, p. 10). A "paradoxical unity among contraries", as Buber notes: "according to the logical conception of truth only one of two contraries can be true, but in the reality of life as one lives it they are inseparable" (Buber, 1948, p. 17). Thus, as these contraries are "inseparable", they may coexist, and this unity among contraries, is, according to him, "the mystery at the innermost core of the dialogue" (Buber, 1948, p. 17).

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[19] I found the original version of this volume by Heisenberg in pdf, and page 125 corresponds to the page 80 of the pdf.

As we mentioned, Buber's perspective on the relationship is the lens through which it is possible to "bridge differences" (Nagda, 2006) also among disciplines, in this case. Among, and, we now may say, across and beyond them. This introduces the third axiom of transdisciplinarity, related to complexity.

*The epistemological axiom: complexity and interdependence*

The third axiom refers to "the structure" of levels of reality, which is "complex", as "every level is what it is because all the levels exist at the same time" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 7). Nicolescu specifies what complexity means from this transdisciplinary point of view: it is "*a modern form of the very ancient principle of universal interdependence. This recognition allows us to avoid the current confusion between complexity and complication*" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 17, emphasis in original). The principle of "universal" interdependence "entails the maximum possible simplicity that the human mind could imagine, the simplicity of the interaction of all levels of reality. This simplicity cannot be captured by mathematical language, but only by symbolic language" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 17). Complexity, therefore, means and implies interdependence, he argues, among "the levels of reality": they are, thus, in relation, or, we would say, in a mutual relationship.

The result, according to Nicolescu, is that "*no level of Reality constitutes a privileged place from which one is able to understand all the other levels of Reality*" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 8), as "*there is no fundamental level*" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 8, emphasis in original).

The consequence of this "not hierarchical approach" to "levels of reality" is that "every level is characterized by its *incompleteness*: the laws governing this level are just a part of the totality of laws governing all levels" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 8). We may understand why Nicolescu called this third axiom "epistemological": complex structure, interdependence, non-hierarchical and incomplete may summarize the fundamental characteristics of the "levels of reality", thus of knowledge, in this transdisciplinary perspective.

## 1.3.4 Towards an application of a transdisciplinary perspective

The three theoretical "pillars" of transdisciplinarity "*give a precise and rigorous definition of transdisciplinarity*" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 7, emphasis in original), which is

summarized in the *Moral project of transdisciplinarity*, by Nicolescu and other scholars of CIRET:

> Transdisciplinarity takes into account the consequences of a flow of information circulating among the various branches of knowledge, permitting the emergence of unity amidst diversity and diversity through unity. Its objective is to lay bare the nature and characteristics of this flow of information and its principal task is the elaboration of a new language, a new logic, and new concepts to permit the emergence of a real dialogue between the specialists in the different domains of knowledge. (CIRET, 1987, para. 3)

The "real dialogue" among the different "domains of knowledge", which this transdisciplinary perspective aims to establish, is an open call, which is not, and cannot be, confined to the academic context nor only to a theoretical approach.

As Nicolescu notes, in fact, the theoretical fundamentals of transdisciplinarity are related to praxis, as it is a methodology to apply to existence, in order to manage one's reality, which refers to daily life. In his view, dialogue among cultures and among religions may be oriented to this approach as well, not only dialogue among disciplines: "cultures and religions are not concerned, as academic disciplines are, with fragments of levels of Reality only: they simultaneously involve one or several levels of Reality of the Object, one or several levels of Reality of the Subject" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 18, capitalization in original). In this perspective, the term "transcultural", he suggests, "designates the opening of all cultures to that which cuts across them and transcends them" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 19), while the term "transreligious" "designates the opening of all religions to that which cuts across them and transcends them" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 19). The openness to "all" cultures and religions "does not mean the emergence of a unique planetary culture and of a unique planetary religion, but of a new *transcultural and transreligious attitude*. The old principle *'unity in diversity and diversity from unity'* is embodied in transdisciplinarity" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 19, emphasis in original).

This transcultural (and transreligious) perspective reminds me of Mall's observation on intercultural philosophy, regarding the meaning of the prefix *trans,* which is "an attitude not positioned outside cultures or philosophies, but within these and going along with these" (Mall, 2000, sect. 3.1 para.22). This "attitude" seems likely to be close to both

scholars - Nicolescu and Mall - as Nicolescu also mentions at the end of this outline of the historical and theoretical strands of transdisciplinarity: "the transcultural and transreligious attitude is not simply a utopian project - it is engraved in the very depths of our being" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 20).

For the scholars of CIRET, in fact, this "attitude" is a moral commitment, which implies a "mental change", which Mall specifies as the "pre-conditions" for intercultural philosophizing. Since the beginning of the CIRET network, they have been sharing "the emergence of a unity amidst diversity and diversity through unity" among other scholars and practitioners of the social and academic international community. They propose their intent in institutional documents, in the form of charters and declarations.

Among them, we shortly outline two documents, which are related with this study and state the need for a transcultural approach to dialogue, in addition to a transdisciplinary one (*Charter of Transdisciplinarity*), and promote a transdisciplinary approach in education (*Declaration of Locarno*).


### *Strands of transcultural dialogue and transdisciplinary education*

Together with the *Moral project*, the *Charter of Transdisciplinarity* is among the basic documents of transdisciplinarity. As previously mentioned, it was co-authored in 1994, by Nicolescu, Morin, and de Freitas at the end of the first world Congress of transdisciplinarity, which was held in Portugal. The document is currently available on the CIRET website in ten languages, even in Esperanto, to concretely indicate the aim for a "new language", as reported in the definition of transdisciplinarity.

The *Charter* includes a preamble and fifteen articles, which summarize what emerged in that Congress and announce the intent of the scholars of CIRET for the present and the future: "we have adopted the present *Charter*, which comprises the fundamental principles of the community of transdisciplinary researchers, and constitutes a personal moral commitment, without any legal or institutional constraint, on the part of everyone who signs this *Charter*" (preamble, emphasis in original).

It firstly presents this transdisciplinary vision, which aims for "the semantic and practical unification of the meanings that *traverse* and *lay beyond* different disciplines" (art. 4, emphasis in original). It presupposes an "open-minded rationality by re-examining the concepts of 'definition' and 'objectivity'. An excess of formalism, rigidity of definitions

and a claim to total objectivity, entailing the exclusion of the subject, can only have a life-negating effect" (art. 4). What "reduces" (art 1-2-3) this vision is "incompatible" (art.1-2) with transdisciplinarity, which is "resolutely open insofar as it goes beyond the field of the exact sciences and demands their dialogue and their reconciliation with the humanities and the social sciences, as well as with art, literature, poetry and spiritual experience" (art. 5).

The central articles deepen the transdisciplinary perspective, which is "multireferential and multidimensional" (art. 6), and "constitutes neither a new religion, nor a new philosophy, nor a new metaphysics, nor a science of sciences" (art. 7). It, rather, leads to "an open attitude towards myths and religions, and also towards those who respect them in a transdisciplinary spirit" (art. 9).

The "dignity of the human being" is remarked in articles 8 and 12: article 8 underlines "the recognition of the Earth as our home" as "one of the imperatives of transdisciplinarity" and "the acknowledgement by international law of this twofold belonging, to a nation and to the Earth", one of transdisciplinarity's goals in research.

Article 12 specifies that "the development of a transdisciplinary economy is based on the postulate that the economy must serve the human being and not the reverse".

Article 10 makes explicit the transcultural approach of transdisciplinarity: "No single culture is privileged over any other culture. The transdisciplinary approach is inherently transcultural". We will return to this article in the next section, as it is on this grounds that I based the purpose of this study, the proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching, therefore a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines mediated by dialogue.

The transdisciplinary attitude in education emerges in article 11, which "revalues the role of intuition, imagination, sensibility and the body in the transmission of knowledge", to a "shared knowledge" (art. 13). It should "lead to a shared understanding based on an absolute respect for the collective and individual Otherness united by our common life on one and the same Earth". This "shared understanding" implies the need "to reject any attitude that refuses dialogue and discussion, regardless of whether the origin of this attitude is ideological, scientist, religious, economic, political or philosophical" (art. 13).

Article 14 may be considered the last one, summarizing the "fundamental characteristics

of transdisciplinary attitude and vision" (art. 14). Article 15, in fact, is an invitation to the participants and to other interested parties to promote this perspective by signing the *Charter*.

The characteristics highlighted in article 14 are rigor, openness, and tolerance: "*rigor* in argument, taking into account all existing data. *Openness* involves an acceptance of the unknown, the unexpected and the unforeseeable. *Tolerance* implies acknowledging the right to ideas and truths opposed to our own" (art. 14, emphasis in original).

In 1997, a few years after the first world Congress of transdisciplinarity, the CIRET network organized a conference in Switzerland (Locarno) in collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The title of this Congress was *Which university for tomorrow? Towards a transdisciplinary evolution of the university,* and it aimed "to make the University evolve towards a study of the universal in the context of an unprecedented acceleration of fragmentary knowledge", as reported in the final declaration. This document, known as the *Declaration of Locarno,* is the first institutional attempt to promote this transdisciplinary approach in academia and higher education. It was co-authored by Nicolescu and Michel Camus (1929-2003), French writer and poet, and member of CIRET.

The nine points of the *Declaration* summarize the aim of the "transdisciplinary education", which "can open the way towards the integral education of the human being" (point 2). This type of education occurs especially at academic level, thus in the university. As the "emergence of a cyber-era" (point 4), "one of the goals of transdisciplinarity is research into the steps which are necessary for adapting the University to the cyber-era. The University must become a free zone of cyber-space-time" (point 4), in which may take place a "universal sharing of knowledge" (point 5). This implies a "new tolerance" (point 5), which permits applying "the transcultural, transreligious, transpolitic, and transnational vision" (point 5). Thus, "both a new vision and a lived experience. It is a way of self-transformation oriented towards the knowledge of the self, the unity of knowledge, and the creation of a new art of living" (point 6). This "new vision", especially in university, requests "to reunite these two artificially antagonistic cultures - scientific culture and literary or artistic culture - so that they will move beyond to a new transdisciplinary culture, the preliminary condition for a transformation of mentalities" (point 7).

This "transdisciplinary education" addressed either to "teachers" (point 8) or to students, scholars and practitioners, would allow the "creation and operation of 'Institutes of the Research for Meaning' which, in their turn, would inevitably have beneficial effects on the survival, the life and the positive influence of universities" (point 8). In order to contribute to repair the "break between science and culture" (point 7) through a "transdisciplinary education", the *Declaration* is followed by *Recommendations*, a list of thirteen proposals which Nicolescu and Camus address especially to UNESCO and universities. Among them, we focus on the ones which propose "transdisciplinary teaching" in higher education and universities: the recommendations 4 and 6.

The first suggests the idea of "programs of teaching which explicitly include transdisciplinarity", and may permit "the flourishing of the human being" and take into account "social phenomena" (rec. 4 n°1). It also promotes the "didactic accounts of different educational experiences which attest to the problem of complexity and the emergence of meaning as well as to the interest in new pedagogical methods occasioned by transdisciplinarity" (rec. 4 n° 2).

The second, recommendation 6, proposes the establishment of "centers of transdisciplinary orientation destined to foster vocations and to enable the discovery of hidden possibilities in each person; at present, the equality of the chances of the students strongly clashes with the inequality of their possibilities" (rec. 6 n° 1). These "centers" might serve as "ateliers of transdisciplinary research" comprised of researchers drawn from all disciplines (rec. 6 n° 2), aimed to "establishing academic dialogue between different cultural approaches, taking account of interior experience and *the culture of the soul*" (rec. 6 n° 2, emphasis in original). Nicolescu and Camus also specify the characteristics of their proposal of "ateliers" of transdisciplinarity: they should be co-directed by "a teacher in the exact sciences and a teacher in the human sciences or art, each of these being elected by an open process of co-optation" (rec. 6 n° 2).

It might be interesting to investigate what was realised in academic teaching and in the international and institutional contexts during the almost twenty years since these recommendations focused on the transdisciplinary approach to education proposed by the scholars of CIRET.

The transdisciplinary perspective proposed by Nicolescu and colleagues orients my teaching proposal, which takes inspiration from this approach to academic education. The

perspective proposed by Nicolescu is also transcultural, as previously noted. Moreover, the transdisciplinary and transcultural approaches may become one, as these points of view are mutually related. This study aims to substantiate this perspective, and to describe a proposal of teaching mediated by dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines.

## 1.4 The proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue

The transdisciplinary perspective implies also a transcultural approach, as article 10 of the *Charter of Trandisciplinarity* states: "No single culture is privileged over any other culture. The transdisciplinary approach is inherently transcultural." The sense which Basarab Nicolescu and the scholars of CIRET give to the term "transcultural", as previously noted, "designates the opening of all cultures to that which cuts across them and transcends them" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 19). The openness to "all" cultures "does not mean the emergence of a unique planetary culture, but of a *new transcultural attitude*. The old principle *'unity in diversity and diversity from unity'* is embodied in transdisciplinarity" (Nicolescu, 2007, p. 19, emphasis in original).

According to this perspective, therefore, transdisciplinarity should be related to the "new transcultural attitude", as it is "inherently" transcultural. This adverb suggests that dialogue among, across and beyond disciplines, all disciplines, implies dialogue among, across and beyond cultures, all cultures. The two dialogues (transdisciplinary and transcultural) are related and in relation. Therefore, transcultural dialogue needs transdisciplinary dialogue to be realized, and, at the same time, transdisciplinary dialogue needs a transcultural approach to be established. Furthermore, dialogue among, across and beyond cultures may be the basis for dialogue among, across and beyond disciplines. And, vice versa, the transdisciplinary perspective may be the basis for the transcultural one. They cannot be separated, as they are "inherently" related to each other.

The relationship between transdisciplinary and transcultural dialogues recalls Buber's reciprocity, and suggested to me the idea to investigate the possible relationship between them. I did not find an explicit indication of this reciprocity in the *Charter on Trandisciplinarity* or in the documents proposed by the scholars of CIRET network. As previously noted, their perspective on trasdisciplinarity embodies and includes a

transcultural approach, including education, but they do not refer to a mutual relationship between these two dialogues.

Other authors describe separately a transcultural (Thomson, 2011), or a transdisciplinary (Russel, 2005, Grobstein, 2007) approach to education, especially in academic teaching, but they do not mention them together, and do not refer to transdisciplinarity according to the perspective proposed by the scholars of CIRET. I recently located a trace of the need for applying a transdisciplinary and transcultural approach to knowledge, according to the vision suggested by Nicolescu (Imbert, 2014a, 2014b). But this Canadian author does not refer to this application in academic education, and does not mention a possible reciprocity between the two dialogues.

My interest in researching the possible reciprocity between a transdisciplinary and a transcultural approach to dialogue, mainly in education, has been strengthened by conversations with scholars who study dialogue from different perspectives: sociological, philosophical and theological, in addition to intercultural dialogue. Most confirmed that this approach to dialogue has been little investigated. Furthermore, this interest seems to me a heritage, a natural consequence of Buber's contribution to the study of relationship. It is also an attempt to look for a space of relationship between a transcultural and a transdisciplinary perspective on dialogue. They become one, as the pair "I-Thou", and this space may be in the hyphen, even the hyphen itself, like the *trait d'union*, as previously mentioned (section 1.1).


*Preliminary research*

Since 2009, I have been describing the possible relationship between a transdisciplinary and a transcultural approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue. These studies are based on experiences in two contexts: courses on transcultural dialogue addressed to undergraduates drawn from different cultures while on an Italian philosophical-theological faculty (Mangano, 2010a, 2010b, 2011, 2012), and courses on the communication of scientific research addressed to PhD students drawn from different disciplines and cultures in some Italian universities (Mangano, 2013a).

I shared part of this initial research at two conferences, in 2009 and 2010 (Mangano, 2009; Longo & Mangano, 2010): one was directed to intercultural dialogue scholars and was

held in Turkey (Istanbul), the second was focused on sociology of science, for scholars of different disciplines, and was held in Italy (Trento).

I consider these studies, between 2009 and 2013, as my preliminary research in this field, and I include them in these pages as part of the state of the art of this dissertation. I briefly introduce the contexts of the academic teaching, which I will deepen in chapter 2 (section 2.2), dedicated to materials and methods, as they are at the basis of my current study and teaching experience. In chapter 3, focused on findings, I will present the main findings of this proposed approach to academic teaching. The findings take inspiration from the initial insights and are substantiated by the observations I collected during the years of my doctoral research, from 2014 to 2016.

The first context draws on courses on transcultural dialogue at the "St. Peter's Philosophical-Theological Institute" of Viterbo (Italy). Started in 2008, this institution has associated with the theological and the philosophical faculties of the "Pontifical Athenaeum St. Anselm" of Rome. The Institute seems made for practicing dialogue: among cultures and disciplines, and between lay and religious students and teachers.

In my initial teaching experience (2008-2013) at this Institute, there were almost 20 cultures, in a total of about 200 students, who mainly came from non-Anglo-European countries to start their training as priests, nuns and missionaries, in addition to lay students who were mainly Italian. More than 80 disciplines are taught, as the bachelor's degree program in theology requires two years of philosophy followed by three years of theology. There is also a bachelor's degree in philosophy of three years, and a master's degree in anthropological theology of two years. Furthermore, from the academic year 2008-2009 to 2012- 2013, an optional preliminary year was proposed, which preceded the studies at the Institute. It aimed to improve the students' skill with the Italian language and to introduce the Anglo-European philosophy to non-Anglo-European students.

I taught courses of transcultural dialogue with a transdisciplinary approach at three student levels: at the preliminary year (from 2008-2009 to 2012- 2013), at the first and second years of the philosophical bachelor's degree (since 2009-2010, every two years), and at the first year of the theological bachelor's degree (in 2010-2011, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015).

The second context draws on courses, schools and seminars of communication of scientific research addressed to young scientists: mainly doctoral students, post-doctoral

fellows and professionals from public or private research institutes drawn from different areas of study in the "natural", "social", and "human" sciences.

In particular, since 2007, I have been lecturing courses at invitation of Italian universities, and since 2014 also outside of Italy (University of West Bohemia, Pilsen, Czech Republic); since 2009, I have been organizing schools in Italy, with the same program of the courses, but in an intensive form of three to five continuous days. Since 2012, I have been lecturing seminars at the invitation of mainly Italian universities which aimed to introduce the main topic of my teaching proposal in communication of scientific research in two (or more) hours.

The preliminary findings in a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching suggested to me that it is possible to find a grounds for dialogue based on human experience. This space may enrich cultural identity and permits to build bridges among cultures, rather than merely displaying their common elements. Thus, the transdisciplinary perspective may provide a grounds for dialogue between, across and beyond each culture.

These initial studies led to my interest in exploring dialogue as a space where the relationship may occur, in order to provide additional evidence on this proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching mediated by dialogue. This dissertation is the result of this further study.

### *Aims of this study*

Buber's perspective on the relationship and Nicolescu's approach to transdisciplinarity suggest a space of relationship between elements: individuals, according to the first point of view, and disciplines, in the second one.

The proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching mediated by dialogue at the basis of this research aims to provide further evidence that dialogue also may start in this space, just as relationship does, and together with relationship. Therefore, dialogue and relationship are connected: dialogue needs relationship to be realized, and, at the same time, dialogue creates relationship. Dialogue may become a space *of* relationship, more than *for* it. In particular, dialogue may be a space of relationship between, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. This space is investigated without

the need to find a common ground for dialogue. Dialogue and relationship may provide the space in which cultures and disciplines meet, and may become the relationship itself, the hyphen or the *trait d'union*.

The proposal of this study is investigated mainly through academic teaching, according the perspectives of the "educational relationship" proposed by Buber and of the "transdisciplinary education" presented by Nicolescu and the scholars of CIRET.

In particular, this research focuses on teaching experiences drawn from courses with a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach which I conducted especially between 2014 and 2016. This study aims to describe this teaching proposal, thus, the materials and the methods I developed for each course and in the two contexts, the findings which emerged and their analysis, in order to provide further support for this proposal. Furthermore, this research intends to illustrate the implications of this approach to teaching, with the additional purpose of applying it also beyond the academic context, and to consider dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines, far more broadly, in everyday life.

# Chapter 2. Materials and method

A chapter for "materials and method" generally follows the introduction and presents the materials and method(s) used in the study, serving as the basis of the results, or findings, and their analysis, which are usually presented in the successive chapter. The method(s) is related to the materials used, as the research, especially in a quantitative approach, is often conducted with instrumentation and procedures which it is necessary to describe.

Therefore, this chapter commonly includes the details which allow readers to understand how the materials and method(s) work, and why we have chosen them. Thus, the information on the equipment and sampling, if present, the measurement, the data (or findings) collection, and the model and the statistics used to analyse them, when possible. We would say that the relationship between the materials and the method(s) should be mutual: we would not be able to collect the data without the materials necessary to produce them, and, at the same time, it is requested one (or more) method(s) to use these materials and one (or more) method(s) to analyse the data. In fact, we could not demonstrate the validity of the hypothesis without the experimental observations, and the results would be meaningless without their interpretation.

The term "method" is different from "methodology", and they are not synonymous: the first literally means the "way of doing anything", from the ancient Greek *methodos,* a word composed by *meta* ("after"), and *hodos* ("way"), while "methodology", indicates "the study" (*logos*) of the "method". Therefore, the methodology investigates which method(s) may be applied to a study, and this implies that the methodology of the research is one, while the methods may be multiple.

The methodology of this study is the one of transdisciplinarity (section 1.3.3), as this research is focused on the proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue. Therefore, in this chapter we do not mention the methodology again, given that it was sufficiently introduced in chapter 1. Instead, I present the characteristics of this proposed approach, especially the basic aspects and the measurement of this study (section 2.1). Furthermore, I describe the materials which I developed during these years, for each course and context of teaching (section 2.2) and related to the content and the tools (section 2.3).

These aspects permit defining the "way of doing" this proposed approach, thus "the method" of this transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective applied to academic teaching and mediated by dialogue.

As previously noted, this approach, at the moment, is little investigated, therefore, the details which will be described are basic to select and order the findings, to analyse them (chapter 3), and to illustrate the implications of this teaching proposal (chapter 4). I now outline the characteristics of this study, which derives from the combination of qualitative and quantitative research, and its measurement.

## 2.1 A study which combines qualitative and quantitative research

The combination of qualitative and quantitative research seems common in some areas of the "social sciences", according to William M. Trochim, a U.S. scholar of applied social research methods (Trochim, 2006[20]). Nevertheless, it may be new in other areas of investigation, thus I present a few topics, to better understand the characteristics of this study.

A common opinion among scholars, even of different areas of research, is that qualitative and quantitative approaches differ for the type of data (findings or results): they are in numerical form in quantitative study, and are in textual form, in qualitative research.

Quantitative researchers often consider their data "'hard', 'rigorous', 'credible', and 'scientific'" while qualitative scholars refer to "'sensitive', 'nuanced', 'detailed', and 'contextual'" findings (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.7).

Qualitative and quantitative approaches to research are, instead, related to each other, as the difference is often based on "the general *assumptions*" connected to a research (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1, emphasis in original), more than on the data collection. These assumptions refer to different "epistemological" and "ontological" conditions of making research between the qualitative and quantitative researchers (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1).

The "epistemological" assumption of the qualitative approach implies that any phenomenon is observed "in its context", and the researcher is expected "to become immersed in it" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1). Thus, she/he moves into the object of

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[20] It is an online source, and there are no page numbers, but the contents are divided into paragraphs and sections, which I reported.

study and becomes a part of it. This allows "the questions to emerge and change", rather than "approaching measurement with the idea of constructing a fixed instrument or set of questions" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1).

The "ontological" assumption is based on the conviction that there is not a "single unitary reality apart from one's own perceptions" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1). Therefore, it is taken for granted that everyone experiences a different reality, and a study is "essentially biased by each researcher's individual perceptions" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1).

The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research overcomes this distinction, according to at least some social researchers, as "all qualitative data can be coded quantitatively", and "all quantitative data is based on qualitative judgment" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1). The first assumption implies that the quantitative coding provides information and allows analyses which would not be possible with a qualitative approach alone. Furthermore, although all qualitative data can be quantitatively coded, this does not "detract from the qualitative information" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1). For this reason, the awareness on the similarities between qualitative and quantitative information, according to this scholar, opens up "new possibilities for interpretation that might otherwise go unutilized" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1).

The second assumption confirms and enforces the first one, as numerical information requires a textual explanation and interpretation to be evaluated. For this reason, these two approaches to research seem "virtually inseparable" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.1), and may complement each other.

Study in the "social" sciences is characterized by basic aspects related to its foundation and measurement, which may be also applied to research which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, as I assume for this study. These characteristics may clarify this research, therefore, they are briefly illustrated.

### 2.1.1 Basic aspects

A research study in the "social" sciences, as well as one which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, is usually characterized by the following basic aspects: it is "theoretical" when is concerned with "developing, exploring or testing the theories or

ideas that the researchers have about how the world operates" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.1); it is "empirical" if is based on "observations and measurements of reality, thus, on what we perceive of the world around us" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.1). These aspects are not opposite, thus a study may be "theoretical" and "empirical" at the same time, when it is based on "a comparison" between the theories and the observations for providing support to them (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.1).

Furthermore, a study is "nomothetic" if it refers to "laws or rules that pertain to the general case" (*nomos* in ancient Greek means "general"), and is "idiographic" when it related to individuals (*idios* means "self" or "characteristic of an individual" in ancient Greek) (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.1). Even a study focused on individuals may be concerned with the nomothetic, thus to the general case, rather than the individual (Trochim, 2006). A research project is "probabilistic", as the term suggests, when it is based on probabilities, thus "the inferences" usually do not refer to "laws that pertain to all cases" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect. 1.1), and it is "causal" when is referred to "the cause-effect relationships", thus to the causes which affect the results of the study (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect. 1.1).

These five basic aspects may also characterize my study: it lays on a theoretical foundation, the relationship according to Buber's perspective (section 1.1), and it investigates it through a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching. Thus, this research is "theoretical" and "empirical" both, as it is based on the observations derived from the application of this approach. It is oriented to individuals and groups, but it may be referred to a general case, as it aims to apply this approach also outside of the academic context teaching, therefore, it seems to me "nomothetic" research. Finally, it is a "probabilistic" and a "causal" study, as is focused on academic teaching, therefore, the evidence and the findings are related to the students, and the cause-effect relationship concerns their cultures and disciplines.

*Types of questions and type of relationships*

There are three more aspects which characterize a study derived from the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches. They are related to the "type of questions" which may orient the research: the study may be "descriptive", if it illustrates a phenomenon; "relational", if it is focused on the relationships among the variables; or "causal", when it

aims to detect the cause-effect relationship (Trochim, 2006, para. 4). These three perspectives are not necessarily separated: it may happen that a "relational" study firstly describes and then aims to relate its variables, or that a "causal" research may describe both the cause and effect variables.

This study seems to me a combination of these three aspects, which, also in this case, are in relation: it is "descriptive", as it proposes an approach to academic teaching and the findings which emerge from its application; it is "relational", we would say by definition, as it is founded and focused on relationship and aims to investigate dialogue as a space of relationship, especially among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines, which may be considered the two "variables" of this study. It is "causal", as it is focused on the causal-effect relationship among these variables.

Another basic aspect of a research study derived from the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches refers to the "types of relationship", which concern "the *nature"* and "the *pattern"* of it (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.4, emphasis in original). The definition that we proposed for the term "relationship" (section 1.1) fits also in this context, as it refers to "the correspondence between two variables". Regarding the "nature" of the relationship, it may be "correlational" or "causal": the first type indicates the correspondence at least between two variables, while the second that one variable depends on - thus, causes - the other (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.4).

The "pattern" of the relationship which orients the study is related to the "type of interaction" between the variables: it may be absent (thus, there is "no relationship"), "positive" or "negative". In the "positive" relationship "high values on one variable are associated with high values on the other, and low values on one are associated with low values on the other" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.4); in the "negative" interaction is the opposite: "high values on one variable are associated with low values on the other" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.4).

It seems to me that in this study the "nature" of the relationship is "correlational", more than "causal", as I am investigating the reciprocity between dialogue among cultures and dialogue among disciplines, and between dialogue and relationship. As this study is based and focused just on relationship, in particular, the "type of interaction" which I expect should be a "positive" relationship.

*Method of reasoning, unit of analysis, and time*

In this basic overview on the characteristics of a study which combines qualitative with quantitative approaches, another aspect which may orient the research is "the method of reasoning", which may be "deductive" or "inductive" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect. 2.2). It is "deductive" when it proceeds from the more general to the more specific: it begins with a theory about the topic of interest, and it narrows down into more specific hypotheses; then, it collects observations to test the hypotheses, and to confirm (or not) the original theories. Instead, the method of reasoning is "inductive" if it moves from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories: it begins to detect patterns, formulates some tentative hypotheses that need to be explored, and finally it develops some general conclusions or theories.

A common assumption among many scholars is that quantitative research is "confirmatory and deductive in nature", and qualitative research is "exploratory and inductive in nature", but, actually, most research investigations involve both reasoning processes (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect. 2.2).

The method of reasoning of this study seems to me both "deductive" and "inductive", and the relationship may be the key to understand the reason. The approach may be "deductive" as it starts from a general theory, thus, the relationship as a human ground for dialogue, and vice versa, dialogue as a human ground for relationship. Then, this topic narrows down into a more specific hypothesis, hence, dialogue as a space of relationship among, across, and beyond cultures and disciplines; this hypothesis is investigated in academic teaching and the findings I collect aim to confirm the original theory and the hypothesis.

At the same time, this study may be approached also with "inductive" reasoning, if we begin with the observation of a phenomenon - the transdisciplinary perspective is "inherently" transcultural (from the *Charter of transdisciplinarity*) - which allows me to propose a hypothesis: the reciprocity between a transcultural and a transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue. The findings permit confirmation of the hypothesis and the proposal of a more general theory: the application of this perspective also out of the academic context of dialogue, and far more broadly, in everyday life. Two more aspects characterize a research investigation: the "unit of analysis" and "time" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.3). As the terms suggest, the first one refers to the type of

data collected, which may be related to individuals or groups; the second one to the period of observation of the findings. This period may be "cross-sectional" or "longitudinal": in the first case, the study takes place "at a single point in time", thus interests a "cross-section" of the phenomenon (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.3); in the second case, the study occurs "over time", thus there are "at least two (and often more) waves of measurement" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect.1.3).

In my study the "unit of analysis" is related both to individuals and to groups, as it focused on the observations drawn from the students' feedback. Furthermore, the "time" seems to me "cross-sectional" more than "longitudinal", as these observations occur at a single point in time, thus during the courses (outcomes), or after them (follow-ups).

We may summarize the basic characteristics of a research in relation to my study, as follows: it combines qualitative with quantitative approaches to research, it seems to me a "theoretical", "empirical", "nomothetic", "probabilistic", "causal", "descriptive" and "relational" study, with a "correlational" and "positive" type of relationship, which involves both "inductive" and "deductive" reasoning processes. It is a "cross-sectional" research with the students, individuals and groups, as "units of analysis".

These basic aspects are attempts of definitions, as they are related to a proposal, thus to a hypothesis, which needs to be supported by the findings. In the chapter dedicated to the conclusions, therefore, I will return to these characteristics, and I will try to evaluate them in light of my findings and their analysis.


I now present a few topics on the "measurement" of a study, which are related to these basic aspects. In a study which derives from the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to research, the measurement refers either to numerical and graphic descriptions, generally common to a quantitative study, or to a textual representation, characteristic of a qualitative research. "Textual" may include also photographs, videos or sound recordings, in addition to words. The measurement of a qualitative study, therefore, needs further details, related to the "approaches", "the methods" and the "data" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6 sect. 6). I outline them, as they allow for understanding the characteristics of this study and the meaning of the "validity" of a research investigation.

**2.1.2 Measurement**

*Qualitative approaches*

Either in a quantitative, or in a qualitative research project, the approach taken to a study describes its purpose, the stages, and the analysis of the results. Furthermore, in a qualitative study, the approach is also related to explicit discussion of the "role of the researcher(s)" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3).

The most common qualitative approaches in a study in the "social sciences" are: "phenomenology", "field research", "grounded theory", and "ethnography" (Trochim, 2006). I briefly define the first three, and I focus on the ethnographic approach, as it characterizes the qualitative perspective of this study.

As in philosophy, the "phenomenological" approach refers to "a focus on people's subjective experiences and interpretations of the world", thus, the role of the researcher is to understand "how the world appears to others" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3).

As the term suggests, the "field research", or "field work" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 3), is based on the idea that the researcher "goes 'into the field' to observe the phenomenon in its natural state or *in situ*" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3). Thus, the researcher is able to "place the study" into a "socio-cultural context" through "observing, interacting and participating" in it (Whitehead, 2005, p. 6).

In the approach related to "grounded theory", as the term indicates, the object of the study "needs to be *grounded*, or rooted, in observation" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3, emphasis in original). This denotes that the research may have no end, as the theory implies continuing observation in order to collect data to be tested and confirmed.

The qualitative approach related to "ethnography" is based on the study of the "entire culture" (Trochim, 2006 para. 6, sect. 6.3), as anthropology, from which, in fact, it origins (section 1.2.1). The role of the researcher implies a need "to be immersed in the culture as an active participant" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3). Therefore, the observation is continuous and there is "no preset limiting of what will be observed and no real ending point" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3), as in the "grounded theory" approach.

Originally, "ethnography" was considered the same of "field work", then it developed and included also the study of the "*socio-cultural contexts*, *processes*, and *meanings* within a cultural system" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 4, emphasis in original). Therefore, the original idea of "culture" related to ethnicity and geographic location comprised also the

study of any group or organization (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3), and was then distinguished from "field research".

The ethnographic approach is characterized by taking both "emic" and "etic" perspectives. The first term refers to the "knowledge and interpretations existing within a culture, determined by local custom, meaning, and belief and best described by a 'native' of the culture" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 3). The word "etic" refers to the "generalizations about human behaviour that are considered universally true" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 3).

These terms originally derive from linguistics, in relation to "phonemic", which indicates "the way of abstracting a speech sound", from the ancient Greek *phoneme* (literally "one of the units of sound"), and "phonetic", literally "the study of the sounds of human speech", from the ancient Greek *phone* ("sound, voice") (Pike, 1967). Over time, their meaning in anthropology generally and ethnography specifically has evolved to include a cultural sense (Harris, 1964). Therefore, in ethnography, "emic" is usually related to a single culture, thus to specific aspects of a group or individuals, while "etic" relates to the general human condition. The ethnographic approach should be addressed to either individual or general aspects of a culture or society, thus to both "emic" and "etic" perspectives (Whitehead, 2005, p. 3). This implies to collect data at the emic level, to compare them to other contexts, and, then, to make etic generalizations.

### *Qualitative methods*

The qualitative approaches to this study are drawn from qualitative "methods". The most common methods in qualitative research are: "participant observation", "direct observation", "unstructured interviewing", and "case study" (Trochim, 2006 para. 6, sect. 6.4).

"Participant observation" requires that the researcher "becomes a participant" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.4) in the culture or context of study, and she/he often studies a context where she/he is already a participant, therefore, she/he becomes accepted as "a natural part of the culture" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.4). This is not easy, and so research with this approach typically requires months, or more likely years, of work.

"Direct observation" does not imply active participation, since the researcher watches rather than taking part, and she/he is not "immersed in the entire context" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.4). However, typically the observer is still physically present, just

observing rather than being one of the actors. Therefore, "direct observation" may use tools, like technology, which allows the researcher to reduce the period of observation and interaction with the participant.

The term "observation", in the ethnographic approach to research, is generally "associated with the sense of sight" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 11). As direct observation does not imply a full participation, the researcher has to raise all senses, thus "sight, hearing, smell, taste and feel to levels higher than normal", and to take inspiration from "all sources of the cultural environment" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 11).

"Unstructured interviewing" involves "direct interaction between the researcher and a respondent or group" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.4). It differs from the traditional "structured interviewing" as there is no "formal structured instrument or protocol" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.4), although the researcher typically prepares an initial set of questions. The interviewer is generally free to move in response to unexpected comments made during an interview, therefore, this method is useful for "exploring a topic broadly" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.4). On the other side, each interview "tends to be unique, with no predetermined set of questions asked of all respondents" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.4). Therefore, the researchers may adapt their list of questions accordingly, once they learn what questions are necessary to obtain useful information, and this feedback may help them to orient the interview, and to analyse the data which they collect.

Finally, a "case study", as the term suggest, is an intensive study of a specific individual or context. There is no single way to conduct it, and a combination of methods can be used, for instance "unstructured interviewing" and "direct observation" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.4).

*Qualitative data*

In qualitative research, generally, the data are "more 'raw' and seldom pre-categorized" then in a quantitative study (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect.6), and this often allows describing what occurs in detail, in the original language of the research participants, and as a narrative story. Nevertheless, it is necessary to organize these data, and to consider them in a more general perspective. For this reason, the combination of qualitative and quantitative research permits a compromise, as quantitative research "excels at

summarizing large amounts of data and reaching generalizations based on statistical projections" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6), while qualitative research "excels at 'telling the story' from the participant's viewpoint, providing the rich descriptive detail that sets quantitative results into their human context" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6).

I briefly present qualitative "data", which consist of "in-depth interviews", "direct observations", and "written documents" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6).

"In-depth interviews" allow probing of opinions on the phenomenon of interest from the source. It may include individual or group interviews, and the data can be recorded in different ways, such as stenography, audio recording, video recording or written notes (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.2).

"Direct observation" refers both to a qualitative method and to a type of qualitative data, which includes field notes, pictures, photos or drawings, and the information collected by "in-depth interviews", while the "written documents" are existing sources, such as newspapers, magazines, books, websites, memos, transcripts of conversations, or annual reports (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.2).

Furthermore, the ethnographic approach may also comprise "secondary data analysis" and "informal" and "semi-structured interviewing" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 3).

"Secondary data analysis" refers to data that others have collected, and previously analysed, including: scholarly and popular products; archival (such as maps and atlas) and statistical data; records collected by business, educational, health, social services, and in various type of directories, including telephone; personal and individual data, such as diaries, family stories, and biographies (Whitehead, 2005, p. 3).

This study is based on the "ethnographic" approach, in which I first was a participant observer, as the teacher in the class, and then I observed and collected the students' feedback to my teaching during the courses. Sometimes, I was also "immersed in the context", as we lived together with the students and we shared the whole day for almost a week, as occurred at the schools of communication of scientific research (CSR).

The ethnographic approach to my study includes both an "emic" perspective, related to the students' original cultures and disciplines, and an "etic" one, which may concern the investigation of dialogue as a space of relationship mainly in academic teaching. The further aim is to apply this approach also beyond the academic context, and more broadly, in everyday life.

The qualitative "method" of this ethnographic approach is based on either "direct observation" or "participant observation". The qualitative "data" include the feedback and the behaviour of students, which I mainly record in the form of "field notes", and "written documents". These type of "data" comprise the contributions prepared by the students, which complement the contents I propose, and their emails, SMS texts and personal conversations. The "data" of this study will be described in chapter 3, dedicated to the findings and their analysis.

### *Qualitative validity*

The "validity" of a research study is "the best available approximation to the truth of a given proposition, inference, or conclusion" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect. 2.4). The "validity", therefore, is related to the basic aspects and the measurement (approaches, methods and data) of the research.

In the quantitative-qualitative debate, the most common opinion is that the "validity" may be applied only to a quantitative approach, as some qualitative researchers "reject a reality external to our perception of it" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5).

In this overview of the characteristics of a research project which combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, I introduce "validity" on the basis of an "alternative" to the "traditional quantitatively-oriented criteria" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5). It derives from the model proposed in 1985 by the qualitative researchers Yvonna S. Lincoln and Egon G. Guba, and compares the four criteria for evaluating a quantitative research with the four ones related to a qualitative study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The first ones are: "internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity", while the criteria for estimating qualitative research are: "credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, pp. 283-285).

These parameters are not antithetic, and they integrate each other, especially in a study which derives from the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches, for this reason, I briefly introduce each of them.

In a quantitative study, the "internal validity" refers to the assumption that there may be a causal relationship between the variables of the study (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect. 2.4). The correspondent parameter in a qualitative research is "credibility", which aims to establish that the findings are "credible or believable from the perspective of the

participant in the research" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5). The purpose of qualitative research, in fact, is to describe the phenomena of interest "from the participant's eyes", as she/he is the only one who can "legitimately judge the credibility of the results" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5). Therefore, the "validity" is "internal", as regards the participant to the study.

Furthermore, the "external validity" of a quantitative study is related to the assumption that the causal relationship may be "generalized to other persons, places or times" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect. 2.4). At the same level, in a qualitative study the "transferability" refers to "the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalized or transferred to other contexts or settings" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5). This criterion regards "the responsibility" of the one doing the generalizing, thus of the researcher (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5).

The "reliability" in a quantitative research is based on "the assumption of replicability or repeatability" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5), and the correspondence in a qualitative study is the "dependability", which refers to the responsibility too. The researcher, in fact, is "responsible for describing the changes that occur in the setting and how these changes affected the way the research approached the study" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5).

The fourth quantitative criterion of judgement refers to "objectivity", which relates to demonstration of the hypothesis on the basis of observations and through the results. In qualitative research, the correspondent parameter is the "confirmability", which indicates the "degree to which the results could be confirmed or corroborated by others" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5). Even this criterion is associated with the researcher's responsibility, and she/he may apply different "strategies" to enhance confirmability, such as "to document the procedures for checking the data, or search for negative instances that contradict prior observations, examine the data collection and analysis procedures, and make judgements about the potential for bias or distortion" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5).

It seems to me that either the "alternative" or the "traditional" criteria of evaluation of research may be applied to this study. I will refer again to both of them in chapter 4, dedicated to its implications and the conclusions, in which I will try to confirm this attempt of definition of "validity" in light of my findings and their analysis. We may summarize the notions of "measurement" for this study, which add to its basic

aspects: it is characterized by an "ethnographic approach", which aims to combine "emic" and "etic" perspectives. The qualitative "methods" are based on "direct" and "participant" observations, and the findings mainly consist in "written documents" which I record through "field notes".

These are the basic aspects of this research, focused on the proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching. I now present the context of this study, in particular, where I applied this proposal and the type of courses I proposed with this perspective, and the teaching materials, thus the content and the tools I developed in each context and for each course.

## 2.2 The context

The proposal of a transdisciplinary and a transcultural approach mediated by dialogue in academic teaching is investigated in two contexts: courses on transcultural dialogue addressed to undergraduates drawn from different cultures while on an Italian philosophical-theological faculty (the "St. Peter's Philosophical-Theological Institute" of Viterbo), and courses on communication of scientific research (CSR) addressed to PhD students drawn from different disciplines and cultures at invitation of several Italian universities.

I present the details of each context, as the cultural and disciplinary richness of both of them inspired this teaching proposal, and oriented it over the years. The context, therefore, is not only part of the background of this research, as I illustrated in chapter 1 (section 1.4), but it allows for understanding how and why I developed this approach to teaching. For this reason, I present it in this chapter, soon after the basic aspects of this study and before the teaching materials. Furthermore, in chapter 3, I describe the genesis of this proposal, which may clarify its development, as well as a better understanding of the later analysis and interpretation of findings observed in both contexts (sections 3.2.1 and 3.4.1).

### 2.2.1 The philosophical-theological Institute

As previously noted, the teaching experiences at the philosophical-theological Institute draw on courses at three levels: at the preliminary year, from the academic year 2008-2009 to 2012-2013; at the first and second years of the philosophical bachelor's degree,

since 2009-2010, every two years; and at the first year of the theological bachelor's degree, in 2010-2011, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

They are six-months courses, which I usually teach at the fall semester, and consist of thirty hours of lectures each, with two-hour lessons every week. These courses are optional, with mandatory attendance, as usually required by Italian philosophical-theological faculties. Since 2015-2016, I have been proposing elective attendance, therefore, students who attend are choosing to do so. This implies involving them also in the decision to experience a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue.

The cultural diversity of the students at the Institute is remarkable: during my initial teaching experience, between 2008 and 2013, there were 20 cultures across a total of approximately 200 students, while in these last three years their number has decreased to fewer than 150 students drawn from 15 cultures. Mostly students come from non-Anglo-European countries to complete their religious training and become nuns, priests and friars, mainly for the Catholic Church. This training is common to the Christian religious students around the world, who frequently take part of their studies in an Italian pontifical university, and then, generally, return to their native countries for their religious service. The cultural richness at the Institute has been central for orienting and developing the proposal of dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. For instance, I had in class Chinese religious students of both the Roman Catholic Church and the official Chinese Catholic Church, as well as descendants from indigenous or ancient cultures, such as the Mapuche (Chile) and Inca (Peru), as well as students who attended only a few courses, as they left the study or moved to other universities, like one from Burundi, who survived the genocide of 1993.

The presence of the Zambian students, who attended the courses at the Institute until the academic year 2015-2016, is another example of this cultural richness. They belong to a community of Franciscan missionary friars and nuns born in South Korea about twenty years ago, with religious houses also in Zambia. The community in Italy, therefore, included Zambian and Korean students, and, initially, also Indian missionaries. This community thought of Italy as a primary destination for the students' religious training and their academic education. They arrived in Viterbo around 2005, and have been here for ten years. Then, the community decided to return to Zambia and South Korea, and to

propose to their students to complete their training and study in their native countries, thus, they left Italy. During these years, therefore, I had Zambian students in every course, as the community was large and consisted especially of Zambians friars, and only a few students came from South Korea. Mostly the Zambian students were Bemba, one of the seventy ethnic groups in the country. These groups coexist in peace since Zambian independence from England, in 1964.

An aspect which may help to better explain the context of the philosophical-theological Institute, which is typical in pontifical universities, is that the religious training is often primary for the students and frequently guides them in deciding the priorities of their daily life. Therefore, it also influences their choices in being involved in the study, and, in particular for this research, in my teaching proposal.

The students constantly measure themselves in terms of time, which they have to negotiate with their religious community. Some of them, in fact, have responsibility for some of the community's daily needs (such as cooking and cleaning), in addition to their religious training and providing parish services during afternoons and week-ends.

Furthermore, some communities' directors consider the study secondary to the students' religious training, as they feel it subtracts time otherwise available for services, prayers, and community programs. Therefore, many students frequently may study only after dinner or at dawn.

In addition to the cultural variety, another element which enriches the potential for dialogue at the Institute is the ecclesiastical diversity among the students and the teachers, who are mainly Italian religious, in particular, nuns, friars and priests, with a small number of lay teachers. They come from different orders and congregations of the Catholic Church, for instance there are Franciscan and Augustinian friars, Benedictine monks, Josephite religious, and diocesans priests. This implies a diverse expression of their charisma, thus a variety in the ways of communicating and sharing their religious choice of life.

Added to the religious students, at the Italian pontifical universities there usually are lay students, mainly Italian, who are interested in the philosophical program of study, or intend to teach Catholic religion at the primary or secondary school levels, which, in Italy, requires a theological bachelor's degree.

At the philosophical-theological Institute there are lay students as well, generally women, sometimes also mature, who often have a family, or are working while students.

Therefore, for them also the time dedicated to study has to be negotiated, in their case with their family and their job. They usually have little knowledge of their religious colleagues' culture, choice of life and daily life, and in turn, the religious students know little of the lay students' choice of life and job. This implies a reciprocal effort to discover each other, which, often, allows the students to overcome their stereotypes and prejudices. During these years, these connections gave rise to a familiar context among the students and with the professors. For instance, some religious students deepen the knowledge of their peers' congregations and orders, or the lay students visit the religious communities, or participate in the main steps of the students' religious training. At the same time, some religious students meet their colleagues' families, often they become friends, and remain in touch also when the program of study is completed.

The cultural and ecclesiastical richness, and the diversity in choices of life among the students, add to the characteristics common to every class: the students' personal history, education, interest in the study and, especially in this research, their attentiveness to meeting the other, as a colleague or as a teacher. The students' immediate space of relationship, in fact, is the class. The Institute is their primal common ground, as the study provides the occasion for attending the courses, for meeting, and also for participating in my teaching proposal. They rapidly establish a brotherhood and friendship which sometimes remains when they complete their course of study and return to their native countries.

In this dissertation, I focus especially on the teaching experiences documented during my doctoral study, thus, between 2014 and 2016, although I refer to the whole activity, since my preliminary research, between 2008 and 2013, is related to my current teaching.

In particular, I describe the courses I taught during the academic year 2014-2015 for the philosophical course, and the philosophical-theological seminar at the first year of the theological bachelor's degree.

The course for the philosophical bachelor's degree that year was attended by 16 students from five countries: Brazil, Poland, the Philippines, Zambia and Italy. There were 12 students in the seminar for the theological bachelor's degree and they came from: Argentina, Brazil, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Nigeria, Poland, South Korea and Italy. Mostly

were starting their training as priests and friars, and there were Franciscans, Benedictines, Augustinians, Josephites, and diocesans. In both classes there also were lay students, who were women, four at the philosophical class, and two at the theological one. All of them were married, and three of them were working students.

The students were in a range of 23 to 36 years old.

The courses at the Institute are usually conducted in Italian, which is the common language for all the universities of Christian theology in Italy. I also included authors from the students' native cultures, when possible, and content in the official languages spoken their countries, such as English, French, Portuguese, Polish and Spanish. I asked the Italian students, who already knew one of these languages, to study these readings, and to share what they learned with their peers who read authors from different cultures and in a non-native language.

## 2.2.2 The CSR teaching experience

The CSR teaching experience draws on courses, schools, and seminars addressed to young scientists: doctoral students, post-doctoral fellows, and professionals from public or private research institutes, of different fields in the "natural", "social", and "human" sciences.

This is a postgraduate teaching offering, which aims to provide theoretical and practical instructions on how to communicate one's own research within the international academic community. Therefore, it is not focused on communication of science for the general public, but on written and oral communication of research for and among scientists. These notions are generally little known by the young researchers, as similar training is not provided during their doctoral program in several universities of Southern and Eastern Europe, and Central and Southern America, a fact which these teachers and young researchers have confirmed over the years.

I present this context by providing the chronological order of the activities I developed over the years, to better understand the CSR teaching experience and the connections among the courses, the schools, and the seminars.

Between 2003 and 2005, I proposed seminars two-hours in length dedicated to introducing a few topics on the communication of scientific research, but they were an initial and occasional aspect of my teaching. I started to significantly developed the CSR

teaching offering in 2007, with the first course. Since then, I have been teaching courses at the invitation of several Italian universities, in particular, the Universities of Bari, Brescia, Milan, and Viterbo. Since 2014, I have started to teach these courses also at the University of West Bohemia of Pilsen (Czech Republic).

The CSR *courses* consist of a twenty-hour design, which I teach in four days of five-hours lessons, twice a week across two weeks, or in two close months. They are generally reserved for the PhD students of the doctoral school which invites me.

The CSR *schools* are organized entirely by me, and are held in an Italian location usually far from town. This offering, in fact, is an intense experience: three to five days, during which the participants live and study together. Although I propose the same content of the course, with six to eight hours per day, this design allows participants to share the whole day and to especially focus on communication of scientific research, for almost one week. For this reason, from the beginning, in 2009, I have called this offering a "school" instead of a "course" (Mangano, 2013a).

Furthermore, unlike the courses, the schools are open to young scientists drawn from different universities and towns. This implies a disciplinary diversity which is peculiar to this proposal and adds to the cultural variety.

The CSR *seminars* which I consider in this study refer to the teaching experiences which I have been collecting since 2012 at the invitation of Italian and Czech universities. They are a different proposal from the courses and the schools, as they aim to introduce the main topics of communication of scientific research and to present the CSR teaching proposal. They generally consist in a few hours of lecture, which briefly outlines the approach and the program of the CSR teaching, and it is usually reserved for the young researchers of the university which invites me.

As previously mentioned, in this dissertation I will especially focus on the experiences collected between 2014 and 2016, although I refer to the whole teaching activity. In particular, I examine the CSR courses and seminars which I taught at the Universities of Milan and West Bohemia, and the three summer schools I held between 2014 and 2016.

The teaching experiences at the University of Milan include: two courses for the PhD students of the doctoral schools in molecular medicine (2014 and 2016), and in pharmaceutical and biochemical sciences (2015 and 2016); and a two-hour seminar to promote the CSR offering (2016).

The teaching experiences at the University of West Bohemia included: a course for the teachers of the Institute of applied language studies (2014), two courses for PhD students of different disciplines (2014 and 2015), and a one-day seminar, of nine hours, for post-doctoral fellows of different disciplines and universities of Czech Republic (2016).

There usually is broad disciplinary diversity among the young researchers who attend CSR experiences. During these three years, for instance, we crossed, in each class, several scientific disciplines, such as physics, genetics, pharmacology, chemistry (organic and biological), oncology, cellular biology, bioinformatics and biotechnology.

In the teaching experiences at the University of West Bohemia this diversity also included the "social" and the "human" sciences: the participants, in fact, drew from scientific (biotechnologists of different areas of molecular biology, engineers of diverse fields), social (economics and English literature), and human (anthropology and Medieval history) fields.

CSR teaching experiences in Italy were attended by Italian young scientists, and were conducted in Italian. One course in Milan was held in Italian and in English, as there was a PhD student from Iran who was learning Italian, and I involved all the class in the translation of the content in English.

Most of the participants to the activities in Bohemia were Czech, with the exception of some researchers enrolled in the first course, who came from Russia, Israel, and United Kingdom, and one PhD student from Belarus who attended the second one. The teaching experiences at the University of Bohemia were conducted in English.

The average age of the participants was between 25 and 35 years old, and they were completing their doctoral studies. There also were younger students pursuing the master's degree, and more mature participants, the teachers of language who attended the first course in the Czech Republic.

## 2.3 Teaching materials with a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach

Since the beginning of my teaching activity, either at the philosophical-theological Institute, or in CSR experiences, I have been proposing to the students the same approach to dialogue, as a space of relationship based on a human ground, which does not depend on specific cultures and disciplines, but instead is among, across and beyond them.

The teaching materials which I developed during these years served as basis for introducing the students to this perspective. They may understand it while they apply it, and, at the same time, when they study the content, they also become aware of this proposal.

This implies a theoretical and practical approach to this teaching proposal for the students, as it will be described in the next sections, and will be deepened in chapter 3 and 4.

In particular, in this approach the term "practical" recalls "practical theory", a kind of communication theory proposed by Vernon E. Cronen, U.S. scholar of communication (Cronen, 2000). In his perspective, this approach "offers principles informed by engagement in the details of lived experience that facilitate joining with others to produce change" (Cronen, 2000, p.14). The "lived experiences" which I describe in this study are those related to this teaching, thus to the students. In particular, in chapter 3, I will analyze these experiences and their meaning, while in chapter 4 I will present the implications of them, to provide support for the possible "change" that these experiences may produce.

As previously noted, the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue is rarely investigated (section 1.4), therefore, at the moment, I did not find similar courses documented in the published literature, nor similar teaching materials. Therefore, I developed them on my own, for each course and for the two contexts, and in the following sections I describe them in detail. These materials have a similar organization between the two contexts, as they are based on the same teaching transcultural and transdisciplinary approach.

I illustrate in particular the content, which I propose in the form of keywords, and the teaching tools, related to the lecture notes, the courses' evaluation questionnaire, and the "transcultural evaluation criteria", which I developed for the assessment of the students at the philosophical-theological Institute.

## 2.3.1 Content at the philosophical-theological Institute

I will briefly mention the keywords I used in the course at the preliminary year, between 2008 and 2013, as some of them are present also in the course at the philosophical bachelor's degree, and in the seminar at the theological bachelor's degree. As will be described in the genesis of the teaching proposal at the philosophical-theological Institute (section 3.2.1), these courses are related, as they developed from the same perspective.

I firstly introduced the terms "dialogue", "culture", "civilisation" and "intercultural dialogue", and I concisely referred to the definitions proposed in chapter 1 (section 1.2). Then, I suggested to the students to overcome the use of general terms like "Western", "Eastern", "African", or "American". I also briefly introduced the sense of "Eurocentrism" and "orientalism" (section 1.2.1). Afterward, I presented the terms "person" and "individual", which are basic in the introduction to Anglo-European philosophy and to Christian theology.

In particular, the Latin *persona* originally indicated the mask of wood or clay worn by the actors in later Roman theatre, which is common also to the ones still used in many cultures during the actors' performance. This term was probably associated with the verb *personare,* which means "to sound through", as the actors' masks amplified their voices. From the original sense of "personage, and a part in a drama", it developed to the modern and current "human being, or assumed character".

The Latin *individuum* initially meant "an atom, indivisible particle", and was used to indicate "a single human being" as opposed to a group. I proposed to the class to compare these terms in the students' cultural perspectives.

Then, I introduced the meaning of the term "other", and the difference between the Latin *alius* ("among many") and *alter* ("between two"). I concluded with two keywords, "*polis"* and "city-State", which were common in ancient Greece, Phoenicia, Pre-Columbian societies, and Eastern Africa. These terms are, therefore, models of the primal social organization which may be understood by the students of almost every culture.


**2.3.1a For the philosophical bachelor's degree**

I introduce the terms "dialogue", "culture" and "civilisation" in the first lesson of the philosophical class as well, and I propose to use the name of a country or a continent, instead of the general terms "Western", "Eastern", "African", "American". These keywords should be familiar to the students who attended the course at the preliminary year.

Then, I dedicate two lessons to present the historical and theoretical basis of transdisciplinarity, as I described in the section 1.3, thus the keywords are: "multidisciplinarity", "interdisciplinarity", "complexity", and "transcultural dialogue".

Afterwards, I present to the class the outline of the course, the transcultural and

transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue, and the intent to apply this perspective to the analysis of three keywords, serving as basis for the course: "otherness", "hospitality" and "reciprocity".

These terms are related, and may be considered three steps towards the discovery of the other, in particular, of the relation with the other. I introduce them by taking inspiration from three contemporary philosophers who investigated their meaning: Emmanuel Lévinas in relation to "otherness", Jacques Derrida to "hospitality", and Martin Buber to "reciprocity".

I dedicate one lesson to each keyword.

In particular, the lecture on "otherness" is usually introduced through a brief overview of the encounter with the other in the history of mankind: millennia of conflicts, conquests, slavery and exploitation of people and resources seem to guide it. Thus, the history of the meeting with the other, reveals, actually, a story of "mismeeting" (Friedman, 1988, p. 5), and a plot of lights and shadows, among and across the centuries and the cultures.

Then, I focus on the meaning of "meeting the face of the other" (Lévinas, 1969), and the need for a "face-to-face encounter" as the answer to the other's call. This answer, according to Lévinas, is mediated by dialogue in terms of "ethics" and "responsibility", as in Buber's perspective (section 1.2.2).

In the lecture dedicated to "hospitality", I generally present an overview of the evolution of this term's meaning, starting from the ancient Greek and Latin senses of "hospitality", derived from the original *hospes*, which literally indicates "whoever feeds the foreigner for friendship". Thus, "hospitality" refers to "the host" (in Latin *pes*) who takes care to "the guest" (in Latin *hos,* in ancient Greek *xenos*). This original meaning of closeness towards the foreigner, evolves during the centuries in the opposite sense, and "the guest" (*hos* and *xenos*) becomes "the diverse" and the "stranger", who may be dangerous and hostile (it has, in fact, the same original root, *hos*), thus "the enemy".

I concisely introduce the essay *Of Hospitality* by Jacques Derrida, derived from some seminars which he held in Paris in 1996 (Derrida, 2000). This essay consists of two lectures, "Foreigner question" and "Step of hospitality", in which Derrida wonders if it is possible "to give hospitality" to the "host" and the "guest", and how do we choose to meet "the other" - foreigner, guest or host - as a basic part of our existence. He works on the words, he deconstructs and reconstructs them, often in different languages, to investigate

and to deepen their sense. His "response" to "the invitation" by Anne Dufourmantelle, French philosopher and psychoanalyst, to talk about hospitality, from which this essay takes inspiration, actually, opens to new questions, "on" the foreigner and "from" the foreigner (Derrida, 2000). The Latin sense of *extraneus,* from which "stranger" and "foreigner" derive, in fact, literally means "the one arrived from outside". For this reason, according to Derrida, the stranger suggests the question on hospitality: one's own choice to make (or not) a "step of hospitality" towards the other (Derrida, 2000).

The lesson dedicated to the third keyword, "reciprocity", presents Buber's perspective, and introduces the terms "relationship", "encounter", and the "I-Thou relationship". I refer to the essay *I and Thou* (Buber, 1937), and I concisely present it to the students, as described in section 1.1.

I generally conclude all my lessons, either at the philosophical-theological Institute, or in CSR experiences, with a lesson entitled "non-conclusions", as the dialogue is not supposed to finish at the end of the course or after the exam. For this reason, in the last lecture I generally propose an additional keyword which recalls the previous ones, and provides further traces to the students.

In the final lesson at the philosophical class, I generally propose the keywords "culture of complexity" and "culture of difference", which respectively reference transdisciplinarity (section 1.4) and the essay by Derrida (Derrida, 2000).

These terms indicate an existential condition of exodus from ourselves, which implies rethinking and reshaping our perspectives, to deeply know ourselves (Baccarini, 1994).

We may truly discover who we are through the other (Derrida, 2000), thus we are at the mercy of the her/him (Levinas 1983; Derrida, 2000). This awareness provokes an "interior disorientation", which makes us "nomad" (Baccarini, 2002, p. 199), thus dimming[21], as we are oriented towards the other.

Lévinas describes this paradoxical condition by referring to Ulysses and Abraham: Ulysses completes his long journey by returning home, while Abraham chooses to leave his guarantees and country for an unknown destination (Lévinas, 1983). According to this perspective, Abraham (we might say everyone) finds his existential condition by losing

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[21] As I translated these expressions from Italian, I quote the original: *essere in balia dell'altro* (at the mercy of the her/him), *spaesamento interiore* (interior disorientation), *nomadi* (nomad, and nomad mentality), and *erranti* (dimming).

it, and by choosing a "nomad mentality and attitude"[22] (Baccarini, 2002, p. 199). This endless journey towards the other, is, actually, a homecoming towards ourselves (Lévinas, 1983).


### *Keywords by native authors*

Across these years, I complemented these elements with the contributions of authors from the students' native cultures, or close. They are scholars who investigated topics similar to the ones I proposed, especially related to otherness and hospitality. Their perspective enriches the meaning of the keywords proposed, and allow the students from those countries to share their cultural point of view on these topics.

I included these authors' contribution in the list of keywords, as I had students of similar provenance almost in every course of the philosophical class. In particular, I referred to authors from Central and Southern Africa (for the students from Zambia), Central and South America (for the ones from Dominican Republic, Haiti, Brazil and Peru), Central and Eastern Asia (for the students from China, India, the Philippines and South Korea) and Eastern Europe (for the Polish students).

I generally propose bibliography on the Southern African cultures in English and in Italian.

In particular, I refer to the term "African thinking" (Nkafu Nkemnkia, 1999) instead of "African philosophy", as it better explains the original sense of the traditional values of the Central and Southern African cultures. Even if the debate on these terms is still open among some native scholars (Van der Merwe, 2000), in fact, the phrase "African thinking" aims to enhance the traditional values, centred on life. In this view, life is based on an inborn religious sense, which founds the human existence in the community and in the relationship with the other. For this reason, some native scholars associate "African thinking" to the so-called "African *vitalogy*", a neologism which indicates "the study of life" (in Italian, "life" is *vita*, and this meaning is kept also in its English translation) (Nkafu Nkemnkia, 1999).

The authors I propose are politicians, writers and thinkers, who centred their contribution on the social issues of their countries, and their perspective is based on the recovery of traditional values, common to the ancient Central and Southern African cultures.

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[22] This expression in Italian is *mentalità nomade*.

Among them is Kenneth Kaunda, Zambian politician and first President of Zambia, who promoted "African humanism" (Kaunda, 1967). This term was inspired by Anglo-European socialism and adapted to "African" traditional values, which, according to Kaunda, needed to be recovered to really promote the person's centrality. In his perspective, "African humanism" aims to defend the dignity, the welfare and the development of the community (Kaunda, 1967).

Also, we discuss the contribution of Julius Nyerere, Tanzanian politician and first President of Tanzania, who referred to "African socialism". His perspective enhanced the traditional values of community, solidarity and reciprocity, with the Swahili term "*ujamaa*", which indicates the "extended family", and "family hood" (Nyerere, 1968).

Therefore, his definition of "African socialism" is focused on the sharing of goods, on their equal distribution within the community, and in social justice. This community property state brings to a "universal brotherhood" and the original "African" society may be a model for it (Nyerere, 1968).

Furthermore, I introduce a few notes on John Mbiti, Kenyan thinker, writer, and Anglican priest, whose contribution to "African thinking" is focused on the religious sense, which he suggests is innate in all the original "African cultures" and defines their identity. In his perspective, "African thinking" relies on the attitude, the logic and the way in which this group of people think, live and talk, in all the circumstances of their life. As their behaviours are founded on religion, the "African meaning of life" is based on the religious sense, as well as more abstract thinking (Mbiti, 1969).

I also propose the contribution by Placide Tempels, although European, as he spent almost thirty years in The Republic of Congo as a Belgian Catholic missionary. He is the first European to investigate the origin of "African thinking", and he translated some terms from the original Bantu language into French. He proposed "Bantu philosophy", as he called it, which derived from the ancient culture of many Central and Southern African countries (Tempels, 1959).

A bridge between "African thinking" and some Central American authors is on the concept of "*Négritude*", a neologism attributed to Aimé Césaire, Martinican writer and politician (Nkafu Nkemnkia, 1999). This term inspired some "African" intellectuals using the French language around the 1930s, who founded the "*Négritude*" Movement in France. Their intent was to recover the common cultural, social, economic and political

values of black Africa, and to reject the cultural predominance of France. In Césaire's usage this call to the origins refers to all the "African" people, thus including also the North Africa and the Caribbean Islands that use the French language.

In addition to Césaire, another francophone Caribbean author I include is Édouard Glissant, Antillean writer and poet, who investigated the concept of "creoleness". Like *Négritude*, "creoleness" is more than a definition, it is an attitude, according to Glissant, as it implies a change of perspective on human existence, based on the encounter with the other. This meeting continuously modifies ourselves, thus each of us is actually "creole", or "*métis*", from the French term *métissage*, which indicates mixed race. "Creoleness", therefore, defines a cultural identity (Ormerod, 1998), not only the condition due to an increasing multicultural society. *Creolité*, the French term for "creoliness", is exalted (Bernabé, Chamoiseau, & Confiant, 1990), together with "diversity" and "relationship", which become possible keys to transform current societies (Glissant, 1998).

The bibliography on Caribbean authors I propose is usually in English, French and Italian. I also suggest a contribution by Henry Grégoire, French priest and politician of XVIII century, who was a leader of the French Revolution and fought in defence of racial equality and the abolition of slavery. He used to be a member of the National French Assembly, and addressed a letter to the black citizens of Saint-Domingue (a French colony in the Caribbean), offering an invitation to rethink their relationship with France, inspired by the values of forgiveness and reconciliation (Grégorie, 2006). This article is available in English and in Italian.

Regarding the East Asian cultures, I generally include an introduction to Confucianism, which is the original philosophy common to most "Eastern" countries, and from which the traditional "Asian values" derive. They include: the idea of life centred on social harmony, mutual respect, familiar and collective relationships, work and sobriety, trust in the civil and political institutions which regulate these relationships and grant social order.

I refer to the current debate on the so-called "Asian values" (Erh-Soon Tay, 2002; Sen, 1998), a broad definition, which risks becoming anachronistic, as the terms "Eastern" and "Western" already have. I also assign the article "Human Rights and the Westernizing Illusion" by Amartya Sen, Indian economist and philosopher, to introduce the Indian students to this debate. These sources are available in Italian and English.

For the Latin American cultures using Spanish language, I refer to an article on the intercultural perspective on education, proposed by some Peruvian scholars in the social sciences: "Interculturalidad y educación en el Perú" [Interculturality and education in Peru] (Zúñiga Castillo & Ansión Mallet, 1997). I also refer to a contribution describing a Mexican philosopher, Mariflor Aguilar Rivero, who investigated otherness in relation to dialogue (Mendoza, 2005). Rivero took inspiration from the hermeneutical perspective of Hans-Georg Gadamer, and proposes dialogue as the key for interpretation of otherness, as a "condition of otherness" (*condición de alteridad*) (Mendoza, 2005[23]), therefore also a condition "for" it. Thus, "intercultural perspective on education" and "dialogue as a condition of/for otherness" are the keywords related to these cultures.

For the Latin American cultures using the Portuguese language, I present an attempt to define otherness in current multicultural Brazilian society, taking inspiration from an article on the debate on human rights in Portuguese, "Direitos (e) humanos no Brasil contemporâneo [Human rights in contemporary Brazil]" (Malaguti Batista, 2008).

For the Polish sources, I usually refer to two native authors, who investigated otherness and took inspiration from Emmanuel Lévinas: Józef Tischner, phenomenologist, Catholic priest and writer, and Ryszard Kapuściński, writer and journalist, who spent thirty years in Africa as a war reporter.

Tischner considers the reality, thus the world, as the stage of a drama, in which the encounter among human persons takes place (Górzna, 2015, drawing on the much earlier work of Canadian sociologist Erving Goffman, using the metaphor of drama as a way to understand human interactions). In his "philosophy of drama", Tischner places two aspects as central, hope and trust, since they give sense to human existence (Adamczyk, 2006, 2009). Thus, "hope", "trust" and "existence as a drama" are the keywords related to his contribution, which I generally offer to the class in Italian and in Polish.

Furthermore, I propose a volume by Kapuściński which collects his contributions on "otherness" written between 1990 and 2004. It is in Italian, but I found some extracts also in Polish.

Finally, I refer to a contribution by Pawel Florenskij, Russian Orthodox priest, philosopher and scientist, who was imprisoned during the communist period for his defence of Russian Orthodox theology. After years of prison and detention in the labour

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[23] It is an online source, and there are no page numbers.

camps, he was executed. I propose, in particular, his essay *Friendship* (Florenskij, 2013), which describes friendship as the highest and purest form of knowledge, of the other and the self. Florenskij refers especially to Christian love, which he continued to defend even in prison. This text is in Italian.


**2.3.1b For the theological bachelor's degree**

At the philosophical-theological seminar, I propose a different theme every year, and the topic is related to aspects of existence which depend neither on cultures or disciplines, nor on faith or religion. They belong to the human person, therefore are close to what the students experience every day and will probably apply in their religious ministry, in addition to their studies.

These themes become the seminar's main keywords, and the different cultural and disciplinary perspectives will help to better define their sense. The proposal of the seminar, in fact, aims to allow a deeper understanding of these terms, and to improve the students' awareness rather than suggesting a solution or an answer to these issues. The students may find the answer(s) on their own, not necessarily at the end of the seminar, and the presence of several speakers, drawn from different cultures, disciplines and choices of life, may help them in this understanding.

I present this overview at the first lesson, when I introduce the topic, the program and the structure of the seminar.

As many students earned their philosophical bachelor's degree in other towns or countries, and so did not attend my philosophical course, I usually dedicate one lesson to briefly introduce my teaching outline, the basic keywords related to the transdisciplinary methodology and to transcultural dialogue. Then, I describe the seminar's theme, and the keywords related to it.

I generally invite scholars from different fields of philosophy or theology to present their disciplinary and cultural perspective.

In my early experience, I proposed seminars dedicated to: "Global crisis, an interdisciplinary and intercultural approach" (2010-2011), and "Paths among, across, among and beyond cultures and disciplines" (2013-2014).

The former focused on four perspectives of the term "crisis", introduced from its ancient Greek etymology (section 1.1.1.1): social (the economic and political global crisis),

environmental (the ecological crisis), philosophical (the crisis of the sense of beauty) and religious (the crisis of religious sense, especially in Christianity). There were three speakers, in addition to me, all Italian and colleagues at the Institute, two of contemporary philosophy and one of spiritual theology, in particular the theology of the Cross, which takes inspiration from the original contribution by Martin Luther. He also had a background in interreligious dialogue, especially Jewish-Christian. Three of us were lay, and the fourth was a priest.

The second seminar centered on two perspectives, sociological and intercultural, serving as a basis for the encounter with the other. Some keywords were close to those ones proposed in the course at the philosophical bachelors' degree: "culture(s)" (in particular in multicultural and intercultural societies), "the other" (especially the diverse, the foreigner, the host and the guest), "the space(s) of relationship" (mainly the encounter and the conflict, the relationship and the reciprocity), and "complexity" (in particular an approach to dialogue across, among and beyond cultures and disciplines). I conducted the whole seminar, from the preparation to the final exam, with an Italian religious colleague from the Institute, who had a combined background in moral theology and sociology.

The theme I proposed for the seminar in the academic year 2014-2015 was: "An interdisciplinary and intercultural approach to suffering". It was dedicated to deepen the existential, theological and spiritual meaning of suffering, from transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives. I involved two colleagues from theology, one a scholar of biblical theology, and the other a scholar of spiritual theology (the latter was the same one I invited to the seminar of 2010-2011). The first speaker focused on a biblical perspective on suffering, the second on the meaning of going beyond suffering, by following the example of Jesus. The third contribution came from a colleague with a combined background, in contemporary philosophy and pastoral theology thus, he discussed the application of the study of religion in the context of Christian Church ministry. These colleagues were Italian and religious: the first one was a consecrated woman, the other two were priests from different congregations.

As at the philosophical class, I dedicate the seminar's last lecture to "non-conclusions", and I propose to the students a final keyword. As we referred to the common effort of walking through suffering (but also through crisis, conflict, or diversity), the keyword I usually propose is "time".

I present it using the ancient Greek etymology, which had three meanings for time: *aion*, *chronos* and *kairos.* In Greek mythology, these terms were related to the corresponding Greek gods, which Hesiod presents in his poem *Theogony* (Hesiod, 2004). Aion was the unchangeable god of eternity, and he indicated time in the sense of life's duration, afterworld, and eternity; Chronos was the god of time in the sequential dimension of past, present and future, days (weeks, months, years), and day (hours, minutes and seconds); Kairos was the god of the right moment, and indicates an opportune and indeterminate time in which an event may happen.

In the languages derived from the ancient Greek, these three meanings have been lost, with the exception of *chronos*, which indicates the quantitative aspect, from which the Anglo-European idea of time derived and thus this term is currently the most common.

*Chronos* denotes the time which we presume to dominate or, otherwise, which we suffer, as symbolized by the ancient Greek god in mythology.

*Kairos*, a term which has no correspondent in the current languages derived from the ancient Greek, suggests the opportune moment, the time which we choose. It refers to the qualitative sense, which becomes, or may become, an opportunity. It is unpredictable, undetectable, and fortuitous, as is the encounter and the relationship with the other (section 1.1).

We may choose with which condition of time we intend to live, and more broadly, we decide if what happens in our existence (including, therefore, suffering, crisis, conflict, or diversity) is, and may be, an opportunity, thus a grace, or a disgrace. Our choice makes the difference in trying to live, or to survive, suffering (and crisis, conflict, or diversity), and to transcend it, in the sense of going across and beyond it.

## 2.3.2 Content of CSR teaching experiences

In CSR courses and schools, I propose the same content, which provides the basic notions of semiotics applied to scientific research. In particular, I present the material in three lessons: the first one introduces the essentials of semiotics, the second and the third lectures are focused on text construction, respectively written and oral.

These elements take inspiration from the lectures on the fundamentals of communication theory proposed in a postgraduate course on communication of science which I attended in 2000-2001 at the University of Milan. They were taught by Silvano Petrosino, Italian

philosopher who teaches theories of communication and philosophy of communication at the Catholic University of Milan and Piacenza. During my initial teaching experience at the philosophical-theological Institute, I discovered that this professor translated some works by Derrida and Lévinas into Italian. Therefore, the lecture notes which I developed also were inspired by this professor's studies on the value of the other and the implications for communication theory.

At the beginning of the CSR teaching experience, I collected these contents in a small volume, which I propose to the young researchers who attend my courses, entitled *Manuale di comunicazione della ricerca scientifica* [Handbook of Communication of Scientific Research]. I published it in Italian in 2008 and in Spanish in 2009, and I enriched it in the second edition, in 2013, which contains the evidences emerged during the initial research on this approach to teaching (Mangano, 2013a).

In the description of the CSR lectures, therefore, I also refer to this source.


*First lecture*

The first lecture introduces the fundamentals of semiotics through the definitions of the term "communication" and the verbs "to communicate", "to educate" and "to seduce" (Petrosino, 2008). I briefly outline the semantic evolution of the verb "to communicate": from the original Latin *communis,* derived from *cum munus*, which indicated the "sharing of a task" (*munus* as "task"), to the Medieval and modern significance of "to participate", in the sense of "to make common", to "share". Then, I present the usage of the last century, which evolves in relation to the "transmission" of a message, which is participated, thus "put in common".

This overview introduces the students to the complexity of this meaning, as it is related to the evolution of society in many countries. This also implies to introduce them to the sense of the semantics, and to the relationship between the sign and its significance, terms which are virtually unknown for mostly students.

One example of this complexity is the Latin term *communis,* which is the original root of the terms "community", "communication" (and "to communicate") and "common". It refers to *cum munus* and to *cum moenia* (Cheli, 2004, p. 14). *Munus*, and its plural *munia,* is a polysemic term. The original etymology, in fact, indicated the sharing of tasks (*munia*), which created bonds (*munia*) among people, and implied a reciprocal effort to

defend one's own goods (*munia*), through the building of the walls (*moenia*, indicating "barrier, obstacle") which used to protect the town. Furthermore, *munus* originally also indicated "the gift", which established the bond of reciprocal protection and aid, and implied an exchange. Therefore, the original sense referred to reciprocity, at the basis of the term "community", thus, a group of people who have goods and gifts to exchange, with the aim to enhance their bond of mutual protection.

The etymology of the verb "to communicate" maintains the twofold sense derived from *munus* and *moenia* in its contemporary usage. In particular, it indicates either "to put in common", thus to offer a gift (*munus*) to the other, or "to build a defence" (*moenia*), hence, to protect the message rather than to share it. These antithetic meanings coexist, not only in communication of scientific research, but in daily experience of human communication. As communicators, the students should make the choice between a communication as a "gift", or as a "barrier" to the other.

The other two basic verbs of communication which I present are "to educate" and "to seduce". They have the same Latin root, *ducere*, with two different prefixes, *ex* and *se*: *ex ducere* means "to bring out something (information, content, but also values, ideals) from someone" (the one who is educated). Hence, education differs from communication, as it requires to the educator to put something inside the students, or to search what it is already inside of them, before bringing it out. I mention to the students just a few introductory notes on Buber's perspective on education (section 1.2.2).

*Se ducere* means "to lead away", in the sense of "drawing away", "making a change in one's direction", or to persuade the other, from which the contemporary usage derives: "to attract", "to engage".

In the perspective of semiotics which I propose, communication may be considered the balance between education and seduction (Cacciari & Petrosino, 2009), a bridge between them. Therefore, the message may be a *munus* or a *moenia*, may educate or seduce the receiver of the message, the other. The communicator makes this balance, and establishes the bridge between education and seduction.

These three verbs are central in the CSR teaching plan and allow the students to understand the second part of the lecture, dedicated to the "competences" of communication, the "text construction" and the "strategy" of communication.

I briefly refer to the basic model of the theory of communication proposed in 1949 by the U.S. mathematicians Warren Weaver and Claude Elwood Shannon (Weaver and Shannon, 1963) to introduce the original notion of communication as a transmission of the message from the sender to the receiver. I especially focus on the communication of scientific research, and the transmission of the message among scholars, thus, within the academic context. Therefore, since beginning the CSR teaching experience, I have adapted this basic model to this context and I propose to the students to analyze and to enrich my adjustments with their comments.

Then, I introduce the notions of "competences" in communication, which refer to three branches of semiotics and I explain them in relation to CSR: "syntactics", "semantics", and "pragmatics".

The first refers to the rules that order the combination of the words to form phrases and sentences; in CSR this competence is also related to the experimental steps of research, thus we may talk about a "syntactics of data and numbers".

"Semantics" is focused on the relationship between the signs and their meanings, thus, every message able to communicate information, especially numbers, data, words, in the CSR context.

"Pragmatics" is related to the social use of signs, and indicates why a language is used and how. I focus, in particular, on two questions to describe this competence in the CSR context: to whom I am communicating (writing or talking), and who is the other for me, in other words, who is the receiver for the sender of the message? Then, I briefly introduce the term "otherness", without providing the details I generally propose in the course of transcultural dialogue, as the PhD students' background is typically broad, and often only a few of them pursued a philosophical program of study during the high school.

These two questions, generally, help the students to realize that CSR teaching is based on *why* and *to whom* to communicate, before than *how* to do it. I also make them aware that the value of the other, or, what the other means for the sender of the message, may orient their communication of scientific research. Each of them, as communicator, in fact, is requested to make a choice on considering her/his research and the written and oral texts as an opportunity for encountering the other. This indication introduces the students to the sense of the term "text", and to the "text construction". It refers, in particular, to the written and to the oral message, as the etymologic sense of the Latin *textum*, which

indicates the weave, thus the intertwining of the words. Therefore, the text is the realization of communication through and with the word.

In this basic introduction to semiotics, I describe three steps of the "text construction" taking inspiration from *Rhetoric* by Aristotle: *inventio, dispositio* and *elocutio* (Aristotle, 1924). The first one refers to "the search for things to say", as *invenire* in Latin means "to find". The second step is centred on "the act of organizing what we found", from *disporre,* which indicates "to put in order"; and the third is related to "the choice of the style to communicate what we have put in order", from *elocutio* which signifies the "style", thus the way to express the written and oral message.

These three steps are central for understanding the later lectures dedicated to the construction of the written text (the second one) and of the oral text (the third one). I describe them in CSR context as the phases of the students' research, in addition to the steps of their communication. The first step, *inventio*, corresponds to the experimental phase of the research. Whatever is the field of study, in fact, its requirement is to search and to find, to have something to communicate as primal aim. Therefore, "the things to say" are the products of research, specifically, what we observed and found.

The second step, *dispositio*, is related to ordering what we found, therefore planning what we intend to say (to write and to present), which kind of message the sender proposes to the receiver. The order is related to the "pragmatics" of communication, the third competence, thus to the question on who is the other/the receiver for us. The second step of "text construction" is the most important among the three in the CSR teaching. Thus, I usually dedicate more time to it, almost half of the second lecture. Before writing or presenting a text, in fact, the students should become aware that it is necessary to have something to communicate, but also to have understood it. The *dispositio* is related with clearness in mind, and, consequently, in the text.

The third step, *elocutio*, refers to "the style" of communication and answers the question: how are we going to write or to talk? It recalls the questions *why* and *to whom* we communicate and introduces the last part of this lecture, dedicated to "the communication strategy".

The term "strategy" indicates the aspects necessary for organizing a written and oral text, on the basis on two aims: "to move" and "to convince". These additional verbs conclude

the list of the keywords introduced in the first lecture, and around which the CSR program is centered.

"To move" means "to touch", from its Latin etymologic sense of *movere,* thus to stir the receiver. This communication strategy addresses to emotions more than to target's mind. It points to make the other (the receiver of the message) obedient and yielding, and it recalls the meaning of the verbs "to educate" and "to seduce".

The verb "to convince", still from its original meaning, *cum vincere*, literally indicates "to win with", therefore, it implies to make the other aware of the message. This intent takes time, as it is addressed to mind rather than to emotions. This strategy refers to the abilities of the sender, such as loyalty, honesty, humility, and to the capacity of the receiver to understand the message and to trust the sender. For this reason, it refers to comprehension, and recalls the meaning of the verb "to communicate", and the balance between education and seduction which the communication aims to negotiate.

I conclude this lecture by asking the class if the communication strategy may be also applied in the communication of scientific research and how, in their opinions. This dialogue, generally, allows them to summarize the themes proposed during the lesson and introduces the topics of the following lecture.


*Second lecture*

The second lecture is dedicated to the construction of the written text, and I focus on the steps of *dispositio* and *elocutio*. The *inventio*, in fact, is related to each student's research, thus, to the experimental step, which is preliminary to the communication of their study, hence, we do not focus on it.

I refer in particular to the *Book III* of Aristotle's *Rhetoric* for introducing the four steps of *dispositio*, which may be also applied to an academic written text: 1) lead (in Latin, *incipit*); 2) description of what we made (in Latin, *narratio*); 3) demonstration of what we saw (in Latin, *confirmatio*); 4) conclusion (in Latin, *epilogo*) (Aristotle, 1924[24], chapters 13-19).

I describe each of them, by proposing to the class to find the correspondence, when possible, between these four steps proposed by Aristotle and the standard sections of a scientific paper, which are generally indicated as: 1) title, author/s, institutional

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[24] This reference is an online source, and there are no page numbers, but the chapters are indicated, so I report them.

affiliation; 2) abstract; 3) aims, purpose, hypothesis, research question/s, objective/s; 4) background, context, introduction; 5) methodology and methods; 6) results, findings, main outcome/s; 7) discussion; 8) conclusions; 9) funding organization/agency/source; 10) bibliography/reference list.

In particular, the "lead" should include the basic information of the text. This term is still used in journalism, to indicate the first sentence of the new, in which the reader should find the answers to five questions: who, what, when, where, and why. For this reason, this indication is called the "rule of 5Ws" of the new. The "lead" in a scientific paper corresponds to the abstract and the introduction, and I introduce them to the class.

The second step, *narratio*, matches with the sections related to the method(s) and the results, as it is a description of what we made. The third one, *confirmatio*, corresponds to the analysis of results, while the last one, *epilogo,* refers to the conclusions and funding source of a study.

After having introduced the *dispositio*, I describe the third step of the construction of a written text, the *elocutio*. During these years of teaching experience, I observed that the students can better approach it through an example. I suggest to them to consider the scientific poster, which most young researchers have faced during their doctoral program, especially the ones who conducted quantitative research, in particular in the "natural" and "social" sciences. The indications on the poster, in fact, are useful for every academic text and help them to understand the meaning of *elocutio* while they apply it.

After a few indications about the sense of the scientific poster and its use in academic conferences, I propose to the students to analyze examples made by them, which we may post in class to simulate a poster session. But, unlike the conferences, the CSR proposal is focused on the organization of the poster, rather than the content of their research. This exercise is centered on the construction of the written text, the *dispositio* and the communication strategy, and does not depend on the fields of study, therefore, it allows an interdisciplinary approach to this analysis.

In every class we have generally examples of scientific posters made by the participants, otherwise, I show them a few samples of previous courses, which contain either mistakes or useful suggestions. I generally propose to the students to analyze the posters individually, and then, to share with the class their comments and we examine them.

Otherwise, if the number of the students is too large, I divide the class into groups and they work separately on this analysis. I present the aspects which do not emerge in the analysis, and I add a few indications on the graphics, which we deepen in the third lecture.

### *Third lecture*

The third lecture is dedicated to the construction of the oral text, and is focused on the third step of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the *elocutio*, which refers to the "style of communication". It is centred to the questions why, to whom and how we are going to talk and it recalls the meanings of communication as a "gift" (*munus*) or a "barrier" (*moenia*), in addition to the pragmatics of communication, the third competence. In addition to Aristotle, in this lecture I also refer to Cicero, in particular in relation to the fourth and fifth steps of the construction of the oral text, which add to *inventio*, *dispositio* and *elocutio*: 4) practice and memory, and 5) *declamatio* (Cicero, 2007).

These further steps are related to the three characteristics of *elocutio*, which help to orient the "style" of an oral communication: a) language and examples; b) presentation of the information; c) look.

The "language and the examples" characterize the "style" of the oral presentation either for the use of language, or for the choice of terms and examples which may clarify complex information. The clearness of the oral text, therefore, is a priority, and it requires organizing the information mentally, in addition to the use of charts and outlines.

Moreover, "the practice and the memory" may be included in this aspect, as they help to reduce the emotional effects, which often characterizes an oral presentation, especially in an international context with a non-native language, a common situation for most of the PhD students in my courses.

In the academic context, "the presentation of the information" may also orient the "style" of the oral text. I generally provide a few indications on the most common ways of presentation: the use of flip board, blackboard, white-board and overhead projector and the slide presentations. In particular, I remark to the students that preparing a presentation implies constructing a written text, different from the original one (PhD thesis, paper, poster), as it is a new form. Therefore, they have to consider the aspects of *dispositio* described in the construction of the written text, in addition to the technical aspects of the slide presentation, which are secondary from the content, although important. These

aspects include, in particular, the colours of the background and the characters, the font's type and size, the use of images, pictures, charts and outlines, and the animations. Finally, I provide further indications on the speed of talking and the need to respect the available scheduled time.

The third aspect of the *elocutio*, is "the look" and refers to the bodily communication, body movements, which complement written and oral communication. It is characterized by clothing (also hairstyle, make-up and accessories), posture (included way of walking), and gestures (included glance and smile). The "look", therefore, also includes the *declamatio*, as it refers to the pronunciation and the accent, the tone of voice, the face and the sharing of emotion (Cicero, 2007, pp. 80-86). I present a few notes of nonverbal communication previously mentioned in relation to paralanguistics and kinesics (section 1.2.1). Furthermore, I briefly refer to the breath, by providing a few notes on the relation between emotions and breath, the control of the breath and the cardiac coherence from a neuroscientific perspective (Servan-Schreiber, 2003).

In CSR courses, I dedicate a fourth lesson to the practice of oral communication: we analyse in class examples of academic slide presentations made by the students, drawn from their recent experiences, such as: the presentation of their master's degree thesis, the oral presentation of their PhD final year report, or an oral communication for a seminar or a conference. I ask to all the students to present their work now from the CSR perspective, therefore, to discuss the organization and the possible *dispositio* of the written text, how they made the slide presentation, the balance between pictures and text and graphics, the style of their presentation, with the three aspects of the *elocutio*. Then, we analyse it in class, and every participant comments on it, by sharing the positive aspects and the ones which may be improved, according their disciplinary point of view and experience.

The fourth lesson is entirely dedicated to this dialogue, which allows all the students to present an example of their oral presentations and to examine it in class. This analysis, with the one of the scientific poster during the second lesson, constitute the "practice of dialogue" of the CSR teaching proposal, aimed to establish a space of relationship among, across and beyond students' disciplines, especially in this context, according to this transcultural and transdisciplinary approach.

In the next section, I will describe the "practice of dialogue" which I propose to the

students of the courses at the philosophical-theological Institute, with the aim to create this space of relationship in particular among, across and beyond their cultures.

At the end of the lessons, either at the courses or at the schools, I generally introduce the "non-conclusions", since their path towards the communication of scientific research does not end, nor dialogue as a space of relationship. Also in this context, therefore, I suggest a last keyword to the students, as at the philosophical-theological Institute.

This word is "Sisyphus", a personage of ancient Greek origin. Hesiod presents him as the bravest and cleverest among the human beings (Hesiod, 2004), who faced Zeus and escaped from his punishments, until the last one, which is a sentence for eternity: Sisyphus is condemned to push a huge stone at the top of a mountain. As soon as he achieved this task and arrived at the top, the stone rolls down, and Sisyphus has to start again to push it.

He is the metaphor of fatigue, apparently vain, as he did not choose it, but was punished by Zeus. I usually compare Sisyphus' effort with that of the young researchers, whom I call "young Sisyphus". Their effort as PhD students and also as young adults, often seems vain, useless and endless, and frequently they experience that the stone is heavy, feel trampled and incapable to push it.

The CSR teaching proposal may allow them to become aware of their effort, mainly in their work, and, for this reason, it may be an opportunity to face it, and to brave it, as Sisyphus did with Zeus. The young researchers cannot avoid this fatigue, as it belongs to the human existence, and neither the course nor the school may be sufficient to overcome it. Nevertheless, at the last lesson, they should be more aware of it, thus, they may have further tools available to use when facing this effort.

For this reason, I conclude the course and the school by inviting them, as "young Sisyphus", to "imagine themselves happy". This suggestion originates from the last sentence of the essay the *Myth of Sisyphus* by Albert Camus (Camus, 1991), which I usually read to the students:

> I leave Sisyphus at the foot of the mountain! One always finds one's burden again. But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well. This universe henceforth without a master seems to him neither sterile nor futile. Each atom of that stone, each mineral flake of that night filled mountain, in itself forms a world. The

struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy. (Camus, 1991, p. 24)

I invite the young researchers to assume an additional responsibility: to choose to be happy as "young Sisyphus". It is a choice, more than an imperative, therefore, they "may" imagine him happy, and not "must", as Camus states at the end of his essay. It implies a free decision, for each student, at the beginning of their own road towards awareness of the communication of scientific research, of their work and, far more broadly, of their life.

On this assumption I based a brief essay dedicated to a reading of the fatigue, especially among the young researchers whom I have met in my teaching experience, with the title *Si può immaginare Sisifo felice* [One may imagine Sisyphus happy] (Mangano, 2013c). It takes inspiration from the essay by Camus, especially his final statement, and proposes a further perspective, as a call to responsibility, starting from stories of "young Sisyphus", ten young researchers, who used to be students of mine, and tried to face their effort in their job, study and choice of life.


At the CSR seminars, I generally introduce the main characteristics of CSR teaching. I present my activity in one hour, and I usually dedicate the second part of the seminar to direct experiences of students who have attended my courses in the past, and may serve as testimonials of the approach I propose.

If the program of the seminar is longer, I also introduce some keywords, usually the three verbs, "to communicate, "to educate", and "to seduce", and the balance which communication may establish between education and seduction. Then, I mention the three steps of the "text construction" according the *Rhetoric* by Aristotle, and I propose an application of these keywords, thorough the analysis of some examples of written or oral works made by the participants.

The tools I developed, either at the philosophical-theological Institute, or in the CSR experiences, complement the teaching materials and consist of the lecture notes and the evaluation questionnaire of the courses, which allow the students to share their opinions on the course materials and on this teaching proposal. Furthermore, I present the evaluation tools, which I developed for the students' assessment at the philosophical-theological Institute. I describe these teaching tools for every course in the two contexts.

### 2.3.3 Tools for the philosophical-theological Institute

Since the beginning of my teaching experience at the Institute, I have been preparing lecture notes for the students which allow them to understand the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue. They include the content, based on the keywords, and the bibliography. These teaching materials are adapted to the cultural perspectives presented in class, thus, they change for every course. I prepare the lecture notes for every lesson, in Italian, with the slides which summarize them.

The students are requested to enrich the content of the course with written and oral contributions from their cultural perspectives, derived from their life experiences, research and study. These assignments complement my teaching materials and allow the students of each class, at different levels, to practice dialogue among, across and beyond their cultures. I prepare a note with an outline of the topics, the aim of the assignment, the authors, the perspectives on which they are requested to work, and the references.

Furthermore, when I present them to the students, I also provide information on how to prepare a written text at academic level and how to present it in class in two additional lecture notes.

I will describe these same teaching tools for the course at the philosophical bachelor's degree and for the one at the theological bachelor's degree.


### 2.3.3a For the philosophical bachelor's degree

I briefly mention the assignments I proposed to the students in the preliminary year, as this exercise introduced them to share their cultural perspective, also with terms in their native language. It was an initial attempt, as they were learning Italian, but, until this course was offered, it helped the students to approach to the assignments requested in the course on transcultural dialogue. They increased their awareness of the logic of providing their cultural contribution to this teaching outline.

The students at the preliminary year used to read their contributions aloud in class, thus they experienced a primal meeting with the other, as they shared aspects of their culture and listened to the other's presentations.

I proposed homework firstly focused on their native culture, with a few questions about themselves, their family, countries, traditions, food, weather, religions and history. When they shared them in class, they often added further details: pictures, or objects they had

brought from home, such as the flag of their country, their traditional dress, or their local handicrafts.

Then, I pointed to the intercultural dialogue and the students were requested to describe examples of it in their native countries, and to compare them with their experience in Italy, with indications on findings, works in progress, and any failures of training in this effort.

In the philosophical class, the students are requested to work on three written assignments, two individual and one in groups, and two oral presentations in class, on the three keywords proposed: "otherness", "hospitality" and "reciprocity".

After completing each written contribution, they share it in a ten-minute oral presentation, which offers them the opportunity to practice dialogue in class: all the students may study in advance their peers' works, therefore they may prepare questions or comments. Their colleagues take notes and construct questions after each oral presentation, in a ten-minute dialogue. The students who present their contribution may answer only to few questions in class in such a short time, therefore, they have to decide to which one they can respond, and explain their choice. Then, they provide answers to the rest of the questions through the online forum (section 2.3.3c).

### *First assignment*

The first written assignment is dedicated to the term "otherness"; the students prepare it individually, and then they present it in class. They try to study and to interpret an author of their same culture, or close, through the bibliography I provide to them.

I generally propose to all the students the introductory article on the intercultural philosophy on the *Polylog forum* (section 1.2.3), "The path is created by walking", (Bernreuter, 2000) to help them to understand this orientation and attitude.

Then, I present the topics and the authors assigned to each student, and I supply the bibliography. I usually suggest sources that they can easily find at the Institute's library or online, and provide them to the students.

The students are requested to briefly present the author's perspective on otherness, and to add their native cultural contribution in relation to this author. When possible, they should

also define the terms "otherness" and "the other" in their native languages, supplemented by proverbs, legends and stories.

To the Zambian students, I usually propose the introductory article on the debate on the existence of the "African philosophy" in relation to "African thinking" (Van der Merwe, 2000). Then, I select excerpts from the volume *African "vitalogy"* (Nkafu Nkemnkia, 1999) which introduce the authors and the themes on which the students will work.

To the Caribbean students, I generally propose introductory articles on *"Négritude"* (Nkafu Nkemnkia, 1999) and "creoleness" (Ormerod, 1998).

To the Central and South American students who speak Spanish, I suggest the article on the intercultural perspective on education (Zúñiga Castillo & Ansión Mallet, 1997), and the other one on otherness and dialogue (Mendoza, 2005).

To the Chinese or Filipino students, I propose the introduction to the traditional Confucian values, which they should compare with the current "Asian values", to better understand the debate on these terms (Erh-Soon Tay, 2002; Sen, 1998).

To the Polish students, I provide an introduction to the "philosophy of drama" by Józef Tischner (Adamczyk, 2006), and the overview on otherness by Kapuscinski (Kapuscinski, 2007).

To the Italian students, I generally propose a reading on otherness in the history of European philosophy, in a path across some classic, modern, and contemporary authors who investigated this topic. I usually refer to the volume *I percorsi dell'altro. Antropologia e storia* [Paths on otherness. Anthropology and history] (Cicchese, 1999), which presents this diachronic outline in a synthetic and accessible way. Therefore, the students of the first year, who do not yet study these authors, also may be introduced to their perspective on otherness.

I usually suggest one author to each student of the following periods: the ancient Greek perspective (Socrates, Plato and Aristotle), the Christian one (the difference between "the other" and "the neighbour"), the modern view (Renate Descartes, Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel), and the contemporary perspective (Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Jean Paul Sartre).

*Second assignment*

The second assignment consists in a group work dedicated to the keyword "hospitality", for which each team is requested to present its cultural contribution in relation to the essay by Jacques Derrida, which is the frame of this work.

Each group works on a different aspect of hospitality using publications by native authors. The students are also invited to define the terms "hospitality", "stranger", "guest" and "host" in their native languages, and in relation to the topics I propose to them.

The members of each group work together and prepare one written composition and the oral presentation. I usually assign them the same authors I propose to them for the first homework, therefore, they should already know them, and may share this competence within the group. I generally divide the class into small intercultural groups consisting of 2-4 students, and I mix first and second year students.

Over the years, I detected similar topics, as the cultural composition of the class was similar. Then, every year I adjust the topics on the basis of the number of the students and the cultures present in class.

I divide the class into 4-6 groups and suggest the following tracks: 1) a reading on hospitality based on friendship, according to the Southern African and European perspectives. For the first one, the group takes inspiration from John Mbiti's contribution; for the second one, they work on an ancient author, Aristotle, in particular a chapter of his *Nicomachaean Ethics* dedicated to this theme, the *Book VIII* (Aristotle, 1908), and a contemporary author, Pawel Florenskij and his essay *Friendship* (Florenskij, 2013).

2) Hospitality and diversity, the definition of the terms "foreigner" and "host" in "African thinking", in particular in the perspective described by Placide Tempels (Tempels, 1959), and in ancient Greece, especially in Socrates, by taking inspiration from the *Apology* (Plato, 1891).

3) Hospitality and the religious sense, in Christian and African perspectives, therefore "the stranger" as "the neighbour", hospitality and proximity (Cicchese, 1999). If in the group someone knows French, I also suggest an article by an Ivorian thinker, Tanella Boni, dedicated to tolerance, as a necessary requirement for humanity, "La Tolérance: Une disposition permanente nécessaire à la construction d'un horizon d' humanité" [Tolerance: a perpetual and necessary stance for the construction of an attitude of humanity] (Boni, 1997).

4) Hospitality according to the Confucian tradition (or pre-Columbian one, if present), from the ancient perspective to the contemporary one. These two perspectives will try to dialogue with "African socialism" by Julius Nyerere and his contribution on "*ujamaa*" (Nyerere, 1968).

5) Hospitality in the Caribbean and African perspectives, according to the "*Négritude*" definition, or "creoleness" (Ormerod, 1998), and the "Letter to the Citizens of Color and Free Negroes of Saint-Domingue" (Grégoire, 2006). These two point of views try to dialogue with the European one proposed by Immanuel Kant in his *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch* (Kant, 1795).

6) A European and African reading of hospitality which takes inspiration from modern authors (Descartes or Hegel) and contemporary philosophers (one or two among Tischner, Sartre, Husserl, or Heidegger) who try to put into dialogue with "African humanism" by Kenneth Kaunda (Kaunda, 1967).

*Third assignment*

The third assignment is dedicated to the keyword "reciprocity", and the students are requested to present the perspective of an author of different culture from theirs, in relation to the essay by Martin Buber, which is the frame of this work. They prepare an individual text and may choose the source among the one already proposed or presented in class, or may locate their own. They are not requested to present it in class, but they may decide to present it at the exam, in a five-minute oral presentation.

**2.3.3b For the theological bachelor's degree**

The assignment for the students who attend the seminar consists of one written contribution and its presentation in class, and they work in small intercultural groups consisting of 2-4 students of different cultures. They are invited to make the group and to choose the topic of research on their own. Their work takes inspiration from one (or more) perspective suggested by the speakers I invite to class, and it is analysed from each member's cultural point of view. The students know in advance the program of the seminar and the readings suggested by the speakers, therefore, they may organize their work from the beginning of the course.

I usually ask the speakers to prepare a one-hour lecture, and to dedicate the second hour to dialogue with the class. I also ask to them to share their contribution with the other speakers, to participate to the preparation of all the steps of these lessons, and to attend, if possible, the other colleague's lectures.

After having prepared their written contribution, the students present it in the same way of the speakers' lectures, but in a shorter time: usually, half an hour for their work's oral presentation, and the same time for the dialogue in class. Hence, there generally are two oral presentations each lesson. The group shares in advance its assignment with the class, thus all of the students may know the content before the oral presentation, and may prepare for the dialogue.

Unlike their peers in the philosophical class, who work on their contributions out of class, at the seminar the students prepare the written assignment in class, and we usually dedicate three lessons to this activity. It implies that each group has to optimize the time to be able to complete the work in about six hours, otherwise, they have to complete it out of class. We usually dedicate two or three lessons to their oral presentations, therefore, the group work is the central part of the seminar, and their opportunity to practice dialogue according to a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach.

### 2.3.3c Evaluation tools

Either in the philosophical class, or in the theological seminar, I develop some tools which help me in the students' evaluation and allow them to express their opinion of my teaching. I also propose the use of the e-learning platform of the Institute, for continuing the dialogue out of the lessons.

### *E-learning platform*

I generally propose to each class to use an open source e-learning platform (Moodle, Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment) accessible through the Institute's homepage, and reserved for the students and the professors.

I post the teaching materials designed for each course, thus, the lecture notes and slides of each lesson, the students' written contributions, and the slides of their oral presentations are all available to everyone. In each class and during the courses, we use the e-learning platform also to practice dialogue out of the lessons through the online

forum. It is a tool which I usually propose to the students for deepening the aspects which we cannot examine in class. On the online forum they are invited to post also their findings in research, observations on the content of each lesson and from their cultural perspective, in addition to their doubts and questions. Furthermore, the students should use the online forum also to complete their replies to the peers which emerged during their oral presentations, if they did not answer them in class.

### *"Transcultural evaluation criteria" for the exam*

The students' written and oral assignments are the principal elements considered when preparing their evaluation through the final exam. In addition, I also take notes and collect indications of their involvement during the whole course, on their practice of dialogue in class, and on their contribution to the online forums. Therefore, at the end of each course, I usually have several elements to evaluate the students, and the final exam is still focused on dialogue, more than being the traditional formal written or oral examination.

At the last lesson I present to the students the structure of the exam and how to prepare for it: they are requested to evaluate, in a ten-minute oral presentation, their effort during the course, in terms of their involvement, in class and on the online forum, and in the preparation of the written and the oral assignments, individually and in groups. Furthermore, I ask them to analyse the positive aspects of their work and the ones to improve, and to explain them, and I invite the students to propose the mark they might deserve, to test their self-criticism.

I also solicit them to observe their peers' examination, and to attend the whole session, thus before and after their turn, to continue the sharing of a space of relationship even at the exam.

Before starting the exam session, I present to the class the "transcultural evaluation criteria", as I call them, which I have developed since the beginning of my teaching activity at the philosophical-theological Institute (Mangano, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). These parameters guide me in the students' assessment and are in order of importance, from the highest to the lowest, according to the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach I propose: 1) openness and disposition to meet the other, to go out from themselves for helping and dialoguing with the other; 2) comprehension and knowledge of contents and bibliography, ability to study, to write and to make research at academic level; 3)

contributions during lessons, in class and on the online forum; 4) respect of the assignments' deadline; 5) knowledge of Italian language and grammar; knowledge and use of informatics, skill to prepare a slide presentation and to present it.

*Evaluation questionnaire*

At the end of the courses at the philosophical-theological Institute, I propose to the students an evaluation questionnaire, which is the same as that I developed for the CSR teaching activities.

It is a report which the students fill out anonymously and they are requested to explain their answers across the following aspects: 1) their general evaluation of the course in terms of the aims, the content, and the methodology proposed, with an evaluation from 1 (the lowest) to 5 (the highest); 2) an evaluation of the organization of my lectures, considering the presentations' clearness and the teaching materials' completeness (from 1 to 5); 3) the positive and 4) the negative aspects of the course considering: the amount of time devoted to the topic, and the benefit of the content for their future (therefore, choice of life, study and profession); 5) further suggestions by the students.

*Additional teaching tools*

Since the beginning of my courses at the Institute, I have been introducing the first lesson with the Peters Map, the projection world map proposed by Arno Peters, German historian and cartographer, in 1974. It shows the real proportions of the countries, rather than the traditional and more common map, the Mercator Map, proposed in 1569 by Gerardus Mercator, Flemish geographer and cartographer. Mercator developed a nautical map, which has become the standard, but it does not respect the real proportions of the countries. It was designed, in fact, to favour shipping at that time, especially to Europeans, thus it presents a Eurocentric perspective of the world.

I brought the Peters Map into each classroom in which I teach and I posted it close to the Mercator Map, which was already there, to emphasise the comparison between the two. At the first lesson of every course, I ask to the students to introduce themselves to the class: they have to post a card on the Peters Map, which indicates their name and choice of life in relation to their native country. I propose to the students to use their native or family name, rather than the "Western" or "Italianized" ones, often used in their religious

communities. This generally implies a common effort for the whole class, to learn and remember their peers' native names.

At the end of the courses, I propose to every class a symbolic conclusion, together with the last keywords: every student takes off from the Peters Map, her/his card, the one posted at the first lesson, and gives it to the student(s) with whom she/he tried to build a space of relationship, or felt her/himself at home, or experienced a *kairos* during the course, and to share the reason.

Finally, at the beginning of my teaching activity, I also proposed to the class of the preliminary year to prepare plastic posters with the word "peace" to post in the classroom. We made them in the languages of the main religions and in the students' native cultures of that class, therefore: Chinese (for Confucianism), Bemba (one language of Zambia), Malayalam (one language of Southern India, and Hinduism), Spanish and Tagalog (the main language of the Philippines) in addition to ancient Hebrew (for Judaism), Latin (for Christianity) and Arabic (for Islam) (Mangano, 2009).

We kept them posted in the classroom of the preliminary year, they are still up and are used by other students, as the offering of a preliminary year ended in academic year 2012-2013.

### 2.3.4 Tools in CSR teaching experiences

At the CSR courses and schools, I usually introduce the content with a slide presentation for each lecture, which I share with the participants at the end of the lessons.

Furthermore, at the schools, the young researchers are requested to give a ten-minute oral presentation about themselves to their classmates on the first day: who they are, their background and current position, reasons and objectives for attending the school. They may choose the style which they prefer, and I ask to the class to take notes of each oral presentation, and to indicate the positive aspects and the weak ones, according to their initial awareness. We analyse them on the last day, after the lecture dedicated to the construction of the oral text.

At the courses and at the schools, I also invite the participants to bring examples of written and oral works, made by them, which they present in class as their contribution to the practice of dialogue related to "text construction". They may include a scientific paper,

the index of their doctoral dissertation and its presentation, for those in their final year, or a scientific poster, and an oral presentation for a meeting or for the final year report.

At the end of the courses, the students are requested to anonymously complete the same evaluation questionnaire which I propose at the philosophical-theological Institute (section 2.3.3c).

Finally, I propose to the students who attended the courses and the schools to keep in touch through a web tool, the wiki. It is an open source website, which allows participants to share and to modify the content from the browser and in collaboration, like *Wikipedia*, which is the best known website created with this technology. I developed the "CSR wiki", which allows the students to continue our dialogue on CSR topics and to share their written works and slide presentations with all the students who attended my courses over the years. Unlike *Wikipedia*, the CSR wiki is not a public website, and access is reserved only to the CSR young researchers.

# Chapter 3. Findings and their analysis

The first challenge in working on this chapter has been how to present the findings of this proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching mediated by dialogue. As previously noted, in fact, I did not find on literature a similar perspective, with the exception of a few indications on teaching materials for a transcultural (Thomson, 2011) or a transdisciplinary (Russel, 2005, Grobstein, 2007) approach, but they do not mention them together, and do not refer to transdisciplinarity using Nicolescu's perspective. The need for applying a transdisciplinary and transcultural perspective to knowledge similar to the one proposed in this study appeared recently (Imbert, 2014a, 2014b), but not in relation to academic education, and it did not mention the possible reciprocity between them.

Therefore, before describing the findings, I had to determine one, or more, parameter(s) which allowed me firstly to select and to order the findings, and, then, to analyse them. The "data collection" is usually described in the chapter related to the materials and method of a study, as previously mentioned. In this case, instead, as the teaching design has been rarely investigated, I also needed to develop an approach to collect my "data", thus the findings of this study. Hence, I had to find a criterion for collecting (thus, selecting and ordering) the findings, which allowed me to analyse and interpret them.

Furthermore, I needed to describe the origin of my teaching design serving as basis of these findings, thus, how and why I developed the program, the contents and the tools of each course, either for the philosophical and theological Institute, or in the experiences drawing on the communication of scientific research (CSR). As the description of these aspects is new, it requires an explanation for understanding the proposal of this approach, the connections among the courses and their development over time.

These challenges remind me of the "narrow ridge", which characterizes my teaching design, the study and this dissertation (section 1.1.1.1).

The first finding, therefore, is the proposal of a criterion for selecting, ordering, describing and analyzing the findings I present in this research. For this reason, I describe it in this chapter, rather than in chapter 2, dedicated to the materials and method of this study.

Afterword, I thought to distinguish the findings from their analysis, for each course of the two contexts and, then, to present the meaning of this teaching design, starting from its

genesis. I first identified "potentials and challenges", as I called them: they are aspects which I detected from the beginning of each course in both contexts, and helped me to orient my courses design. Over several years, in fact, I have developed this approach to teaching as an attempt to enhance the potentials and to overcome the challenges, and to adapt the content to the students' needs. This teaching design, therefore, is the result of a constant adjustment, a work under construction for creating a model for a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines.

In particular, I detected four "potentials and challenges", which guided me in developing this teaching design, in selecting the findings, and in their analysis, either for the philosophical-theological Institute, or in CSR experiences.

These four "potentials and challenges" are related, thus, each of them depends on the others and they are not in order of importance:

1) the cultural and disciplinary richness of each context, which serves as basis for the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching. Nevertheless, this diversity implies a constant effort in creating and maintaining a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines, requiring students to face their "cultural and disciplinary burdens", as I have called them. Therefore, I named this "potential and challenge" as "human, cultural and disciplinary richness";

2) an approach to dialogue accessible to the students, which allows them to understand the proposed perspective while they apply it, and vice versa, since what they experience permits them to comprehend the content. This implies developing this teaching design with a "theoretical and practical approach to dialogue", which is what I called the second "potential and challenge";

3) a program of study which may help the students to achieve the most common challenges at academic level: especially, learning and improving in writing, speaking, studying and conducting research. Thus, I labeled this "potential and challenge" as "main challenges for the students";

4) the ability to promote an increasing awareness of this teaching design among the students, who may experience a space of relationship among themselves, in addition to their cultures and disciplines. I have named the fourth "potential and challenge" an "awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach".

I adapted these four parameters to each context, and I developed a similar order to present the findings and their analysis, as the teaching design is the same.

In particular, I firstly describe what emerged in each course of the philosophical-theological Institute, I present the findings drawn from the lessons and the exam, and I analyze them. Then, I illustrate the findings related to the CSR experiences which derive from the schools, the courses and the seminars, and I analyze them.

For each context I describe the genesis of the course and the "potentials and challenges", as they allow to understand the meaning of these findings.

Finally, I illustrate an attempt of conclusive analysis of the whole teaching design, and I indicate the common aspects and differences between the two contexts starting from the four "potentials and challenges". As it is an attempt, I refer to a "non-conclusive" analysis, which introduces the final chapter, dedicated to the implications and the conclusions of this study.

The teaching design improved over time, and there is a continuity among the courses in both contexts, thus, also the findings are connected. Therefore, I focus on those ones related to the last three years of the doctoral program, 2014-2016, but I also refer to the previous ones, between 2009-2013, and I present the connections among them and their sense.

### *Meaning of findings, outcomes and follow-ups in this study*

As this study is based on a combination of qualitative and quantitative research (section 2.1), this chapter presents findings more than results. In particular, "findings", "outcomes" and "follow-ups", which are the common labels for indicating the evidence of qualitative research and they are usually descriptive. The terms "results", or "data", usually refer to quantitative analysis and to numeric and graphic representations, as something is counted in this type of research.

As the term suggests, the "findings" indicate what emerges during the study. As this is focused on the outline of an approach to academic teaching, the findings are based on the evidence drawn from the courses. Therefore, they derive from the students' feedback and their awareness towards this teaching design, their involvement in practicing dialogue, in meeting the other, and their attentiveness towards her/him, in addition to the ability to achieve the main challenges of a course at academic level. Hence, the findings also refer

to what the students found within themselves, and among, across and beyond themselves, in addition to their cultures and disciplines, which they shared with me, in conversations or by e-mail.

In the "outcomes" I include the students' contributions drawn from the courses (literally, their "output", or products they make): their written assignments and oral presentations, posts on the online forums, their practice of dialogue in class, and at the exam.

Furthermore, I also consider as outcomes the students' cultural and theoretical contributions to the courses, which enrich the content. I include these contributions in the list of keywords, as they are additional terms proposed by them.

The "follow-ups" refer to what occurs after the courses, thus, what follows them: I include in this section further proposals of activities with a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue which I provide for the students or which they suggest to me, even once the course is completed. The follows-up are also related to the students' wish to deepen this transcultural and transdisciplinary approach, and may provide additional support to the proposal of dialogue as a space of relationship out of the classroom, and, more broadly, beyond the academic context. Thus, I present some examples of them.

Sometimes, the distinction among the findings, outcomes and follow-ups is not so narrow, as they are in relation and intertwined. Therefore, I also describe examples of their connections in the two contexts of teaching presented.

### 3.1 Findings for the philosophical-theological Institute

I present the main findings drawn from the two courses for the philosophical-theological Institute, in terms of the students' understanding of the teaching design, and their involvement in creating a space of relationship among, across and beyond their cultures and disciplines. Then, I indicate the main outcomes derived from the students' written assignments and oral presentations, and related to their awareness towards this teaching design which they shared at the exam.

Finally, I describe the follow-ups drawn on this context, and I present an example of application of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue in an academic activity which interested some students of the two classes for the philosophical and theological bachelor's degrees.

### 3.1.1 For the philosophical bachelor's degree

I illustrate the main findings which emerged during the course, and the outcomes derived from each of the three assignments requested of the students. Then, I describe the principal keywords drawn from their written contributions, and the outcomes collected at the exam.

### 3.1.1a Students' assignments

*First assignment*

During the course offered in the academic year 2014-2015, almost all the class understood the sense of the first assignment, and all the students respected the deadline. Most of them presented information about an author through a brief synthesis of the materials proposed, with their cultural contribution. In particular, the two Zambian students outlined their cultural reading of otherness starting from their native culture and according to, respectively, the definition of "African socialism" by Julius Nyerere and his *ujamaa,* (Nyerere, 1968), and the current debate on "African philosophy" and "African thinking" (Van der Merwe, 2000). The Brazilian student illustrated an attempt at defining of otherness, by taking inspiration from the debate on human rights in current Brazilian society (Malaguti Batista, 2008). The two Polish students described Józef Tischner's perspective on otherness, by referring to his vision of reality as "a drama" in relation with "hope" (Adamczyk, 2006) and "trust" (Adamczyk, 2009).

The Italian students at this course were the majority in class, and each of them briefly presented otherness from the European perspective of philosophers of different periods who investigated it. They concisely introduced the author assigned to each of them, starting from the historical period in which he lived, his thought and his work on otherness and on the definition of "the other". The students of the first year, in particular, focused on one author from ancient or modern philosophy: Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, René Descartes, Immanuel Kant, and Georg Hegel. The students in the second year centered their work on a contemporary author: Edmund Husserl, Martin Heidegger, and Jean-Paul Sartre.

More than the half class prepared a slide presentation to describe their written composition in class, and for most students this assignment was their first experience of

writing and public speaking. Therefore, most students undertook these challenges for the first time.

At the end of the lesson dedicated to introducing the first assignment, for instance, two Italian students, one in the first year, another at the second, shared with me that they were familiar neither with informatics, nor with the English language, as they had only studied it a long time ago without practicing it. I proposed to them to consider the whole course, and the assignments, as opportunities to work on these challenges and to overcome them. They might improve lesson by lesson, with their effort, as usually happens with many students in their same position. They immediately took this proposal seriously: with the help of their peers, they prepared and presented their first slide presentation in class after the written work.

It was harder for the three religious students from the Philippines, two in the first year and one at the second one. They had just arrived in Italy, and were approaching their life in a religious community in a small village close to Viterbo. Therefore, they had to manage logistic difficulties, in addition to the language, which was very hard for them.

Before the end of the course, one of them was in crisis: too many changes in his life, in such a short time, with some concerns about his religious choice of life, which made him confused. He tried to study, but was tired and slow, thus he often studied during the night, and sometimes slept in class. His first composition was not good, I corrected it three times, and the oral presentation was weak and insufficient, but he seemed not to take this result seriously. I assigned to all of them the definition of "Asian values", according to the traditional (the first one) and the current (the second one) Confucian values, and the current debate (the third one) on them. They also presented these values as relevant in their native cultures, and indicated the terms "otherness" and "the other" in Tagalog, their native language.

The second student had substantial difficulties with the Italian language, but, from the beginning of the course, was modest and asked for help. His calm attitude and his smile soon fascinated the class, and he tried to do his best, with effort. The third one, in the second year, seemed the more confident with both the language and the context, and soon established good relationships with some other peers. For this student, the first written assignment was the occasion to introduce the class to the history of the European domination in the Philippines, which left deep wounds, which were still open, not only

for society as a whole but also for him as an individual, as revealed in class during his oral presentation.

In other classes during previous academic years, the first oral presentation was the initial practice of dialogue, and it often provided the opportunity to some students for sharing their cultural burden as well. During the 2009-2010 course, for instance, a second year Zambian religious student discussed with an Italian religious one, with a background in political science, who defended European domination as an historical choice which "might also have positive aspects", as he said. The Zambian student replied: "I hardly find positive aspects in colonialism, white people came to Africa only to take, not to give[25]" (Mangano, 2011, p. 64). This debate continued on the online forum and it was decisive for both of them, as it allowed for reciprocal awareness in the sense used in the course. The Zambian student wrote on the online forum after this debate:

> I am fighting with myself, I cannot accept the other if he is a European. I cannot forget history and forgive centuries of colonization. My only answer to the course should be: "No". I need to change my prospective, but I do not know how.[26] (Mangano, 2011, p. 65)

During the course, this student and the Italian student started a gradual path towards their reciprocal changing of perspective.

For other students, the first oral presentation marked an initial awareness on their ability to achieve their first challenges, which often needed only time and practice. At the course of 2011-2012, for instance, one Italian lay student in the first year cried at her first oral presentation, as she felt nervous for talking in front of her peers, although she studied a lot. She described it as her first "decisive moment", and noted how important her colleagues' reactions were for her: the non-native students in the class, in fact, realized that the problem was not related to language and they tried to encourage her. She shared her pain when I proposed she could take her time, wait, or, if she preferred, to start again, and her joy when she arrived at the end, after this "essential moment" for her growing, as she said.

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[25] In this chapter I report in the footnotes the students' original contributions, as I have translated them from Italian in the main text. *Fatico a trovare aspetti positivi nel colonialismo. Gli europei sono venuti in Africa per prendere, non per dare.*

[26] *Sto lottando con me stesso. Non riesco ad accettare l'altro se è europeo. Non posso dimenticare la storia, né perdonare secoli di dominazione. La mia risposta alla proposta del corso dovrebbe essere "no". Ho bisogno di cambiare prospettiva, ma non so come.*

*Second assignment*

In the 2014-2015 course, I divided the students into five groups, and I adapted the topics on hospitality previously mentioned (section 2.3.1a). In particular: 1) friendship according to ancient, modern, and contemporary European perspectives, the ones by Aristotle, Kant and Pawel Florenskij; 2) the other as a "host", "foreigner" and "enemy", according to ancient and contemporary European perspectives, the ones by Socrates, Tischner and Sartre; 3) hospitality from non-Anglo-European approaches perspectives (the one by Julius Nyerere, and the traditional "Asian values"), and the perspective by Edmund Husserl; 4) hospitality from the same cultural perspectives as group 3, but with other authors: Kenneth Kaunda, the original and current Philippine values, and Descartes; 5) the question on hospitality by Derrida from different perspectives: the current debate by the multicultural Brazilian society on human rights, traditional and current "Asian values", and Hegel's point of view on the other.

Four groups of five completed their assignment by the deadline and they understood the proposed topic. In particular, the first two groups worked together in harmony, either for the written assignment or the oral presentation, they comprehended the aim of the exercise, and achieved it. The students felt on the same level within each group, without experiencing conflicts or cultural burdens, they enjoyed this work and they were involved and interested.

Among the students in the first group, in particular, a Polish religious student in the second year, at the end of the lesson dedicated to present the assignment, complained about the topic I proposed to their group: "You cannot imagine what Russian army did to our people. My grandparents told me, and I do not want to betray their memory. I truly cannot give hospitality to a Russian author[27]". I explained to this student the logic behind my choice in proposing a Russian author to his group. I suggested them to work on Florenskij's essay on friendship, as he was imprisoned during the Russian communist period and then executed. Therefore, he received the same persecution as the Polish people, although he was Russian, but he continued to practice forgiveness even during his detention. The Polish student made an effort for approaching this essay, but he read it, as he said during the oral presentation, when he shared this story together with his

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[27] *Lei non immagina cosa ha fatto l'esercito russo al popolo polacco. I miei nonni me lo hanno raccontato e non voglio tradire la loro memoria. Non posso davvero offrire ospitalità a un autore russo.*

group.

At the same period as this course in fall of 2014, the news about the civil war in Ukraine and the disorders at the Polish borders dramatically involved this student and their religious community, which consisted mainly of Polish people. Some of them used to be, or still were, my students, and we shared this news in class.

In a conversation with this student, before starting the lesson and out of the classroom, he confessed to me the idea to get ready to go back to Poland in order to defend his country, if it proved necessary in an eventual conflict against Russia. I was impressed by this sentence, and I proposed to him to deepen it after the lesson. In class, without mentioning this episode, I enforced the sense of dialogue as a space of relationship and, at the end of the lesson, I proposed to this student another type of struggle: inside of himself, by making a concrete step towards the other, in his case, the Russian people. I suggested he contact a Russian student, through the social networks, as many of them were expressing their solidarity with Polish and Ukrainian citizens on the Web. The following week, before starting the lesson, he told me he had met a Russian tourist, who visited their religious community: "You cannot believe! I spoke with a Russian guy of my age: he defends the Ukrainian people and peace, and refuses the war. You were right. I experienced dialogue, and I wish to continue to practice it[28]."

The Italian student in this group, a lay working student in her first year, was enthusiastic about their work group, and at their oral presentation she described it as "a fantastic experience, from the beginning to the end".

The third and the fourth groups completed the assignment as well, on time, in harmony, with interest and involvement, but the Italian students of these groups made a big effort, as they concretely helped their peers with more difficulties, mainly non-native students in their first year. In particular, the Italian student of the third group was in the first year, lay and with two kids, the one in the fourth group was a mature religious one in the second year, with a background in economic studies. They were totally involved in their group, having a growing awareness and considerable effort, and their colleagues responded with gratitude and interest, although their contribution to the group work was limited. Both the Italian students felt responsible for the whole work, which was almost entirely written by

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[28] *Da non crederci! Ho parlato con un ragazzo russo, della mia stessa età: difende il popolo ucraino e la pace, rifiuta la guerra. Aveva ragione. Questo è il dialogo e spero di continuare a praticarlo.*

them, and they also prepared the slide presentation. Outside of class, I asked them the reason for this choice, and if they had really understood the goal of the exercise. They replied, in distinct moments, that, even if it was hard, they considered their effort as a concrete application of the term "hospitality", according their understanding.

The Italian student of the third group explained her choice at their oral presentation. She was with a Filipino student in the first year, and another from Zambia in the second year. This last student left the course, and the Institute, a few days before Christmas, as he decided to change religious community and so moved to another town. He just disappeared, without warning his peers. She felt in trouble, as she lost a member of the group the day before their oral presentation, and, above all, lost track of a friend. She could not completely rely on the Filipino student's help, thus, she had to decide what to do on her own.

Also in the previous years, in the philosophical class we experienced the same situation in the group work: one or two students, generally Italian and religious, or lay and mature, decided to help their colleagues by carrying the entire weight of the group for the written and oral contributions. This is not actually the aim of the exercise, as, often, the other members of the groups presume they have reached the goal by taking advantage of them, even if they do not admit it. Therefore, none of them actually, encounter the other as pair, since they are not at the same level.

The fourth group consisted of a Zambian student in the second year, a Filipino student in the first year, and the Italian student in the second year. They enjoyed their work and became friends. When they presented their oral contribution, the student from the Philippines thanked his colleagues and the class with a gift, similar to what he used to prepare in his native parish for Christmas. It was a surprise also for his colleagues: he made a paper necklace for each of us, with the sun in the middle, which symbolized dialogue, in yellow, as he explained, and the rays, in blue, symbolized each of us.

The fifth group consisted of a Brazilian and a Filipino religious students, both in the second year, and an Italian religious student in the first year with a background in engineering. They had more difficulties in completing their assignment and in understanding and applying the "practice of hospitality". They worked hard, "too much for them", as they explained at the beginning of their oral presentation. Their written contribution was incomplete and the oral presentation confused: they did not prepare

adequately and took more time than scheduled. They recognized the problem, as it was "the result of the reciprocal awareness of their limits", as they said. They realized "to be very far from each other" during the work, but they had to finish it, therefore, they negotiated a compromise and presented it incomplete. In a private conversation with the Italian student of this group, he shared with me his skepticism about the "effectiveness" of dialogue as a space of relationship among "too distant cultures", as he said. He carefully studied Hegel, and read much more than I requested, as he was convinced he would find the answer to the proposed topic in Hegel's work. He did not share this doubt with me ahead of time, nor with the group, as they preferred not to meet and to divide the assignment into three parts, one for each cultural perspective. Then, he assembled the parts into a whole. He also admitted with sorrow his Eurocentric perspective, and shared with me the interior conflict which guided all their work. At the same time, his colleagues suffered for their cultural wounds, still open, and their historical hostility towards Europeans, especially Spanish and Portuguese. Therefore, they were not able to find a base for dialogue, as they agreed with Derrida's perspective on hospitality only in relation to the other as an enemy. But they were scared to share it amongst themselves and with the class; for this reason, they preferred to quit.

I suggested to this student that he challenge the other peers in his group, by trying to deepen the reasons for their fatigue with the class or on the online forum, but they did not follow this idea.

### *Third assignment*

In the 2014-2015 course, the third assignment was completed by all the students, but only half of them reached the aim of the exercise and tried to apply reciprocity by presenting an author drawn from a different culture from theirs. In fact, eight students of fifteen understood the exercise and worked on it with effort and enthusiasm. They chose an author they discovered during the course thanks to their colleagues (six of them); one student worked on a cultural perspective initially "hostile" for her, as she said, which she decided to deepen just for this reason; and another one chose an author about whom she wished to know more, since she was "fascinated" by him, as she wrote in her composition. The other seven students limited their effort to summarizing my lecture notes on reciprocity, as they were non-European students (four), or they assumed the risk of

presenting incomplete work, as they "had not time to work on it" (three), as some of them noted.

The Italian student who worked hard for the third group work explained her choice to deepen her understanding of "African socialism" from her cultural perspective as a European: she could not understand her Zambian peer's choice to leave the Institute during the semester, and she missed him, thus, she decided to tribute her gratefulness to him, who let her discover Kenneth Kaunda, and "African humanism".

Another Italian student chose to "concretely apply reciprocity", as she wrote in her text, and to dedicate her written composition to a Brazilian perspective on human rights. This was her "biggest challenge", as she wrote, because of her personal wounds, due to "sad experiences" with persons of these cultures which were a burden for her. She tried to practice reciprocity also by deciding to approach a publication in Portuguese, which she did not know. It was the occasion to go out from herself and ask for help from the Brazilian student in class, and they became friends.

Also during prior academic years, some students decided to dedicate their third assignment to an author of the cultural perspective of their group work's peers. This often implied for some of them to create a "real" space of relationship with the author, and to "truly encounter" her/him, as someone noted during those years.

During the 2009-2010 course, for instance, a second year Italian religious student chose Édouard Glissant for his last assignment, and decided to conduct additional research on his work, by approaching also texts in French, of which he knew very little. During his study, he realized that he had to thank the Haitian peer of his group, otherwise he would not have been able to "meet" Glissant, as wrote in his composition. After completing his work, he wrote me:

> I have always studied with the demand of taking information from an author. For the first time, I discovered that complete comprehension is impossible, because it is mediated by my opinions and judgements, therefore by my cultural point of view. Actually, I am not looking for information about an author, but he is offering himself to me. It is a gift not a theft. I have only to

listen to him, to give him hospitality and to dialogue with him[29]. (Mangano, 2011 p. 67)

During the 2011-2012 course, a mature Italian lay student in the first year shared her "surprising" discovery, as she wrote in her last composition, for approaching the Ivorian author she chose: "I can say to *have met* the author, Tanella Boni. She *reaches* me, like Martin Buber, I could really feel their suffering and love for mankind, as a result of the relationship and reciprocity[30]" (Mangano, 2015a, p. 82, emphasis in original).

She described her "encounter" with the author, who impressed her so much, that she decided to deepen her work, and approached her texts in French, as she was fluent in this language. Since she needed more information, she directly contacted the Ivorian author by e-mail; for this reason, she wrote to "have met her".

Other students started to reconcile with their cultural "open wounds", and "scars" during the course, as they wrote, thanks to the study of an author drawn from a different culture. During the 2010-2011 course, in fact, a mature Italian second year lay student described her choice to conduct independent research in Spanish for her last written composition.

She presented an Argentinean thinker, Enrique Dussel, although we had not discussed him in class, as she was "intrigued" by his perspective on otherness. She wrote: "I wanted to introduce to the class the meaning of hospitality according to an Argentinean author, as this people have been felt as guests in their own home for centuries, because of the European domination[31]" (Mangano, 2015a, p. 82).

In the same class, a second year Zambian missionary, described his progressive awareness in encountering the other, and himself, in his third composition:

> At the beginning of this course I did not understand what "transcultural dialogue" meant. I considered it useless, but I was afraid to meet the other.
>
> After the lessons and the study, especially of Buber and Socrates, I

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[29] *Ho sempre studiato con la pretesa di carpire informazioni dall'autore. Per la prima volta ho scoperto che la completa comprensione è impossibile, perché mediata dalle mie opinioni e dal giudizio, quindi dalla mia prospettiva culturale. Non sono io a cercare informazioni sull'autore, è lui che si offre a me. È un dono, non un furto. Devo solo mettermi in suo ascolto, ospitarlo e dialogare con lui.*

[30] *Posso dire di* aver incontrato *l'autrice, Tanella Boni. Mi ha* attraversato*, come Martin Buber, ho potuto davvero provare la loro sofferenza e amore per l'umanità, come risultato della relazione e reciprocità.*

[31] *Volevo proporre alla classe il significato di ospitalità secondo un autore argentino, perché per secoli questo Paese si è sentito ospite in casa propria a causa della dominazione europea.*

discovered that the other helps me to define myself. I do not lose my cultural

identity in the "I-You relationship", I find it[32]. (Mangano, 2015a, p. 81)

The main effort for this student was the discovery of a new meaning of otherness, which influenced his existence, in addition to his approach to dialogue. He felt "happy to be reconciled with the hurts caused by history on his culture", as he wrote in his third work. During the 2009-2010 course, a second year religious student from Haiti tried to face his cultural burden, especially in his third assignment. At the end of the lesson dedicated to present it, in fact, he told me: "I know that the best thing would be to present a French author, so I would really practice reciprocity. I would like to describe my reconciliation with the past, with French domination, but I still have deep scars[33]." He was able to do it after having surpassed a sorrowful path, during the whole course, which he described in his final assignment. He mentioned his reaction when I presented the group work, as I proposed a French author to them: "Do you want me to give hospitality to a French author?" Before I could reply, he added: "I cannot do it. For me French is not a mother tongue, it is a cruel mother." I understood that he did not need any answer, he was sharing his wounds, which were still open. He continued: "I am not sure to be able to do it. I will try, but I become sick only at the idea of working on a French author[34]." Actually, I suggested to this group to take inspiration from the *Letter to the citizens of color and free negroes of Saint-Domingue* by Henry Grégorie, in which he invites the citizens of Saint-Domingue to rethink their relationship with France, inspired by the values of forgiveness and reconciliation. This text, and Grégoire's life impressed the Haitian student, who worked hard on their group composition, and he shared this episode at their oral presentation (Mangano, 2010a, 2010b, 2011).

In the same class, a second year Zambian religious student explained his progressive reconciliation with his cultural wounds in the third assignment:

While I was working, I felt that I was not living what I was studying. I did

not put in practice the reciprocity until I decided to stop my interior struggle.

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[32]*All'inizio del corso non capivo cosa volesse dire "dialogo transculturale". Mi sembrava inutile, ma era dovuto alla paura di incontrare l'altro. Dopo le lezioni e lo studio, specialmente grazie a Socrate e a Buber, ho capito che l'altro mi aiuta a definire me stesso. Non perdo la mia identità culturale nella "relazione Io-Tu", la trovo.*

[33] *So che la cosa migliore sarebbe presentare un autore francese, così davvero metterei in pratica la reciprocità. Mi piacerebbe descrivere come mi sono riconciliato con il passato, con la dominazione francese, ma ho ancora cicatrici profonde.*

[34] *Vuole che dia ospitalità a un autore francese? Non posso farlo. Per me il francese non è la mia lingua madre, ma la lingua matrigna. Non sono sicuro di farcela. Proverò, ma sto male solo all'idea di lavorare su un autore francese.*

I understood how to go outside myself: I needed to consider my culture from another point of view, far from the past. As well as when you look at a mosaic, if you are too close, you cannot see the drawing and its beauty. I stopped to say "no" and I started to say "yes". I looked for positive aspects of European domination in Africa and I found one: we learnt English which is useful wherever[35] (Mangano, 2011, p. 69).

This student complained during the whole course about the "real" possibility, as he said, to create a basis for dialogue among cultures when some of them have dominated the others for centuries. For him and another Italian religious colleague, the course was the occasion for a reciprocal awareness of their cultural identity and history. Also this Italian student was involved in an attempt to reconcile with his convictions, as he continued to think that the European domination might have positive aspects. But, he was slowly approaching the non-European point of view, thanks to his Zambian peer. He wrote in his last composition:

I will present a definition of *humanitas* and *philantropia* according to ancient Greek and Latin cultures from which European one derives. The attempt is to put in dialogue two different worlds, the past and the present, to try to explain the origin of some modern European behaviours at the basis of Eurocentrism and centuries of domination[36]. (Mangano, 2011, p. 67)

For some students, the written assignments and the oral presentations were their gift to the class and to this curriculum. They comprehended, in fact, that they were contributing to the cultural heritage of their country. Some of these texts enriched the content of the course, and for this reason, I included them in the list of keywords which I proposed during the lessons. I present them, often with terms drawn from the students' native languages, as examples of the main outcomes on their cultural contribution to this teaching design.

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[35] *Mentre lavoravo, ho capito che non stavo vivendo quello che studiavo. Non ho messo in pratica la reciprocità finché non ho deciso di smettere di lottare con me stesso. Ho capito che dovevo fare un passo fuori da me: avevo bisogno di considerare la mia cultura nativa da un'altra prospettiva, lontano dal passato. Come quando si guarda un mosaico, se si è troppo vicini non si riescono a vedere il disegno e la bellezza. Ho smesso di dire "no" e ho cominciato a dire "sì". Ho pensato a un aspetto positivo del colonialismo in Africa e l'ho trovato: abbiamo imparato l'inglese, che è sempre utile.*

[36] *Presenterò una definizione dei termini* humanitas *e* philantropia *nella cultura greca e latina, dalle quali deriva quella europea. Vorrei provare a mettere in dialogo questi termini, il passato e il presente e provare a spiegare l'origine del comportamento europeo alla base dell'eurocentrismo e di secoli di dominazione.*

**3.1.1b Keywords derived from the students' contributions**

The definition of "person" which is common to most ethnic groups of Central and Southern African countries, for instance, derives from the students of Angola and Zambia. Their native cultures, in fact, descend from the original Bantu culture, which refers either to the language or to the culture. The term *bantu* recalls the sense of community, and originates from the Baluba language, still spoken in the Democratic Republic of Congo. *Bantu* is the plural of *muntu*, which means "individual", in the sense of single person, woman or man. The prefix "*ba*" indicates "mankind", thus "all the *muntu*". Therefore, even in the name of this primary culture and language is expressed the sense of community, which was inherited by most Central and Southern African countries. The Bantu language, and the ones derived from it, do not consider the singular term, thus the person as individual, but the plural, hence as a community, clan or tribe, but also the whole continent, Africa, and the world. Among the languages derived from Bantu, in fact, some of them keep the original root *-ntu* in the terms related to "mankind" and "person", such as, *umuntu* ("person", singular), *abantu* ("persons", plural), and *ubuntu* ("humanity", as a human being quality and indicates the innate need of connection among human persons). These words are present in the languages of the students, in particular, Bemba, one of over seventy languages spoken in Zambia, and Umbundu, one of the five spoken in Angola. The name of the languages, as for most ethnic groups of Central and Southern African countries, indicates also their cultures. These terms recall the Bantu proverb related to the value of the other, *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu,* which means: "I know that I am, because I know that there is the other".

I present this proverb in all my teaching activities, either for the philosophical-theological Institute, or in CSR experiences, when I explain to the students the approach to the group work according the transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective.

This Bantu proverb reminds me of Józef Tischner, who used a sentence with the same meaning in his essay on *Philosophy of drama* (Adamczyk, 2006). He does not refer to this statement as an ancient African proverb, but the connection among these perspectives generally impress the Polish and the Zambian students, who find common human ground to their innate sense of community, as a primal root.

In this list of keywords proposed by the students, I also include the contributions of one Italian religious student from the course offered in 2010-2011 (Mangano, 2010a, 2010b,

2011). He shared with the class his interpretation of the discovery of the other, by proposing a path, in ten steps, and explaining each of them. He intended to summarize his experience of meeting the other, and prepared it autonomously, for the exam. He took inspiration also from the authors he studied, in particular the contribution on otherness and dialogue by the Mexican philosopher Mariflor Aguilar Rivero (Mendoza, 2005), whom he approached although he did not know Spanish and hermeneutics, as he did not study yet.

He entitled this path: *10 steps towards alterity: a pathway to walk* [37]:

1) Encounter: I realize the other's existence, as other from me;

2) first evaluation: cultural prejudice;

3) action: the call to expose myself;

4) choice: to dialogue or not;

5) meaning of dialogue and difference between it and a monologue;

6) educating ourselves about the other, the effort to go beyond ourselves;

7) new experience of the other: from ownership to gift;

8) second evaluation: the other becomes essential;

9) relationship with the other means reciprocity;

10) living the complexity (Mangano, 2011, p. 67).

I included this path in the content of the course for the philosophical class, which I propose generally during the exam, and I present it by referring to this student's experience.

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[37]*I 10 passi verso l'alterità. Una strada da percorrere:*
*1) Incontro: mi rendo conto che c'è altro da me;*
*2) valutazione primaria: il pregiudizio culturale;*
*3) azione: sono chiamato a espormi e a mettermi in gioco;*
*4) scelta: dialogare o no;*
*5) significato di dialogo e differenza con monologo;*
*6) educarsi all'altro, sforzo per uscire da se stessi;*
*7) nuova esperienza dell'altro: dal possesso al dono;*
*8) valutazione secondaria: l'altro diventa indispensabile;*
*9) relazione con l'altro è reciprocità;*
*10) vivere la complessità* (Mangano, 2010a, p.99).

### 3.1.1c During the exam

Further outcomes related to the students' awareness emerge at the exam, in which they summarize their understanding of the course.

During the exam session of 2010-2011, for instance, one mature Italian religious student in the first year explained his choice to help his colleagues during the whole course, as he immediately recognized "the potentialities of a transdisciplinary approach", as he said, and wished the same for his peers. At the conclusion of the exam he stated: "I was impressed by the audacity of these philosophers of dialogue. I would never have imagined that a thinker could propose such a revolutionary approach to the other. I felt brought by them to unbelievable peaks of the mountains[38]" (Mangano, 2015a, p. 81).

In the same class, another Italian mature lay student in the first year during the exam described the oral presentation of her group as "a nightmare", because she was in panic. But her colleagues "really practiced hospitality" towards her, as she noted, thus they completed the presentation. She referred to this moment as "important" for the group for having created "a foundation for dialogue among them".

Many students expressed at the exam their gratitude towards their group's peers for what they shared during their work. The effort for meeting the other in the group was a challenge, especially as they were requested to learn how working together, but many students considered this experience as "the first step towards the awareness of dialogue as a space of relationship", as most noted. A second year Dominican Republic religious student, for instance, at the exam thanked his Italian peer in his work group, a mature lay student of the second year: "It was a very hard course. But it taught me a lot, useful for life. I have also to thank my Italian colleague who taught me what giving hospitality means. She was a home for me[39]" (Mangano, 2015a, p. 81).

The exam sometimes interests other students at the Institute, although they did not attend my courses. During the session, in fact, I generally keep the door closed, but I post a card which invites other to enter and to join the session. In the session of the philosophical class of 2012-2013, one Slovak religious student of the first year of theology followed this invitation and attended some peers' exams. At the end of the session, he asked me if

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[38] *Mi ha colpito molto l'audacia degli autori della filosofia del dialogo. Non avrei mai immaginato che un filosofo potesse proporre qualcosa di così rivoluzionario e straordinario nell'approccio con l'altro. Mi sono sentito portato da loro a vette impensate.*

[39] *È stato un corso davvero impegnativo. Ma mi ha insegnato molto, utile per la vita. Devo ringraziare la mia collega italiana che mi ha insegnato il significato di dare ospitalità. È stata casa per me.*

he might thank the class for the "deep moment of dialogue" he could experience: "I read the notice on the door and I was curious, as I heard about this course, but I did not know anything about transcultural dialogue. Now I may say to have discovered something more: I like it[40]".

At the session of 2014-2015, an Italian working student in her first year came with her husband and asked to me if he could join her examination, as she was among the first and was scared. I welcomed her husband at the beginning of the session and introducing him to the class, and I invited him to stay all the time that he liked. He attended the whole session, and listened to every student with growing attention and interest. After the last examination, he wished to share also his sensations for being "at home", as he said: "I would like to thank everybody for this incredible morning. I know in advance many details of the course, as my wife shared it at home almost every day, thus, somehow, I attended to it as well[41]". He briefly shared to have lost his job in those days, and, for this reason, he had a free morning, but he could not imagine to live such "involving time", as he defined it: "Now it seemed to me to know all of you, and I would like to return the hospitality you offered to me with my gratefulness, this experience encourages me also in this hard moment[42]." His wife answered to the questions I proposed for preparing the exam with a written text, and she printed a copy for all the students as her "last written contribution to the course", as she said. She described her awareness' evolution during the course and her effort, especially in "giving a challenge to the other", during the work group. She described her fatigue on talking in front of their colleagues, during the oral presentations, as she always felt "inadequate". At the end of this "marathon", as she defined the course, she noted her surprise in realizing "new sides" of herself which ignored, and "potentials" which might practice "to help the others".

Over these years, many students proposed the mark which they should deserve at the end of the exam as the final element of evaluation of their involvement in the course.

At the course of 2012-2013, for instance, a religious Italian student in the second year, who was the best in his class and helped many colleagues, concluded his exam by

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[40] *Ho letto il cartello fuori dalla porta ed ero curioso, perché ho sentito parlare di questo corso, ma non sapevo nulla del dialogo transculturale. Ora posso dire di aver scoperto qualcosa in più: mi piace.*

[41] *Vorrei ringraziarvi per questa mattinata incredibile. Conoscevo i dettagli del corso, perché mia moglie me li racconta quasi ogni giorno, quindi, in qualche modo, ho seguito il corso anche io.*

[42] *Ora mi sembra di conoscervi tutti e vorrei ricambiare l'ospitalità che mi avete riservato con il mio grazie, questa esperienza mi incoraggia, anche in un momento duro per me.*

proposing for him the lowest mark. He felt "still very far and inadequate" from the idea of otherness proposed by the philosophers of dialogue, and he realized to need to work "hard" in this direction, as he said.

In the class of 2014-2015, an Italian religious student in the second year made an "experiment", as he defined it at the end of the session, when he revealed to me the backstage and his intent. The day before the exam, on the online forum, he posted a note in which he complained the whole course, by considering it "useless and too heavy for being an optional course". Furthermore, as it is not proposed in other pontifical universities, he suggested to remove it, because it took time to the mandatory courses, "crucial" for their education and training as religious students. He added that it was actually "useless" to teach dialogue to the religious students, as most of them were already "competent" on it, as they received this training in their religious community. I was surprised by this message, considering his great involvement and participation during the whole course, and by the tone, which he did not use during the course or in our conversations, in class and by e-mail. I decided not to reply, and to wait for his explanation at the exam.

He attended the whole session with interest, and, at his turn, he started from the post on the online forum. He described the reactions of some peers, who privately replied to him that he was risking to compromise his exam with a bad mark, for his "silly feedback", as he reported. He also admitted that these phrases were not by him, but he often heard them out of the lessons. While I was listening to him, I observed the reactions of the students in class: a few of them felt guilty, and some others were surprised. I realized that this student was "testing the dialogue", as then he confirmed me at the end of the session. He was assuming the risk also of a negative evaluation, to inform me that some students did not appreciate the course, although they did not admit it at the exam, and without mentioning them. He wanted to test also my reaction, therefore he used the same offensive tone of them on the post, although they concealed it at the exam. I understood his "experiment", and replied to him and to the class that my teaching design cannot be imposed, therefore, in every course I "assume the risk" that the other may refuse this approach to dialogue. When we remained alone, this student thanked me: "It has been an

uncommon exam, which taught me a lot, also on some colleagues of mine. I knew that you would have understood, for this reason I assumed this risk[43]".

### 3.1.2 Analysis of findings for the philosophical bachelor's degree

I now describe the details of the course on transcultural dialogue, in particular, how and why I developed the program, the keywords, the structure, and the sense of each assignment requested to the students. These aspects allow to understand the meaning of the findings drawn from this course.

### 3.1.2a The course: program, keywords and structure

Since the first course for the philosophical bachelor's degree, in the academic year 2009-2010, I have been proposing it as a transdisciplinary approach to dialogue among cultures. In particular, I took inspiration from the article 10 of the *Charter of Transdisciplinarity* (section 1.4): "the transdisciplinary dialogue is 'inherently' transcultural". I hypothesized that also the transcultural approach to dialogue might be "inherently" transdisciplinary, and that these two perspectives might integrate each other in a mutual relationship.

I based the course on this hypothesis, and I began to develop a unique approach to academic teaching, transcultural and transdisciplinary, mediated by the philosophy of dialogue, which considers dialogue as a space of relationship. I started to investigate the effects and the implications of this perspective on this course, then, I applied it to all the courses, either for the philosophical-theological Institute, or in CSR experiences.

From the beginning, I have proposed the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue with the intent to involve the students in establishing a space of relationship among, across and beyond their cultures and disciplines in class. Therefore, they were requested to concretely contribute to this teaching design, which I developed as a theoretical and practical approach to dialogue.

I chose three keywords on which I centred the course, which were intended to guide the students in the creation of dialogue: "otherness", "hospitality" and "reciprocity". I associated each of them with the perspective of three contemporary philosophers who investigated them within the philosophy of dialogue: Emmanuel Lévinas for "otherness",

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[43] *È stato un esame fuori dal comune, che mi ha insegnato molto, anche su alcuni colleghi. Sapevo che avrebbe capito, per questo ho rischiato.*

Jacques Derrida for "hospitality" and Martin Buber for "reciprocity". Although their philosophical inquiry also explored other themes, in this course I focused on their contributions to these topics. I chose these terms as three nuances of the same topic: the relationship with the other. Three sides of the same coin, we would say, which integrate with each other and are connected. They also relate to daily life and, more broadly, to existence: the one of the authors who investigated them, and ours, as students and teacher. Therefore, the approach to these terms implies the need to explore these authors' lives, which may not be separated from their thought and writings. Furthermore, their life goes together with their study, thus, it combines a theoretical and practical approach to these themes, as I propose to the students.

Like Buber (section 1.1), Lévinas and Derrida also left their native countries and moved abroad, both of them to France: Lévinas from Lithuania, and Derrida from Algeria. Thus, all of them spent most of their lives far from their home country, and had to work, talk and write in a non-native language. They described this existential condition of exile as the necessary requirement to understanding the other's need. Furthermore, all of them were close to Jewish culture and religion (especially Buber and Lévinas), in addition to the ancient Greek and Latin, thus, they also are "in between" (Bernreuter, 2000, para.1) as Anglo-European and non-Anglo-European authors. In a way, therefore, their philosophical approach may be considered "transcultural", even if they did not use this term, because it required them to work between, across and beyond their own multiple cultures, religions and beliefs, education, and sensibility.

I chose these authors with a twofold aim: introducing the students to the philosophy of dialogue, through philosophers who investigated what they lived, and vice versa, who used what they studied in their lives. This also implies asking students to try to encounter them, through their life and work, in order to be able to understand their thought. Furthermore, they may learn from them that life and study may be not separated and are related, not only in their program of study. For this reason, the philosophical perspective adds to the cultural and the disciplinary ones in this teaching design, based on the theoretical and practical approach.

The assignments requested of the students during the course allow their gradual improvement in achieving this awareness: first the individual work, which allows them to explore the meaning of the term "otherness" by approaching an author on their own as

"other from them". Then, they investigate the term "hospitality" in group work, with peers drawn from different cultures, by trying to experience and to practice it. Finally, another individual assignment, but on an author of a different culture, therefore, their study of "relationship" implies the choice to give hospitality to the author and to move into dialogue with her/him.

I chose this order for presenting these three keywords to allow an increasing awareness among the students of the meaning of the relationship with the other. Over the years, I have observed that the students might better understand and practice this path towards otherness with a similar order, but these terms are related and each of them integrates with the other two.

### 3.1.2b Students' assignments

*First assignment*

The first contribution requested of the students is an individual work on the keyword "otherness". Especially for the students in the first year, it is often their initial experience, either in terms of academic writing, or in terms of presenting their own work in front of their colleagues. Their practice of otherness, therefore, is with the author, with the language (philosophical and often non-native), and with writing and organizing the oral presentation.

I usually reserve the end of the lecture dedicated to this assignment to explain to the students how to prepare their written contribution, by providing them an outline with suggestions for the construction of the written text. They are introductory notes, which cannot be as detailed as those I propose to the young researchers at the CSR courses or schools, but may help the students to organize their written texts. I generally correct their works once or twice, as a way of helping them to improve in terms of their academic writing. When their final versions are ready, I publish them on the e-learning platform, therefore the entire class may read them and get ready for the practice of dialogue.

I dedicate part of the lesson preceding the oral presentation to introducing the students to the sense of our practice of dialogue in class and how to prepare for it. I describe the difference between a dialogue and a discussion, a conversation, or a sharing, and I indicate to them how to construct questions for their peers and how to try to answer, as if we were at an academic conference. Also in this case, I mention a few introductory notions related

to the construction of the oral text and public speaking, which provide them initial training. Then, we dedicate one or two lessons to their oral presentations in class, I usually chair these, and I also try to make students aware of the need to respect the time scheduled for their expositions. This practice of dialogue is new for most students, as they have not presented their work in class in such a way in prior courses. Furthermore, they are usually scared to ask questions of the speaker during the conferences at the Institute, especially the students in the first years. Hence, this exercise may also be useful as a training for dialogue at academic conferences, as described in the example of follow-up with students from different courses at the annual meeting of the Institute (section 3.1.5).

Over the last several years, I have observed that almost all the class understand the requested task for this first assignment, the students generally respect the deadline, and try to present the author or the perspective proposed, through a brief synthesis of the materials proposed, with their cultural contribution, especially the non-Angle-European students. Furthermore, I noted that usually more than the half of the students prepare a slide presentation to present their written composition, and most of them talk in public for the first time. In some cases, a few students have presented their contribution together, especially when they refer to the definitions of "otherness" in their native culture or with a common perspective.


*Second assignment*

The second assignment is focused on the keyword "hospitality", and it is a group project among students of different cultures. It soon appears to the class as a more demanding step from the first assignment, especially as they are requested to work together. This exercise, in fact, is new for most students, as the written homework in other courses is occasional and usually individual. For this reason, this is generally the most involving part for the class, as it is expected to be a join effort: the students are requested to organize within the group, to schedule meetings out of class, to organize the text and to write it together, as well to prepare the oral presentation.

I generally assign the groups and I try to balance them, to allow connections among the students of the first and second year who do not know one another yet, and to mix the more active with the weaker ones. Therefore, this exercise is also crucial for the students in terms of accepting, or not, the proposal of an approach to dialogue as a space of

relationship.

Most students realize the point of this exercise, the invitation to take a step of hospitality towards the other as suggested by Derrida. They understand that several steps of hospitality are requested of them: firstly, towards their group's peers, then, with the authors and the perspectives proposed, thirdly, towards the approach I present to them. Consequently, many of them also comprehend that it is not sufficient to synthesize the essay by Derrida and the materials on the proposed authors, as they are invited to take a further step. And to take it together within the group, for all the steps of the work: the meetings, the writing, the oral presentation, and their dialogue in class. They are asked to take inspiration from the authors and the perspectives I propose, and to try to put them into dialogue, although they belong to different periods and cultural visions and may not have anything in common. This implies an attempt to learn about "bridging differences" (Nagda, 2006) among cultures, authors, periods, and perspectives, rather than finding common aspects, which do not necessarily exist. The aim of the exercise, in fact, is to try to practice hospitality, thus to give and (to accept) it to (and from) their colleagues, and the author(s).

Their written text is only an attempt, an experiment, without any certainty as to the result. Furthermore, they may discover that the interpretive key which I proposed may not work, or they need to search and present a new one. For this reason, I ask the students to indicate at the beginning of their text their method of work: how did they prepare the assignment, the positive and negative aspects of their exercise in the group, their opinion about what satisfied them, or not, and to explain both. And I also invite them to indicate, in the conclusions, if they experienced a space of relationship among the several differences they had to bridge, and to describe them. When the students understand the meaning of this exercise, and decide to expose themselves, the group frequently works in harmony, with interest and involvement, although this takes effort, and sometimes even "emotion" or "excitement", as some have noted over the years. Otherwise, if the group considers this assignment simply as one of the requirements needed to pass the exam, they usually miss the goal, and their contribution is weak, as the result of a confused or insufficient work among them.

It may also happen that the group is divided, with one (or more) student who does not want to challenge to the others, for many reasons: cultural or linguistic burdens,

intellectual or personal limits, laziness, and, above all, the idea that the other peers may supply their lack. This division inside the group generally appears within a few days: they decide to be in touch by chat or email, preferring not to "waste their time" to meet in person, as some of them noted. They may decide to "optimize their time", as someone said, by working separately on their own part, and they often take for granted that the Italian member of the group will collect the parts and correct the final version. In other cases, the group is not able to solve their conflicts, which are frequently cultural or personal, and they ask me for help.

Over these years of teaching, we have experienced all these situations in class: often the half of the class enjoyed this exercise without pain. In this case, the students offer (and receive) hospitality to (and from) the others. Their reactions are usually enthusiastic, they share them by e-mail, in the online forum, in class, during the oral presentation, sometimes also with other colleagues of the Institute, and at home, or with the religious community, as they have often told me. They realize, in fact, that they are able, together, to effectively create a space of relationship among themselves, their cultures, the authors and the perspective proposed to them. They frequently experience a deeper awareness of dialogue, which encourages them, and they feel more involved in the rest of the course.

The second half of the class, usually, experience a suffering, conflicted and hard exercise of group work, which they often overcome, although sometimes they do not. The groups capable of going beyond the difficulties complete the written composition with much effort and often late, and present it to the class sometimes at the final exam. This fatigue generally results in an increased awareness in these students, who usually share this path of understanding, as it leads them to discover new sides of themselves, and to capitalize on this experience for the future. However, a few of them cannot - or do not want to - go beyond the effort, confusion and conflict within the group, they feel upset and sometimes give up. Moreover, some of them feel responsible for the group's failure, by considering it as a personal one. Finally, some others simply carry on, as they do not realize - or do not care about - the consequence of this failure, for themselves, the group and also the design of the course.

*Third assignment*

The third contribution is an individual assignment on the keyword "reciprocity", for which the students are requested to approach an author drawn from a different culture. They may use the references already proposed in class for the previous assignments, or search for their own. They are suggested to refer to Buber's essay, and to base their work on the relationship between the authors (Buber and the one of a different culture) using the perspective of the "I-Thou" relationship (Buber, 1937, section 1.1.1.3). The aim of the exercise, therefore, is to allow their further progress towards the awareness of the other, and to try to create a space of relationship also with the author they study. They are, in fact, invited to express if they experience it, and to describe it.

This final exercise is generally considered a positive challenge for the students who have understood its sense and achieved a growing awareness of this curriculum. They feel involved and try to work to the written text with a transcultural, sometimes also transdisciplinary, approach. Furthermore, their improvements in writing and in oral presentation encourage them, and they generally conclude their contribution by sharing, in class or on the online forum, their achievements and joy. Over the past several years, I have noted that more than the half of the class follows this trend.

Furthermore, the students who made substantial effort in their group work, and decided to support the whole weight of the assignment, as their concrete application of the term "hospitality" towards their colleagues, realize the sense of a mutual relationship in this assignment, when they study the term "reciprocity". In fact, they often decide to approach the authors of the culture of their group's member, to better know it and with the aim, and as someone said, to also better understand these peers.

Instead, the students who have failed in the previous assignment often work on the third composition with two main attitudes: some try to recover and to take advantage of this last opportunity, especially as they fear the mark at the exam; others lose this chance, as they do not feel involved or interested in the proposed approach.

In a few cases, they do not complete this assignment and experience an example of "mismeeting" (Friedman, 1988, p. 5), as I explain to them, not only with author or with this teaching design, but with themselves, as they have lost an occasion to go in depth.

### 3.1.3 For the theological bachelor's degree

The main challenge for the students at the theological class is the group project, for which they are requested to apply the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue to the seminar's theme. They often concretely experience the situations we describe in class (suffering, crisis and conflict), they try to inhabit and to walk through them, with the aim to overcome them.

The findings, therefore, first refer to the group assignment, in particular to the topic choice, then, to the students' increasing involvement in presenting their cultural and disciplinary perspectives. Furthermore, I present the main findings related to their cultural burdens and personal wounds, as examples of their increasing understanding of the content and the approach, which helps them to overcome some challenges.

Finally, I present the main outcomes drawn from the students' contributions, either as content which complements the list of the keywords, or derived from their exams.

### 3.1.3a Group assignment

Since the first lessons in the seminar during the academic year 2014-2015, most students started to think about the group's composition and to plan their work, as they were requested to decide them autonomously. They made four groups, and two of them soon developed the ability to work in harmony and with reciprocal interest. Both chose to investigate one of the topics proposed during the seminar, a contemporary reading of the theology of the Cross, which takes inspiration from the original contribution by Martin Luther. The two groups examined this theme from different perspectives: one worked on the meaning of the term "reconciliation" according to a social point of view drawn from the Argentinean, Polish and Italian visions; another focused on the Catholic Church's orientation towards human suffering, in particular in relation to the poor of their countries, Brazil, Nigeria, and Italy.

The other two groups took more time to determine their topic and organize their work: one was oriented to the theology of the Cross as well, in the attempt to present God's pain as a result of His passion for humanity, according the Christian perspective, with two African examples of suffering, drawn from the students' countries, Ghana and Guinea Bissau; the fourth group chose to explore a philosophical view on suffering, which took

inspiration from the cultural perspectives of the students drawn from Ghana, South Korea and Italy.

The first two groups soon realized the sense of this exercise, and they felt involved in their topic, they became friends and spent also time out of class and during breaks to talk about the works. Both of them noted they "enjoyed" it. In particular, the first group focused on the meaning of "reconciliation" especially with the past, through examples related to the second world war, in Argentina and in Poland, and in the writing of the Italian Constitution, as examples of the "politics of reconciliation".

The second group "worked with passion on a work on God's passion[44]", as they stated at their oral presentation. Their effort, in fact, was on trying to approach some documents of the Italian Catholic Church on suffering as a social condition, thus to read them with "the eyes of the poor", as they said. This also compared these documents with the ones proposed by the Latin-American and Nigerian Catholic Churches.

Both groups achieved the task of working together in an attempt of putting into dialogue different disciplinary and cultural perspectives related to the theme of the seminar and to the approach proposed. Their written compositions required only a few corrections, then they presented them in class, the first with a slide presentation made together, and respecting the scheduled time, the second without it and in a longer presentation.

The third and fourth groups worked with more pain, as not all the students put forth the same effort and, especially in the last group, not all of them understood the sense of this assignment. These two groups did not complete the work in three lessons, as they took too much time to understand each other and to find an agreement on the work's plan.

Therefore, they preferred to write it separately and to share their work by email, but the result was weak.

In the third group, in particular, the perspective of the Christian approach to God's pain made by the Italian student did not match with the African examples of suffering, which were centered mainly on the current problems of Ghana and Guinea Bissau. The Italian student tried to involve his peers in a deeper investigation using a theological perspective, rather than social or cultural, but they could not achieve it, and he felt upset.

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[44] *Abbiamo lavorato con passione a un testo sulla Passione di Dio per l'umanità, cercando di leggere i documenti della Chiesa Cattolica con gli occhi dei poveri.*

Also in the fourth group the students experienced misunderstanding and conflict, especially between the Ghanaian religious student and the Italian one, a lay woman. The third member of the group, a religious student from South Korea, made the biggest effort: he tried to put them into dialogue and to find a compromise to solve their conflict, for the whole work, and also during the oral presentation, but with poor results. Nevertheless, he did not give up, and his effort was probably the most important achievement of their group.

Also during the 2010-2011 seminar some students were interested in the theology of the Cross as an interpretive key for their group work, and this perspective influenced two compositions of five. None of them explored it directly, as the groups oriented towards other topics related to global crisis: the ecological (two of them) and the social (one of them) definition of crisis. Two other groups took inspiration from the speakers' contribution and investigated on the meaning of "crisis of beauty", and "crisis in communication" in a sociological perspective related to the students' cultures.

Among these five groups, three completed the work and achieved the tasks, while two groups presented an incomplete assignment, as a result of disagreements and conflicts among the members of these groups. This disappointment risked compromising their work, and, above all, their relationships, but, in both groups, the support of other peers was decisive to soften this difficulty.

Finally, during the 2013-2014 seminar, the five groups oriented their choices of topics related to inter- and trans-cultural, and sociological perspectives serving as the basis of the encounter with the other. Each group explored one of these keywords: "gift", "conflict", "the other", "the diverse", and "hospitality". Four groups completely achieved this task, while the fifth presented a weak result, due to little collaboration among the members, who preferred to write separately, as they could not complete the assignment during the scheduled lessons.

### 3.1.3b Cultural and personal wounds

The students in the theological class experienced a growing awareness of their cultural wounds, as did their peers in the philosophical class. For some of them, in particular, the seminar provided the occasion to walk through them. I also describe an attempt of walking

through personal wounds which interested some professors involved in the seminar, in addition to the students.


*Cultural wounds*

Most students who attended the seminar in the academic year 2013-2014 associated one of the keywords proposed, "conflict", with fight: for the independence from European colonialism (especially for the ones from Central and South America, India, and Zambia), against Russia (for the Polish student), and for the recent civil wars (for the students from Burundi and Sierra Leone).

The student from Burundi, in particular, proposed, prepared and presented in class a lesson dedicated to the genocide in his country, which was the most involving moment of the seminar (Mangano, 2014a, 2015b). He was a religious student who was a child in 1993, at the time of the genocide, and lived in Burundi with his family. They survived the genocide, but he had never shared his experience during the following twenty years.

A few weeks after the beginning of the seminar, during the break and out of the classroom, while we were talking with him and two other students, he mentioned "the civil war" in his country, as he initially called it. I asked more, and he revealed to us his original ethnic group, Tutsi, and told us about the genocide, which is generally unknown in most part of the world, and followed the one in Rwanda of 1992. He had never talked about it since his arrival in Italy, and, for this reason, he preferred not to mention it during the first lesson of the seminar, when he introduced himself to the class as a student from Burundi, without adding further details. When the break was over, we were astonished. I soon wrote to these three students, thanking the Burundian one for that deep sharing, and I suggested to them to watch *Hotel Rwanda*, a United States movie made in 2004 and dedicated to the genocide in Rwanda, as an introduction to this theme. I also shared this episode with the professor with whom I co-chaired that seminar, and I propose that we watch this movie in class, in an additional optional lesson out of the program of study. He agreed.

The Burundian student replied the same day with a further proposal: "I would be glad to share my experience in class, because it is necessary that the people know and become aware of the genocide. The lack of freedom of expression, and of dialogue, was the main

reason from this catastrophe[45]" (personal communication by e-mail, October, 28, 2013).
After a few weeks, he prepared a one-hour lecture on his own, and we dedicated the second hour to dialogue in class. I introduced this lesson, by briefly sharing its origin, and I showed the trailer of the movie, as I preferred to leave all the time to this student. He prepared a slide presentation, in which he first introduced the political, cultural and social aspects underlying the genocide, then he shared his story as "a gift to the class", not in revenge, as he specified. He chose not to show any pictures of the genocide, and he carefully chose the words to describe those days.

At the beginning of his presentation, he quoted in Italian a Burundian proverb, which refers to the difficulty of facing the past: "If you enter in a forest which you do not know, you risk taking a medicinal herb that you do not know[46]". He was sharing his story for the first time "aloud, no longer in my heart and mind", and he added that his parents have never talked about the genocide since 1993. He added that his wound was "still huge, also after twenty years, and sometimes I am afraid that it will bleed forever. I do not know if my interior conflict will end, one day[47]". As he was preparing to become a priest, he concluded: "I like to think that my vocation was born after those days, when we left the refugee camp and returned to our town[48]".

The dialogue of the second hour was made up of silence and tears, in addition to words. Many students wished to return to him their gratefulness, even if they hardly could speak. Some of them found the words in writing, on the online forum and by e-mail, in the following days, and they shared their strong appreciation for that lesson. He told me that he felt "deeply" understood by his colleagues and "free to express himself", as he considered the relationships established in class to be "true".

The student from Sierra Leone and the four from Zambia did not attend this lesson. Some of them informed me in advance, and shared that the wounds for that war were still open in them, and they were not able to walk through them yet. Furthermore, the student from

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[45] *Sarei contento di raccontare questa esperienza in classe, perché è necessario che le persone sappiano del genocidio. La mancanza della libertà di espressione e di dialogo che ha preceduto quella catastrofe è stata tra le cause maggiori di tutto questo.*

[46] *Se entri in una foresta che non conosci, rischi di raccogliere un'erba medicinale che non conosci.*

[47] *La ferita è ancora profonda, dopo vent'anni, e a volte penso che sanguinerà per sempre. Non so se il mio conflitto interiore finirà.*

[48] *Mi piace pensare che la mia vocazione sacerdotale sia nata in quei giorni, quando lasciammo il campo profughi per tornare nella nostra città.*

Sierra Leone remembered also the civil war in his country, and he was not ready to again face "that nightmare", as he told me.


*Personal wounds*

During the 2014-2015 seminar, the class and the speakers had the opportunity to concretely experience the chosen theme, suffering.

At the beginning of the academic year, in fact, one teacher at the Institute died in a tragic incident. He was 48 years old, and was an Italian scholar of contemporary philosophy as well as a priest, who had been teaching at the Institute since 2009. He was teaching his courses for the philosophical class in that period.

The news devastated all of us, especially the students who had attended, and were attending, his courses, in addition to the teachers. The three speakers involved in this seminar and I were his colleagues, and we arrived at the Institute at the same period, the academic year 2008-2009. One of the speakers, in particular, used to be the Head of the Institute at that time, and was the one who invited this professor to teach, thus they were friends.

The day after this news, the scheduled lesson was to be dedicated to the philosophical perspective on suffering, open to all the students of the theological bachelor's degree, and the speaker who used to be the Head of the Faculty was to have presented that lecture. I informed the speakers, and it soon seemed to us that the lesson of the following day might be decisive for the students, so we felt called to give them hope and trust, and to talk about existence, just as life ended. I proposed to them to turn our lesson into a tribute to this professor, by reading an excerpt from one of his articles. He used to study Jewish contemporary philosophers, such as Emmanuel Lévinas, Franz Rosenzweig and Hannah Arendt. I chose a quotation by Hannah Arendt, on whom he had prepared his doctoral dissertation, and we proposed the same sentence also for the card we prepared for his funeral. Then, I posted a message on the online forum, for all the students of my courses, and also sent it to those from previous years, to share what we were experiencing together. Another speaker involved in the seminar, the scholar of the theology of the Cross, attended that session, which was shorter than usual, as jointly with all the students and the professors of the Institute we dedicated a moment of prayer to this professor at the end of the morning.

Most students in the seminar class shared their comments on the forum online after this class, and I received some feedback also from alumni, and from the philosophical class.


### 3.1.3c Keywords derived from the students' contributions

For the theological class the students provided their cultural contributions to the content, as for the philosophical course, with keywords suggested by them, which complemented the list I proposed in class (Mangano, 2012, pp 41-44).

The definition of "encounter" and "relationship", according to the concept of "African thinking", for instance, derived from some Zambian religious students in the 2010-2011 course. According their native culture, Bemba, the community is a relational category, which does not refer to space or time. The relationship is based on reciprocal respect and appreciation, and it enforces mutual estimation. It is considered a gift, in Bemba *ubupe,* which implies a free exchange, among persons at the same level, as pairs.

The individual exists because she/he communicates with the other, therefore she/he may meet, talk, listen to, and live as she/he is related to the other. Two Bemba proverbs clarify this view: *Apashili icitente tapaba bumi,* which means: "Where there does not exist community, there cannot be life", and *Ushilanda nabantu ci tumbi,* which may be translated as: "Whoever does not communicate with the other is dead".

In Bemba traditional villages, in particular, this second proverb is used especially in the education of the youths, which is a central activity, and is generally conducted by the elders, who are respected and honored. There is a specific place of the village dedicated to the youths' education called *Insaka,* literally "the place of the encounter". This term indicates the space in which the dialogue among the sages and the youths takes place.

This praxis aims to provide educational tools to the youths, who may become aware of the traditional Bemba values, and, far more broadly, of the basic values of existence, according to "African thinking". *Insaka* is not based, therefore, on the practical issues of daily life, and it is generally an oral interaction, which is enriched by stories, legends, myths and proverbs, in addition to rhetorical questions addressed to the youths. This dialogue is mediated also by nonverbal communication, which enforces the message through looks, smiles and gestures exchanged among the young and the old.

*Insaka*, and, consequently, dialogue, are basic for the community, according to "African thinking", and there cannot be life without relationship. There are, in fact, two Bemba

terms for indicating the individual as a singular person: *umuntu*, as previously mentioned (section 3.1.1b), when the person is lonely but is still part of the community, and *uwacifo,* which refers to the one who chooses to leave the community and to renounce to relationship. She/he is an isolated person, who cannot live, or survive, as victim of *ukukanacetekela*, the Bemba term for "mistrust".

A religious student from Chile also belonged to the same class, and he proposed the term "trust" according to an indigenous culture to which he was close, the Mapuche. This name indicates either the people (literally, the "people" - *che* - of the "earth" - *mapu*), or the native language, also known as Mapudungun (from *mapu* – "earth, land" -  and *dungun* – "speak, speech"). The Mapuche are the original inhabitants of the area between central and southern Chile and southern Argentina. They are currently present in this area as an ethnic minority, still dedicated to agriculture and tradition, but in poverty. In the Mapuche language, "trust" is *fétaluwn,* a term similar to the verb "to confide", which indicates the capacity to receive hope, support and courage from the other, whoever is close to us.

In this list of keywords proposed by the students, I also include the contribution of an Italian religious student who attended the same seminar with the Zambian and Chilean students. He worked on the group's composition with some Zambian students and they experienced the "crisis of the crisis", as they called it, thus, the lack of dialogue in the group, as they initially did not get prepared for it. Therefore, they proposed a path of five steps on getting ready for dialogue, as a result of their effort to achieve it and to complete the assignment. He summarized these steps as follows:

1) Save the time for meeting;

2) do not impose your own idea (aim, tools, strategy);

3) compare all the elements (perspectives, authors, study, and ideas);

4) keep a space for dialogue during all the time, without dominating the other's ideas and contributions;

5) get prepared for the meeting, do not presume to improvise, and do not take for granted that the other gets prepared[49] (Mangano, 2015b).

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[49] *Prima cosa da salvaguardare è il tempo dell'incontro e la seconda di non imporre la propria idea (obiettivi, strumenti, strategia). Terza cosa il confronto su prospettive, autori, studio e idee, quarto, mantenere un ambiente di dialogo, senza sopraffare l'altro con le nostre idee e contributi. Quinto, bisogna arrivare preparati al dialogo, senza improvvisare e dare per scontato che ci abbia pensato l'altro.*

He also referred to his experience in his group for the philosophical class, in particular to Buber's requirement for "genuine dialogue": "The chief presupposition for the rise of genuine dialogue is that each should regard his partner as the very one he is" (Buber, 1965, p. 79).

Since then, I have mentioned these five steps when I propose group work to students, whether in the courses at the Institute, or in CSR teaching experiences.

Another contribution to the keywords derived from the students comes from the 2013-2014 seminar. An Italian religious student, the one who thought he deserved the lowest mark on the exam in the course on transcultural dialogue, provided his definition of the term "conflict". It was based on the sense I had proposed in class and derived from its etymology. I briefly describe this definition, which permits understanding this student's contribution.

The sense of the Latin *cum fligere*, is "to hit, to strike" and is similar in French (*conflit*) and in Italian (*conflitto*). In Italian, furthermore, the term for "conflict" in the sense of "disagreement" is *scontro,* which has the same Latin preposition *cŏntra* of the word "encounter" (in Italian *incontro,* in French *rencontre,* in Spanish *encontrar).* *Cŏntra* means "in front of", but also "against". Therefore, the sense of "encounter" is "to stay in front of the other", hence also against her/him. It means that the meeting, or the discovering, of the other often implies a fight, a disagreement, with her/himself or with ourselves, as the other is someone different from us, "other from us", according to the Latin etymology.

The German language describes this double meaning of the Latin *cŏntra* (in front and against the other while we meet her/him) with the term *Auseinandersetzung*, which indicates "conflict, disagreement". It is a composite word consisting of three parts: *Aus* (like *ex* in Latin, "out"), *Einander* (which means "together, reciprocally") and *Setzung* (literally "set, put in a place, settled"). The sense of this term is "to remain in front of the other in a fixed position", thus, without moving any step towards her/him: we are actually "out" of the relationship, hence also far from the opportunity for an agreement with the other.

After the lesson in which I presented this definition, this student posted on the online forum an image to describe his idea of the encounter with the other, as a result of the

interior conflict which it often produces, starting from the analysis of the German term *Auseinandersetzung:*

> I imagine a large square, with many people sitting down along the verge. There is only a lamp in the middle of the square, but it is not enough to give light to all the people, who are in the dark, sitting down and inert. Everybody presumes to be heard by the other, who sits at the opposite side of the square. Therefore, they scream: the result is only darkness and deafening noise in the square. Nobody wants to move, or stand up and go towards the other, because it would imply to reach the light, in the middle of the square: everybody fears to show to the other how she/he is in depth, in the light, as she/he would feel bare in front of the others. Until we trust in the other and move towards her/him in the light, we will continue to scream in the dark[50] (post on the online forum of November 5, 2013) (Mangano, 2015b).

**3.1.3d During the exam**

For the theological class, the students who attended the course on transcultural dialogue are already prepared for an exam as a further occasion of dialogue. Furthermore, for some students it provides the opportunity to synthesize their understanding and involvement in this curriculum, which they discovered as part of the philosophical class, or, in some cases, during the preliminary year.

At the exam for the seminar of the academic year 2010-2011, for instance, an Italian religious student defined their group experience as "the most surprising and beautiful" of the whole semester. He was impressed by the immediate "communion" among them, as he called it, which he never felt before in a group assignment. He compared this experience with the one for the philosophical class, and admitted to have done almost all the work in that case. This student encouraged the class of the seminar with weekly posts on the online forum and offered his help to the other groups for completing their work. He was also the one who, during the exam of transcultural dialogue, proposed his path of

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[50] *Immagino una piazza grande con tante persone sedute ai bordi. C'è solo una luce nel mezzo, ma non basta a illuminare tutti, che sono al buio, seduti e fermi. Ognuno pretende di essere ascoltato dall'altro, che siede dalla parte opposta della piazza. Quindi tutti gridano. Il risultato è solo oscurità e un rumore assordante nella piazza. Nessuno si muove, o vuole alzarsi e andare incontro all'altro, perché vorrebbe dire raggiungere il centro della piazza ed esporsi alla luce: ognuno ha paura di mostrarsi in profondità all'altro, perché si sentirebbe nudo di fronte all'altro. Finché non proveremo a fidarci l'uno dell'altro e a muoverci verso di lui, alla luce, continueremo a gridare, nell'oscurità.*

ten steps towards the discovery of the other (section 3.1.1c). At the end of the exam at the seminar, he left to the class something to think about, his definition of the term "crisis": "Everything that compromises and obstructs the integral humanism[51]." He joined all the exam sessions, with another Italian religious student, the one who proposed the five steps necessary to be prepared for dialogue (section 3.1.3c). They remained until the end of the session to thank me for the "huge contribution" that the philosophical and the theological classes gave to "their life", as one of them said.

At the same exam session, three groups presented their work, therefore these students took the exam together. During their oral presentation, the contentious atmosphere emerged and influenced some of their sharing. One Zambian religious student apologized to the class for their group experience, and thanked the Chilean colleague who helped them to prepare the slide presentation, although he was not member of their group. One Haitian religious student strongly complained about my evaluation of him, as he disagreed with the mark I proposed. His Zambian peer's group, which received the same evaluation, apologized for him, and explained, in front of the class, why in his opinion they deserved it, as they had needed to do much more.

Another religious Haitian student felt guilty during the exam, and their group oral presentation was confused. He understood my evaluation, and remained in silence with downcast eyes, in front of his peers, when they shared the story of their work. At the end of the exam, he compared this experience with the one for the philosophical class, and he recognized that he could have done much more for the seminar's group.

The third group's oral presentation was better than their written composition, as they prepared it with care, but one religious Zambian student, during the evaluation of his involvement through the seminar, admitted to not having given enough chances to his peers' group. For this reason, he preferred to repeat the seminar, in a new edition, as he was not satisfied by his performance, and wished to demonstrate to himself that he would be able to really "walking through the crisis", as he said.

The 2013-2014 seminar was conducted with another professor, and we co-chaired the exam. We asked the students to synthesize their experience with a keyword, drawn from those suggested in class, or a new one, and to explain their choice.

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[51] *Crisi è tutto ciò che compromette e ostacola l'umanesimo integrale.*

A Peruvian religious student chose the term "process", to express her experience during the seminar, which developed inside of her, in class, and in the group. She was aware of having received "a gift", as she defined the course, as it offered the opportunity to better comprehend her choice of life as a Franciscan cloistered nun. Even the cultural richness at the Institute, in class and in the group was "a process" for her, which might be enlightened by a new comprehension of the other. "It may sound strange", she said at the end of the exam, "that I realized my cultural prejudices and interior limits here, by meeting all of you, and not in the monastery, in which I presumed to be open and free. It is a work in progress, then[52]." She kept the class united and supported all the students with modesty and sensitivity, as most of them noted.

A Zambian religious student chose two terms, "diverse" and "other", which summarized his path towards the "reconciliation" with his interior conflict related to cultural and personal wounds. He shared a few details of his childhood and his education at home, then he mentioned the vocation to a religious choice of life, his arrival in Italy, and the study of European philosophy. He also referred to the two courses with me, at the preliminary year and for the philosophical class, as "further steps of this reconciliation". He concluded:

> I may say that Emmanuel Lévinas taught me the meaning of "walking through
> the conflict", especially my interior conflicts, by taking the responsibility of
> the face of the other, any other. He said that it is not important if the other
> does not answer or understand our effort, the call to otherness remains and is
> at the basis of our existence. Also of mine.[53] (Mangano, 2015b)

An Italian religious student proposed a list of keywords which in his opinion might synthesize his experience, in the following order, and explained each of them in relation to the seminar and to his history: "thank you", "seminar", "*chronos* and *kairos*", "gift", and "freedom". He started by thanking all the class, students and teachers, for the "most involving course" he has ever experienced, as he said. Then, he described his increasing

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[52] *Può sembrare strano che abbia scoperto i miei pregiudizi culturali e i miei limiti personali qui, con voi, invece che in monastero, nel quale pensavo di essere aperta e libera. Ho ancora molto lavoro da fare, quindi.*

[53] *Posso dire che Emmanuel Lévinas mi ha insegnato il significato di "attraversare il conflitto", specialmente quello interiore, assumendo la responsabilità del volto dell'altro, di ogni altro. Diceva che non è importante se l'altro risponde o comprende il nostro sforzo, perché l'appello dell'altro resta ed è alla base della nostra esistenza. Anche della mia.*

awareness during the seminar, as his second keyword. He referred to *chronos* as his life "before the religious vocation", and *kairos* as the "new" one, as a Benedictine monk. *Kairos* also referred to this seminar, he thought, especially for his group, which was the "precious gift" of the seminar, and for this reason he chose that as a further keyword.

Finally, he presented the last two terms, related especially to this curriculum. He shared his "increasing awareness", as he attended the course on transcultural dialogue, which he first failed, and, then, the following year, passed. This progressive understanding encouraged him and made him "free". He concluded: "Your proposal is hard as it requests that we accept searching in depth for the sense of our life[54]".

A Polish religious student chose a few verbs to summarize his experience during the seminar: "to be and to remain open" to the other and "to trust" her/him. He described them in relation to his awareness, which increased after the course of transcultural dialogue, of two years before, when he failed. Therefore, from the beginning of the seminar, he intended to capitalize on that experience and soon decided to expose himself and to take advantage from this opportunity. He defined the time shared in his group as "extremely beautiful", and was aware that something inside of him has definitely changed: he learned "to be free", as he said. He concluded by referring to his "coaching" activity, as he called it, during the seminar, in class and on the online forum.

Finally, the Italian religious student who provided his definition of "conflict" by taking inspiration from the German meaning, proposed a feeling, instead of a keyword, which characterized the whole seminar, according to his experience: "tension". He constantly felt this weight during the seminar, and the result was a "contradiction", which was "the *chronos* of the seminar", as he noted, although he appreciated his group, which was "the *kairos* of it". This feeling did not compromise his work during the seminar, but confirmed his opinion as posted on the online forum about the need "to expose ourselves, if we really want to meet the other".

During the 2014-2015 seminar, most students expressed their interest and appreciation for the proposed theme, and the exam was for many of them the occasion to share their "journey" across and beyond suffering, as some of them said. Most referred to their approach to this teaching design from the first lesson, when I asked them to indicate a

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[54] *La sua proposta didattica è dura perché richiede di accettare l'idea di voler cercare in profondità il senso della nostra vita.*

reason for suffering related to their native country or personal history. Some of them began their exam by mentioning this detail and their gradual awareness during the seminar.

The religious Brazilian student described as "excellent" the occasion of dialogue within the his group, as they established a space of relationship based on "completely different" perspectives. He noted that his Latin American culture did not allow him to accept suffering in itself "without trying to solve it", as "it has no sense". This implied for him a progressive "reconstruction" of his belief, during all the course, and with the "hermeneutical help of the theology of the Cross", which impressed him. He felt "continuously provoked" by this perspective, and it gave rise to many questions on a Latin American "practical" theology, as he phrased it, compared with the Italian one.

For an Italian lay student, the major work of the seminar was "inside of her". She shared her choice to start the theological bachelor's degree "almost by chance", as she said, the day before the beginning of the session, during the opening of the academic year. She mentioned our talk, still "by chance", as I sat close to her and we did not know each other. After a degree in philosophy taken years before, it was a hard challenge for her to come back to the books, but she was touched by the familiar atmosphere at the Institute, thus she decided to try. Although the effort was huge, she said, "it was worth it", and her group was a "decisive confirmation", as it offered to her "the unexpected surprise" to experience a friendship with Argentinian and Polish students "at the same time", as she said. She thanked the Polish religious student, as she defined him as a "leader", who did his best to support their peers in class and on the online forum, and to encourage them "to have no fear of suffering", as he used to repeat in class, especially "the one experienced in the work group".

The South Korean student prepared a written outline for the exam, as he wanted to be sure to answer all the questions. He described the steps of his group, which involved him a lot. He felt the responsibility to build bridges among his peers, as he was the only one within the group to know this teaching design, as he attended the courses during the preliminary year and for the philosophical class. He realized "how it may be hard" to work together when we are "so diverse", as he said, and this helped him to better understand the suffering among persons who cannot communicate or comprehend each

other. He concluded that this group's experience and the seminar theme were "helpful for the future".

The Nigerian student thanked the class for having shared this seminar, in which "everything was new and uncommon", as he said, including the exam. He prepared for it, also by practicing for it ahead of time, to improve his Italian, because he "needed to be totally understood", as he said. The group work allowed him to understand the seminar's "deep" meaning, in his words, which implied a step beyond his cultural opinion, especially on suffering. He had the opportunity to know more other's cultures, and this helped him to reconsider his origin, and to enlarge his perspective, in a way that he wishes to remember: "the course continues", as he noted at the end of his exam.

The two Ghanaian students complained about the evaluation I proposed for them, as they felt they had done their best in the group project and during the whole seminar. One of them described in detail his effort in their group, their reciprocal disappointment, also in front of his group's peers. It was an "unsolved conflict", according to him, which hurt him. Also for the other colleague in the group this misunderstanding caused suffering, but none of them shared it before the exam. At the end of the exam session, I proposed to both of them to find an agreement, as they were supposed to attend the bachelor degree together, thus a three years' program of study. Neither of them answered; they remained in silence, with downcast eyes.


### 3.1.4 Analysis of findings for the theological bachelor's degree

Since the first seminar in the theological bachelor's degree, in the academic year 2010-2011, I have been proposing this course as a link between the philosophical program of study and the theological one. Some students in the theological class, in fact, attended the philosophical class, and, someone also the course at the preliminary year, thus they should know the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach. For this reason, I propose the seminar as an application of this method to a theme presented from philosophical and theological perspectives.

I first describe the transdisciplinary traces which I have proposed at the Institute over the years, which explain the program, the theme, the keywords and the structure of the seminar. Then, I outline the meaning of the group assignment requested of the students.

These aspects help to better understand the sense of this teaching design for the theological class and to analyze the findings I present.

### 3.1.4a A transdisciplinary proposal for students and professors

I generally invite scholars drawn from different fields of philosophy or theology to present their disciplinary and cultural perspective to my students. They are frequently colleagues at the Institute, and this proposal also aims to apply a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue among us, as scholars. This aspect, enriched by the human and cultural contribution of different speakers, is unique to the philosophical-theological seminar. It distinguished it from the course for the philosophical program, which is more focused on the creation of a foundation for dialogue among, across and beyond the cultures present in class. At the seminar, therefore, even the professors participate in making this space of relationship, and sometimes they also feel involved in establishing it. The speaker's contribution is typically a one-hour lecture followed by a second hour of dialogue with the students, which allows for combining a theoretical and practical approach to dialogue at the basis of this transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective. I also ask each speaker to share their contribution with the other colleagues, thus the exercise of dialogue starts among ourselves. Furthermore, I invite them to join the preparation of all the steps of these lessons, and to attend, if possible, one another's lectures.

I have been interested to involve scholars drawn from different disciplines in my courses since the beginning of my activity at the Institute, as our cultural and disciplinary background might enrich either the students or ourselves.

At the first course for the preliminary year in 2008-2009, for instance, I prepared a lecture with a colleague for the course on the introduction to the ancient Greek philosophy, and we proposed it as his last lesson. I consider it to have been our first transdisciplinary experiment with this perspective at the Institute.

During the academic year 2009-2010, with other colleagues drawn from different disciplines, we organized the Institute's annual conference and we focused on the notion of "limit", with the title *Identity and hospitality. Between the limit and the desire*. It consisted of a meeting lasting three days, with plenary sessions and workshops. I chaired

one workshop dedicated to an intercultural reading about hospitality, which I described in the proceedings of the annual conference (Mangano, 2010a).

After this experience, I was invited to teach a philosophical-theological seminar at the theological class in the academic year 2010-2011, and I involved two colleagues with whom I had worked on organizing this annual conference. They joined the preparation of the lessons, and we synthesized what emerged during the seminar and after the students' oral presentations in a final roundtable among all the speakers.

The writing of the proceedings of the Institute's annual conference of 2011-2012 was another occasion for practicing interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue among colleagues. I prepared a chapter on the intercultural reading of "trust", the topic chosen for the conference of that year (Mangano, 2012).

The two seminars of 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 provided additional occasions to expand the transdisciplinary dialogue among colleagues. The 2013-2014 seminar, in particular, was a further challenge, as a colleague and I co-chaired it, as previously noted. Therefore, we prepared the whole seminar together, from the theme choice, to the exam: we decided the outline of each lesson and we lectured together in class, we assisted the students during their group time, co-chaired the practice of dialogue, and both attended their oral presentations. Then, we designed the exam jointly, and we decided together the students' evaluation and their mark, according the "transcultural evaluation criteria" (sections 2.3.3c and 3.2.3).

In the 2014-2015 seminar, I involved two colleagues for the first time: one of them, a scholar of biblical theology, taught at the Institute for a few years before moving to Rome, so she could not attend the other speakers' lessons. The second one used to be the Head of the faculty when I started to teach at the Institute, as previously noted, thus, he knew this approach. He could not attend the other speakers' lectures, as he had lesson in the same day and time as the second and third years' students of the theological bachelor's degree. For this reason, we decided to propose his lecture to the seminar for all the students of the three years of the theological bachelor's degree, as formerly described (section 3.1.3b). This lesson, therefore, was an "inter-class" experiment, along with some students who attended my courses in the past.

The third colleague, the scholar of the theology of the Cross, used to lecture at the Institute as well before his retirement. I invited him to the seminar in 2010-2011, therefore he

knew this approach and, for this reason, felt involved in all the steps of its preparation, as we had experience with it a few years before.

### 3.1.4b The seminar: program, keywords and structure

The theme I chose for the seminar was related to an existential condition, designed to move beyond the students' cultures and choices of life, as it characterizes the human condition. For this reason, over these years, I selected topics related to the global crisis, conflict and suffering. The students, in fact, are starting a theological program of study, in particular focused on Christian theology, thus, the philosophical awareness may integrate with the theological one. This comprehension allows them to deepen Jesus' choice to inhabit suffering (and also crisis and conflict), to walk through it, through His cross, and to overcome it, through His resurrection. Therefore, the students may extend the meaning of Christ's cross and resurrection, and deepen the sense of the verbs "to walk through", "to overcome" or "to go beyond", which we analyze during the seminars.

Moreover, this understanding may also expand their awareness of their choice of life, as most of them are religious students, or lay ones who are interested in teaching Catholic religion at school. Therefore, the philosophical and theological approaches to these themes may help them also in their human and spiritual growth as believers.

During these years, I developed the interpretive key for the seminar's proposal starting from a contemporary philosophical perspective of the theology of the Cross, called "theology of failure" (Navone, 1974). I was introduced to this view by the scholar of spiritual theology and Jewish-Christian dialogue who participated in two seminars over the last few years. He used to be the director of a religious community close to Viterbo and some of their religious students pursued the philosophical and theological bachelor's degrees at the Institute. I met him at the beginning of my teaching activity at the Institute, and he explained this perspective of the theology of the Cross to me, as he used to hold a chair in this subject at a pontifical university of Rome. This approach takes inspiration from the original contribution by Martin Luther, according to whom Christ's Cross is the only source of knowledge of God and His salvation. In the contemporary reading of the theology of the Cross, Luther's perspective is enriched by the input of some Christian and Jewish philosophers and theologians. Among them are Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Barth

and Hans Urs von Balthasar (Lippi, 1999) as Christian authors, and Martin Buber, Elie Wiesel, and Emmanuel Lévinas (Lippi, 1996), as Jewish ones.

The "theology of failure" is founded on a paradox: failure is much more common than hope, as it is the most frequent human experience of every time (Navone, 1974). In such vision, even Jesus' life until His death may be considered a failure, because He was imprisoned and executed as an innocent, therefore His message for humanity failed. But, according the "theology of failure", Jesus chose failure and experienced it for His love to God and to mankind, and, for this reason, He transcended it. The failure, therefore, may offer the opportunity to go beyond ourselves, which implies to come back to life: this is the sense of Christ's resurrection. This paradox, therefore, is the one of the Gospel, as well as of God's history. The "theology of failure" and the theology of the Cross are not devoted to the Cross, but to the Crucified, therefore to God. Furthermore, they are embodied in this time, thus in the present, rather than in the past or in an endless waiting for the future, and, for this reason, they belong to one's own existence. Everyone may be involved in this perspective, of every culture and religion, or even those not practicing a faith, as this view is based on the human condition: the one of a God who becomes human, and the one of a human (ourselves) who becomes God through His sacrifice, the Holy Eucharist.

This interpretive key is at the basis of the seminar, and is enriched by the disciplinary perspectives of other colleagues and by the cultural ones offered by the students' contributions. The class generally approaches the "theology of failure" with interest and surprise, as it is an uncommon view and the students usually discover it during this scholar's lecture.

### 3.1.4c Group assignment

Some students already experienced group work in the course on transcultural dialogue, but they soon note the difference. In fact, for the philosophical class this assignment is one of the three requested, with topics and bibliography provided by me, together with indications for the group's composition, and the details for conducting research, writing and preparing an oral presentation. For the seminar, instead, the students are asked to take a further step: planning all the phases of the work on their own and within the group. This freedom of choice (of the topic, of the group's members, of the written composition and

the style of the oral presentation) usually is the hardest challenge for them, given their lack of practice in freedom during their daily lives.

Over the years of this course, many students have experienced some of the challenges which occurred during the group work for the philosophical class, especially the use of a non-native language, the method of study and working within the group. Furthermore, for those students who did not attend my courses in the past, as they come from other philosophical faculties, these challenges are frequent. Some students slowly and with difficulty develop awareness of the connection between the theory and the practice of dialogue among cultures and disciplines, as they are more focused on the group's tasks, specifically the deadline, the time to devote to this work, the bibliography, the assignment and the slides.

Over the past few years, I have observed a similar trend between the classes for the philosophical course and the seminar: almost half of the students comprehend the meaning of the group work, and the potentials and the benefits of these challenges. They commit to this assignment with growing interest, involvement and enthusiasm, which, often, encourage them to achieve a good result. Furthermore, in some cases, the group is so happy for their successes that the students encourage the other colleagues, especially the ones with more difficulties. Then, some other students achieve this awareness, also thanks to their support, and often realize the sense of having chosen to inhabit their crisis, conflict or suffering, individually and in groups.

A few students, often, cannot, or do not want (or care) to, expose themselves in this way, and they limit their contribution and involvement, in class and online. They frequently expect to accomplish a result as part of the group, but they compromise the whole group, and this may provoke disagreements and conflicts among the students. I noted that they are generally three to five students in every class, but, as they are in different groups, their presence may undermine more than one group.

The trend related to the groups' outcomes is common either for the philosophical class or for the theological seminar, and provides evidence of the students' effort in creating a space of relationship among, across and beyond their cultures and disciplines. As they work together, they may also share their achievements and their failures together, and this awareness often increases their involvement in this approach to dialogue. This may provoke the "tension" in the relationships which the Italian religious student observed

during the 2013-2014 seminar. But this "tension", as we seen, is "inherent in and integral to dialogue" (Wood, 2004, p. xvii), and it needs to be negotiated "moment-to-moment" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 231). The constant adjustment in making this space of relationship may determine the "process" of dialogue (Wood, 2004, Broome, 2015), which is a "work in progress", as the Peruvian religious student proposed at the conclusion of her exam in the 2013-2014 seminar.

For many students the awareness achieved during the courses, both for the philosophical and the theological bachelor's degrees, becomes a call to responsibility after the course. In fact, some of them try to apply the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach in other courses, continuing to take advantage of the "benefits" of dialogue, as one student named them.

I present the main follow-ups derived from this call to responsibility, either for the philosophical class, or for the seminar. Furthermore, I describe an example related to the academic year 2014-2015, which involved students from both courses in the organization of a workshop within the Institute's annual conference. This follow-up provides a further indication of the connection between the two courses, which will be more evident in the analysis of the findings for the Institute, presented soon after this section.

### 3.1.5 Further follow-ups for the philosophical-theological Institute

At the end of 2012, I was invited to prepare a short note on my courses at the Institute for the Italian monthly magazine of the religious order which hosts the Institute. With other colleagues, we were collaborating in those years on the development of an e-learning program addressed to the religious communities of this order present in the world. I asked some students who attended my courses if they wished to contribute to this note by providing their definition of "transcultural dialogue". Four students accepted the offer to collaborate and sent me their contribution, which I included in this note (Mangano, 2013b).

An Italian religious student who attended the philosophical class that year, the one who thought he deserved the lowest mark and at the theological class provided his definition of "conflict" and "tension", defined the course on transcultural dialogue as "a laboratory of alterity". In his opinion, it allows students "to overcome the limits due to the prejudices

and false certainties, which often damage the relationship, especially in a religious community". Through the course he discovered the "importance of modesty", which implied "the availability to expose ourselves, to make the first step towards the other and to let the diversity enrich us[55]".

A religious student from Zambia, in the preliminary year, wrote: "Although meeting a new culture implies a huge effort, it is always important to accept it, in my opinion. The relation between diverse cultures, generations, past and present is essential[56]."

Another religious student from Peru, at that time taking the philosophical class, the one who mentioned the term "process" at the seminar, added: "It is beautiful to feel accepted for what we really are, rather than for what we should be. It seems easy, but it implies the fatigue and the beauty of making space for the other[57]".

An Italian religious student in the first year of theology, the one who proposed the five steps for getting prepared for dialogue, referred to transcultural dialogue as "the human person's awakening", which may occur when we search for "the man common to every man", as happened to him. "Maybe you will realize, like me, that you have become more human. If someone told you that you waste your time, with too human dreams, answer like Saint Augustine: 'Wake up, man, God became man for you' (*Dialogue, 85*)[58]."

For some students who attended my courses in the past, such growing awareness implied a commitment to solicit their younger peers to feel involved.

For the 2010-2011 course, for instance, a religious student in the second year of theology, the one who proposed the ten steps towards the encounter with the other, posted a message on the online forum of the course for the philosophical class to encourage the students at the beginning of the academic year: "I suggest to you to feel totally involved by this uncommon experience, as this course not only will give you content, but it will help you

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[55] *Il corso di dialogo transculturale come "laboratorio di alterità", che permette di andare al di là dei pregiudizi e delle false certezze che spesso danneggiano le relazioni, soprattutto nelle comunità religiose. Grazie a questo corso sto scoprendo l'importanza dell'umiltà, intesa come la disponibilità a mettersi in gioco, a fare il primo passo verso l'altro, a lasciarsi arricchire da chi è diverso.*

[56] *Benché la nuova cultura costi molta fatica, è sempre importante accettarla, secondo me. Un rapporto tra le persone di diverse culture, tra le generazioni, tra il passato e presente è fondamentale.*

[57] *È bello sentirsi accolti per quello che siamo e non solo per quello che dovremmo essere. Sembra una cosa semplice ma c'è la fatica e la bellezza di far spazio all'altro.*

[58] *Il dialogo transculturale permette il risveglio dell'uomo. Cercate l'uomo comune ad ogni uomo. Forse vi capiterà, come me, di diventare più uomini. E se vi dicono che perdete tempo con sogni troppo umani, rispondete pure: "Svegliati o uomo: per te Dio s'è fatto uomo" (Sant'Agostino,* Dialogo *85).*

for life…and remember that the Other works through the other![59]" (post on online forum, October, 24, 2011).

Another religious student in the second year of theology, the one who defined transcultural dialogue as "his awakening", on the same forum invited the students "to do your best and to give yourselves a challenge, if you want to survive to this course[60]" (post on online forum, October, 30, 2011).

Furthermore, some students expressed their awareness in a "transcultural way", as one Korean religious student in the second year of the philosophical class told me in 2011. A few months after completing the course, he prepared a slide presentation which synthesized its main topics, according to his understanding and cultural perspective. He chose images and pictures from Seoul to graphically present his intuitions and to thank the class for having supporting him in learning to prepare a slide presentation, and in improving his written and oral Italian.

Some students continued to visit the online forum after the course or even after they completed the bachelor's degree. Sometimes they left a brief message encouraging their peers "to take the course seriously from the beginning", as a Polish religious student in the second year of theology posted in 2015, and as they missed "this attentive dialogue in class and online", as one Italian religious student of theology added. These two students were the ones who presented a list of keywords at the exam of the seminar in the academic year 2013-2014.

Finally, some other students realized the meaning of this curriculum after completing their program of study at the Institute, and wrote me from other universities to share this insight. In 2014, for instance, one student from Zambia, moved to Rome to attend a master's degree in philosophy, and told me a few months after his arrival:

> Only now that I live in an international hall of residence, with people of more
> than 20 cultures of the whole word, I truly understood what you taught me on
> dialogue as a space of relationship, otherness and hospitality. I invited the
> Zambian students that are attending your course now, to feel involved in it,

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[59] *Vi consiglio di farvi coinvolgere totalmente da questa esperienza straordinaria che non soltanto vi offre contenuti ma vi aiuta per la vita… e ricordate che l'Altro lavora attraverso l'altro!*
[60] *Non vi risparmiate se volete uscirne vivi, mettendovi il gioco il più possibile.*

as it is a unique opportunity to learn to dialogue[61] (personal communication, February 26, 2014).

An Italian religious student who moved to Rome in 2015 to complete his bachelor's degree in theology wrote me: "You would feel at home where I live now: everything is transcultural! There are students from everywhere and of every religion. It is so hard to build bridges with some of them. I try to apply what you taught me[62]" (personal communication by e-mail, May 3, 2016).

### *Example of follow-up at the Institute's annual conference*

The Institute's annual conference in 2015 was an opportunity to continue to apply the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue with some students who attended my courses and beyond the in-class sessions. For this reason, I chose it as example of follow-up for both courses.

This annual conference is a meeting of two or three days, generally addressed to the students and the teachers of the Institute, with plenary and workshop sessions dedicated to a theme which is considered from philosophical, theological and cultural perspectives. At the end of the courses in the academic year 2014-2015, the organizing committee of the conference invited me to chair one of the five sessions, dedicated to the theme: *Towards a new humanity through the existential peripheries.* The topic was chosen in view of the Fifth National Ecclesial Convention, which was scheduled for the end of 2015 with the title: *In Jesus Christ the new humanism.* The Institute's annual conference was thought of as a preliminary activity, open to those from the Diocese of Viterbo who would attend this Ecclesial Convention, therefore the topic and the program referenced it.

The sessions of the Institute's annual conference referred to the guideline suggested by the National Ecclesial Conference's board, which proposed five verbs, as different perspectives of analysis of the topic: "to exit", "to announce", "to inhabit", "to educate" and "to transfigure". I was invited to chair the session dedicated to the verb "to inhabit", and we were requested to present it from philosophical and theological points of view.

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[61] *Solo ora che vivo in un collegio internazionale con studenti di tutto il mondo, di oltre venti Paesi, capisco fino in fondo ciò che ci ha insegnato sul dialogo come spazio di relazione, l'alterità e l'ospitalità. Ho suggerito agli studenti zambiani che ha ora di impegnarsi il più possibile durante il corso, perché è un'occasione unica per imparare a dialogare.*

[62] *Ti sentiresti a casa tua qui: tutto è transculturale! Ci sono studenti di ogni dove e di tutte le religioni. Ma è così difficile costruire ponti con alcuni di loro. Provo a mettere in pratica quello che ci hai insegnato.*

I proposed to the board to consider this session as an opportunity to practice a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue with some students who attended my courses, and to continue the "laboratory of dialogue", as I called it, which we experienced at the Institute over the years. My idea was to chair the session together with the students, and I intended to involve those interested in every step of the organization of the session, as protagonists of the conference, rather than as participants.

I proposed this "laboratory of dialogue" to twenty students, who had attended my courses in the past or during the academic year 2014-2015, and I explained the proposal and the topic to them. I wrote them by email, in blind carbon copy, thus they were not influenced by other peers and were free to decide. Eleven of them replied to this email and one answered in person, seven of them accepted to collaborate: four from the philosophical bachelor's degree, and three from the theological one, both of the classes of 2014-2015. They were Italian, with the exception of one from Brazil; three of them were religious students and four lay women. We decided together the session' details, I only proposed the title and the structure, as the board had asked me in advance: *To inhabit, a verb which is conjugate in the infinitive*[63].

I proposed to the students the structure, a plenary introductory session on the sense of the theme, and the method of work of the "laboratory of dialogue", and four workshops in small groups dedicated to the following topics: 1) to inhabit the suffering; 2) to inhabit the conflict; 3) to inhabit the diversity; 4) to inhabit the relationship.

They were the topics which we considered in our courses, and the seven students would chair them, two for each workshop and one student alone. I would only chair the introductory and the conclusive moments in the plenary session. In each workshop the students would propose a few indications to orient the dialogue, and take notes, as they would report to the plenary session. Then, we would continue the dialogue and propose some conclusions (or non-conclusions). We decided together the details of each workshop, how to form the groups and divide the participants. With the exception of one student, they were organizing a conference session for the first time, four of them were, in fact, in the first year of the philosophical class. We referred to the guidelines proposed by the National Ecclesial Conference's board, but also to the bibliography which they

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[63] *Abitare, un verbo che si coniuga all'infinito*. In Italian it is a play on word around the term "infinitive", which does not emerge in English. It refers either to the verb's conjugation ("to inhabit" is the infinitive form) and to the infinite possibilities to consider the verb "to inhabit", thus, to conjugate it.

suggested, on the basis of what emerged also during our courses. The students who chaired the session dedicated to inhabit the suffering, for instance, referred to the theology of the Cross, while the ones who directed the workshop on conflict mentioned their cultural burdens, as Brazilian and Italian. The student who presided to the third workshop on diversity mentioned the definitions of "diverse", "foreigner" and "host", while the students who chaired the workshop on relationship proposed some insights on reciprocity. I did not attend the workshops, to leave the students completely free to shape the dialogue and to add their personal and cultural perspectives. They experienced what they were presenting, they felt involved and infected the participants with their enthusiasm, as they told me after the workshops. Then, four of them reported to the plenary session what emerged after almost one hour of dialogue, in a ten-minute oral communication, and we had a brief discussion about it. Two of these students, in particular, added to their report a final note as their example of the verb "to inhabit" related to their experience at the courses. They shared them with the audience: the Brazilian student from the theological class mentioned the Latin American Church's perspective on suffering compared with the European view, and an Italian student for the philosophical class described her discovery of "African humanism" by Kenneth Kaunda.

For most participants the event was an "extremely interesting" session, as "they were finally practicing dialogue" and "felt able to truly inhabit" each of the four workshops, as one said. We concluded the session by leaving participants with something to remember, decided jointly with the seven students: we distributed an article by Aldo Moro (1916-1978), Italian contemporary politician and statesman, who was kidnapped by an Italian left-wing terrorist organization for almost two months of captivity, and then murdered. In 1945, he had published an article entitled *Our time*, a call to live, thus to inhabit, the present time, without complaining about it or finding refuge in the past or in the future, although fatigue characterizes every time (Moro, 1945). It seemed to us the best wish of this session, as an invitation to continue to inhabit our time.

The seven students were "excited", "touched", "impressed", "satisfied", as they told me at the end of the session. Some of them defined this experience as "fantastic", and that was the adjective I heard more during the session and in the following days. When they sent me their four reports as their contributions for the proceedings of the conference,

they thanked me for the several "challenging things" I had proposed to them during that semester.

## 3.2 Analysis of findings for the philosophical-theological Institute

After having presented the findings collected for the philosophical class and at the theological seminar, and the characteristics of each course, I will now introduce the genesis of this teaching design at the Institute. Its origin, in fact, permits understanding the meaning of these findings, and the "potentials and challenges" which I detected from the beginning of my experiences at the Institute. As previously noted, they oriented my proposal and I will describe each of them. Then, I will outline the origin and the meaning of the evaluation tools, the questionnaire and the "transcultural evaluation criteria" (section 2.3.3c). They are common to both courses and, for this reason, I analyze them in this section. Furthermore, they are related also to the CSR experiences, especially the evaluation questionnaire, as the teaching design is the same.

The description of the genesis of the curriculum, the four "potential and challenges" and the meaning of the evaluation tools allow interpretation of the findings for the philosophical-theological Institute, which I will summarize in the last paragraph of this section.

### 3.2.1 Genesis

The invitation to teach a course to the preliminary year students during 2008-2009 came from the Head of the Institute of that period. We have known one another for a long time, and we often have talked about communication as an opportunity to create foundation for dialogue among disciplines, especially between the "human" sciences, and the "natural" and "social" sciences. In particular, he was inspired by my combined background and work experience in "natural" sciences and communication, as he has a combined background too, in philosophy and theology. I will provide more details about my background in section 3.4.1, dedicated to the genesis of the CSR teaching experiences, as it permits better understanding of the origin of this design of a transdisciplinary and transcultural approach to academic teaching. Our shared belief that dialogue may build a bridge among disciplines suggested to the Head of the Institute to invite me to teach this course at the opening of this institution.

I considered this course an "experiment in dialogue" among the students' cultures, and, for this reason, I entitled it "Instruments of dialogue among cultures" (Mangano, 2009). The students appreciated it, and, at the end of the lessons, some of them asked the Head of the Institute to be able to continue to attend these lectures during the spring semester, and to offer a similar course every year, for the whole program of study at the Institute.

In a way, therefore, the students suggested the further steps of this teaching design, which developed over the years, and encouraged the promotion of an intercultural and interdisciplinary awareness at the philosophical-theological Institute.

This additional value for the program of study was appreciated by some religious orders close to the Institute. In the same academic year, in fact, the religious order which hosted the Institute, launched an e-learning program to promote training in education inspired by the Gospel's values. It was addressed to the religious communities of this order present in the world.

I was involved in the first steps of this project (2008-2013), as a member of the central committee which coordinated the e-learning program, made up of the Head of the Institute and some of our colleagues who belonged to this religious order. The first course proposed on the e-learning platform was "Instruments of dialogue among cultures", the one I taught for the preliminary year students (Mangano, 2010a, 2010b, 2011).

In the academic year 2009-2010, in addition to the course for the preliminary year, I was invited to teach for the first and second years of the philosophical bachelor's degree. I entitled this course "Transcultural dialogue", as I intended it to propose a transdisciplinary approach to dialogue among cultures.

Then, in the academic year 2010-2011, in addition to these two courses, I was asked to teach a philosophical-theological seminar for students in the first year of the theological bachelor's degree.

Over the years, the teaching experiences at the Institute developed, and I continued to teach courses at these three levels. In particular, I taught for the preliminary year until 2012-2013, for the philosophical class every two years, as it is a course for students in the first and the second years, and for the theological bachelor's degree in the academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

### 3.2.2 Potentials and challenges

Since my first course at the Institute, as previously noted, I have discovered "the potentials and the challenges" which characterize my teaching experience there: the students' human and cultural diversity, the proposal of a program of study and an approach to dialogue virtually unknown to them.

These aspects imply the need to create and to develop the conditions for a foundation for dialogue among students drawn from different cultures, choices of life, and educational background. And, above all in this curriculum, the motivation to meet the other and to dialogue with her/him in Italian, which is often the only common language at the Institute, therefore non-native for most students.

Another challenge, which is relevant for the majority of the students at the Institute, is that their countries had been colonized by Europeans for centuries. Furthermore, they are starting an Anglo-European philosophical and theological program of study in a European country, with mainly European teachers, and in a European language. Furthermore, the historians and the thinkers who had studied non-Anglo-European cultures are mostly Anglo-Europeans, and this is another cultural burden to an transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue, as previously noted (section 1.2.3). In other cases, although the authors are native, generally use an Anglo-European language, investigate the Anglo-European philosophy, or moved and live in Anglo-European countries, as a result they risk misinterpreting the original meaning of "native" culture, which often remains only in their heart and memory.

Over a period of several years, then, I have developed this approach to teaching as an attempt to enhance the potentials and to overcome the challenges, and to adapt them to the students' needs.

I will now describe the four "potentials and challenges" which I detected in the teaching experiences at the Institute, in particular: 1) the students' cultural diversity, and the consequential risk of a "cultural burden", especially for the non-Anglo-European students, who suffer from a lack of non-Anglo-European native authors, 2) the development of a theoretical and practical approach to dialogue, to allow the student's achievement of 3) the main challenges of performing at academic level, and 4) the ability to promote an increasing awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach.

*Human, cultural and disciplinary richness*

I tried to develop the courses at the Institute as an immersion in the historical, political, and social matters, through connections between the past and the present, among and across cultures often seen as very distant, and not only geographically. The students, therefore, are involved in the international issues, which they often know only through the media, as the other courses offered at the Institute are not directly related to the urgent debate. This implies a progressive understanding of the meaning of relationship as a human, daily, and existential condition, and the students may share these events, also dramatic, with a growing awareness.

The terrorist attacks in India (2009), or in Nigeria (2014), as well as the earthquake in Haiti (2012), the Ukrainian civil war (2014), the epidemic of the Ebola virus in Ghana and Guinea Bissau (2014) are a few examples of the events which we directly experienced in class, as some students came from those countries. Although dramatic, in fact, they have been precious occasions for which we put into practice the terms which we were considering: "otherness", "hospitality", "reciprocity", "meeting", "dialogue", and "crisis", "conflict", and "suffering". Therefore, the content and the design of the courses may appear to the students in a new light, as they can share them with their colleagues and may contribute to creating in class a foundation for dialogue as a space of relationship.

Furthermore, from the beginning of my teaching experience at the Institute, the awareness of the risk of Eurocentrism, the frequent lack of native non-Anglo-European authors, and the scarcity of a bibliography in native languages, all suggested to me the need to orient the teaching design towards the evaluation of each student's cultural perspective. Another "potential and challenge" for this curriculum at the Institute, therefore, has been to provide the opportunity for every student to concretely contribute to it.

Since the first course, in fact, I have been proposing to the students to enrich the content, by providing native authors' publications, in addition to the ones I suggest to them. When possible, these materials should be in their original languages, thus, before the European domination, otherwise, in the official language spoken in their countries.

Furthermore, I also invite the students to become sources themselves, through their comments and contributions, as native inhabitants. Most of them, in fact, used to study and live in their home countries before coming to Italy, and they generally return there,

after completing the bachelor's degree, for their religious ministry. Although they are in the first years of the philosophical and theological programs, I suggest that they consider their written and oral contributions as opportunities for enriching their cultures and promoting their knowledge, as native "authors". During these years, in fact, some students provided a precious cultural heritage, sometimes unique, as they were the only participants from those countries, or these cultures are no longer present at the Institute.

*Theoretical and practical approach to dialogue*

The cultural and disciplinary richness at the Institute is, for the students, the primary condition for creating a space of relationship in class, in particular, among their cultures and choices of life. This foundation for dialogue allows them to discover and to intensify this richness, especially during the courses, through the assignments and the practice of dialogue. In fact, while they work for creating a space for dialogue among cultures, they experience the encounter with the other's culture, and, often, they better understand theirs. This awareness often implies (re)discovering their origins, thus, to come back to their human and cultural roots.

At the same time, they comprehend that their identity may be enforced by the other's culture, rather than limited or lost. This understanding is often surprising to some of them, who realize the meaning of going "across" and "beyond" their cultures, as they are experiencing it in class, and together with their peers. This awareness generally develops through the courses, matures at the end and during the exam, which is still an occasion of building a space of dialogue. When they share their intuitions during the exam, in fact, some of them become aware of the sense of this teaching design, and wish to apply it also after, in other courses and, when possible, beyond the academic context.

The approach to a transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective which I propose to the students, therefore, allows them to gradually discover the combination of the theoretical lessons and the practice of dialogue. This combination connects with the course from the preliminary year, either for the philosophical or the theological classes, and aims to intensify the design of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue. Thus, while in the preliminary year we observed the effects of dialogue starting from its practice, through the students' contributions, for the philosophical and theological bachelor's degrees the practice follows the theory. Therefore, the students

slowly discover the relationship between theory and practice, which becomes mutual, as they are involved in creating and a foundation for dialogue and in exploring it, in class and during the courses.


*Main challenges for the students*

This theoretical and practical approach to dialogue allows the students to improve in the main challenges in terms of academic level, which include: preparing the assignments in Italian, presenting them in front of their colleagues, possibly with a slide presentation, learning to construct questions during the dialogue in class, sharing their comments on the online forum, and approaching research.

The non-native students usually have difficulties in understanding Italian, and it takes them more time to comprehend the content, to write and to participate to the online forum. Some others, although Italian, are facing the philosophical and theological languages and programs of study for the first time. Therefore, the effort is generally vast for the whole class, in every course, and at different levels, and this common sharing frequently encourages solidarity among students.

These tasks often offer to the students the opportunity to put into practice the keywords proposed in class, specifically, "otherness", "hospitality", "reciprocity" and "dialogue" for the philosophical class, and "crisis", "suffering" and "conflict" for the seminar. The students, in fact, experience these concepts while they work to overcome these challenges. Furthermore, some of them practice these keywords with the colleagues who need more help, therefore, they frequently apply these ideas while they study and practice them together with their peers. I have observed that some students learn to write at academic level, to prepare a slide presentation and to present it in class only as a result of their peers' help. Some others, instead, are initially focused only on these challenges as personal achievements, therefore they take more time to become aware of the sense of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue.


*Awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach*

The students' initial approach to this curriculum is usually influenced by their choice of life, as religious and lay students. As they are all Christians, of the Catholic denomination, their attitude is to look at the other as "the neighbor", according to the Gospel. Thus, their

perspective is initially based on faith and education, rather than on a philosophical approach which may go beyond religion and may include their life and culture. Several students, in fact, at the beginning of the courses consider the other and the neighbor synonymous, and refer to "otherness" or "hospitality" as the care for the poor and the sick.

Furthermore, the non-Italian students are often influenced by their native culture. For the Zambian students, for instance, initially the other means "the stranger", still associated to the white man, as in many cultures which have been dominated by Europeans for centuries. The other is identical to "the diverse", who may be considered dangerous, and therefore, better not to encounter. Similarly, the Korean students demonstrate this attitude towards the Japanese people, the Polish students towards the Russians, the Philippines and most Latin American students towards the Spanish and Portuguese, and the Indians towards the English. Therefore, the transcultural approach to dialogue requires many students to reconstruct and renegotiate their interior perspectives, that is, their values and beliefs, and even stereotypes and prejudices.

Moreover, at the beginning the students have little understanding also of the notion of transdisciplinarity, and their awareness increases lesson after lesson. Their effort in achieving this understanding and application encourages them to improve and, sometimes, to share with their peers this comprehension. Most students develop this approach also with their native culture, and they (re)discover a new identity, in addition to the original one. Their cultural perspective, therefore, often enlarges as they become more interested, aware, open and able to share, and accept, new input.

I noted that the students' increasing awareness towards the intent of the course arises generally at the end of the course. For this reason, I tried to develop the exam as a further occasion of dialogue in class, and the questions I suggest to prepare for it may offer the students the opportunity to summarize this experience.


### 3.2.3 Evaluation questionnaire and exam

The evaluation questionnaire which I use for the philosophical-theological Institute is the same one I use for the CSR courses. I derived it from the one we used to prepare in the e-learning program of courses, in the academic year 2008-2009, which I have adapted for my later teaching experiences (Mangano, 2015b).

In particular, I ask the students to describe their evaluation of the course, in addition to their level of appreciation, on the basis of the aims, the content, and the approach proposed. I ask to them their evaluation of the organization of my lectures, considering their clarity and completeness. Finally, they should indicate the positive and the negative aspects of the course, considering the amount of time devoted to the topic, and the benefit of the content for their future, in their opinion. The questionnaires are anonymous, therefore the students are free to express their comments, suggestions and critiques. Over the past few years, their feedback has helped me to adjust my teaching design, and their comprehension of the course frequently has provided additional proofs of the value of the approach I propose, as well as the possibility to create a foundation for dialogue among, across and beyond their cultures and disciplines.

### *Exam*

Either for the philosophical class, or at the theological seminar, at the first lesson, when I present the program and the organization of the course, I generally mention the exam. I propose it as an additional practice of dialogue in class, rather than a written or oral test of the students' knowledge of the content and its application.

They are requested, in fact, to briefly summarize and evaluate their effort during the course in terms of: study, assignments, involvement during the practice of dialogue in class and online, and commitment in the creation of a foundation for dialogue. Therefore, I suggest that they evaluate the positive and the negative aspects of their work, and explain what satisfied them, and what might be better. This analysis and its sharing in front of the class are further invitations for the students to practice this approach to dialogue.

Since the first exam for the philosophical class in 2009-2010, I have developed the "transcultural evaluation criteria", as I called the list of priorities which guide me in the students' assessment in the courses at the Institute (Mangano, 2010a, 2010b, 2011). As my teaching design is based on an approach to dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines, I focus the students' evaluation on their capacity to open themselves in creating a foundation for dialogue. For this reason, their attitude to meeting the other and to going beyond themselves for helping and dialoguing with her/him seemed to me the first evaluation criterion.

From the first lesson, in fact, I specify to the students that simply studying, or working on the assignments and presenting them in class it is not sufficient. This approach also implies a further effort, which the students are invited to accomplish during all the course. The contribution of every student is essential for creating a space of dialogue, and they are solicited to fully participate from the beginning. This is not immediate for many students, as they consider the exam their decisive test, rather than the course, in particular the grade they receive on it. At the Institute, in fact, attendance is mandatory, therefore most students generally join the courses as they are requested to do, although they often do not seem fully involved in them, until the date of the exam. I tried to overcome this logic, and to propose to the students to become protagonists of the course and to build it together. This implies trusting them, and, consequently, to ask for their increasing responsibility and involvement. For this reason, the comprehension and knowledge of the content and the bibliography, with the ability in studying, writing and in conducting research at academic level are the second criterion of the students' evaluation. This is generally the most important aspect in the assessment of an academic course, and is central also in this teaching design, but I give priority to the capacity of the students to open themselves in the encounter with the other.

The third aspect which I consider in their evaluation is their skill in sharing their contributions during the lessons, in class and on the online forum. This element should demonstrate for the students the need for an academic level approach to their study, which requires their constant involvement, as well as meeting the assignment's deadline.

The last evaluation criterion I developed is the knowledge of the Italian language, as this teaching design aims to go beyond the linguistic burden, and to enhance each student's cultural richness. At the same time, as the Italian is the common language at the Institute, I have to evaluate their ability in learning and improving in it, as a non-native language for most students. I also include in this criterion their knowledge and use of information technology, and their skill in preparing a slide presentation and to presenting it in class, as we work on these aspects during the course.

At the end of the exam, I also request the students' personal evaluation of their effort during the course, and ask them to indicate the mark they think they deserve. I have already collected the elements for deciding their mark, but this additional question solicits their self-criticism and responsibility also towards themselves, as they are requested to

explain it in front of the class. Over the years of this course, in fact, I have noted that the students' increasing responsibility towards the other and the course implies for most of them taking seriously the proposal of a personal evaluation. Therefore, they suggest a mark which often is very close to the one I thought appropriate for each of them.

Furthermore, as the exam is presented as an additional occasion of dialogue, most students do not feel nervous, therefore, I also suggest they attend their peers' exams and to join the entire session. It is an optional request, which aims to provide further input to create a space of relationship in class. I have observed that most students appreciate it and attend almost the whole session. This is another uncommon aspect for them, because they are generally focused on their own exam and do not think to attend those of others, although they are peers or friends. This kind of exam, instead, offers students the opportunity to share personal details of their life which do not emerge during the course, and increases their awareness of this curriculum.

### 3.2.4 Meaning

Between 2008 and 2015, I offered twelve courses at the Institute, to a total of 175 students from approximately 20 cultures. In particular, I taught five courses for the preliminary year (45 students), four for the philosophical class (80 students) and three for the theological bachelor's degree (50 students).

The course for the preliminary year, as previously mentioned, ended in the academic year 2012-2013, thus, it refers to my initial research on this teaching design. I mention this experience since it became the basis of the courses for the philosophical and theological classes, and because most students at the preliminary year continued their study at the Institute and some of them attended one (24 students) or two (10) additional courses with me. Therefore, their feedback provided further indications of their understanding and involvement in this teaching design. Nevertheless, the majority of the students who attended the course for the philosophical class (70 students) did not join the preliminary year, hence, they discovered this approach at the beginning of their first or second year of the bachelor's degree. Furthermore, thirty students came to this content for the first time during the seminar for the theological class.

The findings derived from the teaching experiences for the philosophical-theological Institute show an increasing ability among the students in achieving the main challenges

of an academic level study. Furthermore, they also indicate a growing involvement in the practice of dialogue, which produced in most students a rising awareness on the possibility of applying a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue. Their expanding commitment in creating a space of relationship among their cultures, in fact, interested almost three-quarters of the class, as I observed during these years, either for the philosophical or for the theological bachelor's degrees. This trend is also shown at the exam, when most students feel involved and attend their peers' exams. Furthermore, many students become aware of the sense of a mutual relationship, and they consider the exam as an additional occasion to practice it. Most of them try to honestly analyze themselves on the basis of the "transcultural evaluation criteria", and understand their meaning within this teaching design.

I also observed that almost half of the class develops a responsibility towards this approach to dialogue, which the students aim to apply in other courses, and, for about a quarter of them, also beyond the academic context.

However, almost a quarter of the students, generally in every class, do not feel involved by this proposal and do not open themselves during the course. They limit their contribution to the ones required by the assignments, they do not visit, or use, the online forum, and frequently do not care, or even disagree, with the increasing enthusiasm of their peers. Furthermore, among this group are also are a few students totally disappointed with the course, the proposed approach, and the content, and, in some cases, they develop hostility during the course, or after the first lesson.

I noted that some of them withdrew from the class or did not care about the course, as a form of protest, in some cases as a result of cultural or personal wounds. They often refuse to give hospitality to themselves, not only to the proposal of the course or to their peers. When these students do not take a step of hospitality towards the other, they often miss the encounter with the other, and actually decide not to challenge, thus walk through, this effort. The "mismeeting" (Friedman, 1988, p. 5) which I experience with these students may be hardly overcame, as they often avoid facing it, even at the exam. They are usually quite distant at the exam, which they consider a "waste of time", as someone phrased it, because it is "just a useless chat". They generally attend only their own exam, not joining their peers. Some of them do not take seriously the "transcultural evaluation criteria", are

skeptical about suggesting the mark which they would deserve, and do not propose one, or they just guess at it.

The findings described in these pages, therefore, provide additional evidence for this study, which describes a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue. In particular, either for the philosophical class, or for the seminar, the practice of dialogue among the students allows most of them to establish a space of relationship among, across and beyond themselves, their cultures and disciplines. Therefore, these findings may also enforce the hypothesis of a reciprocity between dialogue and relationship which this study aims to confirm, in particular, dialogue needs relationship to be realized, and, at the same time, dialogue creates relationship.

The theoretical and practical approach to dialogue which the students experience in this curriculum, allows them also to discover a relationship between theory and practice, which these findings suggest. This connection is a consequence of this approach, an implication, as will be further described in chapter 4.

The hypothesis of a reciprocity between dialogue and relationship finds further support in the application of a transcultural and transdisciplinary perspective mediated by dialogue in the second context illustrated in this study, as the findings described in the following sections indicate. They draw from experiences in the communication of scientific research (CSR). The teaching design is the same, but, while for the philosophical-theological Institute the space of relationship is observed in particular through the students' cultural richness, in CSR experiences, the foundation for dialogue is mainly investigated on the basis of their disciplinary richness.

### 3.3 Findings in CSR experiences

In this section, I will present the main findings derived from the CSR activities, which include: schools, courses and seminars. As the program at the schools and the courses is the same, I describe these findings together, and I specify the type of activity and the period.

I refer, in particular, to the years of the doctoral study, 2014 and 2016, which are related to the previous teaching experiences, thus, I also mention the findings which emerged from earlier years, especially between 2007 and 2013. These findings are related to the

four parameters which guided me in the analysis of my teaching design, either for the philosophical-theological Institute, or in CSR activities, and which I adapted to each context. These "potentials and challenges" are: human, cultural and disciplinary richness; theoretical and practical approach to dialogue; main challenges for the students; awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach. Then, I will present the main follow-ups after the CSR activities, which, sometimes, are intertwined with the outcomes, therefore I also specify these examples.

### 3.3.1 Human, cultural and disciplinary richness

In CSR experiences, the human richness is mainly related to the disciplinary diversity among the students, which adds to the cultural one.

Although the courses are usually offered at only one doctoral school, so that the PhD students belong to the same disciplinary area, their specific fields of study are actually quite different, as well as their backgrounds. Furthermore, most young researchers are native, therefore, the ones who attend the CSR activities in Italy usually come from different Italian towns, while the ones at the University of West Bohemia are mainly Czech.

At the schools, in particular, the disciplinary richness is enhanced, as the participants come from different Italian universities, therefore they generally do not know each other. Over the years, I have chosen the schools' location to provide additional elements for creating a foundation of dialogue among the participants, and to better know the context in which the school was held, from historical, social and political points of view. In the following section, I describe the main findings drawn from the school's location, which allow to comprehend the meaning of this type of activity. Afterwards, I illustrate an example of an intercultural, interdisciplinary and interreligious foundation for dialogue.

### 3.3.1a CSR school's location

Since the first summer school in northern Italy, in 2009, I have been including in the program a visit to the home museum dedicated to Alcide De Gasperi (1881-1954), a contemporary statesman and politician who was born in the village in which the school is held. His history is crucial to understanding the Italian and European condition during the first half of the twentieth century. He was the first Prime Minister of the then just

constituted Italian Republic, and guided the country for almost ten years (1945-1953). He made an essential contribution to the writing of the Italian Constitution, and was one of the founding fathers of the European Union. De Gasperi's home museum combines educational and technological tools, which present his life and work in an involving and accessible way. This visit is often appreciated by the participants at the schools, as they generally know little of him, and of those years of Italian and European history. It usually provides the occasion for further dialogue on current political issues, at local, European and international levels.

After the 2009 summer school, for instance, a participant decided to visit the home museum again with her husband, and she often returned there during her holidays, to show it also to her friends and relatives. Furthermore, many students are impressed by De Gasperi's life and work, and some of them decide to know more. A participant of the school of 2014, for instance, wrote me that, after having finished her PhD in molecular biology, she started to read De Gasperi's writings to his wife, which she discovered at the home museum, as she was fascinated by them.

During the 2013 summer school, this visit offered the opportunity to unveil some cultural wounds of the participants. In particular, there was an Italian mature physician of Bolzano, the main town of South Tyrol, an Italian autonomous province at the border with Austria. The history of this region is linked with De Gasperi. This area was annexed to Italy after the first world war, but only after the second world war did it become an autonomous province, speaking both German and Italian. The feeling of separation from Italy is strong and most of its inhabitants actually consider themselves to be Austrian.

Most of them, in fact, prefer to speak German and there is a diffuse hostility towards Italy. When this participant contacted me to receive information about the summer school, I explained my teaching design, its basic characteristics relating to the geographical and disciplinary diversities, and the requirement to spend the whole day together, including the sharing of bedrooms and common spaces. She did not complain, and did not mention her age or further needs. When she arrived at the school, she used a mix of Italian and German terms, and none of us could understand her. During the first coffee break, she rudely refused some cakes from her roommate. In an attempt to apologize, she actually made things worse: she said she had never tasted them, as "the portion of Italy" she has

seen "until Florence", was "enough" for her. The participant who offered her cakes came from Naples.

I had just finished presenting the twofold meanings of the verb "to communicate", specifically, the sense of communication as a gift and a barrier, and it seemed to me that we were experiencing both. In a confused Italian, she complained about the accommodations, in front of the other participants, and she insisted on having a single room, as she was mature and needed "her space", as she said. I tried to explain again the sense of the CSR proposal, reminding her that she had been informed about it in advance, and she had not complained before. She demanded it, and, without waiting for my reply, took her luggage and moved to another room. I decided to face the situation, but not in front of the class. She apologized, and after that moment, she tried to speak Italian.

At the oral presentation on the first day, she mentioned a few notes on the South Tyrol's history, which was unfamiliar to the rest of the class, and this topic was a constant throughout the whole day. At the beginning of the visit to the home museum, this participant soon criticized the figure of De Gasperi, as he was responsible for the separation of "their" area from Austria, according to her perspective, which is the most common opinion in South Tyrol. Despite her disagreement, she remained until the end of the tour, and tried to apologize to the guide tour, although she enforced her convictions.

When they left the museum, I reviewed the guest book finding that the other participants wrote grateful sentences, as they appreciated that experience. Two young researchers from Naples, in particular, signed their notes by ironically adding their provenance: "the Kingdom of the two Sicilies", which was the name of the southern states of Italy before the Italian unification, as they had the feeling of having returned to that period during the whole day.

All the participants soon realized that it was necessary to make a common effort to create a space of relationship in class. During the second dinner, for instance, the participant from Bolzano described some episodes of racism towards her Romanian colleague in their hospital and added a few comments about it. In our class there was a PhD student who was a native of Romania, moving to Milan with his family, and he replied to her with irony. Also the students from Naples chose the irony to build a bridge with the participant from Bolzano: they invited her to visit them in "the deep south", as they said, to discover

the "real" pizza, which we were eating. She did not exclude it, having discovered that "after all, the Italians are not all equals, and Naples is not only spaghetti and Camorra[64]". Her increasing effort was evident, as well as the commitment of the other participants, who tried to help her to work on her stereotypes, probably for the first time, as she shared at the end of the school.

A second location, in Piedmont, in northern Italy, was chosen to provide further elements for the students to create a foundation for dialogue. Two schools were held there: one close to Ivrea (in the province of Turin), in 2012, and another in Turin, in 2013.

The first was held in a science and technology park located in one of the primal industrial areas of Italy, which was constructed after the second world war. This region is related to a manufacturing company known for making typewriters, calculators and computers, the name Olivetti deriving from its founder, Adriano Olivetti. He is known in Italy and abroad for having introduced a pioneering model of a profit activity which should be reinvested for the benefits of the whole society.

Also the accommodation of the school was in this area, in a holiday farm close to this park, and I invited the owners to describe their work of restoring their house to the class, as their story was related to that of Olivetti.

The second school in Piedmont was held in Turin, at the "Lingotto", an area once home to FIAT, another example of an industrial company born after the world conflict, and currently the largest automobile manufacturer in Italy. At the beginning of the school, I invited an engineer from the surroundings of Turin to share his professional experience and to introduce the participants to the historical and social context in which FIAT developed.

In addition, I organized a school in southern Italy, in Sicily, in 2012. I chose Palermo, and, in particular, a location in the historic centre, in the multi-ethnic and multi-religious district of Ballarò. During the first evening of the school, I invited two friends of mine in Palermo, professors of agriculture, to share their working experience in the islands around Sicily, in particular, in Lampedusa. One of them, in fact, is also active in the voluntary service with the refugees on this island.

Then, I proposed to the participants to visit some districts in the town whose names are related to dramatic episodes of killings by mafia groups. I included this tour in the

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[64] *In fondo gli italiani non sono tutti uguali e Napoli non è solo spaghetti e Camorra.*

program to encourage the students' awareness of social responsibility, which may orient life and choices. I mentioned to them examples of people who fought the mafia groups in different ways and whose contributions were crucial, not only within Sicily or even just within Italy. They were killed, but the changes which were their goal did not end with their murder, nor their work. We visited, in particular, the places in which two judges and prosecuting magistrates, Giovanni Falcone e Paolo Borsellino, and the priest Pino Puglisi, were executed.

The visit to these districts in Palermo was an intense occasion for an immersion in its social wounds. The class consisted of five students, three from Sicily (two from Palermo and one from Catania), one from Milan and another from Trento. The students from Palermo guided us in this tour; the two students from northern Italy were visiting this town for the first time. They considered these visits the "school's added value", as they noted during our final dialogue. On the last night, we saw another district, the historic centre, in which the most popular traditional fish market of the town used to be located. Over the years, this area has become trendy, with bars and live music. The student from Trento was excited and told me: "I have lived more in a few days than in all my life, as a result of the diverse experiences I collected[65]".

### 3.3.1b Example of intercultural and interdisciplinary dialogue

In 2013, I was invited to teach a CSR course at the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute, located in Bari, in southern Italy. This Institute is part of the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies, based in Paris.

The course was addressed to more than 25 participants who were pursuing a master's degree, in addition to PhD students and researchers drawn from various agronomic disciplines. Excluding two Italian participants, the other students came from almost 15 countries in the Mediterranean area, originated from: the Balkans (Kosovo, Macedonia, Bosnia), Turkey, the Middle East (Syria, Lebanon and Palestine), the Maghreb (Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco), and Eritrea.

I taught an intensive course of five days, of eight hours per day, supplemented by moments of dialogue during the meals and after dinner. The common language was English and the students were from 23 to 35 years old with a Muslim majority.

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[65] *Ho vissuto in pochi giorni più che in tutta la mia vita, per le diverse esperienze che ho collezionato.*

It was a challenging context, in which the class was involved in creating a space of relationship among, beyond and across our cultures and disciplines, during the whole week, and in a non-native language. Moreover, I was trying to propose an approach to dialogue to students who came from countries which were still in conflicts, and some them had never known peace. Since the beginning of this course, I have realized that the content provided an opportunity to approach current and dramatic issues: it seemed that no country was free from wounds, often still bleeding, between the past and the present. Talking about the value of the other and otherness, therefore, risked appearing distant from their experiences.

It was, for all the students, a constant effort of reconciliation with their own history, which combined our cultures, traditions, religions, in addition to our disciplines. Some students, for instance, had parents in the neighbourhoods of Beirut where, in those days, a car bomb exploded. Some others had family in the occupied territories of Israel, still without water, electricity and gas, or in a United Nations refugee camp in Sudan. Moreover, it was a challenge to propose to come out of themselves and meet the other to those students who came from Damascus or Cairo, as they suffered because of the repeated conflicts and riots. Most of them, in fact, were convinced about the inevitability of conflict and the impossibility of democratic mediation without violence.

The lessons lasted much longer than the daily eight hours, and continued during meals and after dinner, with talks until late. I presented the standard CSR program, with content in the form of keywords, which I defined from their etymology, in Latin and ancient Greek languages, and then we explored their meanings in their native languages.

They were requested to introduce themselves in a ten-minutes oral presentation, during the first and second days, with common or unconventional tools. Almost none of them respected the scheduled time, as most considered that occasion a "unique opportunity" to present their culture and country, as they said. They were not used to doing this in other courses, and many of them presented using with different tools: slides, oral speeches, traditional clothes, or music. A Turkish student, for instance, played some traditional songs from his country with his guitar.

I also shared with them the notion of a "safe" space of dialogue, in which all of us might learn to communicate with the other without being offensive (UNESCO, 2013, Opffer, 2015). This common effort implied an attitude towards the other, and was not only related

to the choice of the correct terms in English, which was a non-native language for all of us. Furthermore, I showed them a short film from 1979 about bilingualism in Canada, *Twice upon a time,* a satirical reading of the effort to manage two official languages, as an attempt to introduce them to the notion of diversity (among languages, as well as cultures or religions) as an opportunity, rather than an obstacle to coexistence. I asked the students to share their comments, and their reactions were different: the students who came from Turkey or the Balkans appreciated the movie and found it a fitting conclusion to the lesson. However, the students from the Maghreb and from the Middle East did not enjoy it as much. In fact, they considered it boring and a bit excessive, as they did not fully appreciate the issues depicted.

In those days Ramadan began: most students at the university campus observed it and also half of our class, and it provided another opportunity for sharing and dialogue. Since they could not drink water or eat during daylight hours, I thought to lighten the daily load, with shorter lessons. I asked some students if I could participate in the evening prayer, the only one of the five daily times during Ramadan which we could share. Their response was enthusiastic and surprised, as they told me that it was uncommon for a non-Muslim to join in prayer with them. They explained me the ritual, which occurs in separate places for women and men. At the end of the hour of prayer, chanted by more students in turn, they asked me what I had experienced. With some it was also possible to mention the issues of religious fundamentalism, and their hatred against Israel, especially for students of Egypt, Palestine and Lebanon.

Two PhD students from northern Italy came to join the last lesson dedicated to oral communication. They had attended a CSR course at the University of Milan, which I held the month before, and one of them had also attended a CSR winter school in Viterbo in 2013. During the course in Milan, this young researcher collaborated on the analysis of the students' oral presentations, and she decided to reply to this experience. As they said to the class on their arrival, they were "curious and fascinated" to open themselves to "such a unique context of several cultures" and "to test the space of relationship also among cultures and religions, in addition to disciplines[66]."

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[66] *È curioso e affascinante mettersi alla prova in un contesto così unico e poter costruire uno spazio di relazione tra diverse culture e religioni, oltre alle discipline.*

They covered the travel fees on their own, prepared together their contribution for this lesson, and shared it with me before coming. They introduced themselves, in a ten-minute oral presentation and offered a gift to every participant: a marker of different colour with which they could "write their personal history", not only as young researchers, as they said. We devoted much time in the analysis of the students' introductory oral presentations, as they provided me the opportunity to intensify the meaning of the foundation for dialogue which we were trying to build.

The two Italian PhD students were involved in this analysis, and this lesson seemed for both of them "rare and unreal", as they said. Their daily life appeared to them "light years away" from those of their peers, although they were almost the same age and were all scientific researchers. Furthermore, both of them decided to join the evening prayer, even if one student was not a believer. Therefore, her effort was bigger, as she chose to open herself in an "unfamiliar context", as she told me. Their presence was appreciated by most students, they were surprised by their generosity, in sharing their time, included the prayer. After the prayer, a student from Lebanon invited us for tea in the garden, typically a tradition during Ramadan. The Lebanese student wrote me that their night was preserved in his heart, as "we talked as friends", which was uncommon in his experience, either in Lebanon or in Italy.

At the conclusion of the course, I invited the students to consider their master's degree in Italy as an opportunity for discovering the other, without forgetting their homeland, but trying to turn the page and to write on a new one. They could be the protagonists of this new page, for two years, and they could compose it with their peers, if they wanted to.

We were in the garden in the late evening, eating ice cream. The class was not complete, but present also were some students who were not enrolled in this course.

After a few days from the course, the Lebanese student who offered us the tea wrote me by email: "I appreciated your choice to teach communication skills and your teaching method, because all our conflicts are provoked by negative forms of communication such as violence, or because we don't communicate" (personal communication by e-mail, January, 8, 2013). He also added a verse of the Qur'an, which he said synthesized the effort to create a space of relationship among our cultures, disciplines and religions, even if he admitted that "all of us need to learn a lot about dialogue":

O humankind! Surely We have created you from a single (pair of) male and female, and made you into tribes and families so that you may know one another, Surely the noblest, most honorable of you in God's sight is the one best in piety, righteousness, and reverence for God. Surely God is All-Knowing, All-Aware[67] (personal communication by e-mail, January, 8, 2013) (Mangano, 2014b, p. 245).

### 3.3.2 Theoretical and practical approach to dialogue

The ten-minute oral presentations of the first day are characteristic of the CSR school and also of the intensive courses over the following days, as with the one at the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute of Bari, and the ones at the University of West Bohemia in the Czech Republic. These presentations are conceived as an introduction of each participant to the class, and the first approach to this proposed practice of dialogue, which we analyze in the final lesson dedicated to oral communication.

The analysis of these oral presentations and of the scientific posters made by the students as examples of oral and written communication of scientific research allows the young researchers to become more aware of the content. They may better understand, in fact, *what* to communicate, in addition to *how*, *why* and *for whom*. Furthermore, this analysis helps them to create the conditions for a foundation for dialogue among and across their fields of study. In fact, the approach to dialogue at the basis of the CSR experiences is theoretical and practical, as it is also for the philosophical-theological Institute, since the teaching design is the same.

In the following section, I will present the main findings derived from the introductory oral presentations and the analysis in class of the students' written and oral texts, which I collected during these years at the schools and at the courses. Afterward, I will describe an example of the outcome of this theoretical and practical approach to dialogue: the definition of the CSR teaching design as a "method" by two young researchers.

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[67] He sent me also the original version in Arabic: يَا أَيُّهَا النَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَاكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَى وَجَعَلْنَاكُمْ شُعُوباً وَقَبَائِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوا إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ اللَّهِ أَتْقَاكُمْ إِنَّ اللَّهَ عَلِيمٌ خَبِيرٌ.

### 3.3.2a Introductory oral presentations

At the CSR schools, the participants generally begin to put into practice the proposed content during the oral presentation on the first day, which I schedule in the afternoon. Most of them, usually, take seriously my request to prepare this presentation in advance, and they work on it with care. I observed that three quarters of the class prepared a slide presentation, or an outline, and more than half practice it before, as a way to respect the scheduled time. Most participants understand the sense of this exercise, and they follow the sketch I provide: who they are, their background and current job, why they decided to attend the school and what they expect from it. Most, in fact, introduce themselves with pictures of their home towns, and indicate their hobbies, interests and other details (notes on their family, partners, dreams and attitudes).

Several young researchers focused on their background and current job, which is often described in detail, to introduce their colleagues to their research project. At the 2012 school in Piedmont, for instance, a PhD student in physics explained his work on lasers using an educational video he made, while at the 2014 summer school, a PhD student in agricultural presented her project through a brief lecture on viticulture. These oral presentations are often occasions for communication as a "gift" (section 2.3.2), as many students noted, because they open themselves in front of frequently unknown colleagues. In other cases, although they know some participants, they share private details for the first time.

At the first CSR course I proposed at the University of West Bohemia in 2014, for instance, I asked the participants to introduce themselves to the class. We examined these oral presentations in the last day of the course, sitting in circle, in a final analysis which allows the students also to summarize their experience.

The participants were teachers of language at the same Institute, and some of them had been working together for ages, but their introductory oral presentations were "decisive for creating a foundation for dialogue", as some of them noted. Most of them proposed original works: one used music and chose a different song for each part of her presentation; another drew a portrait of herself on the blackboard, a third introduced himself with a quiz to the class; and another used objects and clothes brought from home to describe her interest and hobbies.

There also was a teacher who did not want to participate in this practice of dialogue at the beginning. She soon complained to the director of the Institute, at the first break in the course, about its "uselessness", as she said, in a busy moment for her who was over-committed and "could not waste time". She attended the rest of the lesson sitting in the last row, working on her notebook and with the mobile phone in her hand. During the oral presentations, she listened to every colleague. Thus, before continuing the lesson, I asked her to introduce herself, but she refused, and stated: "Everybody knows me".

At the end of the lecture, when the classroom was almost empty, she apologized to me. I moved close to her, and I observed her reaction when I reduced the distance between us, while I was asking about her work. I tried to overcome the "social space", as Hall defined the possible distance among people who know each other, for instance, in the relationship between teachers and students (Hall, 1966). She was surprised by my "comprehension", she said, and the following day she came back, she sat in the last row, with her notebook and mobile phone, but took part in the lesson and asked some questions. Then, she attended the second part of the introductory oral presentations, and I proposed again that she introduce herself to the class. She connected her notebook to the overhead projector, typed a short lyric she had written, and read it aloud, as her favorite passion was to improvise lyrics, yet none of her colleagues knew it. This moment marked a new understanding for the class, as some of them noted. A teacher of English language, for instance, said during the final analysis: "Something has changed during the CSR course. I hope that this new atmosphere will remain and allow us to work with more attention to the other, as now we know what she/he likes or dislikes" (Mangano, 2015b).

I assigned the introductory oral presentation in all the courses I held at the University of West Bohemia. Their analysis in class took a long time, almost three hours in every course. The participants noted a growing awareness and attention to details, and some of them shared also their opinion of the colleague, not only on her/his presentation.

Furthermore, some PhD students comprehended the amount of information which is necessary to consider to communicate "for" the other, not only "to" the other. At the end of this analysis, in fact, a PhD student in the second course said: "Now I understood what you meant the first day, when you said that each of us can make the difference in communication of scientific research, but it depends on us". During the first lesson, in fact, I mentioned to the participants the sense of their individual contribution to the

course, and, more broadly, to their work, research and communication. I referred to the expression "individual revolution", which an Italian PhD student used to mean her progressive awareness on the CSR teaching design.

The Czech PhD student was surprised by the term "revolution", as it seemed to him too "strong", considering the "small contribution in changing the world" which his doctoral experience might produce, as he noted. A colleague of his soon replied that even with an "insignificant paper or a poster" we can make a difference, because this is our part, as "individuals". I brought up to the class the example of the non-violent protest in Hong Kong promoted by the students, the so-called "umbrella revolution". In 2014, this protest involved, for almost three months, tens of thousands students and teenagers, who strongly believed in a non-violent change of the electoral system in Hong Kong. Their dissent was pacific and symbolic: they used umbrellas to protect from the sun and from the tear gas. Although it ended without any political concessions from the government[68], it contributed to promoting a global and pacific awareness about the need for more democratic political system in Hong Kong. This young researcher was impressed by the example, and at the end of the course he stated: "I am ready to provide my contribution for a better communication of scientific research. It will be a kind of 'non-violent revolution': mine" (Mangano, 2015b).

There are usually a few students who do not prepare the oral presentation, whether due to laziness or that they do not understand the sense of this task, and they often improvise. Some others, instead, prepare a few slides just before this lesson. They usually admit this lack at the beginning of their oral presentation, especially when they attend to their peers' contributions. They often realize they have missed an opportunity of meeting the other, as some of them note during the analysis of their oral presentations.

### 3.3.2b Practice of dialogue in class

The analysis in class of written and oral works by the students is, generally, the most appreciated exercise for the participants, either at the schools, or in the courses, as most young researchers learn about the course content while they apply it. Furthermore, many

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[68] On September 2016, two years after the "umbrella revolution", the young leader of this protest has been elected to the Parliament in Hong Kong, and the movement born during those months has obtained three seats. Therefore, that pacific "revolution" actually produced a change in the political system in Hong Kong and in the citizens' awareness.

of them note that this practice of dialogue is "essential", as someone said, for their improvement in the communication of scientific research, especially in the preparation of future posters and slide presentations.

Generally, the majority of the class contributes to this analysis with examples of their own, as they wish to receive comments and suggestions on their work, and wait for feedback. Most of them take notes on their peers' posters and oral presentations, and their attention and awareness in the analysis generally increases during this exercise.

I usually propose to each student to listen their colleagues' comments without replying, focusing on the analysis from a communicative perspective, as I described in the lesson. Generally, most students accept criticism, and they also thank their peers. Many of them take note of the comments and they slowly learn to share their points of view by presenting first the positive aspects and then the weaker ones. Furthermore, I observed the students' mutual help in trying to improve their posters or slide presentations, with concrete suggestions, indications and changes, even when they might imply a radical adjustment. This reciprocal trust increases their awareness of creating a space of relationship among disciplines, and it often allows the students to discover the effects of this practice of dialogue and to intensify it.

At the school held in 2012 in Piedmont, for instance, after the analysis of the oral presentations, a participant shared with the class:

> I could never have imagined that I could talk about my work in such a way.
> I am shy, I am always nervous when I present, and I was convinced to have
> only to analyse the technical aspects of my presentation. I think that this is
> dialogue, as each of you is enriching me and I feel free to express myself. I
> thank all of you[69].

At the summer schools between 2012 and 2015, for instance, the classes enrolled three and four students, therefore we had time to analyze some examples of their papers, abstracts, and the table of contents of their master's degree thesis. I asked to each class to choose one table of contents of their peer's thesis and to try to order it, on the basis of what I explained about the construction of the written text. Therefore, they had to identify the four steps of *dispositio* - lead, *narratio*, *confirmatio* and epilogo - and suggest eventual

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[69] *Non avrei mai immaginato di poter di parlare del mio lavoro in questo modo. Sono timida, fatico sempre a parlare pubblico ed ero convinta di dovermi concentrare solo sugli aspetti tecnici della mia presentazione. Credo che il dialogo sia questo, perché ognuno di voi mi sta arricchendo e mi sento libera di esprimermi. Grazie a tutti voi.*

changes to make this table of contents clearer. I left them half an hour, but all the classes needed more time, as they had first to detect an order, and to understand the structure of the table of contents. Thus, they spent time also to understand the aim of their peer's research, in addition to the object of the study.

In 2016, the summer school enrolled six participants, and they asked for a supplementary time for practicing written and oral communication. I divided the class into two groups on the first day, and into three groups on the second day. The first day, I focused on the balance between education and seduction with which communication may operate, and I proposed to the students two exercises: the outline of a lesson dedicated to a scientific topic, and a sponsorship request. They had to indicate the details of each: the target of the students, and the possible sponsor; the type of lesson and activity; and the teaching tools. The two groups prepared a detailed outline, which was rich and original for the teaching outline, both taking teenagers as the audience. However, the sponsorship request was a bit general and focused more on the content of the research plan, rather than on the information of costs and time. All the students considered this exercise extremely useful, as they had never experienced teaching at the high school before, and had no idea of how to develop a fundraising project.

The practice of the second day was dedicated to work groups focused on the analysis of their own written texts, especially, a scientific paper, the table of contents of a master's degree thesis and of a PhD dissertation. This exercise was intense for all the groups, as they also experienced the effort to understand their different fields of research.


### 3.3.2c Example of theoretical and practical approach to dialogue: the definition of "CSR method"

At the end of the school during 2012 in Piedmont, two participants suggested to call this curriculum the "CSR method" (Mangano, 2013a, p. 109). The history of this definition is an example of outcome and feedback from the students, who became aware of this experience, and were able to describe it to the other participants. Furthermore, they developed this understanding on their own, at the end of the school, and taking inspiration from their background. For this reason, since then, I have been telling this story at the beginning of the CSR activities.

These two participants devoted almost the whole last night to talking about the approach to the communication of scientific research mediated by dialogue which I proposed during the school, according their understanding as young scientists. One of them in particular was attending the CSR school for the third time, and explained their definition: they derived it from the etymology of the term "method". They noted that "the way of doing things" might refer also to CSR teaching experience. They noted "a style", as they called it, which characterized every step of the school, from the preparation to its conclusion, and it included the program, the choice of the location, the invited speakers, and, even, the type of teaching materials prepared for them.

Furthermore, as young researchers in "natural" sciences, they also referred to the basic characteristics of a method in quantitative research, which they used to investigate: reliability, objectivity and validity, and they tried to apply them also to the "CSR method". In their opinion, it was "reliable" "by definition", as they said, because the activities increased during the years and one of them was at his third experience, thus he was the "proof" of the reliability of the CSR proposal. It was also "objective" because the participants do not know each other, and yet they evaluate the CSR experience in almost the same way, as they noted. This evidence might attest also to the "validity" of this method, either as participants, or as "scientists who tried to understand this method", they concluded. In their opinion, the "CSR method" might be applied to every approach to teaching, not only to the communication of scientific research.

Their analysis encouraged me to use their expression since that time, and I dedicated a chapter of the *Handbook of communication of scientific research* to describe their definition of the "CSR method" (Mangano, 2013a, pp.109-118).


### 3.3.3 Main challenges for the students

The most common challenges for the participants to the CSR activities are the public speaking and the use of English as non-native language, in written and in oral communication. Furthermore, especially at the CSR school, students are faced with an intensive design, which requires sharing the whole day together and approaching a disciplinary diversity.

I present the main findings related to these challenges, as examples of the student's achievements in the application of a theoretical and practical approach to dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond their disciplines.

### 3.3.3a Full immersion, public speaking, and use of English

One of the main challenges for the participants at the school is sharing the whole day together, which is an uncommon experience for most of them.

During the summer school of 2014, for instance, a PhD student soon stated that she would have preferred to have breakfast and lunch on her own, at the restaurant in the village. Actually, she had always meals with the other participants, as, from the first moment, she was very comfortable with them. She told me that she had never experienced it before, neither in Albania, her native country, nor in Italy, and that she "felt changed inside".

Furthermore, at the end of the summer school of 2016, one participant defined it as "a school of life", and a few days later, wrote me that she considered the school one of the "most intense experiences of sharing" of her life.

The proposal of life and study together implied also to sharing the bedroom and the bathroom, which often are "real proof of otherness", as someone noted. One participant at the school in Piedmont of 2012, for instance, was in a room with a double bed. She considered the sharing also of the same bed "the main achievement" in her "comprehension" of the meaning of the encounter with the other, as she said in the final analysis. She defined it "decisive", as they did not know with the other roommate, and they became friends only in a few days.

In some cases, the sharing of the bedroom implied also the need to practice patience, as one of the roommates snored. In several schools, I observed the same reaction: the other peer accepted it, without asking about changing the room, as he developed a "particular affection" for snoring, as some of them said.

The intense time of sharing often allows for intensifying of attitudes and behaviours, as well as prejudices and fears. I usually dedicate much time during the breaks to personal conversations with the students. They are mainly focused on their feedback to the content and on the proposed approach, but they often use the occasion for sharing more, such as their choices in research, job, and even life. Many students usually ask an opportunity to have a private talk, as they wish to share their doctoral experience. I noted that most

students frequently need only to be listened to, as they hardly can find any "attentive listening" (Friedman, 1988, p. 8).

At the summer school of 2011, for instance, a PhD student shared his feedback on the design of the school at the end of the first day. It was the beginning of a dialogue which developed during the days and allowed him to intensify his choice for the research project. He told me that during the school he became aware of the need to change topic, as he actually was not interested in it, but he did not realize that before.

At the same school, another PhD student admitted that, from the beginning of the school, she was hardly able manage her emotions in public speaking and this was the reason for having chosen to attend the CSR school. She shared that she became nervous only at the idea of standing in front of people, as she was not able to control her voice and gestures, and every time she blushed and trembled. Nevertheless, she chose a job which demanded public speaking, as she loved research and did not give up: she had attended courses of diction, recitation, singing, and reading aloud to try to face her limits and work on them, but with poor results. I suggested she take advantage of every occasion during the school to practice on public speaking: she had to announce the program of the day, for instance, with different tones of voice by standing in front of the class. Furthermore, I proposed she use the microphone during the analysis of her written text or for the oral presentation, although it was not necessary in class. Many students helped her, by providing their experience and suggestions. She defined this training as "a painful but extremely useful opportunity", and exulted, as for the first time she was not "shaking", while she was speaking in front of the class, as she noted.

Also the use of English as a non-native language was a challenge for most students, either in the courses or in the schools. Most students are aware of it, and they prefer to avoid it, and to present their written and oral works in Italian, although their posters and slides are written in English. As they have to face with this language during the entire doctoral program, I usually propose that they benefit from the CSR experience by improving and practicing their pronunciation and accent.

At the 2012 school in Piedmont, for instance, a PhD student had a strong accent, which was common in his home town, an area close to Brescia, in northern Italy. Hence, his Italian and English were conditioned by it, and he knew it, but minimized this difficulty.

When he spoke in both languages the class often laughed, and I suggested he work on it by recording his voice. He could listen to it, become more aware on his accent and try to improve. He thought about it, and told me that he was afraid to lose or betrayed his cultural roots. A few months later, he wrote to me from Canada, where he went for one year of research for his PhD. He realized that he needed to improve his English and this would not have required him to lose his origins. Then, he remembered the suggestion of using a tape recorder, he tried and got better, as his Canadian supervisor noted.

The use of English was a challenge during the 2014 course at the University of Milan, in which I proposed to the class to translate simultaneously into English the content I had just explained for their Iranian colleague who was learning Italian. I proposed this exercise as a concrete gift to her, as our *munus* of communication (section 2.3.2). They needed time to understand the content and also to find the correct terms for translating them, as the discipline was completely new for all of them. During the lessons, most young researchers discovered the importance of this effort, as one said: "For me it is always a challenge to talk in public and it has been a shock to do it in English. But I saw that it was hard for all of us finding the right term[70]." At the end of the first day, the Iranian PhD student acknowledged the class efforts in translation: "When I started this lesson, I was afraid I would understand nothing or a little. Instead, I think that your fatigue taught me the real sense of communication as a gift to share." At the conclusion of the course, moreover, she used some Italian words that her peers had taught to her (Mangano, 2015b).

The last example I will present in this section is a challenge which became an opportunity for the students, and was suggested by the physical handicap of one participant.

At the 2012 school in Piedmont, a PhD student in physics used hearing aids for an impairment. All the participants noted it, and the PhD student from Brescia, the one who decided to improve his English accent, soon took care of him, by talking aloud and directed at him. At the opening of the school, this participant told me: "Have you seen that I am deaf? I just wanted to let you know[71]." His modesty was a lesson for me, and I introduced the school and the teaching design starting from this message. I suggested that this student could be the reference point of the practice of dialogue in class, and could

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[70] *Per me è sempre duro parlare in pubblico ed è stato scioccante farlo in inglese. Ma ho visto che era difficile per tutti cercare il termine più corretto possibile.*

[71] *Prof., ha visto che sono sordo? Volevo essere sicuro che lo sapesse.*

remind to all of us to be careful about not overlapping turns at talk while sharing, and to use an audible tone of voice, by avoiding whispering to at neighbour.

### 3.3.3b Example of challenges in disciplinary diversity

As previously noted, the disciplinary richness is both a "potential" and a "challenge" of this teaching design, and it is particularly so in CSR experiences. At the schools, the participants come from different universities and towns, therefore there is often a broad diversity among them. Such diversity also characterizes the courses, especially when they are promoted by different doctoral schools (Milan 2014), or universities (Brescia 2015), and when this disciplinary richness adds to the cultural one (Bari 2013, and Pilsen 2014 and 2015). I observed this diversity also at the seminars, although shorter than the other CSR offerings.

The practical approach to the CSR teaching design, characterized by the analysis of the students' written and oral works, is an attempt to create the foundation for dialogue among disciplines, and often across and beyond them. An example of this effort is the CSR seminar which I held in 2016 at the University of West Bohemia. It was a unique experience, as it was addressed mainly to post-doctoral fellows drawn from different Czech universities. Hence, the audience was different from the standard one, as they were young researchers with a few years of experience, most had already taught their own courses, and some of them had supervised bachelor's, master's and also PhD students.

Furthermore, they belonged to a broad variety of disciplines: they were fifteen students coming from ten disciplinary areas, including anthropology, mechanical engineering, mediaeval history, economics, and physics.

The seminar was conceived as a one-day workshop on theoretical and practical approach to the communication of scientific research, within a program of post-doctoral training which involved diverse Czech universities. I was invited by the director of the Institute of Applied Language Studies, in which the seminar was held, who had suggested my name to the organizing committee of this post-doctoral training program, as she has been inviting me since 2014. This is, therefore, an example of follow-up connected with an outcome, which is related especially to disciplinary diversity.

I proposed to the class to approach to the content from their application, thus from the practice to the theory, as they had already acquired experience in the communication of

scientific research, at an international level, and also through teaching. I prepared a nine-hour lesson with this structure, and I assigned individual exercises and small group work, focused on written and oral communication.

At the beginning of the seminar, I mentioned a few introductory notions on semiotics, then, I proposed an individual assignment for applying the meaning of communication as a balance between education and seduction. The participants were requested to analyze a few examples of scientific posters made by some of them, and to comment on them. They soon experienced the effect of their disciplinary diversity, especially the participants drawn from the "human sciences", as they had little notion of a scientific poster. They forced the participants of the "natural" science to introduce them to their posters, and, consequently, to briefly present their areas of research in an accessible way.

The second exercise was focused on the construction of the written text, and I proposed to the class to organize some of their works, according the second step of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, the *dispositio* (section 2.3.2). I divided the class in three groups, and I proposed that they analyze an article from anthropology if they were in engineering, and vice versa, and a paper from economics for the students of physics and mediaeval history. The young researchers from "natural" sciences hardly could approach the chapter from anthropology, as they were used to the standard sections of a scientific paper, and found lost with new or different labels. Three of them, in particular, were post-doctoral fellows in mechanical engineering, and gave up. During their introduction at the start of the seminar, they admitted being "curious" about this teaching design, and "intrigued by the program", but also "skeptical and picky", as they were "very busy", and were "afraid to waste their time", as they said. During the first break, two of them shared with me their concern for the "usefulness" to create a foundation for dialogue among disciplines, as they were "sure" they would have never collaborated with an anthropologist or an historian during their careers. I invited them to consider this exercise, and the seminar, as "an opportunity to be surprised by the unexpected".

At the second break, during lunch time, these two post-doctoral fellows shared with the class their decision: they did not intend to attend the second part of the seminar, as they "collected enough proofs" that this proposal was not "suitable for them", as they stated. I respected their choice, although they were losing an opportunity, and I observed the reactions of the class. Most participants were colleagues of these young researchers, and

I expected that they might support them or that someone else might follow them. Instead, only one colleagues of theirs joined their decision, without explaining the reason, while the rest remained, enjoyed the seminar and appreciated it, as most of them told me during lunch. These two post-doctoral fellows thanked me, and they also indicated their concerns on the evaluation questionnaire, which they signed, with their apologies.

At the beginning of the second part of the seminar, in the afternoon, all the class seemed more comfortable, relaxed, "ready for new challenges", as one post-doctoral fellow in physics said. I realized that the disappointment of the two young researchers, during the morning, has provoked tension in class, and now the other participants felt free to express themselves.

The third exercise was focused on the analysis of some of their slide presentations, and offered to most of them a way to concretely experience the foundation for dialogue among, across and beyond their fields of study. In particular, the young researcher in mediaeval history presented work which he had prepared for a local meeting, but he was nervous and hardly managed his presentation. Most participants tried to encourage him to rearrange it with useful suggestions and modifications which might help to synthesize it and to be clearer.

At the end of the seminar, many of them thanked me, as they learnt more from this "marathon", as someone defined it, than from years of research. In particular, the young researcher of mediaeval history found the seminar "extremely useful" for his work, and was regretful to have discovered it only during his post-doctoral fellowship, and not before.

### 3.3.4 Awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach
Over the years, I noted in most participants an increasing awareness of this teaching design and the content, especially at the schools and in the courses.

At the end of the 2014 course at the University of Milan, for instance, a PhD student said: "I know that the final report should be anonymous, but I want to share something with all of you. It is a course for life, as it gave me several inputs that I do not want to forget[72]."

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[72] *So che il questionario dovrebbe essere anonimo, ma vorrei condividere qualcosa con voi. Questo corso è un'esperienza per la vita, mi ha fornito tanti stimoli che non voglio dimenticare.*

The same thing happened during the courses at the University of West Bohemia, when a few participants signed their evaluation questionnaires, and added a smile to express their gratefulness.

An example of an outcome connected with follow-up and related to this awareness derived from the summer school in 2011, when a young researcher shared his comprehension of the CSR teaching design during the first break of the opening lesson. He was impressed by the twofold meanings of the verb "to communicate" and by the definition of "communicator" as the one who builds the bridge between education and seduction.

He immediately saw the need for "building a bridge between private and public areas of scientific research", as he said. He was a researcher in biotechnology and was employed in a small, private Italian company. He suffered from the prejudices towards the private context which are common among many Italian academics. His experience in the company was very positive, and felt that it was possible to overcome the stereotypes between the public and private areas and to collaborate. He soon started to build these bridges in class, with his colleagues, who were PhD students drawn from different universities. His awareness increased together with his interest and enthusiasm, and, at the end of the school, he asked me to organize a CSR school in his region, in Piedmont. The two schools which I taught there in 2012 and 2013 were the result of this follow-up, and we planned them together.

He offered his aid for the logistics of both iterations, in particular the search for the location of the school and the accommodations, as "a further occasion to meet the other in a concrete way", as he noted. Furthermore, he involved the director of the biotech company where he was employed, and they sponsored the participation of three young researchers, in addition to him and his colleague, at the following schools. The sponsorship aimed to encourage the participation of those PhD students who lived far from the location of the school, and were not able to attend it, as their universities did not support them. Moreover, this biotech company promoted the schools among their contacts, in particular, a professor of the European Master of Viticulture and Enology at the University of Turin, which was located in Asti (a town near Turin). The PhD student in viticulture who attended the summer school in 2014, for instance, discovered it thanks to this source of information.

The involvement of the young researcher at the biotech company in promoting the CSR teaching design was noteworthy during these years. This was one of the main follow-ups of the CSR school, although this idea derived from an outcome of the iteration of 2011. This is another example of connections between outcomes and follow-ups.

In the following paragraphs, I describe other examples of outcomes intertwined with follow-ups, which involve young researchers from different classes. They attended one or more CSR activities, and decided to open themselves to other CSR experiences.

Among these connections, I also illustrate further follow-ups, which may provide additional proof of the value of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue in academic teaching. In particular, I describe a second level CSR summer school, dedicated to intensify the theoretical basis of transdisciplinarity and of relationship, and some examples of the connections among the young researchers and the students of the philosophical-theological Institute.

### 3.3.4a After the CSR activities

Almost in every class some students decide to join other iterations of the CSR activities. After the 2011 summer school, for instance, the young researcher from the biotech company attended three more schools in three years, as a way of "breathing again the CSR air", as he told me. At the same summer school, two other PhD students thought the same. One attended the winter school in 2012, "to feed the small spark on the need of the other which the summer school had ignited and which risks to be extinguished by everyday life[73]", as she said. Another alum joined the school in Piedmont in 2012, and explained to the class that, as he already knew this teaching design and appreciated it, he was "sure" it would also work a second time (Mangano, 2015a).

I offered to let these young researchers collaborate in the analysis of written and oral assignments by the students at the school which they attended for the second time in 2012, and they accepted. Since then, I have been involving some students interested to expand upon this teaching design in collaborating on these practical lessons of the CSR activities. It allows them to intensify the theoretical and practical approach to dialogue, and they may also test their abilities in education, in addition to communication.

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[73] *Vorrei seguire un'altra edizione per alimentare la fiammella che la scuola estiva ha acceso in me sulla necessità dell'altro, che rischia di spegnersi durante la vita di ogni giorno.*

I collected the follow-ups drawn from these collaborations in CSR courses, schools and seminars, between 2012 and 2016, and I describe some of them in the following paragraph.

***Students' contributions to the CSR teaching***

In 2012, the student from the biotech company attended either the winter school, or the one in Piedmont, and he worked with the other two PhD students who agreed to collaborate on the practical part of the lessons dedicated to the analysis of the written and oral work. These three young researchers prepared their contributions to these lessons before the school, and they were in touch mainly by email, as they lived in different towns. Then, during the school they completed their parts after the program for the day ended, working until late in the night.

In 2013, two young scientists from the same research institute at the University of Milan attended the CSR school: one participated to the winter iteration, and another in the school in Piedmont. Then both of them accepted the offer of collaborating on the practical lessons at the CSR course which I held in Milan in the same year. They collaborated on teaching with another PhD student who worked close by them and attended the summer school in 2012. They did not know each other, but all of them were interested to intensify the CSR teaching design, which they discovered at different schools, and to open themselves also in teaching.

They chaired the analysis of scientific posters, and suggested useful tools, which I have been proposing in class since then, such as showing some pictures of the poster sessions at local and international conferences, as a way to introduce the students to this context. They also provided some posts-it to the students, thus they might indicate the positive and negative comments and physically add them to the posters. Furthermore, they chaired part of the lesson dedicated to the analysis of the students' oral presentations: they prepared an outline for each student for taking notes and they provided some instructions for creating a slide presentation.

These attempts of CSR teaching were much appreciated by every class, and some students were thrilled and took their colleagues' baton for the following courses. It was a "virtuous infection", as some of them phrased it, which has increased over the years, and allowed for the development of the connections among young researchers who attended different

CSR activities. Most of them discovered the same "common CSR root", as someone called it. Some connections continue even today and they often provide the occasions for further sharing and new activities related to the CSR teaching design.

Since 2013, for instance, there have been "CSR teaching assistants" during the practical lessons at every course which I held at the University of Milan.

Furthermore, at the 2015 course at the University of Brescia, there were four young researchers who collaborated on teaching: three attended the schools in Piedmont (one in 2012 and two in 2013) and joined this course in 2015, the fourth one participated in the 2013 course in Milan and the one in Bari on the same year.

Their collaboration was at different levels: two of them were PhD students in physics, and they experienced also communication of science, as they described to the class their research project and we visited their laboratory. The regular participants in the course were thirty PhD students drawn from several disciplines and they belonged to different departments of the two Universities of Brescia. There were young researchers drawn from agricultural, engineering, biotechnology and architecture, in addition to physics. Our visit to an optical spectroscopy laboratory, therefore, was also an exercise in interdisciplinarity. These physics PhD students tried to explain their research starting from its application, and described their equipment with terms designed to be accessible to students in the class. It was an initial attempt at creating a foundation for dialogue among disciplines, and it was appreciated by the whole class.

Their collaboration on teaching was crucial during the second lesson, in the analysis of scientific posters, as I had the flu, and the fever and cough increased during the morning. I could not talk in the afternoon, and they chaired the second part of the lesson, by dividing the class into two groups. The students were comprehensive and autonomous, and they participated in the analysis of their work with growing attention and responsibility. The "teaching assistants" were "excited, happy and tired" as they said, while most students congratulated them for their support and suggestions. One of the "assistants" was the PhD student who taped his oral presentation to improve his English accent, and at the lesson dedicated to the analysis of the slide presentations told this story as an example of "personal achievement in public speaking in a non-native language", as he said. This young researcher also collaborated on two CSR seminars which I held in Milan and Monza (a town close to Milan) in 2012. These seminars were intended to introduce and

promote my teaching activity, therefore, the collaboration I proposed to the students was different from the one at the courses or at the schools, as they would briefly share their experience at the CSR activities. At this seminar, I involved some CSR young researchers who lived close to Milan. In addition to this physicist, there also were two PhD students who attended the same school with him, in 2012, and two participants of the 2009 and 2011 schools. They presented their experience in different ways: the ones who attended the 2012 iteration worked together and started from the analysis of a scientific poster, and they provided a few suggestions on the construction of the text, especially related to their practice on the *dispositio*. Furthermore, they mentioned oral communication, in particular their experiences with the slide presentations in English.

The PhD student who attended the 2011 summer school mentioned her achievements in public speaking, either with her research group, or in the oral presentation at the meetings, in relation to the "style" of communication, the *elocutio* (section 2.3.2).

The young researcher who participated at the 2009 summer school showed a short video which she made to summarise her experience. This idea occurred to her after the school, and the later seminar provided the occasion to share its preparation and history.

Over the years, other students also prepared a short video after the schools ended to thank the other participants in a "communicative way", as one of them said (Mangano, 2015a, p. 82). These were original contributions, which I showed at the seminars as further examples of the students' experience of this teaching design.

The three PhD students who attended the 2012 school in Piedmont participated in the seminar which I held in Monza a few months after the one in Milan. They proposed as "non-conclusions" of that seminar a "symbolic gift" to the participants, as they said. It consisted in some seeds, taken from different plants, in a small plastic tube, which is generally used as disposable material in the molecular biology's laboratories. One of the young researchers was completing her PhD in vegetal biology and she used the "sources of her research", as she said: "as we received seeds of dialogue at the CSR school, today we do the same with you. We wish you to plant these and to offer to others the new seeds which you will discover[74]."

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[74] *Dato che abbiamo ricevuto semi di dialogo alla scuola "CRS", oggi facciamo lo stesso con voi. Vi auguriamo di poterli piantare e di offrire ad altri i semi che scoprirete.*

I was asked to promote the CSR teaching activity in Milan also in 2016, by the same professor who proposed it to me in 2012 and who, since then, has been inviting me to lecture almost every year. As this seminar was after four years from the first one I held there, it provided me the opportunity to present the main achievements of this period. I proposed to some young researchers who attended the CSR activities to share their definition of this teaching design. Most of them completed their doctoral and post-doctoral programs during these years, and found a job, therefore, they might suggest to the participants some input for their future choices. They could not attend the seminar, as they lived in different towns, but contributed with diverse tools, and described how they tried to apply the CSR approach in their work and daily life, as it "is not only related to the communication of scientific research", as some of them said. One of them, for instance, teaches at the secondary school and prepared a video, another one is an entrepreneur and sent me a slide presentation, and the third one completed her PhD the week before this seminar, and wrote a letter for the participants. She proposed to have me read it aloud, and to print a copy for each participant, as "her gift for them", she wrote. All of them used to collaborate to CSR teaching in the past, and attended other iterations of the courses.

Their contributions to the seminar were much appreciated by the participants, either in terms of further evidence on the possible application of the CSR teaching design beyond the academic context, or in terms of immediate follow-up of the "virtuous infection", as some students had named it. At the end of this seminar, in fact, one participant asked me if she could attend the 2016 summer school, and some colleagues of the CSR testimonials invited me to teach a course in 2017 addressed to "more mature researchers", as they said. They asked the director of their department for permission to organize it, and he agreed. I realized that their director used to be the co-tutor of my PhD in biochemistry, more than fifteen years ago, and his wife was the professor of the doctoral school who has been inviting me to teach since 2012, and who also organized this seminar.

Over the past few years, I have also been invited to present seminars of three or four hours, in order to introduce some topics of the communication of scientific research. I invited some young researchers to collaborate on the practical part of the lessons also on these occasions.

In particular, in 2013, I held a seminar in Viterbo addressed to PhD students from different fields of plant biotechnology. Three young researchers who attended my activities in the past agreed to collaborate on teaching: a post-doctoral fellow who joined one of my first courses in Viterbo, in 2007, and two PhD students from Rome, who participated in the 2011 summer school. One of them already experienced the first attempts at collaboration in teaching in 2012. They worked together on the preparation of their contribution, focused on the analysis of some example of scientific posters and oral presentations. Although the time was limited, their effort was highly appreciated, as the participants could benefit from their experiences and suggestions.

One of them decided to repeat this experience also at the end of 2015, when I was invited to present a seminar in Viterbo, by the same professor as in 2013. This young researcher offered her support in the analysis of the students' oral presentations, and shared with the class her growing awareness of the understanding of this teaching design over the years, also as a post-doctoral fellow.

Finally, some students decided to promote this teaching design among their colleagues and supervisors, in addition to exposing themselves in other CSR teaching experiences.

The young researcher who prepared the video dedicated to the 2009 school, for instance, intended to promote the CSR proposal among colleagues in biotechnology. She coordinated with the local secretariat of the Italian Association of Biotechnologists for northern Italy. This association promoted some activities for the training of young biotechnologists and provided support for their integration into the work world. In 2011, after more than one year away from the summer school, she organized a one-day workshop dedicated to the communication of scientific research from different perspectives. It was addressed to thirty biotechnologists in northern Italy. She found the location, the sponsorship and the speakers on her own, and she invited me to introduce a few topics on the meaning of communication applied to scientific research and to chair a roundtable with the other speakers on the communication of science.

Furthermore, in 2014, a student presented the CSR approach to communication as a possible application relevant to communication between a physician and a patient. He was a student of medicine at the University of Milan who participated in the 2014 summer school. He was involved in a postgraduate program of study for three years promoted by his university, which allowed him to combine a masters and a doctoral program and to

complete the PhD in the two following years. Therefore, at the end of his bachelor's degree in medicine (which in Italy lasts six years), he might also have access to the second year of a PhD program. This program required practice scientific research in a laboratory, while he was attending the courses as an undergraduate.

He had to prepare a written assignment for his exam on communication between the physician and the patient, and decided to focus on the CSR teaching design. He mentioned some CSR keywords and introduced the "CSR method", which, he argued, might be applied also in this kind of relationship. He shared this text with me and wrote that his professor appreciated it a lot.

The involvement of this student in "espousing the CSR cause", as he said, was immediate at the summer school: he soon felt involved in the atmosphere, and was the link among the participants. At the end of the first day, for instance, he left the door of his room open, for the whole day, as he wished to reproduce what he had seen in a college of the United States. He spent a few weeks on campus at the University of Massachusetts during his visit to a mathematics department, and was impressed by some professors' choice to leave their doors open during the day. They intended to invite their colleagues to talk during breaks, as "the dialogue on mathematics has no end or limits", he told us.

He proposed the same experiment at the summer school, and it worked, although he did not talk about mathematics with the other participants, rather they shared a relaxing time together during the free time. They became friends and are still in touch, as three of them used to live and work in Milan. These three students attended some "CSR *rendezvous*" in Milan between 2014 and 2016, which I proposed as further occasions of dialogue among the participants of different CSR activities. Furthermore, this student of medicine also collaborated as a teaching "assistant" in the courses I held in Milan in 2015 and in 2016. And he organized a meeting with some of his colleagues to introduce to them this teaching design. He researched the location, prepared a leaflet, contacted his colleagues and chaired this meeting. He tried to do "his best", as he wrote me, and concluded that I could always count on his support in promoting the CSR activities which he considered "schools of life and active participation as human beings[75]".

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[75] *Le attività "CRS" sono scuole di vita e di partecipazione attiva come essere umani.*

**3.3.4b Example of transdisciplinary approach to dialogue: the second level summer CSR school**

During the last few years, and especially given the small classes at the schools, some students asked me more about this teaching design, in particular about the genesis of the transdisciplinary and transcultural approach mediated by dialogue and my experience for the philosophical-theological Institute. Their limited numbers allowed me to expand upon these aspects, which I generally do not mention in classes with a large number of students. For instance, I had the chance to refer to transdisciplinarity and some notes on dialogue as a space of relationship at the 2012 and 2013 schools. The students' interest increased, and a few of them asked me to dedicate an intensive course, or, even a school, to the theoretical basis of the CSR teaching design, in particular to transdisciplinarity and Buber's perspective on relationship.

I followed their suggestions and proposed a second level CSR summer school in 2013. I include this experience in this section, as it was suggested by the students, therefore it is an outcome derived from the schools. At the same time, this is also a follow-up, as I organized the second level CSR school with their contribution. This is another example of connection among findings, in particular outcomes and follow-ups.

This second level summer school was the only edition of this type, and was addressed to the students who had followed one or more CSR activities and were interested in expanding upon this approach to dialogue. They were five young researchers: three of them had attended a school in the past, while the other two participated to the CSR course which I held in Milan in 2013. All of them considered this school a "unique experience", either as we did not replicate it, or because of their "new awareness" on this teaching design, as they noted.

I planned it as three days of lectures: one dedicated to an introduction to the theoretical and historical basis of transdisciplinarity, the second focused on Buber's contribution on relationship, and the third centered on a few notes about the ethics of scientific research, according to the perspective of the German philosopher Hans Jonas.

I proposed to the participants the theoretical and practical approach to dialogue which they had experienced in previous CSR experiences. In particular, we had the theoretical lessons in the morning, while in the afternoon they worked on the application of the content either individually or in groups. I presented only an introduction to these themes,

therefore, I proposed a synthesis of the lecture notes which I usually illustrate to the students of the philosophical-theological Institute. I provided the participants basic references on these topics, and I asked them to study these source before the school, hence, they might be prepared for these lectures.

All of them worked hard before and during the school, and they also prepared the introductory oral presentations for the first day, which I required of them, as they did not know each other. Two participants who had already experienced the school presented an original work to introduce themselves to the class, which combined video, slide presentation, and quiz (for the first student), and an "interactive path" towards "CSR awareness", as the second one defined it. Furthermore, both opened their presentation with a gift for the class, as they wished to thank everybody in advance for what they were "sure" they would have shared, as one of them explained.

Other two participants prepared their oral presentation together, as a "real dialogue", as they said while introducing it. They were PhD students from the same doctoral school, who had attended the CSR course a few months before. Thus, they had not experienced the oral presentation before, and they explained how they worked. They shared all the steps together, since they "cannot face this challenge individually", as they said. They offered this presentation as a dialogue between them, with questions and answers on the topics I generally request: who they are, what they do, why they decided to come. They first described their work, then explained each point. They noted that their big effort was related to introducing themselves, since they did not want to provide general information, as they were approaching a second level school dedicated to relationship therefore, "the first space of relationship had to be between us[76]". One of them also described her attempt in understanding the meaning of the terms, since she did not have a philosophical background. Therefore, she asked help from her aunt, who was a teacher of history and philosophy at the high school.

The other PhD student shared his fatigue, which compromised his sleep, and the time they dedicated to this "adventure", as they called it. One, in fact, lived in Brescia, and the other in Milan, therefore, they had to arrange their meetings every day after work, and often

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[76] *Stiamo preparando una presentazione di noi stessi a una scuola di comunicazione di secondo livello basata sui fondamenti della relazione, quindi il primo spazio di relazione deve essere tra noi.*

until late. Both of them described their reciprocal surprise in the discovery of the other, as realized that "probably" this should be the space of relationship.

These oral presentations put the conditions for creating a foundation of dialogue among, across and beyond each participant. Also their attempt to practice this approach to dialogue provided them the occasion for an initial awareness on this second level school. They soon noted the difference from the first level, as they were no longer requested to work on the communication of their research, but on the theoretical basis of this teaching design. In particular, on the first day I assigned them an individual work for proposing a transdisciplinary academic activity related to their field of research.

After two hours on this assignment, they were exhausted, and they did not complete it. I proposed that they analyze their initial work in class. They mainly presented proposals of interdisciplinary conferences, without real indications of relationship beyond the fields of study involved in their projects. But it was an important exercise, as they experienced the effort to think with a different logic, which they did not use in their daily work. I explained to them that this training took time, as they firstly needed to comprehend the content, and we introduced this in only a few hours. We continued to talk about it at dinner, and they continued the conversation even later.

The second exercise was an attempt at understanding the sense of relationship starting from Buber's "I-Thou relationship" (section 1.1.1.3). I proposed to them to write a letter to their possible *Thou* (relative, colleague, friend, partner, and so on). They had not to read it or share it in class, as it aimed to experience their encounter with the other, in a way probably new for them, and as they were not used to addressing a letter to these people. After this exercise they felt exhausted, but in a different way from the previous day. Surprisingly, all of them described a few details of this letter: they chose to write to a member of their family, or a colleague, or a friend, from whom they had parted or had experienced Buber's "mismeeting" (Friedman, 1988, p. 5). Furthermore, two students shared their intention to try to reconstitute this relationship as a result of this exercise.

The third assignment I suggested was work in two small groups, in an attempt to better comprehend the introduction to the ethics of research, starting from the essay by Hans Jonas of 1979, *Imperative of responsibility* (Jonas, 2002). Each group was asked to propose a practical and transdisciplinary activity related to their field(s) of study and for an academic context.

They preferred to work all together. After two hours, I found them immersed in this work, confused and tired: they were experiencing the effort of working in a group of five, instead of two or three, the difficulty of finding a common language among them and, above all, a shared idea. They presented their idea and we analyzed it: an interdisciplinary conference which aimed to interest all their disciplines, drawn from cellular and molecular biology, pharmacology, economics, and bioinformatics. They explained their choice to work together, and their consequent awareness that their effort would have been reduced in a small group, which was the reason for my initial suggestion. Furthermore, they understood the sense of the exercise, which did not aim to find a common ground among their disciplines, thus an activity which might fit for everybody, but to put forth the conditions for a foundation for dialogue.

In the final dialogue, at the end of the school, they shared their increased comprehension of this teaching design, and they encouraged me to persist in teaching and studying this approach, with the aim to apply it also beyond the academic context, and, far more broadly, in everyday life. With some of them, in particular, we continued to explore dialogue as a space of relationship among disciplines, as described in the next section.

### 3.3.4c Further follows-up drawn from CSR experiences

Further evidence of the students' awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue come from two additional follows-up. They involved young researchers who attended one or more courses, understood this design, and were interested to intensify this approach to dialogue.

The first follow-up concerns three young researchers with whom we organized a "CSR" stand to promote my *Handbook of communication of scientific research*, at the Turin International Book Fair of 2013. The second one is an example of outcomes intertwined with follow-ups, and they derived from CSR courses at the University of Milan.

The first follow-up draws on the connections among three young researchers from different towns, who attended one or more CSR activities and did not know each other prior to that experience. One was a PhD student in molecular biology who joined the second level summer school, and experienced the CSR teaching and several "CSR *rendezvous"* in Milan. She intended to work in the communication of science and to combine it with pastry making, her other passion. Another was a young researcher in

biotechnology from Milan, who attended the summer school in 2009, and organized the one-day CSR workshop for biotechnologists in 2011. She was trying to develop her project as a scientific graphic designer, for supporting the laboratory research, especially in making scientific posters and slide presentations.

The third young researcher was a biotechnologist from Turin, whom I mentioned in relation to his involvement in promoting the CSR proposal and to the definition of "CRS method".

In 2013, the publisher of the *Handbook of communication of scientific research* proposed that I share part of their stand at the Turin International Book Fair for a couple of days.

I took advantage of this opportunity to also promote the initial projects of these young researchers, while the third student benefitted from living close to Turin and so could share this experience for one day. This young researcher offered hospitality to the other two students, and together we prepared the stand. We planned the program of these days and their advertising materials, which they prepared on their own, in particular their leaflets and business cards.

The first young researcher made DNA shaped biscuits, as examples of "science for everybody", as she defined it. She included a brief description of DNA on the package, and indicated the basic molecules in each biscuit. She prepared them in Milan, and packaged them with the other two young researchers the night before our meeting at the book fair. During her trip from Milan to Turin, she texted me: "My happiness is traveling on a train, with a red box full of biscuits[77]."

These students defined the days of the book fair as an "amazing and wearing adventure", plenty of experiences at the stand, with people, possible contacts and ideas. In particular, some teachers at the primary and secondary school level were fascinated by the DNA-biscuits, and some of them proposed to this PhD student to collaborate. Also for the other young researcher it was a "fruitful test", as she called it, because it offered to her the chance to become more aware of the challenges of her project. During those days, two other CSR students joined us; they did not know each other, but they took part in this stand for a few hours.

Over the years, these CSR connections have increased, and some young researchers are still in touch. Their stories have evolved, some of them achieved their projects, some

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[77] *La mia felicità viaggia su un treno, con una scatola rossa piena di biscotti.*

others changed ideas, or they are trying to focus on them, as I started to describe in the essay dedicated to some PhD students as "young Sisyphus" (Mangano, 2013c, section 2.3.2), and as will be presented further in chapter 4.

The second follow-up refers to some PhD students from the University of Milan, who I met at the beginning of their doctoral experience, at the CSR courses in 2013 and 2014, and who I had the opportunity to follow along the years. With some of them, in particular, we have kept in touch, as they attended other CSR activities and collaborated in teaching. Many of them shared their increasing awareness of this approach and its benefits for their research during their PhD.

Until now, I have never had the opportunity to attend to the last steps of the PhD students program, especially their final year's oral presentation, and their doctoral defense. In 2016, I was invited to attend both by the professor in Milan who asked me to teach the CSR course in the same days. This professor asked me to check the students' achievements especially in terms of oral presentations.

I attended the final year's oral presentations of ten PhD students; eight of them had participated to a CSR course: five in 2014, during their first year of the PhD, and three a week before this oral presentation, thus, in their third year. I took notes of each oral presentation, for providing them further indications or comments.

They were "important moments", as most students told me. The PhD defense was the occasion "to summarize" their increasing awareness about life, not only about research or communication, as a student said. She was the young researcher who wrote the letter for the participants to the CSR seminar which I held a few days after her defense, as previously described. Another PhD student was very happy to see me and told me that she hoped to apply "all" my instructions. She was the first to present in the session, while the other PhD student was the last. The board noted their skill in the oral presentation, which they defined as "added value" to their competence in research.

The final year's oral presentations provided the students additional confirmation about their awareness and improvements in communicating their research, especially the three young researchers who had just attended the CSR course. A PhD student, in particular, soon after her oral presentation looked at me for immediate feedback, and another young researcher asked me the same at the first break. Also the PhD students to whom I have lectured two years before benefitted from the CSR course, although their awareness was

different from their colleagues who attended it during their final year of the PhD. Some professors on the board congratulated the students at the end of their oral presentation. Among them, there was one of the professors who had invited me to teach my first CSR seminar in 2003. He still remembered that experience: "Oh, it's you! Our PhD students talk about your course in our department. Thanks for your aid: today we saw the difference among the ones who attended your course and the others[78]."

One of the young researchers who presented the final year's report waited for me at the end of this session: "I wished to thank you for your support, as our 'coach'. This course was the most beautiful experience of my PhD. I feel grown in only ten days, and I am ready for the last rush: writing my dissertation[79]".

### 3.3.4d Examples of connections among the students

I include the connections among young researchers and some religious students of the philosophical-theological Institute as further examples of follow-ups drawn from CSR experiences. They provide additional support to the relationship between these two contexts of my academic teaching and, consequently, to this proposal for a unique approach, which is transcultural and transdisciplinary.

In particular, I invited two Italian religious students from the Institute to meet the participants of the winter CSR schools which I held in Viterbo in 2012 and in 2013.

Furthermore, one of them also participated in a one-day meeting dedicated to intensifying dialogue as space of relationship, addressed to CSR students, which I proposed in Milan in 2012.

I invited these religious students since they were interested to intensify my teaching design beyond the courses at the Institute, with the idea of applying this approach in their daily lives, in addition to their study. I referred to these students in earlier discussion of the findings drawn from the courses at the Institute: one proposed the "ten steps towards the encounter with the other" (section 3.1.1c) and the second student "the five steps for getting prepared for dialogue" (section 3.1.3c). Both of them used to live in Viterbo, and

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[78] *Eccola! I nostri dottorandi parlano del tuo corso. Grazie per il tuo aiuto: oggi si vedeva la differenza tra chi ha seguito il tuo corso e chi non lo ha seguito.*
[79] *Volevo ringraziarti per il tuo aiuto, sei stata la nostra "motivatrice". Questo corso è stato la cosa più bella del mio dottorato. Mi sento cresciuta in soli dieci giorni e sono pronta per la prova finale: la stesura della tesi di dottorato.*

the schools were conducted there, during the New Year's Day holiday, when they were free from lessons and from service to their parish.

I proposed that they share their understanding of dialogue as a space of relationship drawn from the courses they attended at the Institute, and their experiences in applying it in daily life. They considered these meetings as further occasions to practice dialogue beyond the academic context, although they were addressing young researchers. The challenges for these two students, therefore, were at different levels: they were undergraduates with a philosophical background, while the participants at the schools were mainly PhD students drawn from different fields in "natural" sciences. Furthermore, most young researchers were not familiar with philosophical terms, and I did not mention this topic at the schools, thus they opened themselves also in introducing a few notes of it. Moreover, their religious choice of life would have probably surprised the CSR students, as I did not cite it, to leave them free to express themselves. They also could choose the style of presentation which they preferred in no more than two hours.

They worked together to organize both meetings, as they used to live at the diocesan seminar and they were friends, in addition to being religious colleagues.

At the first CSR school, we sat in a circle, and they shared their experience in two moments, one dedicated to the courses and the second to their choice of life.

At the second school, we focused on the term "otherness", thus the encounter with the other in everyday life, as students and young researchers. They joined the dinner together with the other participants, and then they proposed an exercise which took inspiration from the "Johari window" (Luft & Ingham, 1955). They adapted the technique made up by the U.S. psychologists Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham on the study of interpersonal dynamics to provide the class an initial understanding of the relationship with the other, which may help to better know ourselves. They divided the class into two groups and suggested they answer to two questions derived from the "Johari window": each group's members should write in a column what they knew of themselves which they thought the others knew, and, in another column, which things they knew of themselves that the others did not (or might not) know. Then, we examined these comments together, in a circle, and they were asked to indicate, in a third column, what the other knew about each of them, which they did not know. The two religious students

assigned less than one hour to each group for working on these questions and one more hour for the dialogue with the class.

The meeting at the first CSR school involved all the participants, who engaged in a dialogue which overcame their backgrounds and choices of life. They were touched by these two students' proposal, and, moreover, by their religious choice of life, which was quite unknown to them. This also provided the occasion to intensify the religious choice of life, as the young researchers were not believers, and they asked to know more. The religious students felt respected and understood, and they kept in touch with a few of them afterwards. When these two students became priests, in 2014, they also shared this news with them.

The meeting at the second school was hard, as most participants were colleagues and knew each other, thus they were scared to open themselves. Furthermore, most had prejudices against clergy and some of them felt "uncomfortable", as they said during the final analysis. Only a few of them took seriously the exercise proposed by the religious students, and enjoyed the questions and the dialogue with them. A participant was impressed by them and she thanked them a lot. They kept in touch afterwards, they informed her of their entering the priesthood, and she announced to one of them her wedding in 2014.

These experiences were "important and decisive" for the two religious students, as they told me. They did not feel upset about the second one, as they considered it a challenge to their choice of life, which cannot be imposed on the other, as they noted.

Furthermore, one of these religious students attended a one-day meeting dedicated to expanding on dialogue as a space of relationship addressed to CSR young researchers, which I held in Milan in 2012. He decided on his own for understanding what I was fighting for, as he told me since the beginning. We planned his journey together, as I was already in Milan to teach a CSR seminar, and, for this reason, I also organized this one-day meeting. As it was during the summer holiday, he was free from study and parish services, and he also took advantage during those days to meet a friend who had moved to Milan for work.

As a result of a series of accidents, only one young researcher could attend this meeting, in addition to this religious student. She came from Asti (close to Turin), and I proposed to them to work until lunch time, and to enjoy a couple of hours together. I introduced a

few notes on Buber's life and perspective on relationship, and we tried to apply these notions to our dialogue, which, despite the small number, was a "very rich moment", as the young researcher defined it. Although she had not a philosophical background, and was unfamiliar with the terms I presented, she appreciated it a lot.

The religious student described this experience as "demanding and unreal", as we talked about dialogue, in a park, and at the center of Milan. The following day, he introduced me to a friend, and we shared a few details of this one-day meeting on dialogue, as this student had invited him to participate. We realized that, while we were talking about dialogue, it was taking place, among our different choices of life, jobs, and studies. He was surprised by this dialogue, which happened "by chance", as he said, or "by grace", applying Buber's perspective (Buber, 1970, p. 62), which I mentioned to them.

Over the years, we have kept in touch and, when I went to Milan, we tried to meet. In 2016, when I held a CSR course in Milan, he asked me more about my study and this dissertation. He reminded me of that first dialogue, in which his friend, the religious student, was "the accident" which allowed us to meet.

Since this episode, I have introduced this religious student to some CSR young researchers in Viterbo, who were interested to expand on the meaning of dialogue as the space of relationship, especially in daily life. In 2014, after one of these meetings, this student wrote me: "I understood what you are fighting for: you explore dialogue and relationship to make them happen again. I want to investigate them as well, and I would like to be a source for your research[80]" (personal communication by e-mail, January, 8, 2014).

## 3.4 Analysis of CRS experiences

After having presented the main findings derived from CSR experiences, I will describe how they arose. In particular, I firstly focus on the genesis of CSR teaching design, which allows better understanding of its "potentials and challenges". Then, I will present the program of each activity - the school, the course and the seminar. These aspects clarify why I developed this teaching design, and allow us to interpret the findings. In presenting this analysis, I will follow an order similar to my experiences at the

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[80] *Ho capito per cosa ti stai spendendo: studiare come accade il dialogo e la relazione per farli accadere di nuovo. Anche io voglio capire come farli accadere e mi piacerebbe essere fonte alla tua ricerca.*

philosophical-theological Institute, as they refer to the same proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue.

### 3.4.1 Genesis

The first invitation to teach a seminar on the communication of scientific research addressed to PhD students came in 2003, from a professor of biochemistry at the University of Milan. We used to work in the same department when I was pursuing my doctoral program in biochemistry, and we kept in touch when I completed it, and I started a postgraduate course in communication of science promoted by the same university. I informed him when I was employed in a scientific communication agency in Milan, soon after this course. For this reason, this professor of biochemistry involved me in the exam session of his class, in 2003.

Jointly with a colleague they proposed that their students present at the exam on one topic chosen from among those covered during their biochemistry course. Students would have to present to an academic board, and would be evaluated on several different levels: knowledge of content, interest for the general public, and clarity in their oral presentation. The two professors would judge the first aspect, a student in the high school expressed her opinion for the second one, and I was invited to evaluate the last one. After the session, I shared with this professor some suggestions for improving the students' oral presentations. A "few adjustments", as I called them, which might be included in their last lecture of the course. This professor appreciated these suggestions, and replied with the proposal of my teaching a two-hour seminar on the fundamentals of a scientific oral presentation. It should be addressed either to the students of their course, or to their PhD students and the staff of their laboratory.

The head of the agency of communication in which I was employed was skeptical about the effectiveness of such proposal, as I had little experience in communication and two hours was a limited time for fully covering this topic, in her opinion. Therefore, she suggested that I refuse. I shared her concerns with this professor, and he proposed, for the same reasons, to consider the seminar as a challenge, and to try.

Since then, I have been proposing similar seminars for the Italian universities with which I was in touch: in addition to the University of Milan, the ones of Padua, Brescia and Viterbo. I presented these lectures outside of my job responsibilities, thus on Saturday.

At the University of Viterbo, in particular, I was invited by another professor of biochemistry, who had supervised my degree dissertation. He supported this attempt of providing similar instructions to the postgraduates, and he encouraged me to continue, although it was hard to manage it with my job. I shared with him the skepticism of the head of the agency in Milan to these initial approaches to academic teaching, and he suggested that I wait before making a choice between academia and business. He felt they required different attitudes, and I should become aware of what I was really interested in. In 2006, a couple of years after this conversation, I decided to leave the agency of communication, as I needed to open myself to new challenges, in a different context from the world of business. Despite the dynamic and international environment of Milan, in fact, scientific publishing seemed to me to have narrowed to a national (as opposed to a global) context in those years, and the study conducted before restricted to an Anglo-European perspective. I actually did not know what I was looking for, but, I would say that it found me, and this encounter happened "by grace" (Buber, 1970, p. 62).

During those years, in fact, in addition to my job and occasional teaching, I was involved in an interdisciplinary group of scholars in ecology and other "natural" sciences, who wanted to apply a transdisciplinary perspective. They belonged to an ecclesiastical and international movement which promoted the universal brotherhood among cultures and religions, by taking inspiration from the Gospel. The core of this organization was located in the Roman Castles, a cluster of villages in the province of Rome. In 2004, I was asked to collaborate with the central board secretariat of this group of scholars, which used to meet a few times during the year and for an annual meeting.

In 2006, I was invited by this organization to collaborate on the arrangement of a convention which was held in Budapest (Hungary), and involved almost ten thousand people drawn from several countries of the world. I was asked to work for the press office of this convention, for one year, either in the Roman Castles, or during the convention in Budapest.

While I was in Hungary, I received an invitation to teach a course on the communication of scientific research by a professor of the University of Viterbo. He was organizing a course on this topic for his doctoral students and post-doctoral fellows. I proposed a twenty-hour course, which I then taught there every year between 2007 and 2010. This professor helped me to develop my initial teaching design, and supported it: in particular,

in 2008, after this course was offered for the first time, I decided to test if I might transform this attempt to fill a gap in postgraduate education into a job as a freelance lecturer. I described this teaching approach to the communication of scientific research in a small volume in Italian, accessible to young researchers: *Manuale di comunicazione della ricerca scientifica* [Handbook on communication of scientific research]. I published the version in Spanish in 2009. Then, together with a graphic designer, we created the logo, which reproduces the acronym of "communication of scientific research", and the website, with content in Italian, Spanish and English. Since then, I have been calling my teaching design "CSR", using this acronym.

In the same year, I presented this handbook at the Italian universities with whom I was in touch, and at the National Small and Medium Publishers Book Fair in Rome. They were fruitful occasions for promoting my initial experience: at the book fair, in fact, I encountered a professor of the University of Pavia (a town close to Milan), who I had met during my PhD in biochemistry. She was responsible for the organization of the annual summer meeting of Italian PhD students of biochemistry, and she proposed that I present my handbook at this meeting. Furthermore, she also invited me to promote my teaching design at a local conference of biochemistry, close to this PhD students' meeting.

The professor from the University of Viterbo who invited me to lecture in those years also organized the presentation of the handbook to their faculty. On the same day, he suggested a location for the first CSR school.

In the previous months, I had shared with him the idea of an intensive course of a few days open to young researchers drawn from different disciplines and universities. I intended to organizing it during the summer, and possibly outside of the university, as a full immersion in the communication of scientific research able to combine "life and study together", as will be described in section 3.4.4. This professor proposed a possible location at the Alpine Study Centre of the University of Viterbo, based in a small village close to Trento, in northern Italy, which was generally used for the intensive courses promoted by this university. Therefore, in 2009, we organized the first CSR summer school, and, since then, the Study Centre has been offering hospitality to the summer schools every year.

Between 2012 and 2013, I organized CSR schools in other locations and at other times of year: in particular, in Piedmont (Ivrea and Turin), in Sicily (Palermo), and in Viterbo.

Furthermore, since 2012, I have been invited to teach courses in the doctoral school of the University of Milan (where I earned my PhD in biochemistry almost fifteen years before). The professor who invited me started work in the laboratory where I was completing my last year of the doctoral study. Her husband conducted research in another department, and he supervised part of my dissertation.

At the end of the PhD, I left bench research, and I had not heard from them in a long time. Therefore, when she contacted me, in 2012, I was surprised, as I did not imagine that she was informed about my teaching activities. She told me she received word of my project from other professors in biochemistry at the University of Milan, and was interested to know more about the CSR teaching design. Hence, she invited me to teach a seminar in 2012, and since then, she has continued to invited me to teach almost every year.

In the last few years, this teaching has expanded: between 2013-2015, I also lectured at the Universities of Bari, Brescia and Padua and in other doctoral schools of the University of Milan. Finally, since 2014, I also have been invited to teach in the Czech Republic, at the Institute of Applied Language Studies of the University of West Bohemia, in Pilsen.


### 3.4.2 Potentials and challenges

The "potentials and challenges" I discovered at the courses for the philosophical-theological Institute were similar to the ones I identified in CSR experiences, and guided me also in the analysis of findings of this context. They are: 1) human, cultural and disciplinary richness; 2) theoretical and practical approach to dialogue; 3) main challenges for the students; 4) awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach.

As previously mentioned, the richness of CSR experiences relates to the disciplinary diversity among the students, which adds to the cultural one, and it is the first potential of this approach to teaching.

During the past several years, I have had in the same class young researchers from agriculture, economics, philosophy and biology (in 2011), or participants drawn from different areas of biotechnology (bioinformatics, plant biotechnology, molecular medicine, cellular biology, in the courses during 2013 and 2016) or of pharmaceutical sciences (organic and inorganic chemistry, biochemistry, in the course during 2015). In other cases, there has been either a disciplinary richness or a cultural one, as the

participants came from different countries (the first course in the Czech Republic in 2014, and the course at the Mediterranean Agronomic Institute in 2013).

As formerly mentioned, "potentials and challenges" go together. In the CSR course, in fact, the students' disciplinary background and their current research may limit the conditions for creating a space of relationship. Over the years, for instance, I have observed that many students would distinguish between themselves on the basis of their field of research, as "scientists" and "humanists", or according their study, as "physicists", "engineers", or "biologists". Sometimes, the participants are the first to create this burden in class, during the practice of dialogue or the analysis of written and oral works, when some of them mention their status: "we, as chemists", for instance, or "in our laboratory", or "in my research group". This initial attitude may be another way to express a cultural burden, which becomes a "disciplinary burden", as most students tend to associate their field of study with their belonging and identity. This is evident, for instance, at the schools, during their oral presentations on the first day, when most young researchers introduce themselves saying "I am" a mathematician, or a geologist, and so on. This "disciplinary burden" frequently implies the use of technical terms and jargon, related to their field of study, which at the beginning may create distance.

Another aspect of the possible burden is associated with the students' understanding of scientific research, in the sense of their knowledge, thus, what they are exploring during their doctoral program. It is often a fragmented perspective, which needs to evolve, towards an attitude of considering themselves as young scholars, rather than students.

They generally are not aware of this difference, as they frequently consider their research a list of activities to do: working in the laboratory, reading or writing a paper and preparing a slide presentation. They often have little understanding of the epistemology of their field of study, which is broader than their research project or the experimental steps. This is a common attitude, from what I have observed in almost ten years of teaching activities, and does not include only PhD students in the "natural" sciences.

This view frequently implies that the education on the communication of scientific research is perceived by most students as a lack of practical instructions, which they hope to collect in a few days and to apply to their work. Therefore, many of them are convinced that it is enough to learn *how* to make a scientific poster, a paper, a slide presentation, for instance, and are not aware of the meaning of their communication, or of their

implications.

Furthermore, most students' supervisors often consider the communication of scientific research to be a collection of instructions, and do not stimulate the young researchers to intensify this study during their doctoral program. They think that one CSR course, or a school, is enough, or, perhaps even, a seminar. Therefore, my first disciplinary and cultural challenge frequently lies with the students' supervisors and professors.

Moreover, as this proposal is addressed to postgraduates, since the beginning I have considered this teaching experience as an additional contribution which might help them in their future career of academic scholars. I developed it as an intensive course, which might allow the students' participation within their doctoral program and for a restricted time. Therefore, since the initial CSR experience, I have thought about this as being a three to five days' experience, with lectures of six to eight hours per day, and the schools have occurred during summer or holidays.

Over the years, I have tried to develop a curriculum which might help the students to gradually rethink, reconstruct and reshape their "epistemological identity", as it might be phrased. As young scientists of every field of study, in fact, they should attempt a deeper understanding of *what* they are going to communicate, which kind of research, and, possibly, which kind of science, thus, of knowledge. The basic questions which I present to them are *what*, *why* and *to whom,* before and together with *how*, to better understand the meaning of scientific research, and to discover that it does not depend on their field of study. This has implied promoting an increasing (sometimes also new) awareness of their "disciplinary root", a sort of returning to their research's origin. For this reason, this process is independent from the area of research, and it may be addressed to every "natural", "social" and "human" science.

It also implies proposing to the students an initial transdisciplinary approach, in some cases also transcultural, to the communication of scientific research, which is virtually unknown to most of them. For this reason, I developed this teaching design using a theoretical and practical approach, which has allowed the young researchers to comprehend it while they were applying it. In particular, since the beginning of the CSR experience, I have been suggesting in class analysis of the students' written texts and oral presentations, within practical lessons which follow the theoretical ones. This exercise of collective correction might help the students to also practice self-criticism, as they were

asked to analyze their own work, in addition to that of their colleagues. Furthermore, it also has allowed them to develop attention to detail, to accept criticism, to correct the other, and, moreover, to become aware of their mistakes, as a necessary step for improving.

It has also implied helping the students learn to open themselves and challenge the other. This has allowed them to create a space of relationship among, across and beyond themselves and their disciplines. The increasing awareness derived from this practice of dialogue at the schools expanded with the analysis of the introductory oral presentations, and with its final analysis.

Over the years, this teaching design has worked on most participants like a skeleton key, which may open some doors in their minds, such as prejudices or stereotypes, or fears and concerns about their approach to research or to their doctoral experience.

Furthermore, this awareness helps them to assume risk in their work, to become responsible for it, and to understand the sense of this teaching design, which should remind them of the gift, therefore the *munus* of communication. This implies becoming aware that their work, as well its communication, their writing, talking, and their research, may be occasions for encountering the other, and for applying the pragmatics of communication, which refer to the value of the other. This comprehension may become an invitation to continue to apply this approach in their study, to intensify it also when the course is ended, and, hopefully, in their daily experience.

### 3.4.3 The course and the school: program, keywords and structure

The students who attend the CSR activities generally have little notion of semiotics, as most of them have never studied it, either at the bachelor or master's degrees, or during their PhD. As young scientists, they are required to communicate their research within the international academic community. In particular, they create papers (articles, or chapters), scientific posters, and their doctoral dissertation, as examples of written communication, and orally present their articles or posters, a seminar or lecture, or defend their thesis.

The students need to learn to write and to present these materials, but, at the moment, this training is not common in most Italian doctoral programs. This gap also occurs in other countries, as some professors and the PhD students have confirmed. In particular, in

southern (such as, Spain, Portugal, France, and Greece), eastern (for instance Hungary, the Balkans, Czech Republic and Slovak) and central (as Belgium) Europe, and in Central (such as Mexico, Costa Rica, and Cuba) and in South (for instance Brazil, Argentina, and Peru) America. For this reason, since the beginning of this teaching experience, I have considered it an attempt to contribute to fill a gap in a formal education on the written and oral communication of one's own research.

Over the years, I have developed a common program for the courses and the schools, based on three theoretical lessons. The first one is dedicated to introducing the fundamentals of semiotics, the second and the third lessons describe the basis of text construction. In particular, written, at the second one, and oral, at the third. These lectures combine theoretical content with the practice of dialogue, consisting in the analysis in class of the students' written and oral work.

This order for presenting the content may allow the students to become aware of *why* and *for whom* they are communicating, before learning *how* doing it, hence before presenting the suggestions for how to write or talk within the academic community. These three questions are related and connected, but they are often taken for granted by most PhD students. The risk is a technical approach to scientific research, which is frequently focused on the results, thus on the answer, more than on the question. And this risk is common among young scientists, whether in quantitative or in qualitative research, as I have often observed. Therefore, I have tried to develop a teaching design centred on these three questions, in the following order: why, for whom and how. In fact, when the students become aware of the reasons for communicating their research and the meaning of the other, they may also comprehend the way to communicate. Then, they may apply these instructions as tools to enhance their message, and this allows them to practice the theory. Hence, this teaching design is different from training in scientific academic writing or in oral presentation and public speaking. Although they have common aspects, I developed this program as a theoretical and practical approach to the fundamentals of semiotics applied to scientific research. This perspective is mediated by dialogue, which the students are requested to create and to explore, as a space of relationship among, across and beyond their cultures and disciplines.

*Keywords*

At the courses and at the schools, I propose keywords, which often allow an immediate comprehension of the content, and introduce the students to a common language with which we may dialogue. This shared alphabet helps to put the conditions for a space of relationship among the participants, which is not necessarily common, but requires terms accessible to everybody, therefore we need to first define them. I refer to their etymology, from Latin, which is a constant of my teaching design, and allows the students to comprehend the current meaning of the terms. As most participants in the courses and the schools are Italian and many of them studied Latin in the high school, they generally understand this definition.

The verbs which I usually propose at the first lecture, "to communicate", "to educate", "to seduce", "to move" and "to convince", introduce them to the sense of communication as a human and daily experience, not only related to scientific research. The whole lesson, actually, turns on these verbs. The students generally become aware of the connection among them during the second and third lessons. The first lesson, therefore, introduces the other two, and provides the basis for their comprehension and for the practical part, which is an application of the theory.

During the courses and the schools, the students realize that the CSR teaching design centers on these five verbs, and the idea of communication as a balance between education and seduction. They usually understand it at the end of the first lecture, and expand their understanding at the following lessons, especially during the practical parts.

Furthermore, the analysis of their written and oral work allows them to comprehend the three competences of communication, "syntactics", "semantics" and pragmatics", which are generally obscure for them at the beginning. Moreover, they are generally unfamiliar with the terms "value of the other", and "otherness", and associate "the other" with "the diverse", in the sense of someone of a different field of study. Thus, they often take time to redefine terms, to realize the complexity of their meanings and the implications. When they comprehend these terms, their meanings and implications, they usually understand also the sense of the word "semantics", and their awareness increases.

I designed the second lesson to allow their comprehension of communication as a human experience, which overcomes their job and scientific research. At the opening of the lecture, dedicated to putting into order a written text through the four steps of *dispositio*,

I mention the term "order", which, in this perspective, refers to logic, rather than to aesthetics. I explain to them its meaning for their work, in relation to the words "discipline" and "method".

Furthermore, the students are often fascinated by the "5Ws" rule, which provides an interpretative key also for approaching to a text, especially the news. Most PhD students, in fact, as I saw over these years, are not used to read newspaper, they just flip through the pages, or have a look at the web page online. They are often disaffected from the news, and from social and political issues, either local or international. They frequently accept what they read in social media, which are, for most of them, the common (sometimes unique) observation point for reality. This part of the lesson, therefore, is an occasion for helping them to see the value of other perspectives on the news, which may help them to face some prejudices and stereotypes.

The third lesson is focused on the style of oral communication, the *elocutio*, and is intended to continue to unlock some of the students' mental cages, which often influence them, especially in public speaking. The experience of the past few years has confirmed that most of them are scared to present their work in front of their colleagues or at a conference. They fear to open themselves, to hear their voice on the microphone, to stand and to share their opinion. Above all, they are concerned about the questions from the audience, and worried about speaking English, common fears among non-native students, as I saw also in the Czech Republic. These are generally the main challenges for PhD students, as they experienced written and oral communication at the bachelor and master's degree, but they now need to improve and to practice these skills. For this reason, I usually propose the third lesson as an opportunity to face these challenges, especially in the practical part, dedicated to their oral presentations and their analysis.

I describe the characteristics of *elocutio*, "language and example", "presentation of data" and "look", with examples drawn from their colleagues in previous classes, which allow them to become more aware of these challenges.

At the end of the course and at the school, I usually mention the "non-conclusions", and I present as last keyword "Sisyphus", who symbolizes their effort. As with Sisyphus, in fact, so also their fatigue is endless, but at the end of the course they should be more aware, and have more tools, and, hopefully, courage, to face it. In the essay by Albert Camus, Sisyphus refuses to consider himself victim of a sentence, and continues to push

his stone as an eternal rising against Zeus. For this reason, he concludes the essay with the imperative: "One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus, 1991). In his view, in fact, this fatigue also symbolizes the eternal confirmation that his fight against Zeus was right, he assumes the responsibility for his crimes and pays, but he does not redeem himself and he does not please Zeus.

Although they cannot avoid their stone and fatigue, nor may the course be sufficient to overcome these, their awareness may help them to pass through them. Therefore, I invite them to assume the responsibility of a choice: to decide to be happy as "young Sisyphus". It is a choice, more than an imperative, therefore, they "may" imagine him happy, rather than "must", as Camus states at the end of his essay. It implies a free decision, for each student, thus, a call of responsibility to which each of them – as Sisyphus – may answer (Mangano, 2013c).


### 3.4.4 CSR school: life and study together

Since the first CSR school, I have been proposing this as a transdisciplinary approach to dialogue, a full immersion focused on the encounter with the other. The participants, in fact, have the opportunity to intensify and practice this approach for the whole day, by following lessons, cooking, eating and spending free time together. For this reason, they often become aware that life and study become one thing, in a location generally far from where they live and work, thus they may concentrate on this experience.

It is different from what they usually practice at conferences, at other intensive schools, or at the CSR courses. In these cases, in fact, the teaching design is generally limited to the lectures, and for the rest of the day the students are free to manage their time.

Furthermore, even when the students are involved in intensive teaching experiences in which the accommodations and the lessons are in the same location, they generally do not spend the whole day together, even going to the market or cleaning the common spaces.

It is, therefore, a different teaching design from what they may experience at a university campus, in Italy or abroad.

The approach which I suggest, in fact, takes inspiration from the original meaning of the term "university", *universitas*, as it was intended in the Middle Ages, especially in Europe (Moulin, 1992). It refers to the ancient Greek community of students and scholars, such as those of Socrates and Plato. In this perspective, the practice of dialogue among students

and teachers was constant, during the whole day, as an application of the theoretical lessons and an input for them. The product of this dialogue, often, complemented the content of the lectures, therefore, the lecture notes were prepared together, by the students and the professors.

Plato describes this insight mediated by dialogue which leads to the "truth of knowledge" in his *Letter VII,* as "a result of a continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith" (Plato, 1966, 341c[81]). Hence, according to Plato, the combination of study and life is the basis for dialogue, which leads to knowledge. This condition, knowledge mediated by dialogue, "does not exist, nor will there ever exist" (Plato, 1966, 341c), it may happen only through relationship, "communion therewith", which requires and is created by dialogue.

I visited an academic experience in Italy which takes inspiration from this approach to knowledge through life and study together, and according the original model of a university developed in Europe in the Middle Ages. It is a centre for education and research which aims to combine life and study through a transdisciplinary and intercultural approach to dialogue, the "Sophia University Institute", located close to Florence. It was established in 2008 with a master's degree program in "foundations and perspectives for a culture of unity", in which the term "unity" is intended as "dialogue" among disciplines, religions and cultures. Over the years, this Institute has also developed doctoral and post-doctoral programs of study on this topic, in addition to political studies, economics and management, and Trinitarian ontology.

The "Sophia University Institute" is promoted by the ecclesiastical international movement located close to Rome with which I collaborated in 2006-2007, as previously mentioned (section 3.4.1). During 2007, in particular, I met some professors of the "Sophia University Institute", who were establishing this Institute. In several conversations, they mentioned this approach to knowledge through life and study together, and one of these professors had introduced me to the transdisciplinary perspective proposed by Nicolescu, within the interdisciplinary group of scholars in ecology a few years before (section 3.4.1).

I was fascinated by the idea of a space of relationship among disciplines, cultures and religions which is founded on the Gospel and may promote the universal brotherhood.

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[81] This is an online one-page source, so the page number is not indicated, but it is reported the section number.

Moreover, I was intrigued by the opportunity to combine study and life together in academic teaching according the original models of the ancient Greek community of students and scholars and the one of the Medieval university. When I discovered Buber's dialogic perspective, I understood that dialogue may become a space of relationship which belongs to every human being, independently from her/his belief (Christian, as for the "Sophia University Institute", or Jewish, as for Buber). Since then, I have started to explore the foundation for dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines as a human condition, without searching for a common ground - cultural, disciplinary or religious - by taking inspiration from the philosophy of dialogue and transdisciplinarity, as previously described (section 1.4).

Over the past few years, I have developed the CSR school as an approach to teaching mediated by dialogue as a space of relationship which combines life and study. I have kept in touch with some professors at the "Sophia University Institute", and I have involved the one who introduced me to transdisciplinarity as a speaker in the first CSR summer schools in 2009 and in 2011.

The proposal for life and study together which characterizes the CSR school, in fact, implies the presence of speakers from different fields, who may increase the occasions for creating a foundation for dialogue. In addition to the scholar from the "Sophia University Institute" who introduced the young researchers to philosophy of science, in fact, I involved practitioners in communication of science and scientific marketing who presented on their cultural and professional backgrounds at the schools of 2012, 2013 and 2016. These speakers usually live and work close to the school's location, therefore their experience also is an enrichment permitting students to better understand the geographical context of the school, as the participants come from different towns, and most of them are not familiar with the location.

Furthermore, as previously described for the academic experiences for the philosophical-theological Institute, participants become aware of this model while they apply it, and they practice it while they study. This leads to improving their understanding and interaction among the group, especially during the analysis of written and oral work which follows the theoretical lessons. This practice of dialogue is constant during the school: when the participants register, for instance, they are asked to travel together to reach the location. Furthermore, they are asked to introduce themselves to their

classmates on the first day of the school; as are informed about this assignment at the time of registration, they have time to work on it. This brief introduction to the class is presented as an immediate application of the twofold meanings of communication, as a gift (*munus*) and a barrier (*moenia*) for the other. They are asked to prepare their introduction as within a school of communication, rather than for a conference or a job interview. They are free to choose the style and tools for presenting it. This suggestion seems new to most of them, and they usually either prepare a slide presentation or just stand and talk.

These introductory presentations are also an exercise in oral communication, and I propose to the class to analyse them only after the lesson dedicated to this topic, when they become more aware of their achievements or need to improve. Therefore, I generally request of the students to take notes on each oral presentation, and to indicate their comments, which they share and explain during the last day. This further demand aims to solicit their attention to the details, without taking for granted that they will remember them by the end of the school.

The conclusion of the school is presented as a further practice of dialogue as well. I request that the students synthesize their experience, in a few minutes, in terms of their involvement, awareness and evaluation of the proposed approach. I provide them a similar list to the "transcultural evaluation criteria" and evaluation questionnaire which I propose to the philosophical-theological Institute, adapted to this context. This list may help them in the synthesis, as, unlike the courses for the philosophical-theological Institute, in CSR experiences there is no exam, and the final questionnaire is provided only at the courses. Therefore, this moment of dialogue is offered as an additional occasion for sharing, after the "non-conclusions" and the last keyword proposed to the students.

I usually invite the participants to sit in a circle, and I explain the reason for this shape: an endless dialogue, therefore, the relationship among, across and beyond us, as well as dialogue, may continue. I generally suggest to the participants how we may keep in touch: first, through the CSR wiki (section 2.3.4), which allows sharing their written work and slide presentation with CSR colleagues who attended prior courses or schools. I adapted the idea of the wiki from the "Intercultural Dialogue Wiki", which was proposed to the participants of the Summer Conference on Intercultural Dialogue in 2009 (sections 1.2

and 3.6). A few months after this conference, I organized the first CSR summer school, and I proposed to the students a similar tool, which I have been using since then.

Second, I maintain connections through the CSR mailing list, which includes all the students I have met.

Third, I propose to the young researchers interested to building on the CSR approach to collaborate in my teaching of new courses, by attending the practical lesson dedicated to written and oral communication. They may provide their contribution in the analysis in class of their colleagues' written and oral work. This is a different activity from what is requested to them as young scientists and communicators, as it implies exposing themselves in teaching. I invite them, in fact, to chair this analysis in class, and to indicate their suggestions derived from their experiences in previous CSR activities.

Finally, I suggest to any students interested to keep in touch to attend the "CRS *rendezvous*", which I usually propose when I return to towns where I previously taught. I thought of them as further occasions of sharing, among students drawn from different courses and schools, who may experience a common CSR basis for dialogue although they may be meeting for the first time.

The practice of dialogue is constant also with the other partners involved in the organization of CSR school. Among them: the graphic designer who works on the advertising materials and the website, the director of the location in which the school is held, the sponsor(s) which I look for. Furthermore, at the school, I generally distribute a CSR bag to the participants, which contains the teaching materials: a CD with the lecture notes, pencil, and block notes. They are handmade, with recycled and reused materials, as cloth or paper, which I personalize with the CSR label, and which we construct with the help of a handicrafts woman.

The dialogue with this team is essential, as I organize the school on my own, and it adds to the dialogue with the speakers, and, moreover, with the participants, the main actors of this proposal. I usually do not know them, they generally contact me through the website, or are colleagues of those who have previously attended my activities, or their professors suggest they come. This word of mouth, over the years, has increased and allowed to me to expand my teaching experiences.

### 3.4.5 Meaning

The findings drawn from the CSR experiences may provide support for the hypothesis of this study, which aims to describe a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching mediated by dialogue. In the CSR context, in particular, this foundation for dialogue is observed among, across and beyond the students' disciplines and in a postgraduate context. Especially at the schools, this space of relationship is created and explored together with the participants, in a full immersion experience which aims to combine life and study. Moreover, at the school the foundation for dialogue is built and investigated throughout the whole day, thus also outside of the lessons. This may suggest a further application of this proposal of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue also beyond the academic context, and, far more broadly, in everyday life, as the findings derived from the school may indicate.

Furthermore, these findings may support the hypothesis of a reciprocity between dialogue and relationship. In fact, either at the courses, or at the schools, dialogue may create relationship, among, across and beyond disciplines, and, at the same time, this space of relationship is mediated by dialogue in class.

The outcomes drawn from the seminars may evidence the importance of the students' contributions, especially through "testimonials" describing previous CSR experiences.

This sharing may be considered the main support to this teaching design derived from the seminars, as the findings indicate.

I now present the meaning of findings drawn from each CSR experience, thus at the schools, the courses and the seminars.


### *The schools*

The CSR school is an uncommon teaching structure when compared with the courses or the seminars. As previously noted, it is often chosen by the participants, while the courses and the seminars are offered at the invitation of the doctoral schools and the young researchers attend them as part of their doctoral program. This choice implies spending a few days far from their work and daily life, sometimes also traveling for the first time alone, especially for the younger students. It also means accepting an intensive program of study, lasting almost the whole day, and using the rest of the time together, with unknown colleagues, with whom they have to share a lot. Furthermore, it usually implies

spending almost one week in a small village, often hard to reach by public transportation, and for this reason, I recommend that they travel together. This means planning the journey in advance, and often exposing themselves by offering their car or finding travel alternatives.

Moreover, the participants often choose to attend the school during summer, which, for most Italian PhD students, is their only vacation, as they usually have two weeks of holidays in August.

Therefore, I usually say that the students find the school, more than I look for them. In fact, I often do not know them, and we meet only at the beginning of the school.

Since 2009, I have been offered twelve schools, which involved about 100 students, and I have observed that most of them, at least three-quarters, have decided to attend them because they were searching for "a demanding challenge", as some young researchers phrased it. The reasons are different, and often the participants explain them, at the moment of the registration, by email, or, during the school, in their introductory oral presentation on the first day, or during the final dialogue.

Almost half of the young researchers I have met during the past few years are looking around, as they are at the end of their doctoral program, are not sure about continuing their academic career, and are searching for "something other", as most said. Usually, a few of them are interested in the communication of science to the general public or in teaching at the high school level, they have experiences of writing for different target audiences, and intend to improve and better understand whether they can transform this interest into a job.

Some others are fascinated by the proposal of a full immersion on this topic, away from daily life, as they find it "uncommon", as some of them have noted.

Finally, in a few cases, the participants discovered the school "by chance", as they said, and decided to learn more. I provide a few examples of this "unpredictable" encounter, which reminds me of dialogue as "fortuitous" event, as described in section 1.1.1.3.

At the edition of 2012, for instance, a PhD student told that she was searching something related to her field of study, in economics, whose acronym was "CSR", and, for this reason, she founded this course on the CSR website. She was curious and started to read, until she filled out the registration form to attend the school. She was among the ones who also participated at the second level summer school.

In 2014, another young researcher contacted me by email after having read the program of the summer school online. She was a Czech teacher of Italian at the University of West Bohemia, and wrote me that she typed "communication of scientific research" in Italian, as she was looking for "some help in writing at an academic level". When she found the CSR website, she soon bought my handbook, as she could understand Italian, and she contacted me. First, she asked me to join the summer school, then she proposed that I would teach a course in their university, to her colleagues at the Institute of Applied Language.

The number of participants at the schools varies, but it is generally small, between three and fifteen students. Over the years, I have observed an unpredictable trend, with small classes followed by larger ones, and vice versa. Moreover, I have noted increasing word of mouth drawing in young researchers from universities which I did not reach with the advertising or through previous contacts.

This unpredictability implies that holding the school depends on the students' choice and may not be taken for granted. I generally discover the level of interest a couple of months before the school is planned, at the registration deadline. Since the beginning, in 2009, I have been proposing the summer school every year, with the exception of 2010, and multiple times each year in 2012 and 2013.

Most young researchers are generally highly motivated, and almost half the class covers the participation fees themselves, as their faculties often cannot support them.

This frequent motivation implies that they often accept the teaching design immediately and put it into practice, as the findings drawn from the school indicate. As the school proceeds, most of them understand that the topics are mutually linked with what we are living and that the space among disciplines needs their individual contribution.

The findings also show that the theoretical and practical approach derived from this proposal of life and study together is generally soon accepted and applied, although new for most students. Furthermore, the majority of the participants understand that the context of the school belongs to this teaching design, and they are frequently involved in the activities which allow them to better understand it.

Almost a quarter of the participants are recommended to attend the school by their supervisors, who often cover their fees. The majority of them feel involved and soon open themselves in accepting this teaching design. Some others, instead, remain distant, they

limit their contribution to the practical part of the lesson, in the analysis of their written and oral works, which they consider the "most useful" part of the school, as some of them noted. They join the free time moments, but generally do not open themselves in creating a foundation for dialogue as a space of relationship, as they do not comprehend it in depth. Finally, in a few cases, I observed hostility towards this teaching design, with a constant complaint about the "long lectures", "too short breaks", or "useless dialogue", which "has little in common with the results of our research" as some of them stated.

### *The courses*

Although the courses are organized generally by one doctoral school, in this CSR activity there is a disciplinary and geographical richness among the participants, although less than at the schools.

Since 2007, I have been taught ten courses at the invitation of Italian universities, three in the Czech Republic, and another one in an international center for research close to Bari for master's students drawn from several countries around the Mediterranean. This last course, and the ones I taught in the Czech Republic, may be considered similar to the schools, as they were intensive courses of three to five continuous days. In fact, unlike the standard courses, I proposed the introductory oral presentations at the first day and the final dialogue at their end as the school, in addition to the evaluation questionnaires. Since the first CSR course, therefore, I have taught fourteen course for a total of 220 young researchers, and, since 2012, I have used the same evaluation questionnaire as the one I prepare for the students at the philosophical-theological Institute.

The trend of the participants' involvement and their awareness, observed in class, and evident through their feedback, private conversations and email, is close to the one at the schools, as the findings indicate. Almost three-quarters of the participants are interested, motivated, and able to open themselves, especially in the practical part of the lessons dedicated to the analysis of their written and oral texts. Almost half of the class understands and tries to practice creating a space of relationship among and across their disciplines. Usually a few of them, less than a quarter, intend to build on the theoretical basis of this teaching design and keep in touch over the years. Furthermore, a few of them are interested collaborating on CSR teaching in new courses as "assistants" to the practical parts of the lesson. Since 2012, their presence has been a constant at the courses

and at the seminars. As the findings derived from the courses may suggest, the collaboration of some young researchers in CSR teaching is a peculiarity of the courses and of the seminars. They are generally two or three at each course, or seminar. Their aid is much appreciated by the participants, as they are PhD students like them, with similar experiences and stories, and they often establish a reciprocal relationship: the class benefits from their contribution, while they open themselves in an attempt at teaching which often encourages them. Furthermore, they "breathe again the CSR air", as a young researcher said, and their enthusiasm infects some of their colleagues who are touched by their generosity. They realize the effort required for these "teaching assistants", as they have to prepare for this exercise, to travel to the university, and often take off two days of work from their laboratory to attend the course.

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that the awareness of some young researchers who collaborate on teaching often increases over the years, and this suggests to a few of them to attend additional CSR activities even after having completed their doctoral programs. They are about 25-30 young researchers, and with some of them we shared the academic experiences described in this chapter, as the second level summer school, the further activities beyond lessons and in connection with some religious students at the philosophical-theological Institute.

Over the last few years, I have observed a few young researchers disappointed or hostile to the CSR teaching design in the courses, I would say less than 10% of the total number. The CSR course is part of their doctoral program, thus, their attendance is mandatory, and they are required to sign an attendance sheet at the beginning of every lesson.


*The seminars*

The seminars which I held between 2003 and 2005 were occasional experiences of teaching, which may be considered an initial training. I started to develop the CSR program only with the first course, thus in 2007. Therefore, the findings which I describe and analyze in this section refer to the seminars conducted between 2012 and 2016, when I developed this teaching design in its most complete form.

During these years, I taught six seminars in Italy, which involved about 200 participants: they were mainly young researchers, and only a minority were professors, PhD students' supervisors and scholars. Three seminars were dedicated to promoting CSR teaching.

Three others were addressed to young researchers and were intended as a brief introduction to the communication of scientific research, as with the one I held in the Czech Republic in 2016, which directed to fifteen post-doctoral fellows. The analysis of findings, therefore, refer to a total of seven seminars.

In four of them, I illustrated basic content and I assigned the class to briefly analyze some examples of written and oral texts made by the students themselves. I passed out the evaluation questionnaires, as they were a short version of a CSR course. In these cases, the trend of the participants' involvement and awareness is similar to what I observed at the courses and the schools, although their feedback is related to a teaching design of only a few hours. In two of these seminars, in particular, there were CSR "teaching assistants", whose aid was highly appreciated. One of them, in fact, repeated this experience, after having completed her doctoral program and as a post-doctoral fellow, as described in the findings.

The other three seminars were dedicated to promoting my teaching activity and they were appreciated by most participants, and in two of them I collected immediate follow-ups, as the findings indicate. Furthermore, the presence of CSR students who shared their experience and their understanding of this curriculum to the audience was crucial at these seminars. Their contribution, in fact, was considered an added value by the participants, and often a further confirmation of this teaching design, as these CSR "testimonials" experienced their awareness towards it even after years.

After having described the findings drawn from the philosophical-theological Institute and the ones derived from CSR experiences, and having analyzed their meaning, starting from the genesis and the "potentials and challenges" of each course and in the two contexts, I now present a final analysis of the whole teaching experience. I would prefer the term "non-conclusive", as I generally suggest in the last lesson of every course, because it is an attempt of interpretation. Furthermore, this section introduces the last chapter of this dissertation dedicated to the implications of this study and to my "non-conclusions".

**3.5 (Non) conclusive analysis of the academic teaching**

As I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I have followed a similar order in presenting my findings and their analysis in the two contexts, as they are based on the same program: a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue.

I was guided in this description by the four "potentials and challenges", as I called them, which I detected from the beginning of my experiences in both contexts, and which I have developed over the years. These parameters oriented my proposal, as they helped me to elaborate it and to adapt it on the basis of the students' needs and feedback.

I detected similar aspects in both contexts of teaching, derived from the same purpose of creating, observing and describing a foundation for dialogue, among cultures and disciplines in academic teaching. It is not necessarily a common space, as it is based on the relationship among, across and beyond them. I present these similarities starting from these four "potentials and challenges", which guided me also in this "non-conclusive" analysis.

Either the philosophical-theological Institute, or the CSR activities are characterized by a human, cultural and disciplinary richness, which is at the basis of this approach.

I could have not developed a similar proposal without this diversity, therefore, the two contexts were, and are, the "laboratory", in which I was able to elaborate it. At the same time, these contexts suggested the need for filling a gap in academic education on dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines, even when I was first approaching to this topic. Among the "fortuitous gifts" (Dossetti, 1995, p. liii) which have allow me to reinforce this study, therefore, I have to include also that these contexts found me, or "met me" (Buber, 1937, p. 11), more than I looked for them.

The second "potential and challenge", a theoretical and practical approach to dialogue, is a consequence of this human, cultural and disciplinary richness. I tried to develop a proposal which implies a theoretical and practical approach to teaching and learning. In fact, the students may learn the content while they apply it, and they are concretely involved in the creation of a space of relationship among themselves, in addition to their cultures and disciplines. This awareness increases during the courses, and is enhanced either by the human, cultural, and disciplinary richness present in class, or by the diversity

in their choice of life, history, motivation and ability to open themselves to realize this foundation for dialogue.

Furthermore, the theoretical and practical approach implies becoming aware of the content and this proposal thanks to the other. This comprehension allows the students to assume responsibility for themselves and the other, and to feel involved as protagonists of this teaching experience. They realize this foundation for dialogue together, in class, and during the course, with the professors/speakers, who contribute to its creation, as their different cultures and disciplines enrich the diversity already present. The students, therefore, understand that the foundation for dialogue is based on relationship, and that the space of relationship is established on dialogue, and it may become dialogue itself, as dialogue and relationship become the same.

The awareness of this reciprocity slowly becomes evident for the students, at different levels: between students and speakers, between dialogue and relationship, thus, between theory and practice, and, especially at the CSR schools, between life and study.

This comprehension allows the students to intensify this teaching design which is founded on relationship, either for the philosophical-theological Institute, or in CSR experiences. For the philosophical class, for instance, they become aware of this reciprocity when they approach contemporary authors, as Lévinas, Derrida and Buber, who investigated dialogue and relationship starting from their own lives, and whose lives fed their philosophical inquiry. In the theological class, the students realize this reciprocity when they work on themes which are related to human existence, and they approach them from their cultural and disciplinary perspectives.

In CSR experiences, the young researchers comprehend this reciprocity at the schools, when they put into practice this approach based on "life and study together", and in the courses as well, although the intensity is less in that context, as it is limited to the practice of dialogue in class.

The third "potential and challenge" related to the main challenges achieved by the students is connected with these two, as the students' understanding of the theoretical and practical approach allows them to face and to achieve their challenges, and this encourages them to improve. The main challenges which the students encounter are different between the undergraduates (philosophical-theological Institute) and the

postgraduates (CSR experiences), but the effort required to achieve them is similar, as each is mediated by the other and needs their own contribution.

Furthermore, not only is the approach the same in both contexts, but also the structure of the courses, the materials and the tools are similar: I elaborated an approach to content virtually unknown for the students, with lecture notes in the form of keywords and presented starting from etymology. Then, I supplemented this content with written and oral contributions by the students, individually and in groups, which allow them to apply this proposal of practicing dialogue. In both contexts the work in small groups helps them to concretely experience the making of a space of relationship among themselves, in addition to their cultures and disciplines. I propose the same approach, which takes inspiration from the term "*ubuntu",* derived from the Bantu culture common to several central and southern African countries, as previously described (section 3.1.1b). This term refers to otherness, and it recalls the Bantu proverb related to the value of the other, *Umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu,* which means: "I know that I am, because I know that there is the other".

Moreover, at the Institute, the written and oral assignments allow the students to improve in writing, conducting research, and presenting their contributions in front of the class. I introduce a few notes on the construction of written and oral texts and how to prepare for dialogue, the same content I usually propose in the CSR program. At the same time, the analysis of scientific posters and oral presentations in the CSR experiences helps the young researchers to improve in communicating through their written and oral texts, as well as in sharing their comments and accepting criticism from their colleagues. In some cases, I also have introduced a few notes on transdisciplinarity and on the philosophy of dialogue, the content I generally propose in the courses for the philosophical class.

Furthermore, I use similar teaching tools in both contexts: either online, as with the online forum and the CSR wiki, or in class, as with the students' introductions on the first day and the conclusion of each course which refers to this initial oral presentation.

The awareness of this teaching program which I try to promote among the students is the fourth "potential and challenge". It is a constant during the whole course and in its conclusion, which is thought of as a further occasion for practicing dialogue, either for the philosophical-theological Institute, with the exam, or in CSR schools, through the dialogue sitting in a circle. In both cases, the students are required to synthesize their

experience, to share it in front of the class, and to analyze their involvement for helping their self-criticism and ability to evaluate this program. Finally, I use the same evaluation questionnaire in both contexts, which allows the students to contribute to this teaching design with their suggestions.

The connection between these two contexts may support the proposal described in this study of dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. The findings described and analyzed in this chapter, in fact, may suggest that this foundation for dialogue is not necessarily common, and it may overcome academic teaching. This evidence provides support for the possible application of this approach mediated by dialogue, far more broadly, to everyday life.


## 3.6 Further findings on this approach to teaching

Over the past few years, I have shared this proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue to academic teaching with scholars drawn from different cultures and fields of study. In particular, we had the chance to seriously consider dialogue as a space of relationship among cultures and disciplines, and this sharing provided additional support to the hypothesis of a reciprocity between a transcultural and a transdisciplinary approach to dialogue. Thus, at the end of this chapter dedicated to describing the findings derived from this teaching program and their analysis, I thought it would be appropriate to present the main outcomes and follow-ups drawn from three conferences, which I attended in 2009 (Turkey), 2010 (Italy), and 2015 (Portugal). The second and the third, in particular, are follow-ups to the first one, drawn from these connections with a variety of scholars.

As previously mentioned (section 1.2), the conference in 2009 in Istanbul was promoted by the International and Intercultural Communication Division of the National Communication Association, one of the main associations of communication. It was the first one, within this reality, which included scholars of communication drawn from several countries: in addition to those working in the United States (several of whom had been born and raised in Africa, India, China, Russia, or Europe), there were participants from Africa, Asia, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Europe and Turkey. This conference, in fact, aimed to create connections among these scholars, and, therefore, it was limited to a small number, we were fewer than 70. We worked in plenary and group sessions, and we

used our papers as a resource for multiple conversations, instead of presenting them formally to an audience. We were requested, in fact, to study some of these papers before arriving at the conference, to prepare for the dialogue in small groups.

This conference was one of the most decisive "fortuitous gifts" (Dossetti, 1995, p. liii) for orienting my study, and it provided me the occasion for presenting my first course at the preliminary year of the philosophical-theological Institute, which I had just taught (Mangano, 2009). I was the only one with a background in the "natural" sciences and with few experiences in communication. Furthermore, I was the only one from Italy, and without previous knowledge of the National Communication Association.

We benefited from small number of the participants and from the group work, which allowed many of us to experience a space of relationship among and across our cultures and disciplines, and some of us kept in touch over the years. This conference produced several follow-ups: the following year, in fact, the Center for Intercultural Dialogue was born, to bring together international scholars and encourage their studies and collaborations. It was directed by the organizer of this Summer Conference in Istanbul, Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz (section 1.2), who, since then, has been promoting the birth of a network of scholars from different cultures and fields of study interested in the topic of the intercultural dialogue. I belong to this network of scholars and most follow-ups from these years have derived from the connection with some of them. My chapters in the volumes dedicated to intercultural dialogue, for instance, derived from calls for papers proposed by some of these scholars. In particular, one was translated into Turkish (Mangano, 2010b), and two contributions were in English (Mangano, 2011, 2015a). Furthermore, the brief notes posted on the Center for Intercultural Dialogue website originated from sharing with Wendy Leeds-Hurwitz, and they describe the CSR course addressed to the students from the Mediterranean area (Mangano, 2013d), and the lesson at the seminar class dedicated to the genocide in Burundi (Mangano, 2014a).

Also the conferences which I attended in 2010 and in 2015 derived from invitations of two scholars who I met at this conference in Turkey, in 2009. In both cases, we presented a panel session together.

In particular, the conference of 2010 (Trento, Italy) was promoted by the European Association for the Study of Science and Technology, and was addressed to scholars of different areas of research within the sociology of science. I was invited to participate by

a U.S. scholar with a background in scientific and technical communication who taught, at the time, in the Writing Studies Department of the University of Minnesota. She proposed that we prepare a panel session together dedicated to interdisciplinary and intercultural communication as a tool to accommodate social dynamics in technology.

Each of us described her teaching experience, and I focused on my initial activities, as in 2010 I taught the first course for the philosophical class, and the first CSR school and courses (Longo & Mangano, 2010). We also decided to present our panel together, as a concrete example of dialogue between our cultures and disciplinary approaches, although it implied sharing the twenty minutes scheduled for each oral presentation. We were the only ones to present as a pair among the panelists, who were more than four hundred, and our effort was appreciated, as some scholars contacted this colleague for further details on her project of research.

The second follow-up drawn from the Istanbul conference was the convention promoted by the World Communication Association, which was held in Portugal (Lisbon) in 2015. As described in section 1.2.1, it was the biannual conference, and was addressed to their members: we were almost seventy participants drawn from about twenty countries from all the continents and different fields of intercultural communication. I was invited to attend it by a scholar who I met in 2009 who was a member of this association, she is native of Kenya and teaches communication at St. Cloud University of Minnesota (U.S.A.). She invited me to prepare a panel session together dedicated to dialogue as a space of relationship among cultures and disciplines starting from our teaching experience (Mangano, 2015b).

I was not previously familiar with the World Communication Association, and this conference offered me the opportunity to share my proposal for a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching after a few years of experience and research since our first meeting in Istanbul. We worked together to create our panel session, and the first space of dialogue was between us. The organization committee invited me to also chair that session, and I proposed to the Kenyan colleague to do it together. We considered the whole session, about two hours, as an exercise of dialogue between us and with the participants, therefore theory and practice of dialogue might go together.

We were fifteen drawn from eight countries and different fields of intercultural

communication. I proposed to sit in a circle and to briefly introduce ourselves. I explained why we decided this shape (as at the end of CSR schools, the circle indicates that the dialogue has no end), and the structure of the panel session we designed. With the Kenyan colleague, we outlined a few details of our research, as the participants would have found our articles in the proceedings of the conference. Then, we proposed to each of them to share their experiences of dialogue as space of relationship in class and in their own studies, as an attempt to create a foundation for dialogue also among us, as scholars.

We concluded the session with a gift for the participants, which the Kenyan colleague proposed: a traditional African tale, as a metaphor of the importance of doing our own part, presented in a short video entitled *I will be a hummingbird*. This story is told by Wangari Muta Maathai, Kenyan politician and environmental activist who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004, the first African woman to be so recognized. Briefly, the story says: one night a fire was consuming the forest, and all the animals were scared, they felt powerless and nobody knew what to do. Only a hummingbird started to extinguish the fire, by bringing drops of water with its beak, it went up and down from the river to the forest. The other animals were skeptical, and they asked what it presumed to do, as it could never put out the fire with only the water held in its small beak. The hummingbird continued to bring water, and answered them that it was doing the best that it could.

The session was highly appreciated by the participants who thanked us. One of them, in particular, referred to it as a "touching and original moment of dialogue and sharing" the following day, when she announced one of the awards of the conference: the best theory and praxis paper, for the article I presented.

I felt like the hummingbird.

# Chapter 4. Implications and (non)conclusions

The purpose of this study was to describe a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue. This research aimed to provide evidence that the transdisciplinary and transcultural perspectives may become one, as they are mutually related. In particular, transcultural dialogue needs transdisciplinary dialogue to be realised, and, at the same time, transdisciplinary dialogue needs a transcultural approach to be established. Furthermore, dialogue among, across and beyond cultures may be the basis for dialogue among, across and beyond disciplines. And, vice versa, the transdisciplinary perspective may be the basis for the transcultural one. They cannot be separated, they are "inherently" related to each other, as the *Charter on transdisciplinarity* indicates (section 1.3.4). Nevertheless, the reciprocity between transcultural and transdisciplinary approaches is not mentioned in this approach to transdisciplinarity, and it seems little investigated.

This study also aimed to describe this reciprocity, therefore, transcultural and transdisciplinary perspectives are mutually related not only as each of them may take place thanks to the other, but also as they may complete each other. This reciprocity may be mediated by dialogue, since dialogue and relationship are connected, thus they are mutually related as well: dialogue needs relationship to be realized, therefore it cannot take place without relationship, and, at the same time, dialogue creates relationship.

Dialogue may become a space *of* relationship, rather than *for* it. In particular, dialogue may be a space of relationship between, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. This space was investigated without the need to find a common foundation for dialogue, as dialogue and relationship may provide the space in which cultures and disciplines meet, and it may become the relationship itself.

The proposal for this study was explored mainly through academic teaching, according the perspectives of the educational dialogic relationship proposed by Martin Buber (section 1.2.2), and of "transdisciplinary education" presented by Basarab Nicolescu (section 1.3.4). This research was focused on the teaching experiences drawn from courses with a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach which I conducted especially between 2014 and 2016. The study described this approach, thus, the basic aspects of this research, the two contexts of teaching - the philosophical-theological Institute, and the

activities on the communication of scientific research (CSR), as well as the materials and the tools I developed for each course (chapter 2).

The findings and their analysis (chapter 3) provided support to this design, and to the reciprocity between a transcultural and a transdisciplinary approach to dialogue, and between dialogue and relationship. The findings and their analysis were presented from four perspectives, which are the parameters I detected in both contexts of teaching and allowed me to orient my teaching design, to collect the findings and to interpret them. I defined these criteria as the "potentials and challenges" of this approach to teaching: 1) human, cultural and disciplinary richness; 2) theoretical and practical approach to dialogue; 3) main challenges for the students' academic learning; 4) awareness of the transcultural and transdisciplinary approach.

In this chapter, I present the implications of this approach mediated by dialogue, and my conclusions.

The genesis and the development of the teaching approach described in this study seem a collection of "fortuitous gifts" (Dossetti, 1995, p. liii), which happened "by grace" (Buber, 1970, p. 62). Writing this dissertation has offered to me the opportunity to retrace these "gifts" as essential pieces of the puzzle, an embroidery which was realized over the years. In the previous pages, I have traced this path and have walked through it, while, in this chapter, I present the implications of this study, thus the further steps of this journey, which continues. For this reason, I prefer the term "non-conclusions", which I generally use in the last lesson of my courses, rather than the more common "conclusions".

Furthermore, as previously noted, this approach to teaching seems rarely investigated, and I did not find prior literature on the method or the teaching materials, nor on a criterion for analyzing the findings, and for interpreting them. Therefore, I thought the term "non-conclusions" would be particularly appropriate as this study has just started to trace a way forward.

The implications of this study refer in particular to dialogue as a call for establishing spaces of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines and, far more broadly, among individuals. This approach to dialogue and relationship - to dialogue as relationship and to relationship as dialogue, as they are one, we may now say - might be applied beyond academic teaching, and become a "lifestyle", thus, characteristic of daily life, in addition to an approach to education.

I will describe some "seeds" of dialogue, as I call the attempts of applying this proposed approach to dialogue to one's own choice of life, work and research. They draw from experiences of religious students and young researchers who have been my students. Furthermore, I will present "seeds" of dialogue derived from lectures I presented at conferences addressed to educators drawn from different cultures, who work with youths and adults. These further attempts of applying the proposed approach outside the academic context, may be considered examples of these "seeds" of dialogue in everyday life.

## 4.1 Implications of this study: dialogue as a call

Either at the philosophical-theological Institute, or in CSR experiences, most students felt that "something had changed inside of them" after studying and working together in response to this teaching approach, as some of them said. For them the dialogic experience implied an intellectual change, which included an awareness of understanding content from different cultural and disciplinary perspectives, in doing research at academic level, and in approaching new authors, sometimes in the students' native language.

The transcultural and transdisciplinary approach also implied a cultural change in most students, resulting in a new comprehension of terms such as "other", "otherness", "hospitality" and "reciprocity", "encounter" and "conflict", "suffering" and "crisis" for the students of the theological-philosophical Institute, and "dialogue", "communication" as a "gift" or a "barrier", as a "balance" between "education" and "seduction", for the young researchers involved in CSR experiences. The result often was an interior change for the students, which meant an increasing awareness of dialogue as an opportunity to meet the other. These changes (intellectual, cultural and interior) made the students "consumed, exhausted" at the end of the courses, as some students said, but "made the difference", as others added, between their knowledge of dialogue before these programs, and what happened during and after them.

These changes remind me of the sense of the term "practical" according to "practical theory", a kind of communication theory mentioned in chapter 2 (section 2.3, Cronen, 2000). This perspective "offers principles informed by engagement in the details of lived experience that facilitate joining with others to produce change" (Cronen, 2000, p.14).

The "lived experiences" drawn from the application of the teaching approach which I have described in this study, may indicate this change in the students, and also among, across and beyond them. These changes also derive from the connection between a theoretical and a practical approach to dialogue, which is a consequence of this proposed approach. Some students discovered a mutual relationship between theory and practice, especially at the CSR schools and in the working group, in both contexts of teaching, as the findings indicated (sections 3.1.1a, 3.1.3a, and 3.3.2b).

Furthermore, the understanding gained by students suggests the importance of dialogue in achieving knowledge and in establishing a space of relationship among themselves, together with their cultures and disciplines. More importantly, their feedback and contributions evidence the value of insight mediated by dialogue, especially in teaching experiences which involve them and require their common effort for applying this approach to dialogue. As previously noted, knowledge mediated by dialogue may lead to the "truth of knowledge", as described by Plato in *Letter VII,* as "a result of continued application to the subject itself and communion therewith" (section, 3.4.4, Plato, 1966, 341c). This condition "does not exist, nor will there ever exist" (Plato, 1966, 341c), it may happen only through relationship, which requires dialogue.

The relationship as a necessary condition to establish dialogue reminds me of Buber's "*I-Thou* word pair", which "is not found by seeking" (Buber, 1937, p. 11). It implies that relationship between *I* and *Thou*, between individuals, but also between (across and beyond) cultures and disciplines, at the basis of this study, needs a foundation to be developed and established. A space which "does not exist" or "is not found by seeking", because it is created by dialogue. Dialogue becomes a space between, across and beyond the *I-Thou* relationship, moreover, the hyphen between *I* and *Thou*, their connection, what may link and unite *I* and *Thou*. It may also become the hyphen between "the other" and "the stranger", "the guest" and "the host" (Derrida, 2000) one's "face" with another one (Lévinas, 1961), and, especially for this study, between cultures and disciplines, and between the transcultural approach and the transdisciplinary one. These aspects may become one, and this space of dialogue and relationship - of dialogue as relationship, and relationship as dialogue - may be in the hyphen, even the hyphen itself, the *trait d'union* (section 1.1.2).

In such a way dialogue may become "an act of my being" (Buber, 1937, p. 11), as Buber defined the relationship, the "primary words" *I-Thou*, which is an existential condition, hence, it belongs to everyone, of every culture and discipline, as it is at the basis of human life. In this perspective, dialogue becomes a call to create spaces of relationship among (across and beyond) cultures and disciplines, and, moreover, among individuals.

Dialogue as a call reminds me of Buber's sense of "responsibility" and "response", which are related (section 1.2.2). The responsibility, in fact, is the answer, the word, which the *I* says to the *Thou.* They enter into relation by speaking, thus, by mutually answering each other. There cannot be responsibility apart from the answer, at the same time, as responsibility and answer are in relation, there can be no answer to the other, if we do not assume the responsibility of her/him (Buber, 1993, p. 201, note n°8). The answer to this call implies the responsibility and the choice towards the other, the *Thou*, every other, and every *Thou*. Therefore, it may be possible to consider dialogue as a space of relationship also beyond the academic context and, far more broadly, to apply it in everyday life. As mentioned in chapter 1, about the definition of dialogue, in fact, the long term goal is for dialogue "to become entrenched in the very fabric of everyday life" (section 1.2.2, Broome, 2015, p. 4). This implies considering it as "the modus operandi for a society, entrenched in schools, communities, business organizations, and political campaigns" (Broome, 2015, p. 4). Broome especially refers to "intergroup dialogue" as a possible approach to keep "alive" this "ideal" (Broome, 2015, p. 4), as this intent concludes his definition of "intergroup dialogue". This long term goal for dialogue also characterizes this study, which points to considering dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines, also beyond academic teaching, and far more broadly, into "the very fabric of everyday life". In this perspective dialogue may become a "lifestyle".

### 4.1.1 Towards an approach to dialogue as a "lifestyle"

The idea of an approach to dialogue which may characterize daily life, at every level, culture, age, and social condition, is advocated by Buber at the conclusion of his essay *Dialogue*. He mentions, in particular, the need for practicing a "dialogic responsibility" (Buber, 1993, p. 224) either for a factory worker, or for a manager of a large company. It may be enough to practice it "*quantum satis*" (Buber, 1993, p. 224), thus, in the amount

which is needed and in the way which is possible, but this responsibility belongs to everyone and every day, according to Buber. This practice of dialogue may not be reserved for free time or holidays, as it requires daily effort, the same as that devoted to an ordinary and working day. So dialogue may become our task.

At the (non)conclusion of this study which describes an approach mediated by dialogue as a space of relationship, and on relationship based on dialogue, the practice of establishing relationship with the other may become our vocation.

This has been the experience of some students participating in the two teaching contexts presented in this study, as the findings indicate. In particular, some students at the philosophical-theological Institute defined the courses as "a school of dialogue, of reciprocity and otherness", in which they "also" improved in studying, writing and presenting an oral contribution, or as a "laboratory of alterity" which allows "the human person's awakening" (section 3.1.5). Some young researchers defined the CSR school as a "school of life" (section 3.3.4a) in which "it is possible firstly to learn to be, and, then, to communicate[82]".

Furthermore, this has been the experience of some students who tried to apply this "dialogic responsibility" to daily life, even when the course was ended or after years their experience with to this teaching approach. I call these attempts "seeds" of dialogue, and I now present some examples drawn from the students and from experiences which I conducted beyond academic context.


*Students' "seeds" of dialogue*

In 2014, an Italian religious student, who was the captain of the philosophical-theological Institute's football team, expressed his understanding of this approach to dialogue in an interview for local television before starting the championship among the teams of other philosophical-theological faculties. He wrote me that he had defined the competition as "a unique occasion of transcultural dialogue among the football teams and players, as they come from every part of the world, and this play may learn to use dialogue, which is even more important than winning the Cup[83]" (personal communication by e-mail, March,

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[82] In this chapter I report in the footnotes the students' original contributions, as I have translated them from Italian in the main text. *La scuola "CRS" è una scuola di vita, nella quale è possibile imparare prima a essere, poi a comunicare.*
[83] *Il torneo è un'occasione unica di dialogo transculturale tra le squadre e i giocatori, perché vengono da ogni parte del mondo, e una semplice partita di calcio può insegnarci a dialogare, che è ancora più importante di vincere il torneo.*

22, 2014). Furthermore, in 2016, a few days before the celebration of his diaconate, which precedes the priesthood, he wrote me that he truly hoped to put into practice this approach to dialogue in his ministry, in particular "dialogue as love and as a gift to the other" (personal communication by e-mail, June, 23, 2016). He was the student who shared at the exam for the theological class a list of keywords to summarize his experience of the seminar (section 3.1.3d).

Between 2013 and 2015, with another Italian religious student, we applied this approach to dialogue and relationship in his parish service. This student was the one who defined transcultural dialogue as "the human person's awakening" (section 3.1.5) and attended some CSR experiences to better understand this teaching design (section 3.3.4d). Before his priesthood, and during his first year of ministry, in particular, we tried to develop this approach to dialogue and relationship in the realities in which he was involved: the organizations of the meetings with the youths of his parish, the preparation for preaching, and his attitude towards the other, believer or not. I shared with him a few notes on the construction of written and oral text, which I adapted from the CSR lecture notes, as a support for writing his sermons.

Furthermore, with three Zambian students who intended to continue their study after the bachelor's degree, we tried to intensify this dialogic approach as a method for their research. In particular, one of them returned to Zambia a few years ago, became a priest, and completed a master's degree in economics focused on socio-political problems in his country. In 2016, he wrote me that one of his papers was given an award for having approached this topic with "particular" attention to the cultural and historical wounds, and he wished to continue to study and to conduct research "for giving voice" to his people, as he wrote me. He was one of the students who developed the "path" for getting prepared to dialogue during their seminar at the theological class and provided the definition of some keywords in his native language, Bemba, one of the idioms spoken in Zambia (section 3.1.3c).

Another Zambian student completed his master's degree in practical philosophy, in Rome, in 2016, and he decided to start a PhD at the same university focused on the connections between "African thinking" and Anglo-European perspectives on political philosophy applied to the most urgent political problems of Zambia.

Like the other two students, the third one first completed a bachelor's degree in philosophy at the philosophical-theological Institute, then a bachelor's degree in theology at the same Institute, which he concluded in 2016. I met him a few weeks before his graduation in theology, and he shared his intentions to continue to study in Rome and to complete his religious training in Italy: "I would like to hold a master's degree in anthropological philosophy, focused on dialogue and otherness. Do you know who inspired me to make this choice?[84]" This student was the one who described his increasing awareness of this approach to dialogue in his religious community and life at the exam of the theological class (section 3.1.3d).

Furthermore, a student from Burundi, who left the philosophical-theological Institute before completing the bachelor's degree, and had offered a lesson on the genocide in his country (section 3.1.3b), shared with me his experience with the refugees in 2016.

He had a background in nursing, in addition to a master's degree in philosophy, and he decided to "concretely" put into practice what he studied in both contexts, as he said, in the emergency rescue operations with the refugees in the Mediterranean area. He contributed voluntary service with the Sovereign Military Order of Malta on the Strait of Sicily and in the Gulf of Sirte as a nurse for a few months, and as a result he experienced the "frailty of life, the tragedy of indifference and the power of hope. This hope allows us to go ahead, thought the past and current difficulties[85]" (personal communication by e-mail, March, 24, 2016). He also sent me some pictures of him with the emergency operations team and with two babies they saved.

Also in CSR experiences I have collected "seeds" of dialogue drawn from the young researchers' attempts to apply this approach to dialogue and relationship in their lives, research and work.

The teacher of Italian at the University of West Bohemia who contacted me in 2014 (section 3.4.5), for instance, wrote me at the end of the CSR course that her approach to the members of her family and colleagues was changing, because she had started to "move some steps of dialogue" with each of them: "During the course, I realized that I have to find a new way to dialogue with my husband, son, and colleagues, without taking for

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[84] *Mi piacerebbe continuare a studiare e conseguire una licenza (laurea specialistica) in antropologia filosofica, incentrata sul dialogo e sull'alterità. Lo sa chi devo ringraziare per avermi ispirato a prendere questa decisione?*
[85] *In questa esperienza ho vissuto la caducità della vita, il dramma dell'indifferenza e la potenza della speranza. Questa è la speranza che fa sì che andiamo avanti nonostante le difficoltà passate e presenti.*

granted that the other has to know or to comprehend my perspective[86]" (personal communication by e-mail, June, 12, 2014). After a few months, she shared with me that three participants in the CSR course discovered they have become pregnant, and they had been waiting this for a long time. This teacher was among them: "I have the feeling that these babies may really be the fruit of dialogue derived from the CSR course[87]" (personal communication by e-mail, September, 1, 2014).

We expanded upon this approach to dialogue in further conversations we had in Pilsen and by email, and in 2016 I met her baby. On that occasion, she told me she had started to explore the meaning of relationship, especially between parents and sons. She involved some colleagues of hers and friends in this investigation, through books and discussions, as she wished to share with them her increasing awareness of the "benefits" of this approach to her daily life, as she told me.

With two Italian young researchers who aimed to combine science with pastry making, we tried to develop this approach to dialogue as "a challenge for everyday life", as they said. I started to describe their histories in the essay dedicated to the "young Sisyphus" (section 3.3.4c, Mangano, 2013c), and in this section I will briefly present developments since then.

One "seed" of dialogue interests the PhD student in molecular biology who attended the second level CSR school to explore the notions of dialogue as a space of relationship and transdisciplinarity, and prepared the DNA shaped biscuits for our stand at the Turin Book Fair (sections 3.3.4b and 3.3.4c). In 2014, at the conclusion of her doctoral program, she intended to dedicate herself to the communication of science. I involved her in a collaboration with the Italian Association of Cell Biology and Differentiation, which had contacted me to start to develop their communication plan. I proposed to the president of this association to include some young researchers who attended CSR courses as "assistants" in this work. These PhD students were interested to open themselves to the communication of science, and I involved them in the organization of local meetings of this association. They were asked to interview the keynote speakers and to prepare a report, thus to practice scientific writing either an academic level, or for general public.

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[86] *Durante il corso mi sono resa conto che devo trovare un modo nuovo per dialogare con mio marito, con mio figlio, con i colleghi, senza dare per scontato che l'altro conosca o comprenda la mia prospettiva.*
[87] *Ho la sensazione che questi bambini siano davvero il frutto del dialogo emerso al corso CRS.*

We worked together in every step of these activities, they attended local meetings, and prepared the interviews and the reports. Their contribution was highly appreciated by the president of the association, who was particularly impressed by the competence and enthusiasm of this PhD student. After her first interview, she wrote me: "Scientific journalism, especially at an international and academic level, is what can make my heart beat[88]" (personal communication by email, May, 24, 2014).

Since then, we have been trying to explore her passion, which brought her to begin an internship at a scientific open-access academic publisher based in Lausanne (Switzerland) in 2015. This training became her job in a few months, and, since then, she has been employed there. In 2016, she was promoted to journal manager, and she was involved in the management of this publisher's blog dedicated to career insights. She has had the chance to interview opinion leaders and scholars to provide "useful tools for the young researchers' career", as she told me, and this was one of her goals in communicating science at academic level.

Her idea of combining science with pastry making continued and evolved over the past few years: she collaborated with an Italian quarterly magazine, *Pasticceria Italiana*, [Italian pastry making], with news focused on science in cooking.

Between 2015 and 2016, she often shared her intention to "support the 'CSR method'", as she told me, especially in the education of young researchers drawn from countries involved in conflicts. She was convinced that this might be her "concrete" contribution, as she wrote me. I was organizing a CSR summer school in the Czech Republic at that time, promoted with the University of West Bohemia and especially addressed to participants from Eastern Europe and the Middle East. She offered a sponsorship for one participant's subscription, as "the most concrete way to try to change the world is to invest in the other, and this may be one way [..]. I wish to help you to plant some seeds[89]" (personal communication by email, December, 1, 2015). We could not hold that CSR school in the Czech Republic, but her sponsorship allowed for the participation of an Italian PhD student in the summer school of 2016, and this story impressed the whole class.

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[88] *Ho scoperto cosa mi fa battere il cuore: occuparmi di giornalismo scientifico a livello accademico.*
[89] *Il modo più concreto di cambiare il mondo è investire nell'altro e questo è uno dei modi in cui ci voglio provare. Questa volta voglio aiutarti a seminare.*

The second young researcher who aimed to combine science with pastry making was a post-doctoral fellow in forest ecology, who I met in 2007, in one of my first CSR courses. She decided to transform her passion into a job, and with her husband, young researcher in the same field, and her mother, an expert in high confectionery, they opened a handmade pastry shop in Viterbo in 2014. The name she chose also explained their intent, "Le Cose Buone", which she translated in English as "Merry Food". Their philosophy, in fact, was based on preparing "food with love", since this process "may create happiness", as they indicate on their website. Their confectionery shop would work to "make happy as many people as possible".

Before the opening, and especially during their first year, we worked together with the team through weekly briefings, dedicated to establishing the basis for the development of their "small artisanal business", as we called it. These meetings allowed us to deepen the sense of this experience, to determine an appropriate style for communicating their intent. These briefings took inspiration from the "CSR method" which oriented their approach to the customers, the suppliers and the vendors.

Their shop soon revealed something more than good handmade pastry. After a few months from their opening, in fact, they were awarded by one of the main Italian guides for food, the "Gambero Rosso", for their attention to the choice of raw materials. This young researcher put into practice her competence in science and in forest ecology, as, from the beginning, she chose to use local and organic products, sold in the surroundings of the town and in artisanal farms, which often were located within one kilometer of their shop. This "zero kilometer" philosophy, as this type of organic food market is called in Italy, may assure respect for the environment in every step of production and sales. They designed an eco-friendly enterprise, and have been able to guarantee the freshness of the products and to reduce pollution. This choice also implied not using preservatives, artificial colorings and additives, and preparing food with seasonal fruit and vegetables. On their website they offer the result: a "daily dose of happy".

A few months after their opening, this young researcher and her husband were invited to teach courses on Italian cuisine and environmental science at the University Studies Abroad Consortium, an academic international network which allows the undergraduates of several universities around the world to study abroad. One of the bases of this

Consortium in Italy is located in Viterbo, and its director has invited these young researchers to lecture since then.

From the beginning, we worked on each detail of the shop, which should have made "people happy" at the first look: the location seemed suitable for this goal, as it was in the historic center of the town, with a little cloister at the entrance and the kitchen in view.

They created an atmosphere which made the customer feel at home with soft lighting, jazz music, flowers, a library and periodical artists' exhibitions at the cloister.

Since 2015, this young researcher's husband has been employed in a center of research of Arezzo, in Tuscany, and had to move there. They decided to continue the development of "Merry Food" in Viterbo, thus, they work together during the week-end, while the rest of the week they live far from each other. This young researcher visits her husband during the week, and, in 2016, they rented a small backyard in Arezzo, which she cultivates. This backyard is another "concrete support", as she said, to their intent of "making people happy", as it is a social project promoted by a local co-operative which endorses the rehabilitation of persons with mental disorders. Some vegetables used in their shop are grown in this backyard.

Over these few years, this artisanal business has developed into a widely appreciated confectionery shop. Furthermore, the team has evolved: this young researcher provided a three-month internship for some students at local cooking and catering schools. She has also engaged some jobless youths in the internship, including migrants and refugees. One of them, in particular, was employed at the beginning of 2016, and she is currently trying to document the knowledge held by this young researcher's mother, who retired the same year.

### *"Seeds" of dialogue in society*

Further evidence that transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to dialogue as a space of relationship may be applied also outside of the academic context derives from an experience with speakers drawn from different cultures, choices of life and fields of study and work.

In 2015, I was invited to participate to two conferences which were held close to Rome, addressed to the heads of an ecclesiastical international movement, the one I cited in the section dedicated to the genesis of this teaching approach (section 3.4.1). At both

conferences, the participants came from all the continents, and they numbered approximately two hundred. As they were in charge of this movement in their countries, they were especially involved in education and training members. Therefore, they requested that the organizing committee expand the topic of the encounter with the other, considering different perspectives and cultures.

At the first conference, we organized a roundtable especially focused on otherness and the encounter with the other among different cultures. We put together a group of six speakers drawn from Cameroun, the Philippines and Thailand, in addition to Europe (one from Ireland and two from Italy). Everyone except me was a Catholic missionary, and the first three shared their experience with otherness from their native perspective as educators and missionaries. The Irish speaker was a theologian who had spent a few years in Kenya, and the other Italian speaker was a scholar of interreligious dialogue, who has lived in India for years. This scholar chaired the round able and contacted all of us a few months before the conference. I proposed a twenty-minute presentation with the title "The encounter with the other: from need to choice", and I mentioned a few notes on the historical path of the encounter of the other which I adapted from the first lesson in the philosophical class (section 2.3.1a).

At the second conference, we were asked to talk about relationship with the other from two perspectives: the encounter and the conflict with the other. We were two speakers and the other one was a Spanish psychologist. I presented a forty-minute talk dedicated to "The relationship with the other: from need to choice", in which I focused on the meaning of dialogue as a space of relationship according to Buber's perspective.

I proposed to the speakers the same approach to the preparation of our contribution, and in the previous months we worked together on all the steps: we planned the structure and the program, and we shared our written contributions in Italian, which was our common language, and the one used at the first conference. At the second one, our texts were translated into the main languages spoken by the participants, to allow them to attend the whole conference in their native tongues. Our speeches were videotaped, so the participants to this conference might show them also in their countries.

The audience appreciated our contributions, and the discussion after our talks, the break and during lunch, provided further occasions of dialogue with many of them. During the following months, our speeches were presented in several countries and we received some

feedback from the conference participants or, even, from other members of this organization, who were "touched" by our speeches, as some of them put it. In particular, a lady from Mexico sent me her master's degree dissertation, from more than twenty years earlier, as she had investigated Buber's perspective on relationship. I actually did not mention the names of the authors used in my own talks, but she wrote me that she "recognized" the "traces of Buber". She wanted to thank me, as she felt encouraged to continue to promote this approach to dialogue even years after her own study, in the realities in which she was involved every day. For this reason, she decided to photocopy her dissertation and to send it to me with a handwritten cover letter.

The implications of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching mediated by dialogue provide evidence that it is possible to apply this perspective also beyond academic context, and, far more broadly, to daily life. The "seeds" of dialogue described in this section may be traces for a walk which continues, therefore the main steps of this study which I now present may be indicated as "non-conclusions".

## 4.2 Non-conclusions of this study

The conclusions of a study generally follow the implications, and they may be considered the last step of a research project. In fact, this research started with a purpose, developed and was conducted with materials and methods, and produced findings whose analysis may provide support for the initial hypothesis. The conclusions usually summarize these steps to confirm the "validity" of the study and to suggest further research or possible applications. Especially in a quantitative study, in fact, the conclusions generally present a last section dedicated to "future research questions", as they are commonly called.

As I indicated at the beginning of this chapter, I prefer the term "non-conclusions", the same phrase I use in the last lesson of my courses, because this study has just started to trace a way in transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to teaching mediated by dialogue. Thus, this way continues. This section summarizes the main steps of this research, which may corroborate its purpose and aims, in light of the findings and their analysis.

The implications may suggest a further application of this approach to teaching outside of the academic context, therefore, the "future research questions" of the study are broadly

relevant to daily life, with the idea of considering dialogue as a "lifestyle", as described in this chapter. Thus, rather than to the "future research questions", I decided to dedicate the final paragraph to a last keyword, just as at the end of my courses, which may be considered an additional, (non)conclusive trace for the walk.

I now present the basic aspects of this research which have been introduced in chapter 2 and they refer to the characteristics of qualitative and quantitative approaches to this study (sections 2.1.1 and 2.1.2). The findings and their analysis substantiate the initial suggestions and enforce the "validity" of this research. I also refer to Buber's perspective on educational dialogic relationship in this study, which provides for understanding the sense of the term "transgroup dialogue" which I will propose at the end of this section.

### *Basic aspects of this research*

This study described "theoretical" research, based on a theoretical foundation, the relationship, according Buber's perspective (section 1.1), which was investigated through a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching. Thus, it has been presented as both "theoretical" and "empirical" research, based on observations derived from the application of this approach. Furthermore, it was a "nomothetic" study, as it referred to a general case, dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines. Finally, this research was "probabilistic" and "causal", as it has focused on academic teaching, therefore, the evidence and the findings were related to the students, and the cause-effect relationship concerned their cultures and disciplines.

The findings and their analysis indicate that this study was based on research which combined "descriptive", "relational" and "causal" approaches.

It was "descriptive" research as it centred on the proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary teaching design, and it presented the details of this approach, the teaching materials and the tools, the findings and their analysis, and the implications.

Moreover, it was "inherently" a "relational" study, we may say, as it was founded on relationship and investigated dialogue as a space of relationship, especially among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines.

The "nature" of this relationship was "correlational", as I have explored reciprocity at different levels: between dialogue among cultures and dialogue among disciplines, among students and teachers, and between dialogue and relationship. Furthermore, the

type of interaction among the "variables" indicated a "positive" relationship, as the findings suggest. This study also investigated these "interactions" across and beyond the "variables", thus, the student's cultures and disciplines, and their involvement and awareness to create a foundation for dialogue. Furthermore, I have also described examples of connections across the contexts of teaching, which allowed me for intertwining the "variables", we might say, and enforcing this "positive" relationship. In particular, I referred to the outcomes derived from the CSR course in an intercultural, interdisciplinary and also interreligious context (section 3.3.1b), from the second level school dedicated to transdisciplinarity and relationship (section 3.3.4b), and from the links among some religious students and young researchers who met at the CSR schools (section 3.3.4d).

As mentioned in chapter 2, I approached this study with both deductive and inductive methods, and relationship may be the key to interpretation.

I used a deductive method of reasoning, starting from a general theory, linked to the relationship as a human basis for dialogue, and vice versa, dialogue as a human basis for relationship. Then, I developed this topic into a more specific hypothesis, specifically, whether dialogue serves as a space of relationship among, across, and beyond cultures and disciplines; this hypothesis was tested mainly in academic teaching, which narrowed it still further. The findings I have described provide additional confirmation of this original theory and the hypothesis.

At the same time, I also approached this study with inductive reasoning, starting from the observation of a phenomenon - that transdisciplinary perspective is "inherently" transcultural (*Charter of transdisciplinarity*) - which allowed me to propose the hypothesis: that reciprocity between a transcultural and a transdisciplinary approach mediated by dialogue applies to academic teaching. The findings provided support to this hypothesis and permitted proposing a more general theory: the application of this perspective also beyond the academic context, and far more broadly, in everyday life.

Finally, the "time" of this research, meaning the period in which I collected the observations, was "cross-sectional", as the findings were explored at a single point in time, especially during the courses (outcomes), or after them (follow-ups). The "units of analysis" of the study related both to individuals and to groups, as this research was

focused on observations drawn from the students' feedback and contributions to the teaching design.


*The ethnographic approach to this study*

The qualitative approach to this research was mainly based on the ethnographic method, in which I shared with the students what I was proposing to them, during the whole course and in both contexts of teaching I described. In particular, the "emic" perspective of this study was related to the cultures and disciplines of the students, investigated as individuals and in groups. The "etic" point of view, instead, referred to the examination of dialogue as a space of relationship in teaching, with the further aim to apply this approach to dialogue also beyond the academic context, as the implications suggest.

Over the past few years, I have tried to be immersed in the students' environment in every course I taught. Furthermore, in some cases I also lived with the students, as in the CSR schools (section 3.4.4), and we shared the whole day together for a week. In these experiences, I tried to go "'into the field' to observe the phenomenon in its natural state or *in situ*" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3). In particular, the "phenomenon" was the creation of a space of relationship among, across and beyond the student's cultures and disciplines, while the "natural state" consisted in living with them, "*in situ*", as we shared together the whole day.

Therefore, especially at the school, the qualitative method of analysis I used was "participant observation", as I became a participant in the culture, or context, of the study (Trochim, 2006).

The method of qualitative analysis of this approach to teaching included either "direct observation" or "participant observation". This "observation" was not only associated with the sense of sight (Whitehead, 2005, p. 11), as it involved "all senses: sight, hearing, smell, taste and feel to levels higher than normal and takes inspiration from all sources of the cultural environment" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 11). The qualitative "data" included the feedback and the behaviour of students, which I recorded in the form of "field notes", and "written documents". These type of "data" comprised the contributions prepared by the students, which complement the contents I propose, and their emails, SMS texts and personal conversations.

The "field research" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.3), or "field work" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 3) was essential to my study, as the students often allowed me to enrich my human, cultural and disciplinary heritage, and, moreover, my life.

I decided to better understand the students' daily life, their cultures, and choice of life, either as religious students, or as young researchers. This often implied a twofold immersion, in what we were sharing in class, and, in some cases, in their lives, frequently distant from my quotidian one. Therefore, my awareness of dialogue and relationship increased, together with theirs, first as a person, then, as a teacher and a scholar.

I explored the historical and spiritual origin of some religious orders, to better comprehend the religious students' choices in life. I visited their religious communities, and, when possible, I met their superiors. I participated in some events in their parish or community, to try to understand the students' needs and their daily priorities. This implied, for instance, attending mass with them on major Catholic holidays, and sharing some students' steps in their religious training to become friars, nuns, and priests. We also celebrated their civil holidays, such as the Chinese New Year's Day, the Zambian and the South Korean Independence Days, in class, and, sometimes, also in community, with dishes they prepared.

Either with the religious students, or with the young researchers, I sometimes had the chance to meet their parents and friends, and to increase my relationship with their native countries. These opportunities allowed me to better know some students, especially out of class.

The connections among the students from different classes (sections 3.1.5 and 3.3.4c), and in both teaching contexts presented in this study (section 3.3.4d) draw from this "immersion" in their life. Some of these connections, in particular, provided additional support to the proposal of dialogue as a space of relationship also outside the academic context, as the implications of this study indicate.


*Qualitative and quantitative validity of the proposed approach*

The findings, their analysis and the implications of this study provide support to the "validity" of this research, as introduced in chapter 2. In particular, they enforce the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches at the basis of this study.

Therefore, we may try to evaluate its "validity" according either the "traditional" or the "alternative" criteria proposed for judging a research study (section 2.1.2). The "traditional" parameters usually include: internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity. The "alternative" criteria proposed to better evaluate qualitative research are related to: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

It seems to me that both "traditional" and "alternative" parameters confirm the "validity" of this study. In particular, as previously described, the "internal validity" refers to the assumption that there is a causal relationship between the variables of the study, while the "credibility" is related to the perspective of the participant(s) involved in research (Trochim, 2006). We may consider the students' cultures and disciplines as the "variables" in this study, in addition to their choice of life, motivation to learn and to open themselves in creating a space of relationship based on dialogue. These "variables" are associated with a "causal relationship", and the cause-effect relationship was observed through the findings drawn from the students' feedback and contributions. Furthermore, the "causal relationship" was investigated among the students' original cultures and disciplines, and also across and beyond them. Therefore, "the validity" of this research is both "internal" and "external". It is "internal" as it regards the participants, specifically the students. For this reason, this study may be also characterized by "credibility", which consists in describing the research study "from the participant's eyes", as they are the only ones who can "legitimately judge the credibility of the results" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5). As formerly described, in fact, this teaching approach allowed the students to become aware of their evaluation and of the analysis of their findings.

This research was characterized by "external validity" as "the causal relationship" may be "generalized to other persons, places or times" (Trochim, 2006, para. 4, sect. 2.4). In fact, as the findings indicate, this teaching proposal was applied to several students, courses, universities, and also to different cultures and disciplines. Hence, this research may be described as having "transferability", as the findings can be "transferred to other contexts or settings" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5), and the researcher was "responsible for making the judgment of how sensible the transfer is" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5).

This aspect is related to the third criteria, the "reliability" of the study, based on its "repeatability" and "dependability", which describe "the changes that occur in the setting" and their effect on the study (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5).

The findings collected during the several years of teaching described support this third criteria, as "the setting" of the study changed at every course, since each class was different. For this reason, this study can also be characterized as having "objectivity" and "confirmability", the fourth criteria. In particular, this research was "objective" as the findings provided support to the hypothesis, thus, proposing an approach to teaching based on dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines mediated by dialogue. This study was also characterized by "confirmability", which refers to the activities of the researcher to "document the procedures for checking the data, or search for negative instances that contradict prior observations, examine the data collection and analysis procedures, and make judgements about the potential for bias or distortion" (Trochim, 2006, para. 6, sect. 6.5). In this study, in fact, I described the positive and the negative evidence collected over the years, to evaluate whether they might provide additional confirmation of the initial hypothesis.

The analysis of the "traditional" and "alternative" evaluation criteria applied to this study reminds me of the one made by the two young researchers who proposed to define the teaching approach at the CSR school as a "method" (section 3.3.2c). They referred to the quantitative parameters they used as scientists, and their intuitions were close to the suggestions presented in this section. This seems to me an additional proof of the value of the students' insights, which may corroborate this approach to knowledge mediated by dialogue, as described in the implications of this study (section 4.1).

The analysis of these criteria for evaluating the "validity" of this study may be completed by an aspect which refers to Buber's contribution to "human science" in terms of "validity" as "resonance" (Stewart, 1996, p. 165). In this perspective, this parameter is not only related to the trustworthiness of research (Stewart, 1996, p. 165), but to the capacity for both readers and listeners to "resonate" with it. This implies "a kind of personal scholarship, where phenomena are not simply reported as objects for knowledge, or as triggers for personal subjectivity" (Anderson & Cissna, 2012, p. 145). Instead, "the scholar's participation with the phenomena can be acknowledged and recorded in such a way that it engages other experiences. In analogy with a tuning fork, it resonates"

(Anderson & Cissna, 2012, p. 145). Although it "proves nothing in a scientific sense", this perspective on "validity" may open "different worlds to resonate with readers and listeners" (Anderson & Cissna, 2012, p. 145).

This definition seems to me to fit also with the teaching design described in this study, as each course contributed to "engage other experiences", among the students, and, across and beyond us, as the findings indicate. These "experiences" include, for instance, new courses, the students' feedback and contributions, the follow-ups, but also the space of relationship which we tried to establish. These aspects may be considered as a "tuning fork" which resonates over the years in both contexts of teaching presented in this research.


### *Buber's educational dialogic relationship in this study*

The "immersion" in the students' context described in this study may be considered a consequence of the application of Buber's educational dialogic relationship to this teaching design. The foundation for dialogue which I proposed to the students and which we tried to create during the courses, in fact, aimed to be a space of relationship according to Buber's perspective: a space of "inclusion" (section 1.2.2).

As previously mentioned, the meanings which Buber ascribed to this term refer to the following verbs, thus actions: "to embrace", "to include", "to comprehend", "to contain". In this perspective, as educator, I tried to "embrace" the students in the sense of accepting all their being, by experiencing myself and simultaneously perceiving each of them in their singularity. This implied the "active attentiveness to another's words or actions, engaging them as though they are directed specifically at us" (Gordon, 2011, p. 207).

Furthermore, I tried to "include" the students, thus to take them out of themselves, and to "comprehend" them, in the senses which this verb indicates: understanding, perceiving, seizing them, and also uniting, hence, taking them together, for instance, in class. Finally, I tried to "contain" the students, thus, to control and limit their actions, but also mine, as the relationship with the students cannot be mutual and on the same level in educational process (Buber, 1993, p. 180).

Therefore, as I intended to apply Buber's perspective to my teaching design, the space of relationship which we aimed to create in class implied the "inclusion" of the students. I tried to achieve this attitude in every course and in both contexts of teaching, which meant

to be involved in the relationship with the students and to control it, to embrace them, by listening with concrete effort, and to limit my role to respect and promoting their singularity.

Therefore, I chose to focus on "inclusion" the space of relationship with, among, across and beyond the students, their cultures and disciplines. This perspective served as basis for the ethnographic approach and the "field work" of this study, with observations which "involved all the senses" (Whitehead, 2005, p. 11).

The consequence of this "immersion" in the students' context with the aim to apply Buber's perspective on "inclusion", reminds me of the "tensional and ethical practice" of dialogue applied in teaching (Stewart & Zediker, 2000). As scholars of communication, Stewart and Zediker describe, in particular, their experience in teaching this discipline in the dynamic of "letting the other happen to me" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 232). But it seems to me that this approach to teaching may be relevant to every matter, as it is based on "the concrete lived experience of what Buber and other writers [Emmanuel Lévinas] call experiencing the otherness of the Other" (Stewart & Zediker, 2000, p. 232). The findings described in this study may provide indications on the "tensional practice" drawn from the experience of the "otherness of the Other". I refer in particular to the outcomes related to the lesson dedicated to the genocide in Burundi (section 3.1.3b) and to the course in an intercultural and interdisciplinary context (section 3.3.1b).

Furthermore, Buber's perspective on "inclusion" applied to teaching reminds me of the "relational approach to empathy" (Broome, 1991), which is described in particular in teaching intercultural communication. This approach is focused on developing a "third-culture" between the communicators, which provides a basis for "building shared meaning" (Broome, 1991, p. 235). It seems to me that the sense of a "third-culture" which may arise between two persons drawn from different cultures, in Buber's dialogic perspective applied to teaching may be extended. "Third", in fact, as it does not only belong to one of the two parts, communicators for Broome, I-You for Buber, cultures or disciplines, for this study, but it derives from their relationship, thus, we may assume, it is in "the between", as this dissertation has tried to describe.

### Towards the "transgroup" dialogue

The proposal of a transcultural and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue, and the findings derived from its application in the two contexts described in this study, provided support to the hypothesis of a space of relationship in which the cultures and the disciplines may meet. This foundation for dialogue took place with, among, across and beyond the students and the teachers/speakers. It was not necessarily a common ground, as it was based on relationship. This approach, in fact, aimed to overcome the differences among cultures and disciplines in the sense of going *across* and *beyond* them, rather than *over* them, thus the bridge among these differences aimed to embrace, to include, to comprehend and to contain them. For this reason, the proposed perspective was not centered on exploring cultural or disciplinary misunderstandings or conflicts, and it did not primarily aim to solve them. The eventual solution of a difference (culture and discipline, or conflict and misunderstanding) was a consequence, rather than an objective, of this approach.

This teaching design has oriented to creating a space of relationship and - we may now say - of "inclusion" among the students, their cultures and disciplines. Moreover, the foundation for dialogue which they tried to create during the course may be considered also a basis for "inclusion". In fact, this approach included, embraced, comprehended and contained the students, and it often changed their perspective on everyday life, not only in class or during the course. For this reason, some students decided to intensify this approach and to continue to apply it in other courses, in their further study, and sometimes also outside of the academic context, as the findings and the implications of this research have already described.

Over the past few years, this approach to dialogue has fed "the culture of the soul" of most students, as Nicolescu proposed in the *Declaration of Locarno* dedicated to a "transdisciplinary education" (section 1.3.4, rec. 6 n° 2). We may consider this teaching design as an initial attempt to realize "ateliers of transdisciplinary research", as Nicolescu indicated in this *Declaration*. In particular, the seminar at the philosophical-theological Institute, and the CSR schools' researchers and scholars drawn from several fields of study with the aim to establish "academic dialogue between different cultural approaches, taking account of interior experience" (rec. 6 n° 2).

These attempts at feeding the students' "culture of the soul" in both contexts interested about 700 students total: between 2008 and 2015, I offered twelve courses at the philosophical-theological Institute, to 175 students from about 20 cultures. I taught five courses in the preliminary year (to 45 students), four in the philosophical class (to 80 students) and three in the theological bachelor's degree (to 50 students). To complete the count, between 2007 and 2016, the CSR experiences included fourteen courses to 220 young researchers, twelve schools to 100 students, and seven seminars to more than 200 participants.

I would call this proposed approach to dialogue based on a grounds for "inclusion" to be a "transgroup dialogue". I take inspiration from "intergroup dialogue" (section 1.2.2), which recalls the "constitutive" characteristics of dialogue (section 1.2). In particular, a "form of discourse that emphasizes listening and inquiry, with the aim of fostering mutual respect and understanding" (Broome, 2015, p. 1), and a "dynamic" process, focused on the "quality of relationship" among participants (Broome, 2015, p. 1). Furthermore, dialogue does not "preclude disagreement", rather, it offers "an opportunity for individuals to navigate their differences in ways that can help them better understand the complexities of their perspectives" (Broome, 2015, p. 1). It requires "special attitudes" to the participants involved, such as: the willingness to take the "risks" that their perspective might be "altered or changed" (Broome, 2015, p. 1), the awareness that "engaging in dialogue can affect their identity", and the consciousness of "the unpredictable nature of dialogue", as it is a "nonlinear, emergent process" in which tension "is unavoidable" (Broome, 2015, p. 1).

An "intergroup dialogue" focuses on "bridging differences" (Nagda, 2006) especially in contexts of conflict and social inequalities. In the teaching approach described in this study, the potential conflicts among the students and their cultural or disciplinary diversity were often overcome by the relationships they established. Furthermore, the differences which they tried "to bridge" might help them also to experience a reciprocity between dialogue and relationship. The "transgroup dialogue", therefore, aims to walk through differences, among, across and beyond them, starting from dialogue and relationship, from dialogue as relationship, and from relationship as dialogue.

I have not found any indication of similar "transgroup dialogues" in the published literature. Therefore, in the "non-conclusions" of a study which proposes a transcultural

and transdisciplinary approach to academic teaching mediated by dialogue, I would like to propose this new concept.

The long-term goal for dialogue as "the modus operandi for a society, entrenched in schools, communities, business organizations, and political campaigns" (Broome, 2015, p. 4) to which "intergroup dialogue" may contribute, may also be applied to "transcultural dialogue". The further aim of this approach mediated by dialogue, in fact, is its application beyond the teaching context, "in the very fabric of everyday life" (Broome, 2015, p. 4), as the "seeds" of dialogue described earlier in this chapter may suggest.


## 4.3 Between (across, and beyond) Sisyphus and Prometheus

It seems appropriate to conclude this chapter and the dissertation with a last keyword, just as happens during the last lesson of my courses. As previously mentioned, in CSR experiences I generally present "Sisyphus", since his effort reminds me of the young researchers' fatigue, and I call them "young Sisyphus" (sections 2.3.2 and 3.4.3).

As the (non)conclusion of this study, therefore, I would suggest as keyword "Prometheus". Moreover, I would like to imagine Sisyphus and Prometheus in dialogue, in a space of relationship, between, across and beyond them.

Sisyphus and Prometheus are not described together in *Theogony* (Hesiod, 2004) as their stories and their condition are different: Sisyphus is a human being, hence a mortal, while Prometheus is a Titan, thus a god. Both of them are eternally punished by Zeus, as they outraged him. Prometheus, in particular, stole fire from Mount Olympus and gifted it to humankind. Fire allowed the development of humanity, and Prometheus thus aided its progress in the arts of civilization, such as writing, mathematics, agriculture, medicine, and science, as Aeschylus describes in *Prometheus Bound* (Aeschylus, 1881). Moreover, Prometheus offered hope to human beings, "blind hope", as Aeschylus called it (Aeschylus, 1881), as it diverted their attention from the human condition of mortality, which cannot change. These outrages were a threat for Zeus, who feared to be dethroned, therefore, his revenge was eternal and relentless: Prometheus was chained to the mountain peak and he could not move. He hung there, with the storm-winds whistling around him, and fierce eagles eating up his liver which regrew every night.

As was the case with Sisyphus, Prometheus refused to be victim of a sentence, and together they continued to brave Zeus as an eternal rising against him. Or, alternatively,

as an eternal confirmation that what they made was right: they assumed responsibility and paid for their crimes, but they did not redeem themselves, they did not please Zeus.

Sisyphus and Prometheus may be considered as the metaphor for fatigue, apparently vain for both, as they their effort will never end. Although their anguish is eternal, neither of them give up: they persist and wait for something to happen. It does happen: Prometheus, in fact, will be unbound and the eagle killed in the second tragedy by Aeschylus, *Prometheus Unbound,* but we have only fragments of this work, therefore, we refer solely to the first tragedy, at least in this imaginary dialogue between Sisyphus and Prometheus. Prometheus is described as humanity's benefactor for having permitted their development, although he knew this would outrage Zeus. The etymology of his name, in fact, seems to announce his destiny (Aeschylus, 1881), as it means "forethinker, foreseer". His name was derived from *promethes,* which literally means "thinking before", from *pro* ("before"), and *\*methos*, related to *mathein* which means "to learn".

Sisyphus and Prometheus made a choice, although they outraged Zeus: they dared. For this reason, the conclusion of the *Myth of Sisyphus* appears, we might say, as an imperative of hope: "But Sisyphus teaches the higher fidelity that negates the gods and raises rocks. He too concludes that all is well (..). The struggle itself toward the heights is enough to fill a man's heart. One must imagine Sisyphus happy" (Camus, 1991, p. 24, section 2.3.2).

We may consider Sisyphus and Prometheus on the "narrow ridge", described as Buber's standpoint (section 1.1.1.1 Buber, 1947, p. 184). Furthermore, it seems to me that they also walk through their "narrow ridge", as Sisyphus eternally pushes the stone and, helpless, looks at its rolling down. Similarly, Prometheus' liver is eternally devoured and yet regrows every night (at least in *Prometheus Bound*).

Their imaginary dialogue, I would propose, would take place in a sudden moment, which is unpredictable, unrepeatable, and fortuitous, as is the case for the encounter described by Buber (section 1.1.1.3). Neither of them is aware of the grace of this instant, as they suffer from their *dis*-grace and are focused on it. But this unexpected meeting happens and changes their destiny. Their punishment remains, as well as their anguish, but they take courage from each other, they share their pains and enforce their choices. Their space of relationship, as their immediate dialogue, expands on an eternal ground, which is endless. They may walk through their fatigue and overcome it, they may go beyond it.

Their pain is not changed, but their condition appears new, as they each take a further step.

While I was writing these pages, I often felt myself to be on the "narrow ridge", and I thought about the imaginary encounter and the unexpected dialogue between Sisyphus and Prometheus. It may be the metaphor of the effort required by this teaching approach, to practice dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond the students and me, in addition to teaching this perspective. Furthermore, it may indicate the fatigue caused by walking through this approach to dialogue, going beyond the unavoidable skepticism which it produces, as it is rarely investigated and appears new, *extraneous*, thus, literally, which "comes from outside". Nevertheless, education itself actually is a "narrow ridge", as well the aim to apply this approach beyond academia, and to consider dialogue, far more broadly, as a "lifestyle". Although the effort was, is, and will be, noteworthy, it is not vain, they suggest to us. Prometheus assumes the risk to grant fire and hope to humanity, and he dares to stay where other gods are not accustomed to staying, among human beings. At the same way, the proposal of dialogue as a space of relationship among, across and beyond cultures and disciplines described in this study aims to "instigate" dialogue, and to dare to practice and to study it as an attitude for everyday life.

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