

# ***THE CHALLENGE OF A FRATERNAL SOCIAL COEXISTENCE. A REFLECTION STEMMING FROM THE ESSAY “LA SFIDA DELLA CONVIVENZA” BY ALBERTO PIRNI\****

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**ABSTRACT** *This article starts from the analysis of the work “La sfida della convivenza” (2018), by Italian philosopher Alberto Pirni, to establish with it a dialogue around the principle of fraternity. In his essay, Pirni offers an essential lexicon to discuss the possibilities of social coexistence between different individuals, groups, communities and cultures in contemporary societies. The first part of the article offers a summary of the ideas of the author, who seeks to deepen the meaning of key concepts for the intercultural debate through a prevalently philosophical lens. In the second part, we establish a dialogue between Pirni's work and the reflections on the principle of fraternity, in its ethical and normative dimensions. The debate is based, above all, on the Italian, French and Brazilian literature about the theme. The central thesis is that the idea of fraternity can serve as guiding principle to the intercultural ethics defended by Pirni, as long as it is stripped of the excluding or reductive logics that still today is attributed to it. In the concluding remarks, we offer a brief reflection on the possibilities of using the idea of fraternity as an intercultural ethical principle around which to structure deliberation spaces within multicultural societies.*

**Keywords** *Fraternity, Intercultural Ethics, Social Coexistence, Identity, Community.*

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**RESUMO** *Este artigo parte da análise da obra “La sfida della convivenza” (2018), do filósofo italiano Alberto Pirni, para estabelecer com ela um diálogo acerca do princípio da fraternidade. No ensaio em questão, Pirni oferece um léxico essencial para discutir as possibilidades da convivência entre diferentes – indivíduos, grupos, comunidades, culturas – nas sociedades contemporâneas. A primeira parte do artigo oferece um resumo das ideias apresentadas pelo autor, que busca aprofundar o sentido de conceitos-chave para o debate intercultural através de uma lente prevalentemente filosófica. Na segunda parte, estabelece-se um diálogo entre a obra de Pirni e as reflexões acerca do princípio da fraternidade, em suas dimensões éticas e normativas. O debate é feito com base nas literaturas italiana, francesa e brasileira acerca do tema. A tese central é que a ideia de fraternidade possa inserir-se na ética intercultural defendida por Pirni e servir-lhe como princípio-guia, desde que despojada das lógicas excludentes ou redutivas que ainda hoje lhe são atribuídas. A título de conclusão, apresenta-se uma breve reflexão sobre as possibilidades acerca do uso da ideia de fraternidade como um princípio ético intercultural em torno do qual estruturar espaços de deliberação dentro de sociedades multiculturais.*

**Palavras-chave** *Fraternidade, Ética Intercultural, Convivência Social, Identidade, Comunidade.*

## Introduction

In recent times, there has been a genuine diffusion of the debate about the possibilities of coexistence between individuals and communities of different cultures, to the extent that this discussion is an essential part of the political electoral programs of most European parties. In some cases, they have been crucial in defining the very results of elections. Such diffusion apparently democratizes the political decision-making process in the field, but it actually carries the risk of losing the sense of the key concepts necessary for the analysis of the object under discussion. This is especially true in today's democracies, which are heavily influenced by online discussions that are often superficial and exposed to various types of manipulation and multiplication of discourses that propagate ideas and feelings little or not consistent at all with what could be considered a constructive debate. This is why it is urgent to propose reflections that help individuals to better understand what is at stake, to critically consider the strategies proposed by their political representatives (or candidates to hold such positions) and, no less importantly, to think about their own positions and actions.

This is the proposal of *La sfida della convivenza* (2018),<sup>1</sup> the most recent work of Italian philosopher Alberto Pirni.<sup>2</sup> The book has a commitment with an authentically philosophical task: that of giving name to things, in contrast to the tendency, perceived by the author, to consider that the concepts we have are no longer useful to describe the concrete situations of the present. For him, the problem is not the concepts, but the misuse of them. For this reason, Pirni resumes, analyzes and explores different possibilities around the language of the *self*, the *other* and the *community* as well as of *identity* and *recognition*. He seeks to deepen the meaning of such concepts through a lens that is prevalently philosophical, but that does not avoid the interdisciplinary dialogue with other areas of knowledge, such as sociology, psychology, political science, theology.

Pirni offers an essential lexicon to discuss the possibilities for different individuals, groups, communities or cultures to live together in our contemporary societies. This article aims to offer a summary of the ideas contained in the work and discussed in depth by the author to then propose a contribution to the debate. More than a critical review, which usually have much more contained dimensions, this paper intends to establish a dialogue with the work of Pirni, connecting it to a debate that has been present for several years in the fields of philosophy, law and political science in Italy. This is the debate about the principle of *fraternity* in its ethical and normative dimensions. The central idea is that the idea of fraternity could be fully inserted into the intercultural

- 1 The title of the work, translated into English, would be "The challenge of coexistence: for an intercultural ethics". I keep the original title whenever I refer to it in this article. An important observation regarding the title concerns the Italian word "convivenza". While in other Latin languages we can easily find a correspondent word (e.g. "convivência", in Portuguese), there is no literal translation of it in English, if we consider it as something different from what the word "coexistence" means. The difference is important within the reflections of the work, as it will be further discussed. This creates a certain problem in translation. One option would be to replace "coexistence" with "living together". This is the case in one of the most usual uses of the verb "convivere", to indicate the status of two people, usually an unmarried couple, who share a home and have a sexual relationship. But "convivere", or "conviver" (in Portuguese) are also used to describe, more broadly, the situation of two or more people who "live together" under a common frame. This may be the private sphere of the house, but also the public sphere of society, acquiring the sense of a "social coexistence". The phrasal verb "to live together" only artificially reaches this connotation. This is why I opted for translating "convivenza" with the word "coexistence" throughout most part of the text. In chapter 6, however, Pirni differentiates "coesistenza" from "convivenza". When commenting that specific part of his book, in order to avoid confusion, the latter is translated as "living together". A specific footnote will remind the reader of this detail.
- 2 Pirni is a researcher in Moral Philosophy at the "Law, Politics and Development Institute" of the Sant'Anna School for Advanced Studies in Pisa, Italy, where he teaches Public Ethics and Ethics of Security. Among his many fields of research, the questions of Identity, Otherness and Recognition in the multicultural debate cover an important space. On these themes, before the book analyzed in this article, he had written, together with Fabio D'Andrea and Antonio De Simone, "L'io ulteriore. Identità, alterità e dialettica del riconoscimento" (2004) and edited, together with Barbara Henry, "La via identitaria al multiculturalismo. Charles Taylor e oltre" (2006). Whenever this text makes reference to Pirni, it will be referring to the work cited in the previous note, to whose analysis much of the article is dedicated. For this reason, I avoid referring to the year of publication of the work after each mention of the author's name, specifying only the chapters and pages through brackets, when necessary.

ethics defended by Pigni, even as to serve as a guiding principle to it, provided that it is rescued from the oblivion to which it has often been condemned and stripped of the exclusive or reductive connotations and interpretations that are often attributed to it.

Before presenting the debate on the principle of fraternity, however, it is necessary to understand in more detail what Alberto Pigni's essay is about. *La sfida della convivenza* is a theoretical work that does not always manage to be of easy reading – it may be difficult to be understood in its entirety by someone who has not already had some approach, even if introductory, to the literature on the subject. But it can serve as an orientation guide in the sea of information and misinformation to which we are exposed on a daily basis and which require us, as citizens of democratic political systems, to know how to react in a conscious and critical manner to the political proposals that are presented to us. The first part of this article explains, thus, the main ideas of the work. In doing so, we sought to follow the order of the chapters of the book without, however, summarizing them singularly. The second part of the article will be dedicated to the discussion about the relationship between the idea of fraternity and the intercultural ethics proposed in *La sfida della convivenza*. Finally, in the conclusion remarks, we offer a brief reflection on the possibilities of using the idea of *fraternity* as an intercultural ethical principle around which to structure deliberation spaces *within* multicultural societies. This last part, being presented in the form of conclusion, is not deepened in this space, and is rather intended to be a suggestion for further analysis.

## 1. The social coexistence and its challenges

What does the challenge of coexistence in the title of the work mean in clear conceptual terms? According to Pigni, it is the challenge of sharing the same time and space by different people or groups who aspire to be recognized as equal under some aspects (for example, under the legal aspect) or who require the right of being seen and understood as different under other aspects (e.g. under social or personal ones or from the set of values to which they refer to justify their way of acting in society). But in order to grasp what is really at stake when talking about commonness and otherness, it is necessary to understand, first, the context in which *I* and the *other* are inserted. It is indispensable, therefore, to analyze the resizing of the concepts of space and time caused by the phenomenon of globalization. The latter would be among the main causes of an acute (though unequal) awareness of difference, diversity, and otherness. Having the scenario of a globalized world as background allows

the author to introduce, already at the beginning of the book, a theme that is present throughout the whole work and that is used as a lens of analysis for the conceptual discussion proposed in each of the following chapters: that of *complexity*. This lens of analysis proposes, on a greatly amplified temporal and spatial scale, the relationship between cause and effect of various phenomena, by pointing at the same time to the inevitability of this proposition.

It is in this context that we can understand the questioning of the condition of one's own self and that of the other. The author then, in the first part of the work,<sup>3</sup> affronts the deep meaning of *identity* (chap. 1, pp. 19-42) and of *alterity* (chap. 2, pp. 43-60). Although the dialectical relationship between the two may seem an incontrovertible observation in philosophical thought (there is no construction of the *self* without the thinking of the *other*), Pirni is aware of the fact that both have often been seen as monolithic blocks in the Western philosophical and sociological tradition, defined once and for all and without possibility of alteration. After realizing that this is usually the prevailing view in the spaces of discussion and that it informs much of the political decisions in our societies, he points to the need to rescue, in the first place, a dialogical vision of identity to then, in a second moment, propose an identity path that includes the other, instead of excluding it. Pirni's perspective remembers the avant-garde critique of Emmanuel Levinas, Gabriel Marcel and, above all, Paul Ricoeur, who had already highlighted the link between the self and his narrative and dialogical experience. But it is mainly Charles Taylor's thought to be more widely analyzed by the author (chap. 3, pp. 61-76),<sup>4</sup> who has a profound knowledge of the work of the Canadian philosopher.<sup>5</sup> Taylor, in fact, points to the individual identity as a hermeneutic understanding of the being that the subject elaborates in the context of his own action (and that immediately implies, in the analysis of this author, the linguistic dimension). As language of values, the construction of identity implies the opening of a dialogical dimension constitutively linked to the individuality of the self.<sup>6</sup> The

3 "Border places: the self, the others". In the original: *Luoghi di confine: il sé, gli altri*.

4 The thought of Taylor and references to this author permeate the entire book, but Pirni dedicates chapter 3 entirely to an analysis of key concepts present in his work, in the form of a first *excursus*. *La sfida della convivenza* presents three chapters, among the eleven that compose the book, in form of *excursus* - small "deviations" of the main theme, that serve however to deepen it. The reading of these chapters (chapters 3, 7 and 10) does not complicate the logical sequence of the book, but can be done separately from, and preferably next to the rest of the text.

5 See Pirni; Henry (2006).

6 Interestingly, Gerd Baumann in *The Multicultural Riddle* (1999) strongly criticizes Taylor, because he sees in his *The Sources of the Self* (1989) a predominantly essentialist view of culture. Baumann acknowledges that in certain passages Taylor admits the fluid and continually evolving construction of one's own identity, precisely because it happens in relation to others, but states that Taylor seems to forget this conclusion in most of his work. Pirni sticks to the passages in which Taylor considers the dialogicity of the self and, unlike

implication of this is that the subjects involved in an open dialogue mutually recognize each other as interlocutors with identical respect. Identity, therefore, would not be something fixed and immobile. The only thing determined would be the set of social and cultural concretions that define the space the self finds before it and its capacity to act, and which may refer either to merely physical-spatial characteristics or to the underlying moral framework that limits this capacity (see pp. 26-27).

For Pirni, seeing identity through its dialogical characteristic allows us to recognize that it is not possible to conceive an identity path that does not include the other and that implicitly or explicitly recognizes the existence of the other. The dialogical characteristic must therefore also be used to frame the concept of *alterity*.

Pirni elaborates a distinction between three ideal-type figures of alterity (chap. 4, pp. 77-102): The first is the *alterity-wall*, in which the other is a limit and in which the relation with him is given through the contrast. The second is the *alterity-mirror*, in which the other is similar and in which the relation with him is of consonance. If the risk that the first one contains is that of closing the dialogue or of constructing an identity model in which the other is seen as the enemy, because different from me, the second ideal type is also insidious because it seeks in the other only similarity. The disregard for differences can ultimately lead to the denial of the right of existence of these differences.

The third ideal-type is the *alterity-door*. In it, the other is a “unifying medium” of extremes that are disconnected from each other, thus creating a connection between the differences. The dialectics of “between” reminds us that the formation of identity is a process in which “I am with and through the other”. Thus, identity is no longer merely a private matter, but finds its origin and its own balance in a space that is fundamentally public.

This opens up the normative dimensions of recognition. Pirni proposes a further distinction at three levels. The first dimension, on a logical-epistemological level, is that of *acknowledging* the other, and it is the one in which we usually stop: I see and understand who you are. But the path of recognition requires going beyond the mere observation of the other in order to reach two normative levels: the first is that of the dimension of *accepting* the other, which allows us to move from admission to inclusion and to go beyond the mere call to tolerance as a way of enabling the coexistence of

different people. However, for the author, today it is no longer enough just to accept and include the other. It is also necessary to discuss the possibilities of recognizing as valid any pre-comprehension of values coming from him and, consequently, recognizing as politically (and legally) legitimate any relative request for resource allocation. This second normative level, which is also the third dimension of recognition, is that of *approving* the other, and it goes along a scale of growing impact at the level of public policies (see p. 86).

It is from here that the challenge of social coexistence is revealed in all its complexity. If the passage from *acknowledging* to *accepting* the other belongs to the moral sphere, and is therefore part of the eminently philosophical discourse, the passage from *accepting* to *approving* the other belongs to the political sphere, and is consequently brought into the arena of political discussion. If in the first case the dialogue is between two people who recognize each other as different, but who nevertheless choose to socially live together, in the second the dialogue is between many who share a common destiny (obliged, not chosen) of contemporaneity and co-spatiality with others.

Consistent with the objective proposed from the outset, Pirni avoids the eminently political discussions to concentrate on the categories and concepts that fuel the debate. The philosophical discourse reappears, then, at this last normative level, through the discussion about the meaning of community, to which Pirni dedicates the second part of the book.<sup>7</sup> According to him, to say community today means implicitly to say “sharing” - of space, time, ideas, values, etc. The two essential questions about *what* to approve (both *of* and *for* the other) and *how* to do it (i.e., through which political and public practices and choices) need to be answered with a clear understanding of what it means to be and to live in community today. Pirni offers two clues. The first (ch. 5, pp. 103-118) takes up the discussion previously made about the dialogical nature of identity and culture: it is necessary to overcome the view that automatically equalizes community and sharing, according to which subjects who accept to define themselves united to others through community bonds share *ipso facto* with them each opinion, value, ways of acting, etc. (see p. 111). Instead, it is necessary to recognize the existing space between the community and each subject-agent who composes it. This space is inhabited by the individuality proper to each one and, between full identification and full rejection, it knows a myriad of possibilities of interaction between the individual subject and the collectivity represented by the community. The second clue (ch. 6, pp.

7 “The community and the challenge of coexistence”. In the original: *La comunità e la sfida della convivenza*.

119-144) is to redefine “being together in community”, going beyond a mere sense of coexistence (“coesistenza”) to achieve precisely that of living together (“convivenza”).

Overcoming the paradigm of coexistence and recognizing that of living together, which presupposes sharing, leads, on the conceptual level, to prefer the term *intercultural* to the most commonly used *multicultural* (see pp. 140, 178). The latter, according to Pirni, simply indicates the condition of juxtaposition of diverse cultures or, at most, a communicative and operational plan of interaction between them. The term intercultural, in turn, translates into a conscious and reciprocal sharing of values and destinies, going beyond mere spatial and temporal concomitance and implying concrete attempts to answer the questions about what to do with common space and time and how to do it. The model of multicultural coexistence, for the author, interprets the relationship between me and the other in terms of contrast, and thus suffers from a “discomfort” caused by proximity as an objective fact. To this discomfort, the multicultural project does not know how to react and becomes a victim of two possible pitfalls: theoretical immobility, which makes the debate go round in circles with no prospect of discovering new conceptual horizons, and practical superficiality, that is, the tendency to make decisions that react to the urgency of the moment, without the ability or willingness to reflect carefully before.

On the contrary, the model of coexistence<sup>8</sup> proposed by intercultural ethics, precisely because it adopts a dialogical conception of identity (whether individual or that of the group or community) seems better prepared to react to discomfort, proposing to interpret it in a dynamic way and without preconceptions. Moreover, intercultural ethics does not attempt to escape from the complex situations that arise, but rather recognizes the need to inhabit complexity. For Pirni, this means going beyond theoretical immobility and avoiding practical superficiality.

The last part of the book is about the contexts of social coexistence.<sup>9</sup> What can be said about the locus in which interactions can become integrations and where each individual can open up to a path of recognition of the other, her values and her demands? According to Pirni, for this to happen, it is necessary to go beyond the idea of a clearly defined and circumscribed context, which

8 In the original in Italian, the noun associated to the multicultural model is “coesistenza”, whereas the one associated to the intercultural model is “convivenza”, present in the title of the work. See note 1 regarding the decision made of keeping the same English noun – “coexistence” instead of translating “convivenza” with the expression “living together”.

9 “Contexts of coexistence: the present and the possible”. In the original: *Contesti di convivenza: il presente e il possibile*.



remains at the empirical and pragmatic level, to reach another that is more coherent with the logic of our globalized world.

The first possibility is to elaborate a meta-context, which stands above the empirical order and in which subjectivities do without any physical and concrete interaction. We could think, for example, on a virtual or simply imaginary context. However, “the dynamics of formation of the self, of interlocution with the other, of the construction of the communal fabric and of recognition (still) pass mainly through an experiential and daily sharing, laden with meaning to and from places and times of physical presence and material interaction” (p. 239). Another road makes possible, instead, the idea of an inter-context, which presupposes a solid communality and a substantial horizontality between different possible places of interaction. This perspective, by weaving comparisons between different contexts, is aware of the constitutive porosity and transversality of the alleged limits of those same contexts, where the most significant interlocutions for each individual originate. That is, it does not deny the need for physical, concrete interaction between subjects who perceive themselves as different and who, in this way, build their own identity and open themselves up to the recognition of the other and its implications. But it preserves, on the one hand, the perception of proximity and simultaneity of the state of problematic things that have their contexts of elaboration and development very far from our “here and now”, and on the other hand, the consequent need to take them into consideration, worry about and even deal with them directly (see p. 173).

Pirni associates the first path with the conceptual correlative of *cosmopolitanism*, while the second road stipulates a less usual concept which, for this reason, requires greater attention, such as that of *cosmo-culturalism*. The latter avoids thinking about the existing culture without considering who lives, thinks and builds it through his or her concrete practice. The sharing of space, in this sense, opens up to the perception of being here while being elsewhere at the same time, and does so while enabling awareness of the formation of one's own identity. We could say, in a very simplified way, that unlike the cosmopolitan idea that defends the identification of the individual with an abstract humanity, cosmo-culturalism places more emphasis on the historicity of the processes of human interaction that led to the formation of groups, communities and peoples such as they call themselves and see themselves today, and which have a direct impact on the individual perception of the identity of each subject-agent bearer of these cultures. These interactions, incidentally, continue to happen in an endless process of shaping and reshaping cultures based on contacts and multiple influences between the subjects who live them, especially in today's globalized world.

There is a certain risk in introducing a relatively new concept into the literary lexicon of a particular field, especially when this concept is not easily distinguishable from others already more consolidated. This seems to be the case with cosmo-culturalism, which at some points in chapter 11 comes close to some of the meanings of cosmopolitanism, from which it intends to differentiate itself. Pirni does not ignore this risk, but considers that the introduction of the above concept is not explained by a mere “ismophilia”, an unmotivated nominalism, as the philosopher Alberto Caracciolo warns (see p. 240).<sup>10</sup> In fact, in addition to the characteristic already pointed out above, the conceptual lens of cosmo-culturalism allows us to overcome the classic opposition between liberals and communitarians typical of the predominantly North American debate about multiculturalism. It seeks a balance between the typically liberal abstract universalism and the communitarian demand for a return to the relativistic contextualization. But the main strength of this concept is the possibility that it provides of overcoming the topical limit still present in the cosmopolitan horizon, represented, ultimately, by the nation state (and reflected linguistically by the approximation of *polis* to *cosmos*). “The space between the figures of alterity, of 'topic', which is physically contiguous, thus widens to include parts of a 'meta-topical' spatiality: a cultural proximity that is placed beyond and above the physical one, reaching to contemplate and to go beyond both the linguistic and the emotional and symbolic aspects” (p. 263).

The considerations made in *La sfida della convivenza* allow us to rescue another concept present in the lexicon of political philosophy, but which is often neglected, if not entirely forgotten: that of *fraternity*, seen not only as an idea belonging to individual moral sphere, but understood as an authentic political category capable of inspiring legal principles (including constitutional ones) and public policies able to give positive responses to the demands of recognition. We devote the next part of this article to this question.

## 2. For a fraternal social coexistence

The debate about the principle of fraternity, its meanings and its importance not only historical, but capable of playing a relevant role also in contemporary societies, has been developing for several years in Italy. The debate about the principle of fraternity, its meanings and its importance not only historical, but capable of playing a relevant role also in contemporary societies, has been developing for several years in Italy, fed mainly by scholars and academics

10 For a deeper analysis of the concept by the same author, see Pirni (2011) and also Pirni (2016).

linked to the Focolari. The latter is a progressive movement of the Catholic Church which especially regards openness to dialogue and the acceptance of differences.

The idea of universal fraternity translated into the practice of respect for others and the importance given to human dignity is one of the central characteristics of the philosophy of the movement's founder, Chiara Lubich, naturally from a Christian faith perspective. What many scholars linked to the movement have sought to do is to expand the discussion on the principle of fraternity beyond eminently religious circles, precisely because they believe (most of them) that it does not need to be identified solely with a religious and predominantly Christian dimension.<sup>11</sup>

Generally speaking, the defenders of the “rescue” of the idea of fraternity in the philosophical and political lexicon share the central thesis that this principle would precisely be the regulative one of the other two that make up the revolutionary triad. Without it, the claims of liberty and equality are bound to remain in a plan of conflict.<sup>12</sup>

In France, the debate is instigated above all by the historical weight of the triad “liberté, égalité, fraternité”, which has its origin in the revolution begun in 1789, although it only became part of the French constitution after the revolution of 1848. But it is also because fraternity is a constitutional principle in France that discussions about its meaning have never completely disappeared in that country.<sup>13</sup> Baggio (2008) states that, despite this fact, the third element of the historical motto has generally been neglected in the political reflection and practice of the last two centuries, especially if compared to the other two.<sup>14</sup>

11 It is important to precise that not all scholars involved in the study of fraternity in Italy are linked to the Focolari movement, but to them goes the merit of having introduced the debate in the country and of continuously feeding it. From Italy, the debate expanded to other countries within the same movement, which is international. In Latin America, the main countries where there is a significant academic debate on the subject are Brazil and Argentina. See the works of Lopes (2012), Machado (2017), Veronese and Oliveira (2017) for the discussion in Brazil. In Argentina, see Ighina (2012) and Barreneche (2010). In Chile, see Monares and Ramírez-Rivas (2018).

12 See the articles in the two volumes organized by Antonio Maria Baggio (2008; 2009), which depart from this central idea to offer a broad reflection on the principle of fraternity from different perspectives - philosophical-political, historical, legal, theological, sociological.

13 See the important study conducted by Michel Borgetto (1993), which became a reference for all further studies about the principle of fraternity, including those by Italian scholars.

14 Spanish philosopher Antoni Domènech had already dedicated a masterful work on the theme of fraternity in 2004 (See Domènech, 2004). To Domènech, the principle of fraternity encapsulated the real republican ideals present in the political revolutionary framework of Europe (and from there, to the Americas) from 1789 to 1848. Also for him, of the famous revolutionary triad, fraternity was the great forgotten value, despite the fact that it was *through* the idea of fraternity that the plebs were able to conceive the full incorporations of individuals who lived by their own labor into a republican society of *free* and *equal* citizens. The defeat of the revolutionary path after 1848 opened a new historical stage during which the major ideas of the political project of a free and egalitarian society were washed away. He points out that the consequence of this defeat

Liberty and equality became constitutional principles in virtually all modern democracies, and were even able to be the inspiring and justifying ideas of two antagonistic economic and social systems throughout much of the twentieth century, during the Cold War: the capitalist world would wave the flag of liberty, calling itself the “free world”, whilst socialist countries would exhibit equality as a synonym for justice among their citizens. Fraternity, in turn, would have been set aside or used to justify the creation or existence of closed groups that exclude the non-brother: the other, different from me and from those with whom I maintain an artificial bond of “brotherhood”, is excluded from the benefits reserved for those who belong to this “fraternal” group. This is clear, for example, in a vision of community strongly based on nationality, in which the “other” – the foreigner, the immigrant, the non-national, is almost, if not entirely, seen as an enemy. Another example is the religious-informed view of community. In this case, the national borders may count little, but the apparent broader sense of community is jeopardized inasmuch as I consider only those who share my faith and beliefs as worthy to be called brothers and sisters.

An opposite critique that can be made to the idea of fraternity highlights the high level of abstraction implicit in its appeal to a “common humanity”. The philosophical question at the core of this critique has also a strongly political appeal, for it makes room for criticizing fraternity as being a utopian, almost an “apolitical” concept, in Schmittian terms (cf. Tosi, 2009, p. 58).

The opposing critiques mentioned above illustrate one of the main challenges that the idea of fraternity faces when it tries to find space in the lexicon of public policies. Being a word open to a myriad of theoretical interpretations, which translate into very different practices, it faces the resistance of a large number of scholars who react with skepticism to those who propose its rescue. This is the first reason why it could be part of the lexical discussion of *La sfida della convivenza*, coherently with its purpose of analyzing and clarifying the concepts that are used (and abused) in today's political debates.

A second reason is linked to the fact that the discussion on fraternity in Italy as well as in Brazil was born and developed from an environment of religious inspiration, although, as explained above, it deliberately tried to dissociate itself from this reductive “mark”. Pini dedicates a chapter of *La sfida della convivenza* to the discussion about the religious thinking and the dialogue it establishes with the secular world in the current democratic societies

(especially after the chapter of the Neo-Jacobin Commune of Paris in 1871) was a serious political involution suffered by all the progressive political and social forces. Nevertheless, for Domènech the old ideal of a republican fraternity remains a powerful star that, although eclipsed, could still be able to determine the field of gravity of contemporary democratic politics.

(chap. 9, pp. 189-212). According to him, religious thinking, which is a peculiar expression of cultural difference, can offer quite original contributions to a renewed configuration of public space and of coexistence understood as reciprocal “hospitality”, something the different expressions of faith must also know how to build.<sup>15</sup>

Here a very interesting dialogue is opened with the French tradition of studies on fraternity, which, in general terms, is intended from the beginning to be much more secularized. There is also a debate about the preference of many authors for the term *solidarity* instead of fraternity.<sup>16</sup> It is not our goal to enter into this discussion, but the predilection for the use of fraternity within the discussion we propose is due to two main reasons: first, in the West this concept can be more easily associated with its historical origins, which do not deny their Christian roots, but that separated from them precisely since the French Revolution. Second, because more than solidarity, a concept that leads back to an already fundamentally secular thought, fraternity can more easily be “identified” with principles found in other religions and traditions of thought. In this way, it contributes to a process of recognition of identity that is aware of the continuous evolution of culture and open to dialogue with the other.

From this point of view, fraternity could be “found” within different traditions as an anthropological data that points to the universal. Filippo Pizzolato, professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Milano-Bicocca, considers that although fraternity is a structural condition in Christianity, according to which it originates from the common fatherhood of God, it is not exclusive to Christian understanding alone. The author cites texts and documents from various religious traditions to support the thesis that there is a universal anthropological condition according to which human beings originally recognize themselves as brothers and sisters (see Pizzolato, 2012a).

This thesis is not shared by all who see in fraternity a principle around which to structure a cooperative and solidaristic society. Ilenia Massa Pinto, professor of Constitutional Law at the University of Turin, understands the fraternal bond as a choice dictated by an original freedom, which is constitutive of every human being, and that only in a second moment chooses some as brothers and sisters (Massa Pinto, 2011). There is therefore a fraternity of origin and a fraternity of result. It is worth remembering that the fraternity

15 The author has developed this argument in Pirmi (2010).

16 This is, for example, the choice of Stefano Rodotà (2014), who was an eminent Italian jurist and a prominent figure in Italian national politics. Rodotà dedicated one of his last works to questions about solidarity, not avoiding the debate about the bonds of similarity, but also the differences, that it keeps with fraternity.

of origin is not only the objective one, of blood, or one based on the faith of a common fatherhood (or motherhood, according to the language of belief in mother-nature, or *Pachamama*). It is also the already secularized fraternity of the Enlightenment philosophers, who thought that what human beings have in common is their rational nature or their condition as free beings, such as, for instance, the Kantian view. According to Francesco Viola, a leading Italian theoretician of Law and emeritus professor at the University of Palermo, this type of fraternity (of origin), even though indelible, may remain inactive or be uncomfortable, while the fraternity of result may be deeper and more engaging, precisely because it is *desired* to some degree (see Viola, 2003, p. 146). On the other hand, fraternity becomes a mere rhetorical device if it refuses to open itself to the mystery of common origin (ibid., p. 160): if I do not choose to acknowledge the fraternal bond prior to any rational choice, the “datum” of fraternity is ineffective, unable to translate into norms of social behavior responsible for the other (Cf. Pizzolato, 2012b).

If we follow this line of reasoning, we could link with some ease the idea of fraternity to the view of cosmopolitanism, to which Pirmi prefers that of cosmo-culturalism. In fact, for several of the authors considered here, fraternity is connoted as universal and aims to safeguard in space and time not only the partial communities that are legitimately born in society, but an ever larger community, until embracing that universal that is the “human family” of the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. At this point, the concept of fraternity, especially if used in its ontological interpretation (fraternity of origin), distances itself from the idea of cosmo-culturalism. But this does not necessarily prevent it from fully identifying itself with an intercultural ethics.

If a preference is simply the expectation of a good, the desire would be the faculty through which the human being could live for imaginary senses or purposes, configuring an ethics and drawing the conditions of a good life. Here is the need for an ethical plurality, the possibility of living for multiple purposes, for the various senses of the good life. [...] [F]raternity would teach each one to admit, both to himself and to others, the universal respect for different orders of values. [...] From the interplay of fraternity and pluralism, each one could live in accordance with what they believe, building their own subjectivity based on a logic of inclusion and respect (Costa Lima, 2009, p. 62. Translation mine).

The third and final reason why we could include fraternity in the lexicon proposed by Pirmi is that the debate on that principle, as it has been conducted in Italy, Brazil, and, to a lesser extent, France, is permeated by the issues connected to the understanding of dialectics between identity and otherness and the need

to re-signify it. We have seen this to be one of the fundamental requirements in Pirni. For Giuseppe Tosi, one of the greatest challenges facing humanity in the globalized world of the 21st century is to overcome a purely identitarian logic to move towards an effective recognition of otherness, diversity and reciprocity.

By emphasizing liberty and equality to the detriment of fraternity, Modernity has accentuated the individualistic and selfish aspects of human rights, forgetting the social, fraternal and solidaristic character of these same rights. These are not simply the rights of the individual and of groups or classes, but also those of the “other”, the poorest, the most disadvantaged. If liberty refers to the individual in its uniqueness, and equality opens to a social dimension that nevertheless remains within the identity of a certain group or social class against others, fraternity refers to the idea of an “other” that is not me or my social group, but the “different” before whom I have duties and responsibilities, and not only rights to oppose (Tosi, 2009, p. 59. Translation mine).

According to Tosi, a mere ethics of rights, having been developed on the basis of individualistic foundations, is insufficient and should therefore be inserted into an ethics of responsibility that more properly considers the “other”, such as the one advocated by Hans Jonas (2009) and by Latin American philosophers and theologians of liberation. For the author, the main characteristic of original identity, part of our human condition to which we cannot renounce, is the fact that we are beings not totally predetermined by nature. Identity is necessarily constructed in an intersubjective confrontation between one “self” and one “other”, and between “us” and the “others”. The author recalls, using the maxim of the medieval scholastic philosophers, that *omnis determinatio est negatio*, all determination is at the same time negation. “The self is defined as such as it relates to the non-self, the other, the different. But this denial, which is both logical and ethical, cannot go so far as to ignore what, in diversity, is common, that is, the identity” (Tosi, 2009, p. 61).

The relationship between subjectivity and otherness may be simply negative, in which the other, being a non-self, one different from me and from those who are similar to me, easily becomes the enemy, the adversary. As such, he is hostile to me, and not only does he deserve, but also demands my mistrust. In practice, this leads to the exclusion of individuals and entire groups, who are ignored in their claims.

How to overcome this negative dialectic of otherness? By promoting a dialectic of intersubjectivity, in which the other is not recognized as an enemy, that is, simply as a non-self, but as another self: “myself as another”, according to the formula of Paul Ricoeur. Recognizing the other as myself means overcoming a purely negative dialectic of otherness, in order to achieve a common recognition of belonging, which is part of our human condition (ibid., p. 63).

Tosi's proposal is close to the intercultural ethics advocated by Pirni. The dialectics of intersubjectivity might even appear to be more consonant with the second ideal-type figure of alterity, the alterity-mirror, which Pirni claims to be as insidious as the alterity-wall. Ricoeur's language of "myself as another", however, should not be read in this key, but rather approaching the alterity-door, which creates connections between differences. And the idea of fraternity, as an ethical principle capable of being translated into politics, could be revisited and rescued precisely because of its capacity to see and respect differences within a common identity. Francesco Viola, in the only text he wrote about the principle of fraternity, comes to the conclusion that "identity in difference is not yet fraternity, because the latter requires, on the contrary, difference in identity". It is mainly at this point that fraternity differs from the idea of equality, which in general "wants to preserve identity in difference" (Viola, 2003, p. 161. Translation mine).

It is not a question of putting fraternity *against* liberty and equality, but rather *with* them, by articulating the three principles dialectically. This, by the way, is also the conclusion reached by the French historian Mona Ozouf in the work "L'homme régénéré" (1989). A year earlier, in her *Critical Dictionary of the French Revolution* (co-written with François Furet, 1988) Ozouf had considered that between liberty and equality on one side and fraternity on the other there is no equivalence status, with the former two being rights and the latter a moral obligation. In *L'homme régénéré* the perspective is completely reversed: Ozouf considers fraternity less as a mystical and religious communion and more as the need for solidarity without which neither liberty nor equality makes sense. In other words, not only does fraternity no longer have a minor status, but it stands as the precondition for making the principles of liberty and equality effective (see Rodotà, 2014, p. 24). Marco Aquini considers that

fraternity is considered to be a principle that lies at the origin of a behavior, of a relationship that must be established with other human beings, acting in relation to one another, which also implies the dimension of reciprocity. In this sense, fraternity, more than a principle alongside liberty and equality, appears as one that is able to make these principles effective (Aquini, 2008, p. 137. Translation mine).

The challenges this proposal would have to face are not few. Baggio himself considers that "studies in this domain must not only address the situation of oblivion of fraternity. They must also remove the 'rubble' that hinders the field of study, produced by the reductive interpretations fraternity has had over the last two centuries and that have contributed to generate a kind of mistrust towards it" (Baggio, 2008, pp. 19-20. Translation mine).



Tosi admits, at the end of his essay, that he remains doubtful about the effectiveness of fraternity as a political category, precisely because he considers that in societies of any historical time, politics has always been realistically governed by personal or group interests. However, he considers that the idea of fraternity would be apt to play a relevant political role in the context of international relations and relations between peoples. Especially in a time of globalization characterized as a risk society (to use the term coined by Ulrick Beck, 1992), the idea of a “universal fraternity” can reach a broader level of consensus, given a framework in which the very survival of humanity is at stake (Tosi, 2009, p. 63). This is also the perspective of Pasquale Ferrara (2014) Italian career diplomat and author of numerous articles on the subject.

For our discussion, however, following the idea of bringing the debate on fraternity closer to the reflections proposed by Pirni, what is important is to propose the possibility of inserting the idea of a fraternal relationship within an intercultural perspective. Such a proposal raises more questions than it offers answers: What would it mean to see the other whom I see as being different from me as another me, according to Paul Ricoeur's formula? Is it possible to equate “another self” to what is meant by my brother and sister? Would it be possible to propose such a nomenclature without it being associated with a typically religious language, that would likely come laden with prejudices, internal or external to it (that is, that come from the religious milieu itself, again assuming an exclusionary logic, or that are directed to the milieu by those who are not part of it)?

It is beyond the limits and scope of this text to offer any attempt to answer such questions. The idea, as explained at the beginning of this article, was to conduct a reflection on Alberto Pirni's work, *La Sfida della convivenza*, and to introduce the debate about the principle of fraternity in the discussion raised by the author. In conclusion, we could consider that the idea of fraternity as an ethical principle propitiates an openness to the other, respecting the imperatives of pluralism - which reminds the importance of respect for differences – and of dignity of each person – which remembers the importance of having in mind the condition of equality shared by each human being simply by the fact of being human, in a language long known and used when referring to Human Rights. If understood in this way, stripped of any exclusionary logic and, on the contrary, in perfect agreement with an ecumenical logic – to use a word typically present also in the religious environment – then perhaps fraternity may be the guiding principle of a truly intercultural ethics.

### Final remarks: a hypothesis of application

Questioning where and how the cultural interactions advocated by Pirmi can take place raises the issue of the institutionalization of such spaces and forms. Although the author does not make direct reference to any specific model, the defense of a dialogue aware of the dialogicity of cultural construction and identity points to forms of participatory and deliberative democracy in which the cultural baggage of each individual is not purposefully left outside the political arena, as in the classic Rawlsian model that intends to be neutral while free of everything that forms the “comprehensive doctrines” (cf. Rawls, 1993), but can freely enter into it. Seyla Benhabib defends such a deliberative model in *The Claims of Cultures* (2002).

This model has no pretension of being the definitive answer to the problem of recognition. Maria Laura Lanzillo (2005), for example, criticizes Benhabib's social constructivism by stating that the model she proposes offers the risk of producing the opposite effect of what it aims: the reproduction of inequality between those who today grant democracy, as in past centuries granted tolerance, and those who should gladly accept its granting. For Lanzillo, the challenge that the decadent images of today's democratic states impose on us – instead of discussing tolerance – is to think of the so-called multicultural society as a moment of juxtaposition to the fight against exclusion and social inequality. That is, to think of it through the concept of *equality*. This alone can create a new form of recognition that considers cultural complexity, since it is implemented in political practice through active public policies (ibid., pp. 101-102) Lanzillo recognizes that the concept of equality must aim to recognize the other as a subject no longer denied of his own reality and represented uniformly, but rather “placed” in his own reality of class, gender, age, lifestyle, in a never fixed and ever-moving process, which becomes a process of social justice. But for her, this can only be a process of redistribution of wealth (ibid., p. 103).

The deliberative model that provides a dialogue between differences, however, neither contradicts nor imposes itself above the legitimate and necessary claim for an equal distribution of wealth. Boaventura de Sousa Santos, for example, who defends a distributive model from a socialist perspective, does not forget that inequality in contemporary societies is also within the cultural difference that is used, in a conservative perspective, to perpetuate economic disparity. He defends an intercultural policy capable of recognizing that people have the right to be equal when difference makes them inferior; and that they have the right to be different when equality depersonalizes them (Sousa Santos, 2016, p. 155).

The difficulty of such a model seems to be dictated, first and foremost, precisely by the imperative of tolerance, which is linked in the intercultural debate to another classic concept, that of *liberty*, and which can be summed up in the classic dilemma of liberal democracies: to what extent to tolerate the intolerant? To remain on the theme of Pirni's book: to what extent should we accept and approve the demands of the other who does not accept any kind of integration and who shuns open dialogue? If a few decades ago political ideology was perhaps the first factor that would hinder dialogue, today it is easy to think, in the first place, of religious dogmatic and intolerant positions, not to mention the various types of fundamentalism that derive from them.<sup>17</sup>

Here is where the idea of *fraternity*, placed inside the intercultural ethics proposed by Pirni, could find a possible application. It would be the central idea around which to structure deliberation spaces that make possible an intense and significant participation of individuals, allowing for a coexistence of citizens in a way that would be able to apply universal principles while taking into account the *background cultures* (Rawls, 1971) that inform the views and opinions of participants. This is so for two main reasons: it does not presuppose the need for a particular form of rationality shared by all involved in the deliberation, privileging instead the construction of a *dia-topic* hermeneutics (Sousa Santos, 2002) necessary in multicultural contexts; moreover, it appeals not only to the language of rights, but also to that of *duties*, which is present in many traditions of thought, perhaps more than the language of natural or human rights. In this way, it presents itself as a truly cross-cultural principle, one that has resonance to many political-, culture- and religion-informed views.

Many questions arise as for the real possibilities and the feasibility of such spaces of deliberation, which can be object of further enquiries. We conclude by making the hypothesis that fraternity may be a well-equipped principle for inspiring an institutional framework that seeks to reach a just *equilibrium* between the concrete demands of *rights* of the individuals and the *duties* of each individual towards the others with whom he/she interacts. In this way it could find a practical application as a principle inserted in an intercultural ethics that aims to foster a solidaristic social coexistence.

17 I am thinking not only of Islamic-type dogmatisms, to which more reference is made in the European and North American political debate, but also of those of a Christian – especially evangelical – type that exist in various Latin American countries and are already strongly present in Brazilian politics.

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