

EDITORIAL COMMENTARY

In this new issue of the journal, we publish six conference papers presented during the 2008 academic year. These were part of the Extension activities of the Center for Research, program for Education in Indigenous and Intercultural Contexts of the Millennium Scientific Initiative (Núcleo Iniciativa Científica Milenio, CIECII, P075-039-F), at the Catholic University of Temuco. Its Director, Dr. Daniel Quilaqueo, edited this special issue. The papers were also presented at conferences in the National University Network (REUNA).

This issue is devoted especially to theoretical and methodological questions linked to the program for Education in Indigenous and Intercultural Contexts, and are the result of research undertaken by the different academic units and faculties of the Catholic University of Temuco. The articles address questions aimed at understanding the complex nature of cultural diversity in the southern macro-region. They also serve to highlight the latest and more advanced findings in intercultural research in order to process this plurality of cultural wealth that characterizes many Latin American contexts, and in our country, those contexts defined by local indigenous worlds.

The article by Professor Quilaqueo addresses two general questions that explain the nature of intercultural dynamics. The first refers to the meaning of the terms “pluricultural” and “multicultural”, showing that the dynamics of that which is intercultural (and cultural) is based on two main elements: the epistemological and historical. The second points to the epistemological difficulties located between the ‘context of discovery’ and ‘context of justification’. This issue problematizes speculation centered on the contexts in which intercultural relationships develop between Mapuche and non-Mapuche communities. Quilaqueo establishes that the dynamics of ‘interculturalness’ allow for the possibility to

consider and question cultural situations in current research.

Professor Quintriqueo develops in his work an interesting approach to intercultural education within the Mapuche context by drawing upon the theoretical and practical elements associated with the historical, centralized, and mono-cultural character of education in Chile. Intercultural education is defined in relation to the historical demands of families and communities for improving learning and appreciating the value of the Mapuche cultural heritage in education.

Professor Merino’s work focuses on discourse and intercultural communication as the epistemological basis for intercultural education in indigenous contexts. In this view, discourse “constructs” individual identity inasmuch as the individual is but a socio-cultural and socio-historical entity informed by discourse. Merino argues that intercultural education, based on the principles of intercultural communication, requires students with Mapuche cultural and Chilean cultural backgrounds, to mutually exchange their identities, with classroom teacher support, through processes of cultural identity negotiation.

Professor Pagano, from the Catholic University of Salta, offers “Notes for a philosophy of *abiayalense* intercultural education” where the central thesis is that intercultural education has become a global imperative. He stresses that philosophy, as a critical mode of inquiry (*vis a vis* the status quo) aimed at creating conditions necessary for heightened human solidarity, should take over this critical role as a means of preserving the objectives associated with intercultural education. Philosophy must challenge itself as well as question the manner in which it educates given the Euro-centric character of philosophic education which ensures epistemological cultural hegemony by

sanctioning the market as the only civilizational and pedagogical reference point in the world. Intercultural philosophy thus does not remain unto itself as an accomplice of the neoliberal project. It must establish its offerings so that intercultural education does not become a mere facade occluding dehumanizing and predatory cultural absorption, a neocolonialism that feeds on natural and human life.

From an intercultural-philosophical perspective, Professor Salas proffers not only a theory of texts on cultural difference, but outlines a few elements of a theory of inter-translation and an inter-cultural theory of reading. He suggests that texts assert an *ad intra*, which defines a cultural identity dynamic of origin. But they also assert an *ad extra*, which refers to alterative modes of recognition by members of other cultures. This means distinguishing between various types of contexts: social, political, cultural, etc. in the culture of origin as well as in other cultures. In this sense, texts and contexts are always marked by epistemological problems of intertextuality, which current philosophy, understood as critical hermeneutics, refers to as “the struggle of interpretations”. This opens a field of debate concerning “the struggles for recognition.” Hence, the multidimensional semantics of cultural texts that an inter-translation theory seeks to explain, embraces and interprets *intra-textual* and *inter-textual* analyses.

Professor Cárcamo, on the other hand, argues that intercultural communication is an authentic experience of openness toward others, and that this is an essential part of a project and method for the pursuit of the intercultural. This thesis allows her to locate epistemological and methodological practices on the horizon of a science of conversation, whose development requires a holistic re-characterization of scientific experience in order to render those practices less ethnocentric. In this sense, she offers a transitional hypothesis where the intercultural openness of the human sciences requires an epistemology of harmony consistent with a methodology of conversation.

Professors Peña, Carrasco, Almendra

and Rojas, discuss the relevance of an interdisciplinary approach between anthropology and territorial space. This considers territory as a transcultural category, a locale in which relationships and cultural systems develop and in which territorial ordering (considered as a way of fostering new forms of development, uses and occupation of space) is carried out. This allows the authors to emphasize the relationship between the way in which society manifests and discloses its needs and interests vis a vis its territory and territorial models.

Pedro Hepp’s article on digital technologies in intercultural contexts, offers an overview of Chilean education in the most vulnerable areas of the population, particularly in the Mapuche context. Hepp discusses the use of digital technologies in cross-cultural and inter-ethnic contexts while describing the state of digital technologies in Chile and the opportunities such technology affords in intercultural education. Finally, he describes the digital technologies in indigenous and intercultural contexts of the Center for Research, program for Education in Indigenous and Intercultural Contexts of the Millennium Scientific Initiative (Núcleo Iniciativa Científica Milenio).

What appears as a primordial necessity in the above-mentioned research is the need for developing an inter-cultural dialogue, not only as a social and political imperative, but as part of a set of proposals that outline a new view of rationality that is not only a scientific but philosophical, and which is consistent with the mission statement of a Catholic university located at the center of the southern macro-region. The University’s concerns have been characterized by cross-cultural and ethnic themes as defined by its own history. This has allowed for the challenging of monocultural intellectual approaches that still mark current research. This special issue may help explain why intercultural approaches are of the utmost importance and why monocultural schemas have become unacceptable. If we examine this historically, it is possible to understand the cultural importance of codes of discourse and praxis frequently espoused by a majority of Chilean institutions. These are ultimately

grafted upon the discourse and practices of human ethnic communities.

From the point of view of research, it is now necessary to delve into a dialogical analysis of cultural relations, which means we must foster a reasoned approach in dealing with a number of conflicts associated with the problem of recognition or acknowledgement of otherness, as well as assemble an ever-growing number of individuals to this cause. But this requires that the reasons for this not be defined by a distorted view of the rationality of a hegemonic society. Such reasons in any case stem from the reflective practices associated with diverse discursive forms extant in any culture. Because of this, we must distinguish genuine from unauthentic dialogue.

In this respect it becomes necessary to define what a genuine intercultural dialogue is all about. Only when he who belongs to a culture deemed superior is able to transcend his own culture (pondering it as *relative* rather than *superior* to another culture) will a genuine, symmetric and symbiotic dialogue emerge. Intercultural dialogue, which implies acceptance of 'the reasons of the other', presupposes accepting that human reflexivity is not alien to those processes that generate significations linked to life contexts. This becomes internally operative through the articulation of various discursive forms, and it obliges individuals to the acceptance of a common view as regards rules and procedures. This link between contextualized reflexivity and normative mediation processes cannot be determined by pointing to the particular practices of any given culture since this would not ensure mutual understanding especially among those who do not share identical life-worlds.

The central argument regarding the link between rules and context is that it allows to account for mutual intercultural intersubjective action. This is the current focus of research in intercultural studies

undertaken at UC Temuco. It is also part and parcel of a long-standing tradition among teachers and researchers spanning across many of its academic research programs in the social sciences and humanities. The latter has inspired this journal since the very beginning.

In sum, the Faculty of Juridical and Social Sciences is most pleased to publish this special issue on intercultural dialogue. It is nonetheless part of an academic exercise which is hesitant to step forth precipitously into a state of conciliation that disregards the differences between variegated discourses. Such a belief would imply that the same universal rules apply to all discourses. Neither is it a kind of dialogue inimical to recognizing the difficulties associated with human communication, and with individuals from different life-worlds. This would mean that all discourses possess different rules.

This kind of dialogue proposes a far more patient modality aimed at understanding otherness from the point of view of the other's own discourse. An intercultural dialogue is one which grasps the difficult art of understanding its own discursive processes, something that is difficult to clearly achieve without support from others, and without recognizing in others their status as true and genuine interlocutors.

Dr. Ricardo Salas Astrain
Director

* Translation by Luis Valenzuela Vermehren, Assistant Professor, School of Sociology and Political Science, Catholic University of Temuco.