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Transcending Modernity:
The Quest for a Relational Society

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Introduction

The modern/after-modern divide
and the emergence of a new sociability

Modern social thought was born based on a specific reflection as to the antithesis between freedom and social order (the latter in the sense of control), as polarities irreducible to one another within which social life unfolds. Freedom is generally thought of as the possibility of action unbound by conditioning. On the contrary, order (control) is intended as a bind that conditions action from the outside. Conditioning and binds are first conceived as naturalistic, then as normative, and finally mechanical.

The point to which I wish to draw your attention is that, to moderns (both liberal and not liberal), freedom lies outside control (i.e. extrinsic to its forms). Social control as such cannot make one free, cannot be a component of freedom, but only expand or diminish the chance for freedom, which is built on other foundations. Freedom lies in the subject (individual, collective or historical), while social control lies in external constrictions (in the form of rules, either structural, normative or functional).

The previous statement may be mitigated by saying that both liberty and control are conceived within a shared framework characterized by rationality, contractuality and conventionalism. One assumes that both sides of the distinction may and must be made increasingly rational, contractual, conventional. What this means is explained by the various competing concepts of rationality, contract and conventionalism.

Some have observed that Western social thought, compared to other cultures, places freedom ("liberation" of the subject, beginning with the individual) as a priority and as a limitation of control. Of course, only in the West do we find radically libertarian theories, unknown to other societies. But it would be stretching to maintain that modern social thought interprets society only as a process of liberation or, vice-versa, only as a process of control, although these unilateral temptations are anything but absent.

We can instead state that modern social theories still differ today on the side of the distinction (freedom vs. control) from which they choose to observe society: some see society from the side of freedom and as a function of freedom (I will call these lib theories), while others see it from the side of control and as a function of social control (I will call these lab theories). In both cases, however, social aspects are defined and analyzed according to

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1 By ‘control’ I mean here those system mechanisms that are set up to ensure social order from above, in particular to enforce social equality (of opportunities and public welfare).
conceptual categories that are substantially identical (referring to the same meanings) and fall within the same binary distinction logic\(^2\).

As modernity develops, the "lib/lab complex" increases, in which the two poles - *lib* and *lab* - are gradually placed in increasing synergy\(^3\). Modern social thought legitimates a configuration of society in which *lib* and *lab* feed one another, however opposite they appear. Through this process both classical liberal and socialist theories find their end. This is the framework that should be highlighted.

Observing social reality from a *lib/lab* standpoint has certain consequences: (i) it leads to theoretical paradoxes, and (ii) it contradicts many aspects of empirical reality. Modern and contemporary social theories raise these two sets of problems. In an attempt to respond to these problems, modern social thought transforms its very nature: from an explanatory and/or interpretive narration of social reality, seen as a phenomenon that emerges spontaneously, it becomes a means for the paradoxical construction of social reality itself.

Those who have sought a non-paradoxical composition between freedom and control within the paradigms of modernity, specifically Talcott Parsons, have failed. Today, no matter how hard they try, social theories which refer to the classics (up to and including Parsons) do not see how freedom and control can be reconciled, in the sense of mutual support or at least significant relations with one another. Freedom and control are assumed as two tracks - infinitely parallel - along which social theory runs, but nothing is said about how they are intrinsically connected. Social thought therefore finds itself with the continuous need to return to the discussion on the categories of freedom and control. In doing so, it generates theories that are by necessity anti-modern, neo-modern or post-modern.

This highlights the fact that modernity has made a bet. It has configured the relationship between freedom and control as a typical synergic antithesis (i.e. an antithesis producing a synergic effect) between the two terms of the distinction. But today this bet seems about to be lost. As a matter of fact, in today's Western society, we can note that the contingencies for

\(^2\) The fundamental binary distinction is that of freedom/equality. Some might object that these are not antithetical terms, since "equality of the conditions of freedom" also exists. But one might respond to this objection that the conceptual category "equality of the conditions of freedom" is paradoxical, and therefore does not eliminate the binary nature of the *lib/lab* distinction. Indeed, sociological analysis reveals that the processes that encourage liberty are against social equality, and vice-versa social controls are introduced to reduce the inequality deriving from the existence of certain freedoms.

\(^3\) The term "*lib/lab*" is used to express the dual structure inherent to postwar Western democratic society, which involves the continuous negotiation and compromise between, on the one hand, the freedom of market (*lib*) and, on the other hand, the state in its function of control exercised for the sake of social equality (*lab*). *Lib/lab* therefore represents a political-administrative system for the management of the whole society which combines the rival ideologies of libertarianism and liberalism on the one side and socialism (called "labour" in Great Britain) on the other side.
both freedom and control are increasing, that both sides tend to pursue their
own paths independently, that their meaningful bonds no longer hold - at
least those that were considered meaningful until recently. This highlights the
fact that, today, the union between *lib* and *lab* comes to be an "unhappy
marriage" (no doubt that it is a marriage, but an unhappy one).

The relationship between liberty and control turns back onto itself
ceaselessly and ends up in a void, or it remains limited by forms of self-
reference (the *lib/lab* complex) that prevent society from developing new
meaningful and stable relations. As a matter of fact, if the *lib/lab* logic is
radically extended to all forms of social life, it generates catastrophes. If
instead it is restricted to inhibit further possibilities for synergy, it runs the
risk of leading to degenerative processes, e.g., a regression to pre-modern
forms of social life or a leap into post-modern destructuration. Modern
management of the freedom/control coupling becomes increasingly
problematic.

Today, many are attempting to reintroduce a neo-liberal reading of
society understood as a system that can simultaneously increase freedom
and social control, making both more rational, contractual, conventional. But this
is an illusory dream. The synergy no longer acts as a guiding criterion for all
of society. For the *lib/lab* logic (which, by the way, was inaugurated by
Thomas Hobbes with its *Leviathan*) consumes what is human in the social
much more than it can produce it. At the most, the *lib/lab* logic may be
reproduced in strictly limited sectors (particularly of the most "mechanical"
institutions of the welfare state, such as anonymous insurance systems). In
any case, the binary distinction of freedom/control no longer interprets the
figure of the dialectic between civil society and the state, which lies at the
foundation of the modern era. The freedom/control distinction is reduced to a
mere conceptual pair, analytical in nature, that no longer grasps the meaning
nor the functions it held in modernity. One wonders, then, whether modern
social theories that reason in terms of *lib/lab* might contain some actual
ideological biases based on a type of society which becomes wholly obsolete.

The very crisis of the dialectic between freedom and control leads us
to believe that we are entering an *after*-modern era, such as to impose
substantial changes to the most general assumptions of social theory.
Throughout this book, I draw a distinction between 'post' and 'after'
modernity. The expression "after-modern" is different from the seemingly
similar phrase "post-modern society" in so far as the former is meant to
underline the fact that contemporary society changes the guiding distinctions
which dominated modernity (e.g. the idea of linear social progress turns into
the idea of increasingly risky and not necessarily progressive social
organisation), while the expression "post-modern" refers to particular cultural
and artistic mainstreams and/or social phenomena which characterise late or
radical modernity. This distinction will be articulated in each chapter.

I introduce the term "after"-modern in order to avoid the many
ambiguities inherent in the "post"-modern discourse. The prefix "after"
means what comes historically after the modern era at the very moment when
the basic criteria of social action and organization are no longer referred
primarily and exclusively to the concepts of freedom and equality as they
have been envisaged by modern Enlightenment. The concepts of freedom and
control, *lib* and *lab*, become only two operators among many, and are not
absolute, but must be referred to other principles which, in turn, may reveal
more relevant.

The society of globalization changes the categories of modern times.
The old representations are insufficient for interpreting what is happening -
i.e. the passage to the after-modern - because they do not grasp the novelty in
the social realm. Theories that remain within the *lib/lab framework* see
subjects and rules, but *not the generation* of society. Generating society
becomes - peculiarly, for the first time in human history - building a new
sociability through unprecedented communicative relationship networks.

* Part I is intended to explain the exit from modernity.

The thesis of chapter 1 is that the passage from modern to after-
modernity is specifically distinguished by the need to move towards a
*relational approach* to the freedom/control distinction, which is *post-lib* and
*post-lab*, post-individualistic, post-holistic (I would say: *after..., after...*).
Such an approach may allow us to see the new, historically unique aspects of
social formations that are taking place before us more clearly. Such
formations are characterized by new ways of combining freedom and control
by redefining their internal elements and reciprocal relations. Which means a
redefinition of the social molecule through changes in the symbolic
references (*refero*) and their structural connections (*religo*), within a societal
context which modifies both time and space (Donati 2013: ch. 8).

The vicissitudes of the economic system (neo-capitalism) are the
litmus paper of the more general changes which foreshadow the occurrence
of an unprecedented morphogenetic society. I maintain that these processes
are marked by the overcoming of the historical compromise between the state
(political-administrative system) and the market (industrial and financial
capitalism) that has ruled modern Western societies so far.

The financial economy’s world crisis that broke out in September
2008 has been interpreted in many different ways, mostly from a strictly
economic point of view. Basically, the crisis has been attributed to a
‘malfuctioning’ of financial markets, obviously widely resorting in the
process to moral considerations concerning economic actors failing to behave
ethically. Solutions have been looking to identify new rules capable of
moralising markets.

Politics has been assigned the task to find practical solutions, that is
measures implemented by nation states and formulated by international
agreements among states. International monetary authorities have been called
upon by governments to act as fire brigades (i.e. to bail out banks and financial agencies from bankruptcy). Governments have adopted measures to limit the crisis’ effects on unemployment as well as an increase in national poverty rates.

We are still short of a sociological interpretation of the crisis per se, differing from interpretations centred upon economic, moral and political factors. Sociological analyses have often been confused with moral ones. Take, for instance, the proposals regarding a new economy with a ‘human face’, drawing economic behaviour from anthropology (in particular from a personalistic anthropology). Such philosophical proposals fall short of making the link between anthropology and economics by considering the specifically social factors that are the subject of sociology.

In fact, the interpretations that have shown how the crisis was determined by a lack of ethics in the economy have also shown that ethics on its own – i.e. seen as a call upon economic actors to act according to moral principles – can do very little, not to say nothing. It has been observed that only political coercion can introduce rules into the economy, whose ethical quality is always debatable. Instances of ethical self-regulation on the part of economic actors and financial markets have been rare in for-profit sectors. This in turn has highlighted to an even greater extent the weakness of the ethics-economy match as a remedy for the crisis.

In my view, we need a sociological analysis to show how the crisis stemmed from a certain set-up of the so-called ‘global society’. Such a set-up is the product of a long historical development, which goes beyond the financial crisis’ outbreak in 2008.

The question at stake is the following: from a sociological standpoint, why did this crisis break out? And what remedies can be put in place? Chapter 2 presents an outline of possible answers in terms of what I call relational sociology.

Luhmann’s sociological analysis turns out to be very useful to understand the situation in question. Luhmann (1997b) holds that highly modernised societies act as a world system (a world society) of a functional kind, in which each sub-system, for instance the economic one, is self-referential and autopoietic. The financialisation of the economy has emerged precisely out of that (Luhmann 1998). This means that in Western societal systems, representing the paradigmatic model of modernisation processes for the rest of the world, political power can enforce only some limitations to economic systems. These limitations are contingent, merely functional and they cannot meet normative imperatives beyond economic and political action. Ethics is turned into an exaggerated steering mania, which proves to be practically ineffective when challenged by real incidents (Luhmann 1997a: 50). From this viewpoint, modernised lib/lab societies cannot resort to any solid moral values, least of all to a business ethics, simply because this goes against the modernisation idea itself. Modernised societies are constructed in
such a way as to be immunised from ethics. As Luhmann put it bluntly and brutally (1995), man is no longer the yardstick of society.

The basic question becomes: is the functionalism of the lib/lab binary code the way out of the liquid, uncertain and risky societies we live in? Personally, I doubt it. The measures adopted these days cannot solve the system crisis, but, for a number of reasons, they can at most provide temporary stoppers and remedies.

First of all, all these remedies remain within the ‘economic-political system’. Possibly, Luhmann’s arguments by which the «market+state system» (the ‘lib/lab’ configuration) will keep on working even during a constant endemic crisis may reveal true. But I argue that, if we want to avoid a permanent crisis - more or less ‘under control’ as the case may be -, then remedies have to break away from the self-referential logic of economic-political systems. In Luhmann’s conceptual framework this is not possible. We then have to accept the challenge posed by having to prove that an alternative societal set-up is not only abstractly possible, but is also necessary and realistic, if we really want to get out of a system producing a chronic crisis.

Secondly, the ethics that is called upon to correct the markets’ malfunctioning has no credible sociological foundations, for the ethical principles one would like to uphold have nowhere to be generated or regenerated in this societal configuration. Neither the market nor the state are sources of ethical standards. If ethical corrections are to work, one needs to think of a different way of organising society. Such a new set-up: (i) has to be capable of allowing for the emergence of social subjects (viz. ‘social environments’ for the economic and political system) that can generate and adopt certain ethical standards of conduct and uphold them in economic-political systems, and (ii) has to meet such a condition in a structural manner and not by way of an occasional voluntary commitment. Luhmann would say that this is not possible, because – in his view – society’s multiple spheres cannot in any way influence one another, least of all exchange ethical services. I propose to meet the challenge of proving that this is as possible as it is necessary, if we want to avoid a permanent crisis.

Social change can take different paths. In order to understand how society changes, chapter 3 focuses upon what has come to be known as ‘social morphogenesis’. In this chapter I offer a relational interpretation of what is meant by social morphogenesis – as a process affecting any social form – and what happens to the whole societal system (‘societal morphogenesis’), that is the oncoming morphogenetic society.

The concept of social morphogenesis in the social sciences can be traced back to system theory. This concept became problematic once research showed that social networks cannot be treated as (i.e. reduced to) systems, due to their specific relationality. Along the way, the relational nature of social morphogenesis was revealed ever more clearly. The products of these recent developments are now reflected in all the sciences. In biology the
genome is described in relational terms (the very significance of every DNA sequence is relational). In sociology social phenomena – including ‘society’ – are explained as relations emerging from relationally contested contexts.

In chapter 3, I wish to emphasize why and how social morphogenesis is wholly different from morphogenesis in biology. In sociology, the new perspective involves moving beyond a definition in structural-functional-system terms of the concepts of variety, selection, positive/negative feedbacks, and the stabilization processes that go to realize social morphogenesis. It is necessary to redefine these concepts from the perspective of a relational paradigm of social morphogenesis. The task of this paradigm is to explain and understand the production of a new society as a process of social morphogenesis that, amongst the dilemmas and discomforts generated by modernity, tries to manage social change by guiding its outcomes through various attempts of relational steering, whose success is highly improbable anyway. These attempts are characterized not so much by the use of automatic positive or negative feedbacks (which operate, nonetheless) but by recourse to relational feedbacks that generate emergent social effects. Under many respects, the emerging society has to look for remedies to the negative outcomes of modernity, to the extent that the latter has been governed by the principle of ‘institutionalized individualism’, by reversing this principle into a ‘principle of relationality’.

* Part I is intended to outline the new societal configuration which seems to emerge after modernity if we look at social changes through the relational morphogenetic paradigm. The new configuration stems from those social spheres where social morphogenesis take the form of a new sociability. Chapter 4 focuses on these changes dealing with the vicissitudes of the welfare state, as a part of society and as a whole. The welfare state represents both the greatest political conquest and the structural limits of modernity. If one were to attempt to exceed those limits in the sense of further expanding the Fordist-industrial model of the Keynesian-Beveridge model of the welfare state beyond the boundaries that indicate the very possibilities of action, society would simply no longer be the same. In the first place, society could not sustain such an expansion because the lib/lab order of societal systems would be heavily modified, producing an excess of social control and limiting social freedoms. Secondly, such an attempted expansion would provoke a further dissolution of social ties. Once social relations are dissolved, the "societal" character of the welfare state disintegrates. The capacities inherent to the welfare state's associative nature to be and create "society" would be diminished beyond repair.

The success-failure of the welfare state once again puts into question the political and ethical order of society. In order to properly understand the crisis of the welfare state and its possible alternatives it must be situated
within the broader context of the crisis of modernity. Against the opinions of the neo-enlightenists, the neo-liberals, and the neo-socialists, for whom the crisis of welfare structures is only a question of re-definition within the modern model of the welfare state, I contend that the crisis is more radical, both in its current condition and in its probable outcome. I believe that the welfare state will be forced to change the fundamental political and ethical principles upon which it has been based from the early period of industrialization to today. But in what respects? What will the post-welfare state be? Chapter 4 outlines this turn in the direction of the emergence of a relational welfare society. At the core of this civil society there is the production of new social and public goods, called the «relational goods».

The transition to an after-modern society marks a renewed search for common goods. But commons cannot be today as they once were. They take a different form, which I call ‘relational goods’. Chapter 5 proposes, first of all, to clarify this concept and, subsequently, to show that such goods can be produced only by specific social subjects, which I call ‘relational subjects’. Sociological analysis has to explain in which sense and in which way relational subjects, and the goods they generate, can contribute to making civil society more robust: that is, no longer the typically modern civil society – the bourgeois society of the market – but an ‘associational’ society able to sustain a mature democracy as a welfare society’s form of governance.

It is important to emphasize from the beginning that the type of goods that I call relational cannot be traced back to traditional or premodern forms of social organization because they require conditions that only modernity has created by making individuals more free and guaranteeing the maximum amount of social mobility. For a long time these goods have been dismissed or even repressed by capitalistic society as well as by societies dominated by dictatorships. Today they are emerging as the yeast of an advanced democracy. They are created precisely where relations between consociates are tendentially symmetrical (not hierarchical), free, and responsible (not constrained by authoritative norms or powers), not mercantile or, in any case, not dictated by the pursuit of individual profit.

Empirical studies show how widespread they really are. These are goods that are invisible to the naked eye (they are intangible goods) and are continually sought out by people, but they come into existence only under particular conditions. As examples we could think of goods such as the following: trust and care produced by associative networks of people or families in difficulty who are willing to help one another; a civil welfare assured by new forms of corporate citizenship; the feeling of safety among the residents of a neighborhood obtained by undertaking a local civic initiative; improving the quality of relations between parents and offspring by organizing family dialogical networks (such as the family group conferences); setting up an internet site that receives and gives useful information to a group of people interested in that service; and so on. Our life
is a continual search for relational goods, but we have a very limited awareness of what they are and how they can be generated and regenerated.

There can be no proper welfare society without a mature democracy. In chapter 6, I argue that the forms of democracy more suited to a welfare society are ‘associational’ in their nature. Tocqueville and Putnam have presented emblematic versions of these realities, but their studies, and those of their followers, are far from being satisfactory. I claim that the concept of associative democracy depend upon how we articulate civic culture and social capital, whereas these dimensions of social life are co-related but distinct. They influence each other and combine together in many different ways depending on social contexts and dynamics. A new sociological paradigm needs developing, which may be able to express a generalized theory of social capital and its connections with civic culture and civil associations. Chapter 6 presents such a paradigm, called ‘relational’, which has been tested in a series of empirical surveys, which are briefly summarized here. By studying social capital, and its effects, through social networks we can explain and understand those emergent realities, endowed with sui generis powers, which build a civil democracy and are not seen by those studies which focus on individuals and social structures.

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The final prospects want to shed light on how to resolve the major conflicts that lie ahead because of actual and potential clashes between cultures in a society which is bound to become more and more multicultural, i.e. characterized by cultural cleavages. Ever since human cultures have confronted themselves, swinging between a decent living together and clashing one against the other. Why do we perceive today that the relationships between different cultures have become a new challenge, different from the past?

There are, of course, many different reasons. Three main causes which are playing a major role can be mentioned: i) first, the changes in the quantity and quality of migrations (as they relate to cultural changes both in sending and receiving countries); ii) second, the crisis of citizenship as referred to the typical modern nation-state; iii) third, the process of globalization in so far as it diverges from a process of universalization.

These three orders of reasons are interrelated among them. The dynamics they imply altogether lead to the obsolescence and inadequacy of the forms of universalism as conceptualized and practiced in the processes of modernization so far. In order to understand were multicultural societies are going to, and whether a new universalism is possible or not, we need a new approach. I call it ‘relational’ in so far as it is based on the relational management of memberships. Its main task is to provide a general framework which can be able to articulate, by differentiating and re-integrating, the
different types of universalism emerging today in interaction with the new forms of localism and particularism.

First of all, the relationships between cultures become different because there are changes in the relationship between culture and migration. Present migrations have little in common with those of the past, which were basically linked to poverty and destitution. More and more migrations become a necessity for many people, irrespective of their economic conditions and social status. For many people migration comes to resemble something which could be called a new "way of life". In the future migrations are expected to become even more diverse than today.

Undoubtedly it would be useful to analize how the issues of coexistence between cultures change over time, particularly in relation to the quality and quantity of migrations. But empirical data are very poor or not available, and moreover there is not enough room here. A tentative typology could suggest a distinction among the following types:

a) relatively integrated multicultural societies seem to be linked to traditional settlements created through slow historical processes in the presence of a scarce and limited migration; the sequence variation, selection, stabilization can be helpful in the interpretation of this process, provided that the social differentiation be slow enough and that integration forces prevail over conflicts; but, in any case, integrated multicultural societies stem from particular conditions favourable to the stability of contacts and associations amongst people of different cultures (for instance in many areas of North and South America, and the Scandinavian countries);

b) conflicting multicultural societies are linked to the segregation/segmentation of societal and migratory structures; usually they have been created through historical processes unable to achieve a minimum of stabilization, either because of the lack of a unifying political power (for instance in many areas of the Middle East), or because civil society was not able to give itself an efficient political system (for instance in the Balkans, the former Yugoslavia, and in many African countries); in this cases a process of differentiation-with-integration was not produced, so that the conflict between cultures has dominated;

c) today we are witnessing the emergence of what I would call "fluctuating multicultural societies" which are typical of those contexts characterized by being culturally homogeneous until recently and now facing increasing migrations due to their demographic depression and in the absence of tested traditions in the politics of recognition (for instance Western, central and southern Europe in different degrees) (Taylor, Habermas et al. 1994).

The three forms (a, b, c) have not a linear relationship among them. There is no continuity and no adaptation, let alone a kind of up-grading adaptation, among them. The mere flowing of time and the mere reiteration of communications are not enough to provide a good coexistence between different cultures (as many scholars, following the constructionist stream, would make us to believe today). The multicultural configuration of a society
is linked to the ways in which migrations are conceived and practiced as social relationships.

Today the second and third types (conflicting and fluctuating multiculturalism) pose great problems to the international community. Migration processes are now taking place on a global, i.e. planetary, level. Large-scale demographic unbalances produce rising expectations for migrations; the invasion of Western modernization into other cultures takes on a violent character; and in many countries the capacity to provide social regulations for all these processes decreases day by day.

In this scenario, everybody must become a migrant from the cultural point of view. No one type of community (understood as Gemeinschaft) can guarantee the survival of a particular culture or a particular social group if that culture or group wants to avoid the inter-cultural confrontation under the umbrella of the nation-state citizenship as it has been conceived and practiced in the modern age. Within modernity universalism and communitarianism tend to become antithetical (Rasmussen ed. 1990).

That is why we can say that the challenge of multiculturalism is different from the past. It is new in so far as the ideas and practices of democratic citizenship - as modernity thinks of it - are no longer able to provide significant steps further in the resolution of the issues connected with the political coexistence among different cultures.

Today we have to acknowledge that the outcome of what we are used to call (Western) modern democracy is something which resembles a "paradoxical community": a community made by people without any real community. Modern democracy in fact normatively prescribes a community where people are supposed not to be linked to any particular community. As a matter of fact, citizenship becomes a place where what is common to all people is only a kind of universal uprooting.

Among the very many different paradoxes of our contemporary society, there is one point which deserves a particular inspection. Contrary to what the ideology of multiculturalism claims (its slogan is “All different, all equals”: Benhabib 2002), all sociological surveys show that cultural globalization increases at the same time that cultural universalism4 decreases. The issue is: how is it that we witness the emergence of particular cultural attachments in the presence of wide spreading processes of cultural globalization?

My feeling is that the 'causes' of this paradox (i.e. the more society globalizes the more we see cultural conflicts coming up) are different in different contexts:

- in Europe we could see the motive of an unprecedented demographic depression amongst native populations,

4 By cultural universalism I mean the share of common values among people belonging to different cultures.
- in the America there is the crisis of the national ideologies which have traditionally provided a cultural cement; the ideas of melting pot and salad bowl are in crisis, and a new ideology seems to propagate which is centred on the idea of "walking around carefully" (streetwise), and to proceed through negative capabilities (Lanzara 1993),

- in other continents, what is emerging is above all a reaction against the cultural violence of the Western modernization as guided by precise interests and identities that are aliens to those peoples.

We ask ourselves: can we bring the issue of cultural coexistence back to some design of cultural universalism?

According to Klaus Eder (1993: 169), one of the basic problems confronting post-industrial societies is "the inclusion of cultural differences into a universalistic political and social order (in a democratically organized civil society)". To me this statement - which is widely shared among Western scholars - is certainly attractive, but it should be discussed at length. What does it mean inclusion? And inclusion to what?

An easy criticism to Eder's perspective is that it leaves completely apart the problem of the quality and quantity of the crisis of Western universalism as incorporated in the "inclusion" formula of modernity.

Eder's suggestion is clearly made by the viewpoint of Western society, and for this reason it meets a great limit: it rejects the idea that different cultures could have different conceptions of citizenship (understood as the complex of rights and obligations which characterize a full participation of individuals and groups to a political community).

The historical process generated by the West produces the crisis of the universalism as created by the West itself. It is in the Western world where collective and widespread fears arise concerning the idea that we could come to live in a world without any universal value or norm. And it is there that a crucial question arises: can we still think in terms of some form of cultural universalism?

Within the postmodern Western climate the answer seems to be negative. Most people say: the process of modernization is over. And the proof is precisely seen in the fact that the more we globalize the social world, the more we come to reinforce "local cultures" which are particularistic (Gutman 1992). This is undoubtedly a clear symptom of a historical turn. The problem of multiculturalism is no longer an heritage of past traditions, but an issue brought about by the present world system. It is a need which is generated again and again precisely in "globalized localities".

I maintain that the perspective of coping with the issues linked to a multicultural society by means of "political inclusion" of minorities into a "general system" (be it a nation-state or anything alike or equivalent) can be utopian and even dangerous if the concept of political inclusion is not well articulated. Briefly: the failures in achieving a peaceful multicultural society may not be linked to mere deficiencies in what we are used to call "modern political inclusion". Lacks and lags may be due to the quality of such an
inclusion: if it is thought in terms of inclusion into a culturally neutral public sphere (as it is widely thought in Europe) or into a morally qualified public sphere (as it is widely believed in the U.S.), and in the second case what kind of moral qualification the public sphere should have.

I wish to argue here that issues linked to the coexistence of different cultures derive from the fact that they cannot be dealt with in terms of the binary couple «political inclusion vs exclusion». They need what I call «relational inclusion», as the guiding criterion to enhance new forms of sociability.

The emerging, globalized society is multicultural in its essence. But we must distinguish between multiculturalism as a social fact (the co-presence of many different cultures) and the ‘ideology’ of multiculturalism. Recent sociological research has shown that the ideology of multiculturalism, after having been adopted as official policy in many countries, has generated more negative than positive effects (fragmentation of the society, separation of minorities, cultural relativism). It becomes imperative to discuss on the possible alternatives to multiculturalism, asking ourselves whether the way of interculturality can be a solution or not. The idea of interculturality has the advantage to stress the inter, namely what lies in between different cultures. But it does not possess yet the conceptual and effective means to understand and handle the problems of the public sphere. To go over the failures of multiculturalism and the fragilities of interculturality, a lay approach to the coexistence of cultures is required, being able to give strength back to Reason, through new semantics of the inter-human diversity. I claim that this approach is emerging in those sociocultural practices which are adopting what I call a "relational reason", beyond the forms already known of rationality. The relational reason is a reflexive reason applied not to the mental processes of the individuals, but to the social relations and their outcomes. To make human reason relational might be the best way to imagine a social order being able to humanize the globalizing processes and the growing migrations.

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5 On the different conceptions of the public sphere and its recent metamorphosis in Western countries: see Cotesta (2007).
Part I
The transcendence of modernity

Chapter 1
The end of modernity in the lib/lab interplay:
what after?

1. Lib and lab meet and shake hands.

In modern social thought, despite the debates between *lib* (liberal) and *lab* (labour) thinkers - or, if we prefer, methodological individualism and holism - society is seen through the common framework of a historical process that conceives of itself as individual and collective liberation from the ascriptive ties of the community (*Gemeinschaft*) (read: life-worlds), to move towards progress in which Reason, be it individual or collective, micro or macro, of action or social systems, leaves its contractualistic mark on society.

Within this scenario, freedom is intended as freedom "from" (thus as an opening of contingencies of existence, and not merely dependencies), rather than as freedom "for" something or someone. And within this framework, social control is intended as external, coercive regulations rather than an intentional and purposeful choice according to a moral conscience inherent in the subjects and their relationships.

Some might object that this is simply the positivistic, functionalistic side of social thought, so to speak. I feel the same way. But the point is that within modernity no great Western social theory appears immune from creeping positivism, which even pervades those theories intended to be non-functionalistic or even anti-functionalist (Marxian theories, for example).

Why is positivistic functionalism considered to be limiting and simplistic, but then permeates every theory and ends up winning in the end?

I believe the reason lies in the fact that *lib* and *lab* theories are not truly opposites, but largely complementary: they "dance together", so to speak. This very dance is what feeds positivistic functionalism. Freedom and regulation, whether aimed at the individual or collective, work together in a certain way (to be defined below) to build that symbolic and institutional complex (*lib/lab*) that contains the collective conscience of our times and "good system governance". The categorical imperative says: we must expand
all freedoms under the sole condition that they do not create a constriction for anyone; and good governance is considered an expansion of all possible freedoms as long as they are "compatible" with one another and with the concurrent principles (especially equality of opportunities and solidarity) that act as external binds.

a) From a methodological standpoint, this means that individualism and holism "shake hands", support and complement one another.

b) From an applied standpoint, this means that society is conceived as a game between freedom and control along the Individual-Government axis, through continuous re-negotiation between the market and the state.

Even empirical research sees through the same lenses. To give an example, anyone wishing to prove that school choices are individual rather than controlled by the system can do so. But only to then be forced to admit, in empirical results, that the growth of individual freedom does not alter the stratification structures (Boudon 1979). Individualism and holism meet and shake hands.

This is the liblab paradigm inherent in modernity. It proposes a synergy between freedom and social control that constitutes the "propulsive engine" for the entire historical-social formation. The engine works like this: social control is used to free individuals, and freedom is used to make control more rational and functional to progress, under the assumption that one can be freed from the binding nature of social relationships without putting social order in danger.

Even today, Western social theory thinks of society in these terms: as the battle between the forces of freedom, representing the propulsive (innovative) thrust, generally free of any need for a priori ethical justification, and the forces of social control, representing a brake (self-preservation safety) and generally requiring justifications, which must become increasingly technical-functional. The burden of proof is on control. The brake refers to the regulations of the public sphere and must be used only when others' private freedom is violated, not before and not for any other reason. The fuel for the history machine is the liberty/control distinction used as a synergic antithesis between the private and public.

The engine of the modernity machine, thus configured, is fueled by a potentially infinite energy - or at least that is how it is represented. "Progressively" removing constrictions to freedom, making it potentially

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6 I assert «must» because I assume that, below the technical-functional processes, there is a latent value-pattern and a normative imperative that require such processes (Donati 1991: 237-266).

7 By ‘synergic antithesis’ I mean the use of the public to privatize the private, and vice-versa, the use of the private to publicize the public. It is important to emphasize that this takes place for the development of one based on the development of the other (in terms of system theory, the private and public spheres increase their internal complexity by taking turns in the system/environment scheme).
unlimited, means creating an inexhaustible source of opportunities. If one
then manages, in a complementary fashion, to invent a form of social control
that does not block this process of liberation, but instead uses control to
expand freedoms, then social control itself is no longer an insurmountable
obstacle, but rather a mere identification of temporary limits and functionally
necessary mechanisms to ensure that the freedom machine runs smoothly.

Those forms of society that interrupt this process are viewed as
deviations, pure accidents, temporary halts or stopovers. This is how we
interpret, on the one hand, political dictatorships (whether they be
communist, fascist, Nazi, or other types) that eliminate freedoms, and on the
other hand those forms of capitalism considered "rampant" or haphazard
(casino capitalism), which do not guarantee equal freedoms for all. In the
eyes of the lib/lab paradigm, dictatorships and unregulated capitalism are
"unintentional effects", which must be once again subjected to the (same)
freedom/control directive distinction. Modernity is convinced that the lib/lab
machine is expandable in terms of progressive upgrades. It refuses the idea
that this logic has extra or meta-social binds or limitations, and that each new
cycle may generate situations that are more problematic than before.

This is how the West represents itself: as the best of all possible
worlds. Dominant social theories reassure it that this is indeed the case.

The West believes it has harnessed the freedom/control antithesis as
the engine of history. The engine of society has certain analogies with a
nuclear propulsion engine: it is considered to have practically unlimited
resources, with extremely high performance, although with some inherent
risks. This is how the globalized society of communication is considered. It is
assumed that the risks are generally controllable. Note: controllable, thereby
re-introducing the same guiding distinction within what has just been
distinguished. The problem of discovering what might be achieved by
changing the guiding distinctions of this arrangement is systematically
avoided.

This configuration characterizes modern social theory from the
nineteenth century to the present. Indeed, my thesis maintains that a theory is
considered all the more "modern" the more it assumes this very
configuration. To avoid it means risking the development of a pre-modern or
anti-modern social science.

The dance where lib and lab shake hands is still the prevailing
arrangement of Western society. In the meantime, however, its limits have
become apparent. We are gradually realizing that it prevents the observer
from seeing beyond the - quite limited - horizon at which it appears that all
possibilities have their place, while instead the opposite occurs. Indeed, many
possibilities are not at all thematized or discussed, and many of those that are
prove to be more virtual than real in the end. In brief, one realizes that the
lib/lab approach does not see the morphogenesis within society as an
emerging associative or surplus form that combines freedom and control
according to means that escape modern logic.
2. The modern dialectic between freedom and control leads to paradoxes and contrasts with the empirical reality.

The *lib/lab* configuration begins to be placed under serious discussion when it encounters systematic malfunctions, thus when one realizes that it can no longer function structurally.

There are many crisis paradigms. Most of these take note that a development machine, as conceived, encounters structural limitations in its external and internal environments (to cite just one author: see Hirsch 1995). One cannot exploit nature indefinitely (physical resources are limited). One cannot make the ecosystem indefinitely artificial. One cannot polarize social relationships indefinitely towards total isolation or total constriction, under penalty of pathological repercussions.

Yet, not everyone sees that critical results are the product of specific relationship processes between freedom and social control that generate vicious or perverse circles. What I would like to emphasize here is that the *lib/lab* complex intrinsically, in itself, leads to situations that are unsolvable paradoxes and that contrast mightily with the needs and experiences of daily life. Let us examine these two aspects.

In the first place, to describe society specifically as a synergic antithesis between freedom and control leads to unsolvable paradoxes, which come in two forms: (a) freedom enters into contradiction with itself; (b) social control loses its legitimacy. Let us examine these separately.

(a) The exaltation of freedom as the absence of restrictions - in particular normative restrictions - internal to agency and its subject thwarts freedom and eventually causes it to self-destruct.

Until the beginning of the last century, early modernity worked with a concept of freedom that meant interdependency, thus to be free was experienced as the chance to choose the environment from which to depend. But in the symbolic code that modernity has generated, it is written that this is a purely temporary limitation, because freedom as such consists of the possibility of abandoning interdependency or the choice of dependencies. This is the symbolic code attached to money as a generalized means of interchange (Simmel 1989). We know that money, with the freedom to choose a specific transaction, must also transmit an increase of freedom as the possibility of escaping any other constrictions for further transactions. The guiding norm of society is no longer the duty to implement value-patterns worthwhile being pursued in themselves, but the obligation to accept the convertibility of anything into anything else.

As long as this process remains restricted to limited groups of people (the modern elite), only the highest social classes experience a lifestyle in
which freedom is an end unto itself. Only they, for the moment, enter the paradoxes. When the process becomes a mass phenomenon, one realizes that all of society takes on the characteristics of a "deviant majority". We are at the "drift of liberalism" (Schooyans 1991), thus within a social arrangement in which freedoms cancel each other out. One must then note that the civil society born of the Protestant Reformation no longer exists (Seligman 1992), that it has run out or defeated itself. The very idea of civil comes under discussion. To generate a civil life one must create new social institutions which can manage to intertwine freedoms and controls through morally significant relationships between them (far from encouraging a "lightening of ethics ", as Arnold Gehlen 1957 believes).

When the old relationships fall, one must seek new rules for the creation of social institutions that reflect an ethics of freedom not entirely detached from control, or, more precisely, an ethics of positive freedom conceived as the opportunity to pursue legitimate goals according to moral standards. But the horizon of moral resources and possibilities remains limited. Since it is imperative to be modern, and since we are modern to the extent to which we do not seek norms which can constitute freedom from within, but only mechanisms to reduce the undesired side effects of freedom, then it becomes inevitable that social norms be unintentionally configured as vicious circles within the system of freedoms. To put it bluntly: many private behaviours are permitted, but their public effects are punished or blamed (as it happens when a country permits a certain use of drugs in the private sphere, but punishes those who sell it and blames those who become drug-addicted).

(b) Something similar takes place for control. A concept of social control as intrinsically external and coercive towards human agency and its subject removes the need for a substantial moral legitimacy of the social order and renders morally neutral those mechanisms (institutions and rules) that should ensure it.

The more social institutions and rules are separated from the subjects' motivations and interior aims, the more they are perceived as purely artificial and constrictive, and therefore free of any human sense; they become purely a technical necessity, which should in turn be artificially reduced.

There are abundant indicators of these outcomes. We might briefly recall: the collapse of conditional normative orders (based on norms such as "if x occurs then do y"); the collapse of the institutional welfare state; the fact that the law has changed from guarantor of social order to a source of social disorder. In all of these instances, social control is first delegitimized in terms of moral aims and values, then reduced to a technical point and thus subject to procedural rules that chase their own tail (Dahl 1979).

For example, the welfare state was created to achieve greater social justice, but was then reduced to a functional fact of redistributing resources, and therefore subjected to rules of effectiveness which not only made
entitlements depend on the existence of a surplus of economic resources which are necessarily always scarce, but may be pursued even outside a certain political-institutional setup, thus making the *ethos* of welfare more and more evanescent.

The control machine begins to waver. This phenomenon may be described as the emergence of a social order based on chaos or entropy (Forsé 1989), or as a functional differentiation that creates more problems than it solves (Luhmann 1990). Some scholars, using other language, speak of the death of public goods, while others declare the death of privacy, as outcomes due to mismatches between freedoms (*lib*) and controls (*lab*). But few see that these demises are produced by that very modernity that exalts the *lib/lab* synergy, i.e. the pursuit of greater freedom through controls carried out as a function of negative (non-normative) freedoms. In my language, the *lib/lab* configuration produces relational evils, instead of relational goods (as defined in chapter 5).

In the second place, the *lib/lab* code contradicts empirical evidence and subjective experiences of daily life.

Modern social thought describes the relationship between freedom and control as a synergic antithesis (binary code) that always finds a new and better balance. But that is not how things really are.

In common sense experience, the growth of freedom is always problematic, as is the growth of social controls. To conceive of society as a "society of individuals" (Elias 1991) with increasing "individualization", i.e. as a society capable of "individualizing individuals" (Beck 1992) according to increasingly less constraining norms, appears to be highly misleading for at least two reasons. (i) Firstly, because such claim underestimates the fact that an increasing number of individuals become prey to new forms of alienation and dependency, show dramatic deficiencies in being adequately reflexive (fractured and impeded reflexive become abundant) and generally become victims of what has been called an «addicted society» (Teubner 2011). (ii) Secondly, because the above claim does not mention the fact that new forms of institutionalized individualism appear that are not functional to the subject's freedom (in the end, what else have many authors such as M. Foucault 1988 and J. Donzelot 1979 told us?; particularly Foucault has

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8 By non-normative freedoms I mean those freedoms that are purely negative (i.e. intended as freedoms "from" something or someone). Negative freedoms see the *alter* only as a limit and constraint to *ego*s action. On the contrary, positive (i.e. normative) freedoms are those that are oriented towards (they are "for") something or someone. The latter see the *alter* not merely as a limit, but as a condition and resource for *ego*s agency. In this case, *ego* is free to act insofar as he/she can promote *alter*’s freedom as a condition and resource of his/her own action. Contrary to the unrelated concept of negative freedoms, the positive concept emphasizes the relational nexus existing between *ego* and *alter*, which becomes the focus of sociological interest. Positive freedom is not the opposite of negative freedom; on the contrary, the former guarantees that the latter be exercised in a moral way.
shown us that the institutionalization of individualism may transform the "technology of self" into the destruction of the self).

It is beyond a doubt that new freedoms appear on the one side, and new controls on the other. Nevertheless, this growth is not parallel. Most of the time it is asymmetrical in space and time, and remains highly problematic in the rules that guide social processes. The idea that social control may be configured in such a way as to ensure greater individual freedoms without significant relations between freedom and control leads to mystifying forms of systemic control, which bring about the schizophrenia typical of daily life in our times.

The experience of contemporary men and women is that they live between two entirely discrepant levels of reality. On the one hand, they are theoretically free to do anything they like, on the condition that it remains private. The culture of globalization reinforces this feeling in them, which is that they may "privately" enter the realm of virtual reality, so to speak. On the other hand, when they deal with the facts, men and women find that the opportunities to satisfy their social needs are socially limited and structured. Many specific freedoms and identities are denied. The ideology of egalitarian control ensures that men and women have the same freedoms and opportunities, but in practice the opposite occurs. Social freedoms and opportunities are gendered, or differentiated by gender, and the egalitarian viewpoint does not allow us to see the new inequalities that are generated. And yet the globalizing machine of modernity provides a representation that denies this fact. It may admit the existence of inequality only as a temporary situation, while waiting for the synergic lib/lab antithesis to continue further, and thus engender forms of control that ensure more freedom.

The conclusion is that, in the globalization processes under way today, the ideology of freedom masks widespread non-freedoms, and the ideology of equality masks new inequalities. Social control is not functional to many freedoms nor to many equalities that one would like to pursue from the standpoint of human needs and rights.

3. Attempts to reconcile freedom and control conducted within modernity.

In the course of its history, lib/lab thought has tended to represent society as a construction in which everything works out in the end, thanks to the fact that conflicts may be led back to rationality through the synergic antithesis of freedom/control. It may be said that this attitude constitutes the sociological mainstream even today.

Parsons' theory represents the finish line and point of greatest morphostatic equilibrium in modern sociological thought between freedom of action and the need for social order, between private and public, or, to use the words of J.C. Alexander (1983), between substantial and formal voluntarism. Parsons is the last of the moderns to theorize as to the horizon of that contact
between reason and revelation which, according to many (Seligman 1992), is the origin of the modern Western spirit and its idea of freedom (civil society) that may be regulated through a system (State) conceived as a structural form of conditioning needed in order to reach common goals. In Parsons (2007), the societal community may combine freedom and control only because it can resort to a value system that transcends both (Parsons 1977: 310-11). Civil society incarnates the spirit of a freedom that is born "from within" social actors, and can compromise with the social system because it rests on a cultural system with religious roots. But Parsons is no longer able to justify this arrangement, which appears to be grounded in an unduly normative vision of society. Because of how his theory (read: Parsons’ AGIL diagram) is formulated, it absorbs and rationalizes the transcendent element, the vital source (of values) of the social system. Within the very logic of Parsons' AGIL, the subject of freedom disappears against the determinations and structural limitations of social action. Indeed, in Parsons’ theory, despite its optimism, it is already evident the difficulty to avoid that a strongly modernizing society (even as civil society) may become a huge contraption that secularizes transcendent (i.e. religious) concepts and values.

With Parsons and immediately thereafter ends the dream of the starry heaven above us that is reflected within us. The Kantian spirit of modern social thought dissolves. It is no longer so easy to reconcile freedom and control. The lib/lab synergy can no longer be considered a normally functioning process. Normality becomes the very fact that the mutual conciliation of freedom and control no longer works.

Parsons thought that freedom consisted of individuals internalizing the value patterns and control mechanisms of the Protestant ethic, and Freudian schematics in the processes of socialization. Now this ethic no longer exists, and Freudianism has been overturned. Thus it is revealed that Parsonian thinking was "modern" only to a limited extent; it actually reflected some substantial pre-modern convictions. Contrary to Parsons, since the beginning it was quite clear that to be modern meant to think that freedom

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9 Talcott Parsons's design of the AGIL diagram first appeared in his works of the 1950's. He further elaborated the diagram in Parsons (1969). A reformulation of Parson's diagram according to my relational approach may be found in Donati (1991: chapter 4). According to Parsons, AGIL is a diagram of four functions (A=adaptation, G=goal-attainment, I=integration, and L=latency or latent pattern maintenance) that he considers to be necessary, structural, and functional prerequisites for the existence and functioning of societal systems. Empirically—according to Parsons—A corresponds to the market, G to the political system, I to the societal community, and L to the fiduciary system. From my perspective, A, G, I, and L represent the four analytical dimensions and poles (like the pole of a compass) in the study of social relationships on the micro, intermediate, and macro levels. These four dimensions correspond respectively to means, goals, norms and values. I define the L-G axis of the diagram as the axis of refero (in which the symbolic dimensions of social relations reside) and the A-I axis as the axis of religo (in which the connective dimensions, in a structural sense, of social relations reside). From the empirical and structural point of view, social relations are what emerges from the interaction of these axes, with their analytical polarities or dimensions (Donati 2013: chapters 5 and 8).
cannot be founded (constituted) on control. Modernity was born based upon a relation of contingent complementarity (not concomitant and stable complementarity) between the two poles, and therefore they were bound to diverge more and more. This is the exact point where Parsons’s theory fails in trying to keep them together and must be abandoned.

It becomes clearer why and how Parsons never found a way out of the dilemma that lies at the heart of all modern sociological theory, and that can be expressed by the guiding question: how is it possible to limit the modernizing social system's demand to control all areas of human life by assuming that such a system stems from the freedoms that legitimize its institutions?

Parsons' theory still assumes that: (i) freedom and control work within a certain symbolic framework of values, and (ii) they increase each other by respecting the famous cybernetic hierarchy (L→I→G→A). But both of these conditions have collapsed today. Thus the guiding question becomes: how can the social system develop, or even survive, if it globalizes contingencies and searches for its regulatory form within this globalization? Parsons' theory is by now useless in answering this question.

Sociology in recent decades is a declaration of the failure of Parsons' theory as the apex of modern theorization on the freedom/control dilemma.

Three alternatives arise after Parsons:

a. run the risk of being anti-modern, and thus refute the process of differentiation between freedom and control (where they are merely external limitations for one another), therefore resorting to a lesser differentiated relations between them, so that freedom and control be strictly connected and internally interdependent, under the aegis of an overall structure or prerequisite or meta-social requirement;

b. define oneself as neo-modern, thus reintroduce the synergic antithesis between freedom and control in search of new forms of compatibility (stable complementarity) achieved by adjusting re-selected mixes and contingencies;

c. or, one may enter the post-modern, further destructuring the two terms and their relationships.

These are three different ways of criticizing the modern view of society and foreseeing the post-modern. Of course, various configurations of mixes between these three modes are also possible. And indeed, the real post-modern is a mixture of these three "pure" types of response. Let us briefly examine them.

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10 It is not difficult to place the various currents of today's social and philosophical thought within these three ways of responding to the crisis of modernity. In terms of the morphogenetic theory (Archer 1995), they may be easily classified: the first category includes the neo-communitarians (who commit errors of downward conflation); the second includes the neo-liberals (who commit errors of upward conflation); and the third are the neo-relationists (who commit errors of central conflation).
a. The anti-moderns are characterized by claiming alternative systems for distinguishing freedom/control from those used by modernity. They highlight how society performs selective reductions of complexity that differ from those typically used in modernity. These distinctions and selections generally have a "community" outlook (indeed, this category includes many of the so-called "communitarians"). There is no lack of traditions in this sense. F. Le Play, K. Marx, E. Durkheim, F. Toennies, M. Mauss, K. Polany could well be considered the fathers of numerous "communitarian" theories, all in a different voice. But, apart from the observation that, today, only a few schools reject a lib/lab interpretation of the contingency play, what is most relevant here is to consider that contemporary sociology has developed a new sensibility. Reasoning about our society requires something more than simply recalling a classical perspective. It requires that one be able to point out more highly differentiated and complex solutions to reduce the globalization of contingencies. In order to overcome the shortcomings of modernity, we cannot go back to pre-modern configurations of social relations. Many of the communitarian schools seem to be unable to avoid these pitfalls.

b. The neo-moderns distinguish themselves by reinterpreting society within the lib/lab synergy. Although they would probably never recognize it, many of them repeat Parsons’ thought without Parsons' faith. They essentially propose bringing multidimensionality into the primary assumptions of Parsonian thought, which means opening the theory to greater contingency. They intend to reconcile freedom and control in the form of a more advanced lib/lab democracy by opening the two sides of the compromise to a higher complexity and new mixtures between them (see for example the “Third Way” by Giddens 1998). These moves lead to quit the cybernetic hierarchy within the AGIL framework. The freedom/control dialectic becomes now even more uncertain, more replete with indetermination. J.C. Alexander (1994) attributes the possibility of stabilizing the societal system to the ability of culture to produce and reproduce a symbolic order, but this solution appears highly problematic. J. Habermas (1992) proposes the solution of an "unlimited community of discourse", which in turn reveals utopian.

c. The neo-moderns expand the contingencies of freedom and controls, but in doing so lose certain essential prerequisites for preserving both. They realize that freedoms must have independent – or at least autonomous – subjects, but the latter become a ("deviant") minority, since systemic mechanisms and pervasive heteronomous pressures reduce individuals’ autonomy everywhere. A functionalist explanation of social control and order runs up against a chronic deficit of meaning where modernity is carried to extremes. In short, the neo-moderns attempt to re-launch modernity without the myths and illusions that gave early modernity
its forward thrust. They want to "purify its spirit". But, in my opinion, this attempt appears conceptually backward compared to the phenomena under way. The neo-moderns prove themselves unable to grasp the new.

c. Those who instead draw the radically coherent consequences of the loss of normativity in social systems are followers of *post-modern* thought, whose greatest breaking point with humanistic tradition lies, to my mind, in systemic neo-functionalist thought. Luhmann (1995) elaborates a theory intended to immunize social evolution from the crucial problem implicit in modern thought: i.e. making the freedom/control relationship depend on the ability of traditional cultures to regenerate themselves in the evolutionary process. Luhmann does that through two basic moves: the first move is to assume that culture (*Geist*) is neither a functional requirement of action nor a system in itself (it is reduced to a byproduct of the three basic systems: biological, psychical and communicative); the second move is to place freedom completely outside the system, in the so-called system environment, where the human subject may fluctuate as desired. For him, communication (or, if you prefer, information) is enough to warrant control to self-organizing systems. There is no more need for an autonomous culture as a necessary precondition and framework to organize the relationship between freedom and social control.

Neo-functionalism thereby reaches a decisive turning point, in the direction of a *radically contingent* relationism between freedom and control. With Luhmann, sociology proves itself ready to be placed in that crucible of post-modern thought that cuts all human ties between freedom and control. In this light, Luhmann appears simultaneously as the grave-digger of modernity and the lark of post-modernity. This lark, however, has no wings; Luhmann's post-modernity cannot take flight ("the future cannot begin": Luhmann 1976). Beyond the metaphor, Luhmannian sociology cannot indicate any cultural innovations complete with a sense of humanity. Just the contrary is possible, and indeed most probable to him. In the end, society should bid the last farewell to the human-social and be prepared to face the inhuman-social. To him, the distinction between human and non-human relations cannot be managed relationally. On the contrary, in my opinion, this is the core problem of the post-modern world.

At the turning point of the 21st century, the difficulties that modernity encounters in managing the freedom/control relationship foster a multitude of theories based on the paradoxes and contradictions between the two terms of the relationship.

It would require a great deal of space to deal with this topic as a whole.

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11 I am perfectly aware that I leave aside many other post-modern approaches and thinkers, such as Weak Thought (G. Vattimo), Decostrutionism (J. Derrida), Immunology (R. Esposito, P. Sloterdijk). But, as far as I am concerned, the latter are to some extent included in Luhmann’s thought (see for instance Teubner 2001).
Here, I would rather call your attention to the fact that the end of modernity is revealed by its inability to achieve its promises, summarized in the triad of freedom/equality/fraternity. From this standpoint, one realizes that the lib/lab complex (freedom/equality) has made fraternity (solidarity) residual and continues to corrode the primary and secondary forms of social integration (non-systemic). The lib/lab complex systemically empties the fabric of sociality (Donati 2000; 2001). Society discovers that it is a powerful machine that turns life into merchandise. The appearance of the post-modern is marked by the need to reintroduce the third pole (solidarity) within a historical context in which the freedom/control combination has taken on the abstract form of general intellect (of Marxian memory) that appears and materializes more each day in the globalization processes implemented by the new communication technologies.

The crisis of the lib/lab complex is manifest as soon as one must appeal to some form of social solidarity - not occasional or marginal - and realizes that the lib/lab setup does not provide for it. What is called “institutionalized individualism” prevents social systems from producing social integration and, indeed, it erodes the life-worlds. Then, and only then, when one realizes that the destruction of solidarity has exceeded the critical points of social cohesion, does it become apparent that lib/lab sociology can describe society only as a paradox. To create a viable society, human individuals should become able to act as fellows (socius), but this is precisely what modernity hampers. The crisis emerges gradually, asymmetrically in various systems and social institutions, and at different rates for different societies. But, at a certain point, one is led to wonder: what is the glue of society?

Within the winning model of Western modernization, beyond the threshold where solidarity is radically eroded, the existence of sociability, as a sui generis reality, may no longer be assigned to freedom nor control, nor to a combination thereof, simply because the modern definitions of freedom and control implode.

The only alternative that remains is to conceive of sociological theory as the construction (and management) of paradoxes.

The dialectic between freedom and control becomes something else in relation to the dream of early modern civil society. The reconciliation between freedom and control appears increasingly despairing, because these two realities separate beneath the figure of an environment (containing freedoms) that fluctuates around the system (containing control) without the

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12 I am referring here to the distinction between system and social integration according to Lockwood (1992).
13 Neo-functionalists offer several paradigmatic versions of this. Alexander (2006) sees civil society as prey to a paradoxical nemesis between freedom and control, rather than as an expression of a functional synergy between them. Luhmann (1990) sees society as a paradox in itself and elaborates what he calls “eurialistics”, intended as a strategy to prevent being blinded by it.
two being able to communicate. Sociology must cope with paradoxical phenomena and should examine their outcomes.

In this regard, I claim that many of today's attempts to analyze the relationship between freedom and control end up merely taking note of conflicts, implosions, irrationalities and distortions, which are actually in place, but I wonder whether we can see positive aspects too. Postmodernists do not go beyond the crucial boundaries of modernity, and in many cases they do not to see the origination and originality of social forms as an emerging *sui generis* reality. In order to see what emerges after modernity, sociology needs to change the lens through which it observes the freedom/control relationship.

4. Limitations and obsolescence of the lib/lab paradigm: the shift to the communicational paradigm.

In late modernity, the freedom/control dialectic meets structural and cultural limitations beyond which it may not go.

What are these limits? We may summarize them briefly by stating that the late capitalistic arrangement:

a) tends to identify social control with mere technical procedures, or functional mechanisms, which should be managed by impersonal systems (system regulations through negotiations between the state and the market),

b) identifies freedoms using the yardstick of market freedom, thus generalizing freedoms as processes of commodification,

c) makes all associative spheres of social solidarity (i.e. non-profit oriented actors, otherwise called "social private" spheres) residual, allowed only to be functional to the capitalist market or to survive in the most marginal regions of society,

d) weakens the civil culture of the life-world, i.e. debilitates the civic commitment of people and their informal networks, through privatized and standardized forms of consumption and behavior.

The *lib/lab* arrangement now stands on a process of ethical and cultural un-differentiation, i.e., as others say, on ethical-cultural relativism: in other words: differently from previous societal systems, ethics and culture do not have a proper symbolic code for their own internal differentiation. “All different, all equal” is the slogan applied to moral and cultural patterns.

On this background, Western advanced society, at the beginning of the 21st century, no longer can represent itself as the best of all possible worlds, but only as one of the many possible variations of one world that is infinitely "possible otherwise" (possible in an indefinite variety of other social, ethical and cultural arrangements).

Indeed, many old problems remain unsolved, and others arise that the *lib/lab* arrangement cannot confront. These problems have to do with:
- the crisis of the welfare state induced by the growth of freedoms guaranteed regardless of the negative consequences of private behaviors (Mead 1986),
- the overflowing markets beyond national confines and other control apparatuses (Scott and Urry 1987; Offe 1988),
- the unregulated dynamism of the mass-media networks which create what is called the new global society (de Kerckhove 1997),
- the increasing risk of amoral behavior by subjects, against the increasingly "mechanical" nature of control systems which have by now long stopped relying on the purposeful, intentional motivations of subjects in many behavior areas, such as drug taking and selling, environmental pollution, the diffusion of hazardous lifestyles, the perverse effects of the old and new mass media on people and their communicative relationships (erosion of the boundaries between public and private; end of the Mandeville paradigm in relationships between the private and public spheres) (Beck 1992).

It becomes evident that the *lib/lab* paradigm creates more problems than it can solve. This state of affairs is called “reflexive modernization” (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994; Beck, Bonss and Lau 2003).

The inadequacy of this paradigm is revealed in the fundamental subsystems of society.

a. Politics has no control of the capitalist market, and tends to close itself into a self-referential political-administrative subsystem, while on the other hand there is an increasing request by new social movements to consider the political nature of the various spheres of life.

b. New civil and human claims for freedom emerge that cannot be derived from market freedoms or generalizations thereof, but lead instead to other spheres and require other generalized symbolic means (different from money).

c. New intermediate social formations arise, with their own subjectivity, that cannot be included within the individual-state axis, hinge of modern citizenship and its *lib/lab* structure.

d. Bio-ethical questions emerge in the field of physical and human ecology that cannot be dealt with neither by the political ethics (which remains governmental) nor by business ethics, that us by the two ethics whose symbiosis leads these societies.

The *lib/lab* distinction becomes obsolete as the guiding distinction of society precisely when it is no longer able to see:

i) the developments within each subsystem of society,

ii) the changes in the relationships between these subsystems,

iii) the emerging effects of their interactions.

An analysis of all of this would require a great deal of space.

Suffice it to say that the end result of all these turns is that Western advanced societies need to limit the *lib/lab* arrangement to some functionally
specialized mechanisms of social protection that safeguard the basic acquisitions of modernity in the form of a minimal safety net. But these functions cannot be any longer the engine of the whole societal system. To go beyond, society needs a fundamental change in the guiding distinctions upon which the social institutions which have to cope with the new needs are built.

At this point, it seems that the passage to new paradigms of relationship between freedom and control is marked by symbolic codes that refer to the interplay between the subjectivity of the actors and the "world of communications".

Post-modern society tends to be described and interpreted within a framework based upon tow terms: the subjectivity of actors and the communications system (with its symbolic codes, means and rules of communication). Possibly, Luhmann has been one of the major interpreters of this shift, which proposes to read the oncoming society as an interplay between ‘the social system’ (understood as the autopoietic world of communications) and its ‘environment’ (constituted by human beings freely moving outside that system). I call it the “communicational paradigm”.

This is the framework with which we are confronted. The emerging phenomena that are expressed today can be seen: i) in the explosion of the social networks on internet and, more generally, the increasing influence of the information & communication technologies (ICT); ii) in the apolitical attitude pervading the private spheres of civil society, in the form of autós (need to render autonomous the links between freedom and control within each sphere of life); iii) in the concomitant emergence of what has been called ‘the culture of difference’ (the idea that we are ‘all different’, but at the same time ‘all equals’); iv) in the development of new, alternative markets (known as "social" markets since they are non-profit or do not comply with the monetary equivalence). All of these phenomena escape the lib/lab arrangement.

The "communicational paradigm" is an expression of these new phenomena. But how does it interpret the changes under way? It gives many answers. But, generally speaking, those who share the communication paradigm believe:

- that freedoms may be managed by translating them into new forms of communication, including new, non-monetary forms of "money"; here, again, it remains to be seen whether these means activate a new sociality or, on the contrary, put the social context within which communication takes place into latency (making social relations latent), thereby distorting social reality;

14 By 'communicational paradigm' I mean a sociological paradigm which does not only interpret social relations as a matter of dialogue (which is perfectly correct), but, in a more radical way, reduces social reality to a form of communication and only of communication (this reduction is well illustrated by Luhmann’s theory).
- that the new subjects must be understood as communicative actors, no longer protagonists of historical revolutionary battles nor activators of collective resources, but rather bearers of new cultural codes in which identity and interests blend in a vital-existential manner;

- that the relationships between society and nature may be rethought as "clean ecological communication"; but it remains to be seen whether it is possible to avoid the further artificialization of nature itself, beyond limiting Faustian exploitation thereof;

- that the apolitical attitude of society may be resolved by allowing the rules to emerge from communicative processes, be they a "community of discourse" of the subjects (Habermas 1981), or the so-called communicative hyper-cycles (Luhmann 1995), or the “anonymous matrix of communication” (Teubner 2006); it remains to be seen whether communicative processes, by themselves, can lead to some kind of re-politicization of the social sphere or, instead, produce an additional lack in the political character of society.

The new paradigm of globalization centered around subjectivity and social rules mediated by communication on a planetary scale certainly slips out of the lib/lab logic, as a logic of modernization. But in turn, it leaves the relationships between freedom and control hanging. The communications system is often once again viewed as the product between market demands and matters of organization into which it is difficult to introduce elements of life-world (Lebenswelt). But there are social spheres in which, in fact, such a chance can be realized (Bauwens 2008, 2013).

At the beginning of the 21st century, a representation of society as the world of communication - or rather, as an infinite number of cohabiting worlds of communication - becomes dominant.

One wonders: how and to what extent does this new paradigm manage to go beyond the limits of the lib/lab arrangement?

It acquires a few new advantageous features, but also persistent weaknesses. The gains lie in the fact that the subject is now seen as freer to express her/his internal self and relate to others. The weaknesses persist in the fact that this paradigm once again has problems accounting for the social pathologies that derive from the progressive scission between freedom and control (intended as actions respectively interior and exterior to the subjects), between intimate relationships and community relationships, between private agency and public normativity. To manage these scissions solely through mere communications leads to an additional loss in the ability of actors to relate to each other. The logical consequence are the various theorems of the death of the subject and the implosion of social ties (Taylor 1989). This consequences are visible in the line of thought that goes from Habermas (1981), who believes in the 'community of discourse', to Luhmann (1995), who deems communication as technology and not as social relation, and Teubner (2006), who speaks of the incumbent dominance of an ‘anonymous matrix of communication’ featuring an addicted society.
My argument is that the paradigm of society as communication lends itself better than the previous one (lib/lab) to grasping the new social aspects of a networking society. But I also believe that the communications paradigm does not offer an adequate view of freedom and control as social relations.

In the new communications paradigm, freedom lies in the subjects and control in the procedures of the communication system. But one wonders: what relationships exist between the subjects and the communication system? Supporters of these paradigm fall into two distinct positions.

On the one hand there are those who maintain that subjects and the social system have in common only communications and no more than communications, conceived as transfers of information. They assure us that communication can act on its own as a vehicle for both freedom and control, making both of them more contingent because freedom and control take on the nature of pure communication. This seems to dissolve the paradoxes and contradictions of real social structures (for instance persisting and increasing social inequalities) into a virtual (‘communicational’) reality.

On the other hand are those who state that the "society of communication" is far from being that way. They note that communication is always embedded in social relations, which come first and go beyond subjects and the communication system. They emphasize that freedom and control are achieved in a context where choices do not depend on pure communication, much less correspond to pure contingencies. This raises the view of a truly "relational" society as opposed to the relationistic (non-relational) fading society of the "pure" communicationists (who reduce relations to simple communication). Relational society means that there is a true autonomy of the social subjects who relate to each other, and the emergence of distinct structures (social forms) from their relations, while in a relationistic society subjects and structures merge into each other (what Archer 1995 calls ‘central conflation’).

So, to put it bluntly:

i) on the one hand, the view of pure communicationists leads us to observe that freedoms are increasingly formal and empty of a substantial content, and do not create that minimum of “political” glue upon which the vitality of the spheres of daily life depend. Daily life dissolves into a globalization that is a standardization of the Mind. The rules to which social control is entrusted appear increasingly impersonal, more systemic, and increasingly lacking interpersonal social interaction. The world of the media does not show (does not generate!) those spheres of social integration and symbolic cultures (ethos) needed to fill the void left by the modern;

ii) on the other hand, we note that only in certain contexts and under specific conditions can freedom and control relate in such a way as to express purposeful actions capable of social integration. Note that this takes place: a) in personal care services and within a new professional ethic of social work, conceived as services to the alter while respecting his characteristics,
potential, and membership perspective; b) in service organizations, where private freedoms are enacted for purposes of community utility rather than solely for the instrumental interests of the members of these organizations; c) in social relationships that undertake to assume a new attitude towards "nature", considered not as a mere physical ecosystem, but especially as a symbolic referent that offers new mediations of meaning for human life.

Within this scenario, social relations reveal a novelty. This is the *sui generis* reality of society, when expressed in an *original* and *originative manner*. Original, since social relations arise in peculiar and independent ways outside the systemic regulations of the state-market complex. Originative, since social relations come into existence through new forms of symbolic exchange that are not imposed from outside the agents nor are an aim unto itself, but are new ways of making the social fabric.

Why create common goods, why take care of social relationships, why respect the actors for their differences and peculiarities, why work for the good of others, why celebrate the value of nature? Because, in all of these cases, the relationship between freedom and control is configured not as a result of the trade-off between the two terms (subjectivity and communication controls) but as a concern in itself. Such a concern possesses a relational structure and relies upon a culture of symbolic exchange whose paradigm lies in the will to build a new sociability. Such a project needs that people adopt a system of action based upon free giving as the prime mover of social relations which should go on in a morphogenetic way through the norm of reciprocity.

One wonders: is one who makes a gift free or forced to do so? From a common sense viewpoint, the answer is that the first to do so, of his own spontaneous volition, is free, while he who reciprocates is in some way forced by the norm of restitution. But, to my mind, this distinction does not hold. Within the giving circuit it is difficult to track down the "first" move. Who or what is the *primum movens* of giving? The subject's freedom or the norm of reciprocity as a symbolic exchange? If we admit that an individual may be totally free as a speck, an atom, that moves throughout the emptiness of social space as it pleases, then the *primum movens* is the individual. But anyone who gives a gift responds to internal and external needs that are born and live in a context of relationships within which only the gift has meaning (Caillé 1996). The gift is a relationship in itself, where the subject's freedom meets social constrictions. Each impulse takes place in a social environment which, anyway, is not imposed in an entirely binding fashion on that concrete individual. This human freedom lies within a normative context, but at the same time transcends it. With this observation we go beyond simply noting that human beings move freely within social constraints. We find that free giving can change the system of social norms and what the latter deem to be relevant.
The society of communication goes beyond the *lib/lab* concept if and to the extent to which it performs two operations: first, it makes "other" freedoms and "other" forms of control possible; second, it relates them according to a new symbolic code.

If it does so, it is because it places the relationship as the underlying assumption of a new ontology of the social world, which needs avoiding both naïve realism and radical constructionism (Donati 2011a).

There are many different ways to interpret and act society as a social relationship between freedom and control. Only a few of these ways are innovative. As Marcel Mauss has demonstrated (Caillé 1996), only reciprocal giving can generate new forms of sociability, while instrumental motives are more likely to lead to its consumption.

The new civil society is born as a place where human relationships are taken seriously. In order to provide care, to organize a collective service action, to respect and emphasize nature, it is necessary to make specific choices. In these domains, one must develop social relationships in which freedom and control penetrate each other, and thus remain interdependent, inter-penetrated, and interactive according to new processes sensitive to what emerges from social relationality.

Civility emerges to the extent at which human relations become significant "otherwise" in the sense of taking on the significance of a good in itself, and to the extent at which this "relational good" is pursued as such (Donati and Solci 2011).

In short, this is my thesis. Society is (and is becoming) *after-*modern if and to the extent to which it takes the originateive and original nature of social relations seriously, sees them and enacts them, placing communication within the relationship and not making the relationship a by-product or superstructure of communication (as late modernity does). For this type of society to emerge, freedom and control must distinguish themselves and rejoin relationally (as it happens within the logic of reciprocity), rather than act as a binary division that proceeds by progressively excluding one side from the other through the logic of re-entry (as envisaged by Spencer Brown 1979).

Only if things are seen in this light can one realize that after-modern society is divided into many social spheres, which differ because they conjugate the meaning of freedom and control - and their relationships - differently. In particular, we can distinguish four basic types of spheres: 1) market spheres, where freedom means competition for profit, and control is assigned to the pricing system; 2) government spheres, where freedom is represented by exercising the right to vote, and control is entrusted to obedience of laws; 3) service spheres, where freedom means symbolic exchange, and control lies with associative social exchange rules; 4) the spheres of family and informal networks, where freedom is an action of mutual giving and control is entrusted to the rules which make this relationship valuable. These basic types differentiate internally as well as in
their external relations, so that a new networking society is emerging where the multiplication of different kinds of relations creates social forms endowed with a new sense of sociability.

Briefly, this multitude of intertwining spheres is the foundation of a new societal configuration.

5. A relational approach to freedom vs. control dilemmas after modernity: possible scenarios.

I have described the crisis of classical liberalism in late modernity as the result of that peculiar, synergic antithesis between freedom and control which has been postulated since the beginning of modernity. I have also maintained that this symbolic code (lib/lab) can no longer act as the guiding code for the entire societal system, and becomes a mechanism for highly limited choices in specialized social sectors (particularly in the regulation of the impersonal trade-offs between the state and the market). I would now like to draw the theoretical implications of this way of interpreting society beyond modernity.

The overall premise lies in assuming that the freedom/control relationship is structured as an antithesis only in particular instances. The antithesis - especially when synergic - is only one of the possible reductions of the relational dilemmas between the two poles. It lends itself to describing the relationship between state and market, but not relations within and between the other spheres of life. Generally speaking, a complex, multifaceted relationships arise between freedom and control, especially within civil society.

When this reality takes on a new appearance, we enter the after-modern world, where alternative relating processes emerge because the relationship between freedom and control may now be seen and enacted with many more degrees of contingency on both sides. This contingency is selectively reduced in different ways, according to the communication contexts, since these are relational contexts, or, better, relationally contested fields. That this type of society presents new problems, and even immense risks, is intrinsic in its relational nature.

From a theoretical standpoint, a fact then emerges: that freedom and control are not simply two dimensions inherent in every social relation, but are social relations themselves, which must be conjugated differently in different social spheres according to their internal peculiarities and their diverse environments\textsuperscript{15}. If freedom and control are conceived as social relations, it becomes possible to relate them to other dimensions of social

\textsuperscript{15} To claim that freedom and control are social relations themselves means that they can be conceived of as systems of action in which freedom has its own internal controls, while control has its own internal freedoms. Or, otherwise stated, you cannot disconnect freedom and control entirely, but you can only redefine the relations among their components.
action - such as for example with solidarity – which otherwise are viewed as antithetic or incommensurable to them.

Freedom not only stands outside control, but also inside it; freedom is a form of control and its source of justification. Control not only offers greater or lesser opportunities for freedom, but constitutes it, in the sense that it creates the various forms and degrees of freedom itself.

Freedom and control work together, and are not mutually exclusive alternatives. Instead they both define contexts and opportunities that develop one another. To see this, we must consider the freedom/control distinction as a relationship of social relations. But how is it possible to consider freedom and control as social relations?

a) As far as freedom is concerned, modernity has viewed it as a social relationship that may be played in many ways, but basically as the opposite of social norms and constraints. By introducing new binary distinctions (differentiations based upon the free/normed symbolic code), it has made unique relational universes possible.

First example. By introducing the distinction between freedom "from" (negative) and freedom "for" (positive), it has on the one hand expanded negative freedoms as demands for non-interference (for instance, freedom as the ‘right to be let alone’), and on the other opened new horizons of positive freedoms as opportunities to achieve significant goals (for instance, freedom as the right to vote or be part of a class action).

Second example. By introducing the distinction between procedural freedom and substantial freedom, it has on the one hand increased the possibilities for automatic social relations (for instance, the entitlements to impersonal welfare services), and on the other made new relationships of significant human intention possible (for instance, creating an ethical bank).

The lib/lab complex, however, still sees the first side of these relationships almost exclusively. It mainly sees negative and procedural freedoms, while it has great difficulty in seeing positive and substantial freedoms. We need to rethink the sense of liberty if we wish to avoid nihilism.

This explains why much of sociology has observed freedom essentially in the form of the contingency inherent in "money" (as a generalized symbolic means of interchange), releasing the instrumental (adaptive) function of exchanges from the norm of social justice, as well as from all forms of self-restriction, thereby making all social relationships abstract and instrumental. Today, sociology needs to open its mind and observe the reverse processes, those through which new embodied, value-based, heavily intertwined and at the same time self-restricting social relationships have produced social forms outside those regulated according to the lib/lab logic. Many sociological theories have not realized that the social relationship is a mutual action, and have thus ignored the fact that vital
associative worlds produce positive and substantial freedoms outside the state-market complex.

b) The same has happened for control. Modernity has generated new distinctions of social control, which has become a social relationship that can be played out in many diverse ways.

First example. By introducing the distinction between systemic integration/control and social integration/control, modernity has on the one hand built new rules which operate by freeing people from personal responsibility (e.g. social security system), and on the other hand has opened up room for norms which can operate only provided that people take personal responsibility (e.g. in the field of family relations).

Second example. By introducing the distinction between hetero-control and self-control, it has on the one hand been able to construct impersonal mechanisms for the regulation of people’s behaviour (e.g. mass consumption), and on the other has explored the worlds of the personal reflexivity (e.g. internal conversation).

The lib/lab complex still sees the first side of these relationships almost exclusively: it sees systemic and coercitive control towards subjects, while it has difficulty seeing the control of informal norms within subjects and social actions. This explains why some sociologists have ended up seeing the social domain as that which negates the authenticity of the self (i.e. society as a powerful machine that denies the bio-psychological identity, or "individuality"), rather than that which makes it possible.

6.3. Modernity tends to play out freedom and control as opposite dimensions, negatively correlated. If we refer to Parsons’ theory, freedom and control are seen as the two axis of the AGIL scheme (figure 1), where freedom is understood as psycho-cultural reference (i.e the social relation is seen as refero in the Weberian sense) and control is equal to the structural bond or constraint (i.e. the social relation is seen as religo, in a Durkheimian sense). In the AGIL language, the refero is the connection between latency (L) and goal-attainment (G), while religo is the link between adaptation (A) and integration (I).

In this framework, freedom (refero) and control (religo), being negatively correlated, define a sort of "relational hyperbola" in which they may develop only inversely (figure 2). In modernity it is assumed that if

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16 On these dimensions, which refer to the Weber (refero) and Durkheim (religo) traditions, see Donati (1991: chapters 1 and 4).

17 The distinction refero/religo is, in its turn, relational. To understand this, take for instance the dilemma competition (marketization) vs. social control (welfare provisions). This dilemma can be played by putting these two poles either as refero/religo or as religo/refero respectively, depending on the point of view of the observer/actor of the situation (who stresses one as freedom against the other as control). The hyperbola of figure 1 becomes specified only when it is articulated within figure 3.
freedom is expanded along the *refero* axis, then control is reduced along the *religo* axis, and vice-versa. It is always improbable to find a balance point on the hyperbola (this difficulty leads to the constant reduction of the social world to a series of problems only, viz. the well-known process of Problematizierung). Consequently, society is described as an antithetical oscillation between *status nascenti* movements and processes of institutionalization.

In the course of developing this dynamic, the forms of social control tend to liberate freedoms insofar as possible. As long as the game remains within certain limits, it is possible to find mix solutions while remaining on
the hyperbola. But it is no longer possible beyond certain thresholds. The asymptotic development of control must expunge freedom in the system environment (thus outside institutions). The same occurs for the asymptotic development of freedom, which confines controls to its environment (thus only within system operations). In one direction, freedoms are placed outside the social sphere (thus outside social institutions), and in the other social control becomes only systemic (i.e. mechanical) and remains without justifying values.

The lib/lab complex thus ends up stretching the social sphere asymptotically towards "polar layouts", dominated by control (along the religo axis of functional limitations) or freedom (along the refero axis of merely symbolic references).

Reformulated in a relational way (Donati 1991: ch. 4), the AGIL diagram can be useful to observe post-modern society as an inherently unstable system, on the contrary of what Parsons believed (figure 3). In representing society as a hyperbolic organization stemming from the dialectic between freedom and control (interpreted according to the AGIL diagram), the space of relations between freedom (refero) and control (religo) delineates the scenarios for both micro and macro social forms emerging in post-modern societies. We have eight possible hyperbolic escapes (figure 3):

a. (from) G → (to) A: decisional (political) freedom is asymptotically reduced to the economic mechanisms of the market;

b. A → G: the mechanisms (binds) of the market are cancelled out by free political decisions;

c. G → I: decisional (political) freedom is reduced to the rules of social exchange in the so-called third sector;

d. I → G: social exchanges in the third sector give way to political decisions;

e. L → A: informal relationships take on the characteristics, especially the restrictions, of the market;

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18 Luhmann’s theory is based upon this assumption when it claims that the social system is basically autopoietic, which means that social actions generate themselves without a ‘human subject’, so that human freedom is preserved by putting it in the system’s environment.

19 I conceive of post-modern society as a radicalization of modernity, while what I call “after-modern (or trans-modern) society” is a socio-historical formation marked by strong discontinuities with modernity (see Donati 2001, 2010).

20 The "hyperbolic escape" may be defined as follows: if the AGIL-system is reduced to one dimension (refero or religo, in one of their dual poles), the other dimension is placed in its environment (the asymptote corresponds here to the re-entry of the systemic differentiation according to N. Luhmann). For example, if the love relationship becomes "pure" (of pure intimacy, as though suspended in a normative vacuum), or, otherwise stated, when the love relationship is reduced to the pure latency (L of AGIL), then the institution (the religo in the couple) is placed outside the AGIL-system formed by the pure love relationship (in other words, the social institution of the couple becomes only one of the many possibilities represented on the horizon of the pure love relationship).
f. $A \rightarrow L$: the market is cancelled out within the network of informal relationships;
g. $L \rightarrow I$: informal networks give way to third sector organizations;
h. $I \rightarrow L$: third sector organizations accentuate their nature as informal networks.

To describe society as a configuration where social forms tend to assume a relational-hyperbolic tendency is an alternative to the description based on the functional primacy of one of the four functional prerequisites $A,G,I,L$. The functional primacy of one of the four poles is no longer possible (as both Parsons and Luhmann believe) for the entire society. Only trends are possible, as asymptotic convergences of the hyperbolas on one of the relational poles ($A,G,I,L$ around figure 3), which however cannot - as a single dimension - ever absorb the others, which are pushed to develop in other social spheres. To develop a code for the freedom-control interaction in one direction (in a certain relational sphere) means to push for other codes of that interaction to be developed in other directions (in other relational spheres).

If we consider the vertical axis in figure 3 (refero) as culture and the horizontal axis (religo) as structure, we can summarize the four possible response scenarios to modernity as follows. Social forms may follow different paths:

1) they may remain on the hyperbola, i.e. in some intermediate point; this is the neo-modern scenario that still bases itself on the lib/lab yardstick;

2) they may escape into the refero, in the direction of goal attainment (G) or latency (L), through charismatic movements characterized by a purely
intentional ethic (even irrational); in these cases, pre- or anti-modern types of political and cultural movements can emerge (they un-differentiate the societal system in the G or L poles); in these instances, affirmations of freedom prevail over demands for adaptive control;

3) they may escape into the religio, in the direction of adaptation (A) or integration (I); in the first case we are faced with hyperfunctionalism (e.g. welfare systems managed through highly automatic institutions, based upon purely anonymous insurance schemes), in the second with new social markets or self-regulated insurance networks (e.g. welfare produced and run by the "third sector");

4) finally, they may produce a morphogenesis of the societal system (or parts of it) through relations emerging from particular interactions of the four dimensions (AGIL). This is after-modern society. Its main character shall consist in going beyond the modern forms of social differentiation through new competitive as well as solidaristic games among the different dimensions of social relations, so to generate social forms unknown to the previous society. New forms of welfare and well-being can be generated as an interplay between freedom and control which are not deemed to be inversely correlated, but positively correlated; so to produce a sort of "solidaristic competition" and new welfare systems endowed with a high degree of stability and responsiveness to "local" requirements. These new forms of welfare will be vital insofar as they are original and originative. Of course, strains, conflicts, and even struggles will not disappear. Just the contrary is true.

The new society will result from this "game". Paths 2 and 3 may occur in spatially and temporally limited spheres of the social realm. As far as the general framework of the societal system is concerned, the global challenge is played out between paths 1 (neo-modernization) and 4 (a new morphogenesis).

All of this may be stated in yet another way. We may hypothesize that society changes its structure from a hyperbolic configuration, typical of the modern, to a relational configuration, typical of the after-modern.

In the former, freedom and control are played out as a synergic antithesis, while in the latter they are played out relationally (i.e. as an emergent property of reciprocal action). The underlying theoretical hypothesis, which obviously requires a great deal of empirical studies for

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21 ‘Solidaristic competition’ corresponds to the original meaning of the Latin word *cum-petere* (to seek together). It means to compete without reciprocal destructive antagonism, but, on the contrary, with the purpose to pursue the same goals by adopting different means that can be undertaken by the competing agents/actors as exemplar later on, in order to meet a common good.
verification, says: the more freedom and control differentiate, the less they become separable, and must be newly bound and referred to one another. This may happen by staying in one of the four hyperbolas; in this case, solutions to social issues will be still "modern" (although giving room to "other modernities" or multiple modernities: Cotesta 2011). But it may also happen that a new relational AGIL-complex be born (when both binds and references change for the whole AGIL-system); in this case, solutions to social issues will be after-modern, in the sense that they shall escape from the synergic antithesis between freedom and control. Freedom and control will be configured as qualitatively new relationships, with new cultural (refero) and structural (religo) dimensions. Where this will happen, society rediscovers its relational nature, thus the fact that it is made up of social relations that imply cultural references and structural binds which interconnect in a sui generis manner.

In conclusion: the more society tend to overcome post-modernity, the more each relationship (each sphere of social relations) must be based on its own guiding distinction that sees freedom and control not as identifiable or collective attributes in an antithetic contraposition, but as characteristics of differentiated, specific networks of relationships that are regulated (and regenerated) based on an autonomous nexus between freedom and control.

6.4. I do not believe that the debates on agency and structure, between subjectivity and rules have highlighted this new reality clearly enough. They have undoubtedly contributed to seeing many aspects of the social morphogenesis under way today. But they have not seen the overall relationality which emerges in many social spheres (see Part II of this book). Most times scholars have reduced the new relational quality of society to a single hyperbola. Just to cite an example, consider the "pure relationship" theorized by Antony Giddens (1992): it represents an escape from a pre-imposed social structure through the hyperbolic paths that tend asymptotically to the flight toward pure latency (L in figure 2).

Perhaps, by adopting a relational paradigm, we can see how the norms of freedom and control lie neither simply in the individuals (as "abstract" subjects) nor in systems (the "fully structured"), but in social relations when taken seriously for what they are: real (fully social) reciprocal action between subjects.

Herein lies the novelty of civil society, which beyond modernity no longer coincides with the forefronts of political democratization, but rather with reflexive social subjects that express a new process of civilization (Donati 2011b: 192-210).

22 In part II of this volume some empirical evidences are given with reference to civil welfare, relational goods, associational democracy, and, finally, ways to avoid clashes between different cultures.

23 Or its own "principle of operation", if you prefer the Aristotelic language, which Luhmann calls autopoiesis.
The political expression of this project is "societal citizenship", intended as citizenship distinct from the governmental sense. Societal citizenship is produced by forms of bottom-up social governance. It is built as a co-growth of freedom and control within a framework of social solidarity, through distance relationships between civil society and the state, rather than as an ascriptive emanation of the nation-state (implemented, as in modernity, through the principle of progressive inclusion of the population in it).

Social relationality is the new glue of society. Social integration cannot be produced by the state, an abstract normative system, or an abstract adaptation system. It may perhaps be called "the political" (le politique) of social exchanges, as opposed to "the politics" of the political party system (la politique) (according to the distinction made by Caillé 1993). But only if we see that the political stuff of society consists of its "relational glue", and if we can observe it in an adequate way. "The political" has become simultaneously more global and more local, meaning that it has spread throughout all relational dimensions of society and at the same time has differentiated within each societal sphere, according to autonomous intersections (nexi) between freedom and control. In the 21st century, society will be able to manage "the political" only as a form of post-liberal as well as post-labour relationality unknown to the moderns.
Chapter 2

The failures of the State/Market compromise: towards a new societal configuration

1. What is behind the world economy’s crisis?

Mainstream sociological theory nowadays converges on the idea that world society is bound to face a future bristling with risks, uncertainties, disorientation, and even chaos (in the technical sense of the word). A future which, as Luhmann put it, cannot even begin. The so-called ‘reflexive modernisation’ theory, though with different emphasis given by each supporter (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994), has in essence legitimised such an analysis of the current situation and of future prospects.

The world financial crisis started in 2008 seems to confirm this forecast. We ask ourselves: what, then, lies behind the world economic crisis that broke out in 2008? There is certainly a very different crisis from that of 1929. The historical circumstances are totally different. At the time capitalism was scarcely regulated and lacked a substantial welfare state structure. Nowadays markets are far more regulated and benefit from more developed social security systems. When comparing historical ‘system crisis’ we must be careful.

As nation states play a much larger part than eighty years ago, the measures that are now put in place to solve the crisis amount to three kinds of action: (i) incentives to, and enforcement of market best practices by political-administrative systems, (ii) ban on ‘dirty’ financial products and on fiscal heavens, and (iii) greater public commitment in terms of social expenditure, to nurture the real economy’s virtuous cycles (by supporting family expenses, by limiting unemployment damages, by protecting poorer segments of the population).

The sociological argument I have presented in chapter 1 is that the set-up of world society is a critical and unstable set-up it is impossible to get out of except by reforming its own lib/lab basic structure’. Let me explain this a bit more.

I have argued that Western societies are still working on the basis of a framework which tries to stabilise economic cycles and a fairer resource
distribution through *lib/lab* regulations. What is wrong with this societal configuration?

On the one hand, it is to be said that the *lib/lab* set-up has so far offered remarkable advantages, in as much as it has guaranteed freedom and more extensive political and social citizenship rights. In fact, we can say about this set-up what is said about liberal democracies, i.e. that although this system is full of defects, it is the best one human history has produced so far. On the other hand, though, we have to point out that its structural faults are not insignificant, but they concern some mechanisms which produce intrinsically and inevitably recurrent crises. In other words, *lib/lab* systems are *not sustainable* as long-term systems.

What are the mechanisms that make this society unsustainable? I would like to scan the problematic aspects of *lib/lab* systems and verify whether there can be a societal configuration likely to exceed these limitations.

Let us first look at intrinsic faults of the *lib/lab* set-up.  

a) According to the *lib/lab* approach, society is an *intertwining of economics and politics* against which the rest is seen as insignificant for the common good and for citizenship. In particular, life worlds are conceived as a merely ‘private’ sphere. I myself would rather point out that, from a sociological point of view, what lies outside the State-Market pair is not insignificant for the achievement of the common good, for citizenship and for the workings of both market and state. If life worlds are conceived as ‘left overs’, the *lib/lab* system falls into a chronic crisis it cannot remedy.

b) For the *lib/lab* system, there is no alternative to the combination of liberalism and socialism. Such a societal configuration, though, essentially considered as a problem of balancing between (anti-systemic) freedom and equality (in view of extending individual freedoms), refrains from tackling the social integration problems posed by such an approach. Even though one may agree that society’s systemic planning is not a workable regulatory response, still it is clear that the *lib/lab* combination says almost nothing on social integration problems in contemporary social systems. To put it another way, *lib/lab* systems generate increasing social integration deficits (the so-called ‘modernity pathologies’) for which they provide no remedies.

c) The *lib/lab* set-up seeks to tame the ‘competition-profit vs. solidarity-social redistribution’ conflict without providing alternatives to the permanent opposition between these two contradictory needs. The conflict is

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25 A champion of this approach, Ralph Dahrendorf (1994) sees citizenship as a gift granted (*octroyée*) by an enlightened political élite, including entitlements guaranteed by the State versus other provisions offered by the free market.
26 I am using the phrase ‘social integration’ here to distinguish it from ‘systemic integration’ (Lockwood 1992, 1999).
27 The well-known expression was first proposed by J. Habermas (1981), who deals with such pathologies in terms of communicative forms and not as a more complex problem. At the cultural level it has been employed also by Charles Taylor (1989).
seen and dealt with as an insoluble opposition, which may only be kept under control through political democracy, especially in the form of neo-corporativistic democracy. The two oppositions, though, bring about a structural imbalance. In the USA, the competition-profit side has the upper hand over social citizenship rights, which entails serious social inequality and poverty indexes in Third World contexts. In Europe the solidarity-redistribution side prevails on the basis of a citizenship principle that seeks to be unconditional without actually succeeding in that.

The world system (or globalisation), marked by the economy’s financialisation, is the outcome of this current worldwide societal lib/lab structure.

What determines the crises occurring in systems based on the lib/lab compromise between state and market is the very ‘economic logic’ 28, which is not purely capitalistic, but is based on the intertwining of market and state, and thus embraces society as a whole (starting with the market). Such an economic logic has unexpected effects, side effects and negative external effects which erode the civil society on which the lib/lab system is based. What is this logic about?

Let me summarise it in figure 1. The economic logic I am talking about consists in using political power to increase consumption, which in turn will foster productivity and profits, so as to be able to draw on fiscal drag for the financial resources needed to push consumption. The rest is irrelevant. Banks and financial systems serve this logic.

![Figure 1 - Lib/lab systems' economic logic](image)

Such a systemic logic, with all its internal mechanisms, cannot be extended over certain thresholds, because great social problems arise once certain economic growth levels are exceeded. The present societal model

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proves functional to break away from poverty and under-development, whereas it becomes dysfunctional for a welfare society. In particular:

a. consumerism generates a broad range of problematic or pathological human conditions since consumption needs are artificially induced and technologies, especially the media, are misused;

b. the social inclusion model that is supported by this logic (founded on a simple extension of the typical twentieth-century welfare state) makes beneficiaries ever more passive and produces distorted effects: for instance, it creates various ‘traps’ (the poverty trap, the ‘crystal roof’ limiting women’s social mobility and distorting equal opportunities on the basis of gender, etc.), and above all immunises individuals from social relations.

Many will point out that there are no alternatives to the systemic logic I am talking about (figure 1) because: a) if you curb consumption, you also stop economic growth; b) if you cut social expenditure (the welfare state), you create poverty.

What shall be done then?

The proposals put forward are centred on introducing two kinds of correcting tools:

(i) putting ‘more ethics into the market’, as proposed by some, in the hope of making actors more responsible: two examples of this are ‘business ethics’ at the production stage and a ‘fairness ethics’ in the distribution of goods - such proposals are especially aimed at correcting the *lib* side of this set-up.

(ii) extending citizenship, as proposed by others, to make it ‘more inclusive’ to embrace the weakest social segments, in order to reduce poverty and social problems - such proposals are especially aimed at correcting the *lab* side of this set-up.

I note that such corrective measures do not modify the systemic logic of *lib/lab* systems. As generous as the above proposals may be, they do not stand many chances of succeeding because it is the *lib/lab* system itself which makes them ineffective. The system continues to work in such a way as to be functional to a moral order centred upon individual, instrumental and utilitarian values and criteria. Though sensitive to the need for personal honesty and greater social justice (in the form of equal opportunities), these values and criteria fail to meet the need to create a civil society capable of supporting honest and fair behaviour, because it is the economic interest that drives morality and not vice versa, as a civil society would require. How can the *lib/lab* logic be modified?

2. Should we yield to evolution laws?

The *lib/lab* perspective on the historical processes is an invitation to let society run in accordance with the evolutionary tendencies that follow its own premises. Such an approach is implemented through the so-called ‘reflexive modernisation’ theory, which, in essence, claims that society must
chronically question itself. As Beck, Bonss and Lau (2003: 3) put it, «‘Reflexive’ does not mean that people today lead a more conscious life. On the contrary, ‘reflexive’ does not signify an ‘increase in mastery and consciousness, but a heightened awareness that mastery is impossible’. Simple modernity becomes ‘reflexive modernization’ to the extent that it disenchants and then dissolves its own taken-for-granted premises». This leaves the referent, the purpose and the point of ‘reflexivity’ highly ambiguous.

The society envisaged by the lib/lab way of thinking is a society which suffers from a permanent identity crisis, pervaded as it is by insoluble social and personal risks. Reflexive modernisation is defined as a radical uncertainty affecting every sphere of social life. A view which does not add anything new to sociological scrutiny, as many scholars have observed (Heiskala 2011).

According to my argument, on the basis of modernity’s own assumptions, the above mentioned correcting measures (i.e. a. ethical injections into the market and b. extension of citizenship rights and their beneficiaries) do not work because: a. the lib/lab logic is relativistic from an ethical point of view and neutralises any attempts to replace economic criteria by ‘non-utilitarian’ ethical criteria; b. the extension of citizenship rights (in terms of more rights and more beneficiaries) is always unstable and problematic, and, at any rate, if it is viewed according to the typical twentieth-century lib/lab welfare state model, faces increasing failures (fiscal crises, inclusions generating exclusions, etc.).

In short, the present modernisation processes do not tolerate any restrictive, external regulations of the lib/lab logic (in the three stages summarised in figure 1: consumption, for profit production and redistribution through the welfare state). The only regulations this logic can endure are functional ones, that is functional to its own reproduction.

Neo-functionalism, though, does not ensure any society capable of avoiding the dilemmas and social pathologies produced by such a societal model. It cannot produce any stable social system, it can only determine the same problems again and again. Neo-functionalism turns to be just ‘another way’, only outwardly non-ideological, of describing the commodification of the world and an evolutionary adaptation of the whole society to such commodification processes.

Basically, the lib/lab model proposes us to live in a society that adapts to Darwin’s evolutionary laws, lacking any finalism and pushed by its competition and survival skills. This is the way in which the globalisation of the world system is understood.

There seem to be no alternatives to this state of affairs. Utopias have fallen. And yet, perhaps, a careful analysis of the situation may reveal ongoing societal morphogenetic processes which question the functionalistic view of economic rationality as configured in the lib/lab model (figure 1). Sociology has consecrated this model first with Talcott Parsons’ theory and
later, faced with the former’s failure, with Niklas Luhmann’s one. We now see a new version in place, which we had better look at: it is a version of functionalism proposing an interpretation of markets, particularly financial ones, through key ‘reflexive truths’.

George Soros (2000), the International magnate, has pointed out that financial markets’ workings follow their own ‘reflexivity’ (or reflexive rationality) marked by evolutionary mechanisms, which are self-referential and have uncertain outcomes. These ‘mechanisms’ are rooted in the particular reflexivity of economic actors who ‘discount’ the future. They shape reality (what actually happens in society, not only in markets) through investments that anticipate the future and pre-empt future reality in the shape desired by financial operators. Reality is transformed through the financial operators’ own ‘reflexive truth’.

However, our question is: to what extent can society – interpreted as daily life’s social texture – be configured in the same way as financial markets and their ‘reflexive’ logic promoting an evolution without finalism? The thing is that society – if we see it as a social relationships network properly – is not a stock exchange. There are other types of reflexivity to shape society (Archer 2003; 2007; ed. 2010).

The argument I would like to hold is that it is these ‘other’ forms of reflexivity that can get us out of the crisis started in 2008 and beyond the lib/lab systems’ own chronic crisis.

3. Is there an alternative to an evolution without finalism?

Can we think of an alternative to the functionalist and evolutionist model I have been discussing? I think that the world needs a post-functionalist, indeed an after-modern development model, i.e. based on the assumption of definitely overcoming functionalism – theoretical and empirical – as its intellectual infrastructure.29

However, a word of caution is needed here. Functionalism cannot be overcome by a backward-looking humanistic view, unable to match the competitive skills of functionalism. It has to be a kind of humanism proving capable of taking functionalism into account while overcoming its limitations.

Such a post-functionalist perspective, or logic of societal development, ought to be able to do three things:

a) at a macro level, to reduce systemic determinisms, in favour of processes of social morphogenesis based upon the logic of opportunities instead of the logic of (antagonistic) competition;

29 I see functionalism as the root of the scientific-technological approach typical of the West and of Western modernity, as Davis (1959) described it.
b) at the meso level, to find new forms of social governance based upon partnership and open coordination among organisational networks capable of self-steering;

c) at a micro-level (i.e. of individual action), to modify life styles, i.e. consumption habits, according to more austere value guidelines, to avoid functionalistic commercialisation mechanisms. Life worlds, i.e. primary (face-to-face) relations and interactions, taking place within informal networks, small groups, voluntary associations based on interpersonal relations, have to be given a chance to speak. One has to take into account the decisive role of personal reflexivity, seen as inner conversation (Archer 2000; 2003) and the role of social reflexivity as a quality of relations’ networks (Donati 2010).

It is clear that such changes are not possible within a consumption economy whose only ruling principle is the GNP growth imperative (as it is depicted in figure 1). They become possible, though, as soon as one takes on board the fact that GNP has been a useful well-being parameter when used for developing countries with quite a low average income and with widespread poverty problems, but it becomes hardly significant for societies that have reached a certain well-being threshold, such as post-industrial countries entering the ‘information or knowledge society’. In these countries, GNP has to be replaced by other units of measure, such as Gross National Well-Being (GNWB), which should be adopted not only by developed countries, but also by developing countries.

An austere life-style does not mean a ‘poor’ economy that reduces aspirations to a greater well-being. It does not mean, for instance, a mere de-industrialisation or a demise of medical services or schooling as proposed in the past, nor does it mean rejecting technology. It does not mean going back to a naively ‘naturalistic’ way of life. These are utopias without any hope or sense. A different economy is made possible by a different notion, relational and not merely materialistic, of well-being and of happiness (Diwan 2000). We need another economic logic, if we realize the relational character of society which follows from the ‘happiness paradox’, according to which the well-being in the advanced countries does not increase over time, or even declines, in spite of the rising trend of income, while people continue to strive for money.

We have to ask ourselves if and how it is possible to envisage an economy centred upon the human quality of individual and social life and focused on humanising social relations.

The crisis that emerged in 2008 is at the root of the following novelties (see figure 2):
- consumption habits are becoming more reflexive (Garcia Ruiz and Rodriguez-Lluesma 2010),
- we are seeing an expansion of an economy that we may call relational because it envisages the economic stages of production-distribution-consumption of goods and services in terms of social relations
and aims at producing a synergy between profit and non-profit (Goldsmith, Georges & Burke 2010);

- the rule of the old welfare state operating top-down is gradually replaced by a new societal governance operating through horizontal networks and bottom-up (plural and subsidiary welfare, featuring a market-state-third sector triangle) (Willke 2007);

- social life must be dealt with the ‘reflexive imperative’ in every social field, in order to pass from the acquisitive logic of competition, which produces inequalities and marginalization, to the logic of opportunities, which fosters a more equalitarian and inclusive society (Archer 2012);

- the reflexive differentiation of socio-economic markets (for profit, no profit, civil economy, social markets, etc.) follows the idea that markets stem from social networks (White 2002).

Such changes point to the rise of another type of societal configuration, as outlined in figure 2.

Fig. 2 – The economic logic of a relational society.

![Diagram of economic logic]

It is important to understand the fundamental role of the social spheres commonly called ‘third sector’. Not only does the influence of their economic role increase (in terms of turnover and workforce), but above all such spheres operate as an ‘engine of a civil society’ that is alternative to the market underpinning the lib/lab set-up (as described in figure 1).

It is the vast world of co-operation (social co-operation, social enterprises), of voluntary associations, of ethical banks and of various forms of microcredit, of fair trade, of NGOs, of multiple forms of enterprises which we call ‘civil’. Such bodies create their own financial markets, such as the Bolsa de Valores Sociales y Ambietais (BVS&A) in Brazil, SASIX (South African Social Investment Exchange) in South Africa, the KIVA project in the USA, the Asian Impact Investment Exchange (IIX) managed by the Social Stock Exchange Asia (SSXA) in Singapore, GEXSI (Global Exchange For Social Investment) in the UK, MYC4 in Denmark and Social Stock Exchange
Ldm. in the UK, involving the Rockefeller Foundation, and finally the FacciaperFaccia [Face for Face] event at the Falacosagiusa fair in Milan. Others have proposed to create a ‘social stock exchange’, aimed at managing ‘social and welfare business’, which would become an integral part of a horizontal subsidiary set-up a state could not ignore. And this might happen by setting up a sort of AIM (Alternative Investment Market), whose financial instruments would be shares (issued by low profit enterprises and non-profit social enterprises) and debt bonds (equally issued by for profit and non profit bodies).

Such new enterprises as low profit limited liability companies and community interest companies, as well as new financial markets, can produce a different response to the world economic crisis, not merely by adapting themselves but by giving moral standards priority in economic and social action and by being able to modify life, work and consumption styles. Compared with traditional capitalist enterprises, such enterprises have a number of peculiar features: for instance, they produce relational goods (and more generally intangible goods), they show greater flexibility, value sideways social mobility rather than competitive (upward/downward) job mobility.

These new economic entities do convey a new model of society, but to implement it they have to overcome a number of obstacles: (i) internally, they have to develop their own meta-reflexivity; (ii) externally, they have to get rid of their structural dependence on the nation state (above all in Europe) and on the for-profit market (above all in the USA).30

4. Rethinking civil society and its economic foundations.

The problem with modernity having reached the globalisation stage is that civil society is still seen as a capitalist economy tending to financialise real economy. The 2008 crisis has revealed this way of seeing civil society and has at the same time started to elaborate a new way of interpreting civil society. In other terms, the 2008 crisis has highlighted the difference (a real splitting) between the old modern and the new civil society. We may have reached a turning-point between one and the other.

On the one hand, the old modern civil society is still amongst us, tending to subject every good to the sequence by which money is invested in goods which in turn are used to make more money [according to the sequence: Money-Good-Money (M-G-M)]. Actors, that is, invest money in a good they have no need for, but which is only instrumental to making more money. At first, they attribute to that good a monetary (functional) value and then trade it to make more money. It is important to understand that this

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30 As an indicator that a lib/lab configuration is prevailing in the USA too (and not only in Europe), it can be reminded that 97% of the private debt in the States passes through the State (Sinn 2010: ch. 11).
mechanism presides over the whole lib/lab system. The state also uses it in its relationship with the market: the state uses the market to get the money to pay for public welfare, which in turn is the source of votes, the political system’s own money. In this context, civil society is identified with the market.

On the other hand, a new civil society is emerging, which is identified with an economy which does not comply with the previous principles. In this economy (based upon indicators of fair and sustainable well-being and social progress, like the HDI-Human Development Index or similar measures), in contrast with the previous case (based upon the GDP), the good is evaluated in itself and money (also in forms different from currency) is only used by actors as a tool to acquire the goods they need [according to the sequence: Good-Money-Good (G-M-G)]. A good can be translated into money to the extent that it is needed to obtain another necessary good which can be bought (for traditional goods, as when work provides the money used by actors to buy the consumption goods they want). Many goods, anyway, have not a price in terms of currency (let us think of the quality of life, security, physical and human ecology, etc.), and need other forms of ‘money’ (which is now defined as an entitlement of access to those goods).

Rethinking civil society means understanding whether, and how, it is possible, and necessary in the first place, to shift from the M-G-M sequence to the G-M-G sequence. This shift requires a more complex view of society than modernity’s own view. At the core of this view lies the relational nature of goods. Indeed, if it is true that the distinctive feature of a modernising economy is to erase the relational nature of goods and economic processes, the building blocks of a new economy will be precisely the new needs for proper social relationships. It is not by accident that we see free giving coming back into so many social spheres and in many different forms (Donati 2003): from a sociological point of view, gifts point to the pursuit of social bonds and to the need for social relations to be forged to cement the sense of community.

Let me explain the distinction I have been drawing between the two societies: the modern one and the one I call after-modern, in more detail (figure 3).

The key element of this distinction is the fact that after-modern society is confronted with the need to produce a variety pool of options (in goods consumption and production, in life styles, in welfare measures) which cannot be left to the logic of pure competition, or amount to a merely functional monetary equivalence (as Luhmann holds), but has to be endowed with human sense, permitting the creation of common goods (by which I mean relational goods) within a logic of enhancing personal opportunities.

This results in the rise of a new Zeitgeist. Whenever we say that future society will have to be inspired by the ethical principles of social inclusion, responsibility and ‘sustainability’, we have many different things in mind, the
first being that the instruments (such as finance, technology, etc.) must match human needs and not vice versa. Means should serve the ends, reversing what modernity has brought about. Which implies that means have to be used only as means and not as self-standing ends or goals.

I summarise the distinction between modern and after-modern set-ups in a table (figure 3).

(i) In modern society:
   A) Financial economy is based on the equation: money = currency
   G) Money is an end in itself, because of the functional culture which makes all goods and services subjectable to monetary equivalence;
   I) Enterprises have no broader social responsibility than that strictly associated with their own employees;
   L) the motives of economic action are individual, instrumental, acquisitive.

(ii) In after-modern society, on the other hand:
   A) means economy assumes that money does not only amount to currency, but there can be other forms of money, meaning by money an entitlement to access goods and services [money ≠ currency]. This economy, therefore, draws a distinction between monetary and non-monetary forms of money, by connecting them to ‘real economy’ (in which many goods and services do not allow for monetary equivalents). Hence arises an observable multiplication of forms of money, labour and capitals (not only financial capital, but also political, social and human) and also a multiplication of contracts, in brief, of all the goods needed to pursue an economic objective (Donati 2001);
   G) money is subjected to social constraints, which may be usage or functional constraints (as, for instance, is the case of vouchers);
   I) corporate social responsibility is extended outside the company to the surrounding community and to stakeholders (profits do not only or entirely go to shareholders); social responsibility is also broadened with regard to employees with forms of conciliation between work and family, with relational contracts, as well as corporate citizenship;
   L) the motives of economic action relate individual interests to principles of subsidiarity and solidarity which are necessary to produce common goods, which will be relational goods.
Figure 3 – Two paradigmatic set-ups of economy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>In a ‘Modern’ society</th>
<th>In an ‘After-modern’ society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (means)</td>
<td>Money = currency</td>
<td>Money ≠ currency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G (goals)</td>
<td>Whatever the goal of economic activity in the market, it should use money with the only constraint for it to provide more money</td>
<td>Economic goals must provide functional constraints upon the use of money (in its various monetary and non-monetary forms) in order to give goals a social usefulness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I norms (social responsibility)</td>
<td>Enterprises only have an internal social responsibility to their employees</td>
<td>Enterprises also have an external responsibility to the community’s stakeholders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L (values)</td>
<td>Value motives are individualistic, instrumental, acquisitive</td>
<td>Value motives are relational (inspired by subsidiarity and solidarity to produce goods seen as relational goods)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new societal configuration (as outlined in figure 4) does not erase modernity, but sees the modern lib/lab set-up only as a particular case, that is as a way of operating (of organising economy, politics, etc.) which is no longer general and which cannot be generalised throughout all social actors and spheres, but is only applicable to ever more limited action areas. Earlier on modernisation was seen as potentially extendable throughout all spheres of society. This in turn legitimised the fact that the compromise between state and market was able to turn life worlds into commodities. The new set-up that I call after-modern is not characterised by a logic of dominance of a pole (market or state) over the other or by commercial negotiation logics between sub-systems or social spheres, but by a network-like logic which is forced to make the different societal spheres more co-operative, or at least to follow a mutually non-destructive competition logic, within a world-system’s global sustainability project.

To implement such a set-up, one needs a relational configuration that modernity was unable to tolerate, because it was overwhelmed by cultural movements seeing modernity as a denial of sociality.

31 I am referring to individual A, G, I, L sub-systems with the institutions thereof.
32 J. J. Rousseau’s works, for instance, provide a paradigmatic example of this position, which has justified an apolitical individualism and at the same time State dictatorships within modernity (cf. Spaemann 2008).
It is possible to apply to civil society a notion of ‘reconversion’ by analogy with what happened to market reconversion, when we shifted from an economy based on large industrial concerns to the information and knowledge economy. It can be defined as a reconversion of civil society if we think of it as a ‘bottom up’ promotion of networks of social relations which do not respond to imperatives of functional performance and to monetary equivalence criteria, but meet the need to create relational goods. The reconfiguration of civil society will redefine the ways of being of state and market as well. This whole societal process can be called ‘societal morphogenesis’, which will be clarified in the next chapter.

AGIL (A=adaptation; G=goal-attainment; I=integration; L=latency)
Symbols: M (money); GS (goods and services); P (political power);
T (third sector, civil society associations); R (social relations)
Chapter 3

The oncoming societal morphogenesis: how social networks produce a relational society

1. The issue: how to conceive of social morphogenesis.

This chapter aims to show how relational sociology – in connection with critical realism – sees social change, understood as social morphogenesis, in advanced societies. The idea of applying the morphogenetic conceptual framework to society comes from far away. Its initial analogy with the field of biological life is evident. In recent times it has been dealt with by authors such as M. Maruyama (1960a) and W. Buckley (1967). A new version has been given by M.S. Archer (in her book of 1979) whose critical realist approach I share. My starting point can be expressed with the following questions: what is the ‘morphogenesis’ of society? how can we conceive it? why do we speak of the ‘morphogenetic society’?

I wish to emphasize why and how social MG is wholly different from the biological one. In sociology, the new perspective is that of moving beyond a definition in a structural-functional-system sense of the concepts of variety, selection, positive/negative feedbacks, and the stabilization processes that go to realize MG. It is necessary to redefine these concepts from the perspective of a relational paradigm of MG. The task of this paradigm is to explain and understand the production of a new society as a process of MG that, amongst the dilemmas and discomforts generated by modernity, tries to manage social change by guiding its outcomes through various attempts of relational steering, whose success is highly improbable anyway. These attempts are characterized not only by the use of positive or negative feedbacks (which operate, nonetheless) but also by recourse to relational feedbacks that generate emergent social effects. Under many respects, the emerging society has to look for remedies to the negative outcomes of modernity, to the extent that the latter has been governed by the principle of ‘institutionalized individualism’, by reversing this principle into what I would like to call a ‘principle of relationality’.

2. Social change and emergence of new social forms.
In the conceptual framework of relational sociology, social MG is a peculiar kind of social change. Some scholars believe that MG is an analytical scheme to understand any social change, but this view runs the risk of conflating the two concepts. I maintain that MG is a special case of social change in which new forms emerge, and the emergents are stabilized as structures that operate for a certain span of time (elaborated structures). In any case, in order to happen, social MG requires specific conditions to become a reality. First of all, it needs time, and time must not be purely interactive but must have a certain durée so that the process can generate an organizational form. The basic difference existing among the different possible directions of social change resides in the ways in which variety is produced and new chances (opportunities) are selected in the intermediate ($T^2-T^3$) phase of the morphogenetic process (Archer 1995) (see figure 1). Here logics for selection, which can be of various types, come into play.

For example: the choice of varieties follows criteria of compatibility or cooperation among themselves (= organic development), or it relies on competition with one another in such a way as to make the strongest, the most efficient, the most efficacious variety the winner (Darwinian selection). Often, however, the increase (enhancement) of opportunities does not follow a precise logic, but only specific, local and particular goals without an overall logic other than the “creation of variety for the sake of variety.” In any case, selections are conditioned by a context (‘surrounding conditions’) which always leaves margins of freedom to the agents/actors.

![Figure 1 – The process of social morphogenesis and its phases.](image-url)
Emergence is an “act of composition (syn-thesis)” (ontologically, it is an act of coming into existence)\textsuperscript{33} that combines into a new entity elements that contend with each other. Such an entity presents (possesses) sui generis qualities and powers that cannot be reduced to the sum of the powers and qualities of the elements that have been combined with each other, nor can they be explained on the basis of these powers and qualities because the latter belong to a new relational structure (the relational network in which the basic elements have been combined). How does this – apparently mysterious – ‘synthetic act of composition’ come about? Do the elements (for example, the subjects of the social relation) create the composition, or does it come about due to other causes?

Let us examine the causal process. The elements are the material causes of the emergence process which could not happen without them. The final cause is the generation of an entity that, otherwise, could not exist as a reality of a different and new order with respect to the order of reality of the constitutive elements. The efficient cause is the vital force that produces (alias ‘brings out’, ‘brings forth’, causes to \textit{ex-sister}e) the emergent effect.

The formal cause is the sustainability of the reticular structure that combines the elements and causes them to subsist in an emergent effect endowed with its own autonomy, relative though it is (the more exact term is ‘relational’ autonomy’ in that it is the possibility of self-norming contingent upon the material and non-material causes that generated it).

The relational concept of MG requires the generation of a form: but what happens if the process is anomic and refuses to assume a shape?

Let us take as an example the case in which the emergent effect is a social relation of friendship between two people. The elements to be combined are the two people as subjects who are autonomous in themselves. They are the material cause of the relation. The final cause is their intentionality to generate the common good that exists in the bond of friendship (the bond is the sociocultural structure constituted by expectations of trust and cooperation that are reciprocated and able to be reciprocated over time; it should be noted that reciprocal expectations define a web of fiduciary relations). The efficient cause is the energy that is situated in the bond, which exists, in reality, as the ‘attraction’ that the friendship bond exerts on the two individuals (they feel attracted by the energy of the friendship relation, which is external to them as individuals). The formal cause is the sustainability of the bond, i.e., the fact that the bond consists of (is ‘made’ of) and consists in

\textsuperscript{33} From the etymological point of view, the term synthesis means ‘composition’. It is formed by \textit{syn} (= with, together) and \textit{thesis} (= action of putting something). Thus, to synthesize means to unite together in a (new) composition. Such a composition is not a ‘dialectical synthesis’ in the manner of F. Hegel, nor is it the result of interactions that arise from dualism between structure and agency (as in the paradigm of emergence theorized by Sawyer 2005), but it is the generativity of two relations that create a \textit{sui generis} reality. This is well highlighted by Prandini (2011) on the basis of a renewed social ontology in scientific social research.
(has as its purpose) a relation that responds to the expectations of the two subjects, not by giving specialized and predefined performances (as stated by functionalism) but by providing performances that are potentially not localizable, not specific, open to interactions, not pre-definable, not discrete, all of which makes the emergent phenomenon (in this case, the friendship relation) a super-functional social fact, i.e., with a spectrum of potential functions that are not determined by a system structure that includes it and, thus, does not have functional equivalents. For this reason we say that the emergent effect is a sui generis reality precisely because it has its own qualities and powers that cannot be traced back either to the elements (individual subjects) or to a prior preordained system. This is ‘the relation’s order (of reality)’ of which the ontological reality is situated in the being that is in/of the relation (being in relation): in other words, in the connecting network’s relationality.

3. How do we conceive of the social relation?

One of the most recent and interesting contributions to relational sociology comes from Jan Fuhse (2003, 2009), who combines the theories of Luhmann (on communication) and of Harrison White (on social networks) and asserts that networks are phenomena emerging from processes of communication that constitute themselves as structures of meaning. Social norms are expectations that are formed in narratives (‘stories’) from which social relations emerge that structure interactive episodes. His thesis is that relational stories create social networks through the reiteration of communications (in which the ‘utterance’ has the greatest influence). However, it must be observed that it is not at all clear how the structures of meaning that ‘make’ social networks can be stabilized. For a plausible answer to this question, we should clarify what we mean by social relation.

My relational sociology argues that, if we adopt a radical constructivist perspective, the sense of social relations is hollowed out and distorted. This happens, to my mind, in the convergence between system theory and the theory of social networks that has taken place along a sequence [Parts/Whole → System/environment → Theory of communication (Bateson 1972) → Autopoiesis → ANT theory (Latour 2005)] in which sociological knowledge has lost sight of the properly human qualities of social relationality.

In my opinion, in the constructionist versions of system theory, human relations appear deficient in one or more of their components.34 Particularly, in Luhmann’s theory human relations are reduced to communications, to pure stimuli or noise. Thus, it is necessary to rethink the

34 By components of the relation, I mean the organic components (bios) that sustain the relation, the situated goals of the relation, the norms that regulate the relation, and a value pattern that orients the relation. See the relational theory of AGIL according to Donati (1991: ch. 4; 2011b: 148-162) against Luhmann (1988a).
convergence between system theory and network theory in light of how the social relation is understood.

From the perspective of an epistemology which I call critical, relational and analytical realism, a social relation is an emergent effect of a reciprocal action (ego-alter inter-action) between actors/social subjects who occupy different positions in a societal configuration (a system, a network, or other arrangements). These positions can be translated into an algebraic matrix (Tony Tam 1989: i → j/j → i). The actors are supposed to realize exchanges between each other (via means and norms: A-I of AGIL) 35 within a certain relational context of power (which can have, or not, a value pattern of legitimation of the situated goals: L-G of AGIL). If stabilized over time, such reciprocal action (inter-action) produces an emergent effect that consists of a structure of interdependence, which can be called ‘relational configuration’ (as meant by Norbert Elias 1978) or ‘relational organization’ (Lawson 2013: 71-72). The latter can be more or less ‘new’ in relation to the prior one. It can be a relational good or a relational evil depending on its effects on the actors and on the social networks to which they belong.

Crossley (2012) has proposed a relational sociology that does not meet these properties. Let me point out the main differences between the perspective put forward by Crossley and my relational approach. Both relational sociologies aim to overcome three central sociological dichotomies – individualism/holism, structure/agency, and micro/macro – since neither individuals nor ‘wholes’, in the traditional sociological sense, should take precedence in sociology. Rather, sociologists should focus on evolving and dynamic networks of interaction and relations. The difference starts when Crossley conceives of relations as transactions, Crossley argues that social worlds “comprise” networks of interaction and relations while a relational sociology would assert that social worlds “consist” of networks of interactions and relations. He claims that relations are lived trajectories of iterated interaction, built up through a history of interaction, but also entailing anticipation of future interaction. Of course, social relations are built through interactions, but they do not consist only of interactions. For him, social networks comprise multiple dyadic relations that are mutually transformed through their combination. It is certainly true that dyadic relations are the basis of networks, but Crossley ignores the triadic nature of social relations and relations as emergent effects. In other words, Crossley ignores the ‘logic of the third’ which is inherent to the process of emergence (such a logic has been clarified by Hofkirchner 2013).

35 I am referring here to the relational redefinition of AGIL (see Donati 1991: ch. 4) which is a deep revision of the theories by Parsons (1978) and Luhmann (1995) on the same scheme.
4. The working of social networks in the morphogenetic process.

The attempts to theorize MG today that are directed toward a convergence between system theory and social network theory are, most of the time, conflationary in nature. This defect can be overcome only by configuring a more analytical framework of MG than those that are currently available so as to avoid all types of conflation. Starting with Archer’s scheme (2011), I propose to make it more complex and articulated by means of an analysis of the intermediate phases (T2-T3) in terms of social networks.

Let us begin with the formulation of the morphogenetic scheme according to system theories that are sensitive to network theory.

At time T1 we observe a configuration A of the conditioning structure, which can be described as AGIL-1 in terms of a network of relations among N social actors who are interacting among themselves. At time T2 the new elaborated configuration B is stabilized (or not). It can be described as AGIL-2. What has happened between T1 and T2?

If MG is to be generated, according to the system approach, during the interactions one or more positive feedbacks are to be produced that generate variations that are seen as new opportunities. Variations in what?

The variations can concern actors and their relations. (a) The number and type of actors: the number of actors can change because some can disappear and others can come into existence; moreover, their identity can change over the course of the interactions. (b) Relations can change in terms of their components: variations in resources (material and not) available to the actors and in their distribution; variations in relations of power among actors (modifications of interdependencies); variations in norms and values that allow for new behaviors and stabilize them in the emergent structure.

The examples of MG offered by system theory make reference to discontinuities in societal differentiation: in the first place, the passage from primitive (segmentary) societies based on reciprocity and equality, to stratified societies based on asymmetrical relations of power and the acceptance of social inequality and, then, from stratified societies to the functionally differentiated society. We notice that accounts of these morphogenetic jumps privilege (give priority to) variations in resources and in their distribution. In this respect, Luhmann’s version of MG is no different from that of Karl Marx. All system approaches are characterized by the fact that, in them, “culture is subsumed under structure” (Zeuner 1999). On the other hand, non-system approaches offer other explanations that privilege either the actors and the culture of which they are the bearers (norms and values, i.e., cultural identities), as Max Weber proposes, or relational dynamics, as Bearman (1993), for example, proposes.

In the mainstream system paradigm, variations are essentially the product (i) of positive feedbacks in the instrumental dimension and (ii) of endogenous factors. Exogenous factors can function as stimulus and catalyst
of transformative processes (for example: the plunder of a victorious war, a conquest, etc. can confer greater resources on certain social strata, and this fact alters power relations and the acceptability of new social norms; today we might think of the internet’s advent, which has fostered revolts in societies of Islamic tradition in North Africa and the Middle East). However, external factors are considered ‘random’, not planned or determined by the constraints of the initial social structure, while factors internal to the system are those that actually carry out MG.

The system approach, moreover, entails precise conditions in order for MG to be obtained in the intermediate phases of the morphogenetic process: the first condition is that there be a structural equivalence of individuals in the networks (Lorrain and White 1971); the second is that, in order for MG to be produced, the time must be linear, in the sense that, at least in the long term, a progressive ‘evolution’ is achieved.

Within the system approach, the passage from a modern society to a morphogenetic society is read as one more step in the process of functional differentiation. The neo-functionalist approach supposes that each societal sub-system encounters the logic of re-entry and self-reference. In particular, it supposes that: (a) the MG of the market (the economic system) comes about according to the logic of maximization of profit (money); (b) the MG of the state (the political system) comes about according to the logic of the maximization of political power; (c) the MG of science comes about according to the logic of the maximum search for knowledge; (d) the MG of third sector organizations comes about according to the logic of the maximum possible compensation in terms of social solidarity in response to the failures of the market and the state; (e) the MG of the family comes about according to the logic of the maximization of love in intimate relations, therefore, producing a differentiation of forms beyond the traditional family (free unions, one-parent families, reconstituted families, gay families, blended families, colored families, etc.).

One can wonder: does what happens in the T2-T3 interval really respond to a functionalist logic in each of these spheres and between them? It is doubtful for many reasons.

The functionalist logic may be suited to economic and political systems (market and state) but becomes problematic when applied to science and technology, and it certainly has very little applicability to the third sector and to families.

It is quite difficult to interpret the morphogenetic changes of the family, of the third sector, of civil society, but also of scientific and technological research, according to the logic of functional differentiation. The functionalist logic may be suited to the area of interests (market-state) but is totally unsuited to understanding the MG of lifeworld identities, as well as the MG of those scientific and technological researches which strive to serve people’s needs and not exploit them in an instrumental way.
As a matter of fact, by now even the market and state no longer respond to the functionalist logic. In the dynamics of emergence, the functionalist logic is only one of the possibilities, and certainly not the most probable. The problem becomes how not to remain prisoners of the functionalist system approach.

5. Is it possible to steer social morphogenesis?

The relational paradigm of social MG distances itself from the functionalist one because it redefines the key-words of the morphogenetic process and the sequence that leads to emergence.

In particular it does the following. Variety is seen as the product of variations of relations, and not only of individual motivations or of ‘things’ (elements); relations have their own internal structure (not only form) based on components of purposes, means, norms, and models of values. Distinctions are drawn not only on the basis of binary codes but make use of relational codes, above all. Selections address contradictions and incompatibilities by means of the creation of new sustainable relations between choices via the modification of expectations. Reflexivity is inflected (articulated) in a relational manner. Differentiation proceeds via relational distinctions and coordination. Stabilization takes place according to sustainable relations between the parts. Norms are defined and managed in a relational manner. Emergent output is a new relational structure. Social time follows a register of a relational-historical type; if the register of social time is merely interactive or merely symbolic, MG is not generated.

In the phases between $T^2$ and $T^{z-1}$, variations can be produced in other ways with respect to what is envisaged by system theory, which minimizes exchanges with the outside and privileges internal factors because it holds that meaningful variations are produced by positive feedbacks within the system, even if they are stimulated by external factors. Instead, new elements (exogenous factors) can make an entrance. Moreover, variations can be quantitative (inequalities) or qualitative (diversities). The entry of exogenous factors and the characteristics of quantitative-qualitative variations give rise to the necessity of introducing distinctions that are not the product of internal (positive or negative) feedbacks. These distinctions, however, must be confirmed by internal feedbacks in a positive sense (if MG is produced). If confirmed, the distinction becomes differentiation (of the entities at stake), which must then be stabilized as a norm by means of a reflexive recursivity. This is the point at which social interaction produces social differentiation.

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36 In my view, there are three main types of social time registers to which I refer: interactive (or événementiel, that lasts the mere time of communication), historico-relational (that has a durée, i.e. it starts, lasts for a certain span and then ends up), and symbolic (it has no social time meaning that it lasts for ever).
Here, social MG is generated in that it is completely distinct from biological MG.

In society, as well as in biological life, there can be a mutation. There are mutations that are not destined to survive and others that become stabilized. The difference lies in the non-generative vs generative character of the mutant (emergent). If mutations become stabilized, we speak of bound morphogenesis, which is characterized by the fact that, in it, the constraints are not imposed from outside the interactive networks, but are generated from within the networks. Networks are an expression of social integration, but of a social integration that operates in synergy with system integration.

Anyway mutations are rare. The creative character of MG usually corresponds to what Buckley (1967) calls ‘adaptive’ with reference to complexity theory. Among the adaptive kinds of social MG emerging in what I call an after-modern society, I want to look to those ones which are produced through processes of relational steering in coping with social issues. Relational steering is here conceived as a way to produce MG by means of those mechanisms which I call ‘relational feedbacks’.

Relational feedbacks can be defined as those feedbacks which: (i) are non-automatic; (ii) are generative in the sense of giving birth to a new, relatively stable, relational configuration; (iii) are compatible with the presence of positive and negative feedbacks but operate according to a many-valued and transjunctional logic, not according to a binary (positive/negative) logic; (iv) imply a social network of agents (partners); (v) so that the feedback loop is regulated mainly by redefining the goals and/or rules of the network. I will develop this argument later on.

The features of MG depend to a great extent on the agential power of a social network’s units. If we apply the concept of “centrality” (agential power) of the social network’s units (Tam, 1989) to a multifaceted X (single actor or network), what happens? My answer is: a relational subject, i.e., a subject that defines its own personal and social identity through relations (Simmel’s circles) due to the fact that it is acquired and exercised through ego-alter relations.

With respect to the system paradigm, it should be noted that exchanges with the outside are not random but happen on the basis of the logic of networks. Variations are subjected to distinctions that are not binary, but relational, instead. The process is not merely functional but comes about through the activation of new relations within and between the various social spheres. The structure that is elaborated is itself also a social network that distinguishes its internal structure from the environment and defines its boundaries, even if only temporarily.

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37 Generative here is not equal to a generic ‘causal’ mechanism, but is means that has the power to cause an emergent.
38 In network analysis, ‘centrality’ is the concept that gives a rough indication of the social power of a node based on how well it “connects” the network (“betweenness,” “closeness,” and “degree” are all measures of centrality).
What I want to emphasize is the autonomous role of social networks with respect to system logic. Social mechanisms that generate the emergent phenomenon have a relational character. For this reason, the idea that we should study the mechanisms of social emergence by means of multiagent-based computer simulation (for example, Sawyer 2004) is misleading. Computers do not have and cannot address social relations.

The theory of social networks alters the fundamental concepts of system theory. The reasons for this alteration are many.

First, variety is not only of elements but also of relations, which is not contemplated in Ashby’s (1956, 1958) theory of statistical variety.

Second, the network dynamics affects social structures in different ways depending on the kind of feedback they use: public bureaucracies use negative feedbacks by default; for-profit markets use positive feedbacks and face outcomes of addiction (Teubner 2011); the organizations of civil society do not act either on command or for profit, and use a type of feedback that is neither negative nor positive (although it is compatible with them, which I call ‘relational feedback’, proper to relational steering); mixed networks of some, or even all, of the other actors (various forms of partnership and open coordination, for example between for-profit and not-for-profit, with or without public institutions, etc.) use feedbacks that normally are neither purely positive nor purely negative.

One could examine this subject more in depth at this point, analyzing in more detail and with practical examples the type of networks that have to do with civil society, such as: extended family networks; the neighborhood; friendship; voluntary networks (civic associations), which can be of advocacy, services, opinion, or social networks on the internet; social promotion associations; family associations; social cooperatives; social enterprises; civic foundations; networks of self and mutual help; community networks of various types. In the realm of social networks outside public (state) bureaucracies, feedbacks are usually treated as an open relation. This means that whatever is changed is negotiable to some extent: it is not a cut and dry choice between accepting and refusing, between passivity (or stasis) and its opposite. In order to understand how this can happen, it is necessary to see feedback not as an automatic mechanism of a binary type (as in a thermostat), but as a relation that can be steered by a many-valued and transjunctive logic. Relational feedback is a second order, non-automatic, generative mechanism that follows a many-valued logic (also multi- or multiple-valued logic), that is a propositional calculus in which there are more than two truth values, without violating the principle of non-contradiction. In Aristotle's logical calculus, there are only two possible values (i.e. "true" and "false") for any proposition. In case a value is neither true nor false, an extension to classical two-valued logic is an n-valued logic for n greater than 2. Those most popular in the literature are three-valued (which accept the values "true," "false," and "unknown"), the finite-valued
with more than three values, and the infinite-valued, such as fuzzy logic and probability logic. A transjunctival logic is a logic based on the operation of transjunction, which consists in refusing a given dualistic structure of proffered choices (i.e. the choice between yes and no, left and right, 0/1, etc.) and going beyond the conjunction/disjunction alternatives; it transcends (not necessarily in the Hegelian form of sublation) the given objective two-valued system (for instance lib/lab). It is a relational pattern which requires that more than two values be filled in (because it does not remain within the frame of acceptance/rejection of the given opposite values and their combinations).

We can think, here, of forms of social partnership. There are forms of partnership with a vertical structure (as in public administrations in which the networks are dictated from above), partnerships with purely horizontal interaction (in which there is the risk of central conflations between actors and their networks), and spontaneous partnerships from below (which run the risk of inefficacy in achieving shared objectives because they lack coordination between the partners). To speak of relational feedbacks means being able to see those forms of social partnership that we can call ‘generative relational partnership’ in that they are able to combine principles of horizontal and vertical coordination, avoiding conflations (from below, from above, and central). The process is that of creating a ‘relational subject’ which is neither an individual nor a collective entity overshadowing the single agents/actors.

Third, emergence is due to the fact that the context of the network consists of contradictions within and between differentiated and stratified entities (as Bhaskar 1989 rightly maintains) and is caused by interactions amongst these entities and their relations so to produce emergent effects (as in the case of new forms in the so called Third Sector: Donati 2004).

Fourth, if a new network is to appear, the selection must be stabilized in terms of the sustainability of the opportunities accessible in the network.

This leads us to the issue of relational steering. Luhmann (1988b) holds that the social systems of the future will be increasingly less capable of steering due to the explosion of the world of communications. As we know, for Luhmann the social is communication and only communication, and that communication is synonymous with information in the sense that to communicate means to ‘give form’, to in-form. In-formation, in his thinking, gives a form to organizations and social systems, but not to interactions and social networks because the latter are characterized by a high level of contingency and, therefore, by a high improbability of being stabilized.

Conversely, In ‘t Veld, Termeer, Schaap and van Twist (eds. 1991) hold that, from the empirical point of view, it is possible to ascertain the fact that many social phenomena, including interactions and networks, can be directed (governed) by creating societal configurations able to manage the growth of complexity by means of a convergence on values and shared practices that render diversities compatible with each other. These authors
indicate various modalities of steering, which is understood in a generic way, i.e., as the capacity for finding solutions to problems by means of reciprocal adaptations among actors. Steering is conceived as a method of governing society which rely on the creative capacity of social networks to generate efficacious configurations for facing challenges. Such configurations are conceived of as follows: “Patterns come about in the social process of sense making, patterns that in turn influence the subsequent processes. I use the concept of configurations to describe these patterns. Configurations are social relationships between people who together determine the meaning of what they do. They can be characterized as a connection between a social structure consisting of stable patterns of interaction (“who”) and agreed-upon rules of interaction (“how”) and a cognitive structure that consists of shared meanings (“what”). Configurations usually don’t coincide with existing arrangements like organizations, departments or regions. Configurations come into being because when interacting with each other people develop shared meanings and because people especially take to people who give the same meanings as they do. Value judgments, rules of construction and routines are nested and formed in configurations and then have a structuring effect on subsequent interactions, without determining them. Social and cognitive structures strengthen each other in the process of configuration formation, spinning around each like a kind of double helix” (Termeer 2007: 8).

These authors attribute the capacity for societal steering to the fact that agents/actors (the nodes) create stable interactions with shared meanings. They do not analyze the way in which the relational dynamic (the relationality) of networks operates. The capacity for steering is identified in the formation of patterns and habits shared by the agents/actors, rather than in the processes of reflexivity. They ignore the inner reflexivity of single agents/actors, the reflexivity of subjects in relation to each other, the reflexivity of relations that make the networks, and the structural reflectivity of networks. The way in which the social network is able to generate new stable configurations is said to be due to the stabilization of values and reciprocal expectations via negative feedbacks, while we know that, to produce a real social MG, such a stabilization is highly improbable.

My hypothesis is that for stable configurations to emerge, they need what I call relational steering.

The crucial point that distinguishes the relational form of steering from other forms is the fact that it is based, not only on positive or negative feedbacks, but rather on relational feedbacks. Relational feedbacks consist in reciprocal action between agents/actors that does not opt for the negation or amplification of variations but manages them as options that are always open and negotiable in a network having relationality in common between agents/actors, but not necessarily the same values, habits, and intervention styles. Relational steering consists in sharing the relationality of the network
as a common good (a relational good) among subjects that intend to accomplish a project open to new opportunities.

Going back to figure 1, I can give an example. Let us take into consideration a couple consisting of the partners Ego and Alter. The two partners have a relation that must continually confront the problem of accepting or rejecting variations (in respect to the goal-state of producing a relational good), but normally there is negotiation. This means that the feedbacks are generally neither positive nor negative, but of another kind. The partners seek a relational steering of their relation through feedbacks that are relational because they are reversible and can be crossed by both parties.

If a couple (Paul and Laura, Ego and Alter) decide to have a child, with the birth of the baby (the Third) a network with three nodes is created. Ego no longer has only one relation (with the partner), and not even two relations (with the partner and the child), but three relations, i.e., with the partner, with the child, and with the relation existing between the partner and the child. The same thing holds for Alter and also for the Third, so that going from two to three nodes means having not three relations, but six first order relations (relations between nodes) and second order relations (relations between a node and the relation between the other two nodes). In addition, one could consider the relations between the two-way relations (third order relations), which would bring the diagram to nine relations.

The system (family) with three members is a rather complex business when seen as a reality of a relational order. It must reproduce itself with negative feedbacks that stabilize it, but the negative character is, at least in theory, increasingly improbable the more the number of nodes grow. How does such a complex relational system succeed in surviving since it is evident that it must also continually change itself in order to survive, i.e., that it must use positive feedbacks? This means that it must coordinate the two types of feedback at the same time, positive and negative. However, it cannot act in a contradictory way, using them at the same time. It can use them on an alternating basis, using one in one moment and the other in another moment. But it has undoubtedly to combine them with each other if it does not want to become paranoid. This means that it must find feedbacks that allow for the acceptance or rejection of possible variations in terms of open and negotiable articulations of the relations in flexible circuits of reciprocity. Such circuits do not operate with only positive and negative feedbacks; a family cannot simply adopt the rule of “take it or leave it”: otherwise, it would not survive a week. I call these feedbacks relational.

If it does not adopt relational feedbacks, the relational system of the family faces rigidification (morphostatic structure) or breakdown (unstable or chaotic MG), that is, two outcomes that do not allow for the necessary adaptations. Couples become rigid, incapable of reflexivity, blocked, or they face a limitless increase in alterations (unbound morphogenesis) that will make the system explode (severed couples). There can be many other outcomes, obviously.
The couples that succeed in surviving apply relational feedbacks that rely on explicit or implicit forms of relational steering. Alternatively, couples implode or explode.

As difficult as it is, the relational regulation of a couple (or a family) as a social network has to carry out three operations. It must: discern what can be preserved and what can be changed; select new elements and/or relations to introduce with recourse to the outside or to activate with internal resources; stabilize the network with a new relational system endowed with situated values, norms, means and situated goals different from the preceding arrangement. An analogous line of reasoning holds for those civic associations which are constituted on a voluntary basis in more informal or more organized networks.

Continuity/discontinuity is a property of contexts of reference that foster, respectively, the fact that the couple will have either communicative or autonomous reflexivity. When the couple experiences incongruity between life contexts, the most typical relation that emerges is meta-reflexivity, but we must be careful. Without a suitable context, metareflexivity can run the risk of degrading into a state of fracture or blockage. It becomes an enabling resource on condition that the couple uses a relational, rather than a functional-system, approach during its life course (Donati 2012).

6. Thinking the future in terms of social morphogenesis.

In the field of the social sciences, the theory of morphogenesis was initially formulated within a system theory with a biological character which, in its various forms, ignored the relational perspective. Organic development belongs to the world of the past. The logic of competition is typical of the market in the modern sense. What emerges after the modern is the logic of selection on the basis of situational needs that require the creation of new opportunities. To speak of an emergent logic of opportunities in hypermodernized societies does not mean only seeing the individual confronted with his/her possibilities of choice because, if choices are the fruit only of subjective choices, the vision of social processes remains completely indeterminate. Certainly, the individual makes his/her choices and creates social relations. But he/she does it within a life course that obliges one to use distinctions. How are these distinctions made? We can identify different logics for distinctions depending on which choices of opportunities are made: i) competitive and non-competitive logics; ii) individual logics and relational logics; iii) instrumental logics and expressive logics (and so on).

The logic of late modernity is that of competition based on ‘equal individual opportunities’ (for example, between men and women,

among youth who come from families of differing social status, etc.). Is this still valid, or is there space for non-competitive, relational, expressive logics? The passage from modernity to after-modernity is conspicuous for its orientation toward differently competitive, relational and expressive logics. The latter operate in what Gustafsson (2011) calls ‘swap framework’, in which the choices (relations of preference) are carried out by continually exchanging one alternative with another, without privileging any one of them.

Step by step the system theory of morphogenesis has taken on an informative-communicative character. The paradigm of networks has acted as an interface between the biological and the social sciences. Along the way, the relational nature of MG was revealed ever more clearly. The products of these recent developments are now reflected in biological and social theory. In biology, living organisms can be described in relational terms. The genome, which acts on the development of the living, is fluid; it is a complex reality: “The very meaning of any DNA sequence is relational.” In parallel fashion in sociology, social phenomena – including ‘society’ – become describable as relations emerging from relational contexts.

The structuralist paradigm of networks must be subjected to a critique that cuts it loose from system theory, which has condemned it to a scant or distorted relationality. Even the movement from morphogenetic robotics to epigenetic robotics (as illustrated by Stevenson and Greenberg 2000) confirms the necessity of taking more into account the relationality of phenomena, limiting the dominance of non-relational mechanisms.

The new perspective is that of moving beyond the concepts of variety, selection, feedbacks, and stabilization defined in a functional-structural-system sense. It is about redefining these concepts by adopting an appropriate relational paradigm. In particular, in order to understand how the social fabric is made, it is necessary to move beyond the dualism of positive/negative feedbacks and to see how emergent social realities are the product of relational feedbacks as the innovative mechanisms proper to an after-modern society.

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40 I use the term after-modernity to mark the deep discontinuity with modernity, while the term post-modernity indicates the outcomes of a radicalized, late modernity. To say that MG is becoming the form (the directive distinction) of the next society, i.e. its principle of evolution, means that the social becomes ‘normatively morphogenetic’, in radical discontinuity with the basic features of modernity, based upon the ideology of linear progress.

41 Many are aware of E. Fox Keller’s (2000) critique of the structuralist approach to the study of the gene. More recently, she went so far as to claim, “The most important lesson we have learned is that virtually every biologically significant property conventionally attributed to the DNA – including its stability – is in fact a relational property, a consequence of the dynamic interactions between DNA and the many protein processors that converge upon it. The very meaning of any DNA sequence is relational” (Fox Keller 2005: 4).
The concept of MG should be articulated and specified in various realms, for example, in biology and in sociology, based on the following operations:

(a) how variety is produced (the production of variety is different in biological and in social phenomena);

(b) how the selections of the varieties that are accepted and of those that are rejected (denied, repressed, expelled) come about; selections occur with different mechanisms, and only some of them lead to the emergence of new relational networks;

(c) how the stabilization of emergent forms (networks of relations) comes about; the institutionalization of emergent forms is a different problem from that of the process of emergence.

The ‘system’ and the ‘network’ have properties with powers and qualities that are different in biological and in social phenomena. Moving from the field of biology to that of sociology increases the degree of contingency in all the phases of MG. In any case, the decisive regulatory element is feedback. The direction of MG depends on the type of feedback that prevails.

At the level of social phenomena, variety, selections, emergences, and stabilizations have to do with social forms, i.e., with relational configurations. The possibilities are infinitely more numerous in social than in biological reality. This can be explained by the fact that, while in the biological realm the functional system character of phenomena prevails, at the social level, instead, the reticular character of processes prevails. In social networks many and diverse modes of relating are possible. Likewise, there is a low degree of probability for the type of MG that collapses the above mentioned operations (b) and (c) into each other, i.e., that makes the selections of accepted varieties and of emergent phenomena ‘always otherwise possible’ (always possible differently based on functional equivalence). Luhmann believes that the most probable direction of the global society of the future is a sort of perpetual recursiveness between the three operations (a, b, c) of MG, i.e., what can be called chaotic MG. Conversely, relational sociology believes that, if society is to continue to have an integration of its own, it will come about because the three phases (a, b, c) remain distinct and operate relationally.

In sum, by adopting a relational perspective we can better understand the fact that, by moving from biological to social phenomena, MG acquires an increasingly relational character in its presuppositions and outcomes. We need to integrate system approaches (based on positive and negative feedbacks) with network approaches based on relational feedbacks if we want to explain social MG as a peculiar way of social change. The incoming morphogenetic society is society that has a ‘relational matrix’ run by a many-valued and transjunctive logic.
Part II
Towards a new societal configuration:  
the possibility of a relational society

Chapter 4

Beyond the traditional welfare state:  
“relational inclusion” and the new welfare society

1. The welfare state as an issue.

The welfare state (WS henceforth) may be analyzed as a sub-system of the entire society or as a system in itself. As a sub-system, the WS coincides with the political-administrative sub-system of society. As a system in itself, the WS may be considered a self-standing structure, which – to some scholars – covers the whole of society. Adopting the first point of view, we can see that the WS relates itself to and regulates the other sub-systems, that is, the economy, the welfare apparatus, and the cultural system in which ethics is found. Adopting the second point of view, we can see that the WS is – in a sense – the institutional order of the whole society.

In both cases, the apparatuses of welfare occupy an ambiguous position. This ambiguous position is due to their being located partially within the political-administrative system and partially outside of it. At times the services provided by the welfare apparatuses have been confused with what are usually called intermediate social formations (private or third sector). To put it very briefly, the social institutions of welfare ambiguously straddle the state-market ensemble and the ensemble of the vital worlds.

The unresolved problem of the ambiguous location of the welfare apparatus is one of the principle challenges of modernity. In contrast with the opinion of Habermas (1981), I believe that this ambiguous collection of social institutions is not salvageable, so long as we remain within the framework of modernity. To fully characterize the current processes of change and future alternatives, one ought to thoroughly analyze: 1) the processes of differentiation among these various spheres (the economy = A, the political-administrative system= G, the spheres of social integration = I,
the societal culture = L); 2) the exchange and interaction among these spheres; and 3) that which is produced by such processes.

In this chapter I will try to do such an analysis.

I begin by observing that modern society has been constructed through processes of differentiation that have augmented the complexity of society through the systematic use of some basic distinctions. The two fundamental distinctions are the distinction between the individual and the state and the distinction between mass and particular social category. These two distinctions are at the basis of modern citizenship—which, although individualistic, is often called social—and of its entitlements. Although these entitlements are called universal, they are always more selective, that is, reserved to a particular social group. By constructing society ("making society") on the basis of these distinctions, modernity is dissolving the social fabric from which it draws its very lifeblood and which has been the foundation of the modern WS. The more that this type of WS expands, the more it erodes the very premises of its existence. In modernity, the more social relations are differentiated the more the social spheres are specialized into particular tasks. The increase in social differentiation and specialization augments the sustained need for an integrating, global solution. Today's society has inherited this continual process of differentiation and specialization from the modern order of society and its internal logic of WS development. To combat this dynamic, modern society's solution was to increase the omnipervasive, integrating force of the State-nation, conceived as the Center and Vertex of society (Luhmann, 1970). But such a solution is today no longer feasible. With the end of the modern order, every societal system—and not just the state, the economy, or ethics—enters a state of crisis, in the etymological sense of the word (Krisis).

The fundamental guiding distinction of the process of social differentiation must change. The guiding distinction ought no longer be the dialectic between self/non-self—i.e., the privatization or subjectivization of society under the protective sponsorship of the WS—that has created a society of individuals. Other possible distinctions could emerge, for example, the distinction between social subjectivity and non-social subjectivity which is the basis of a possible "society of social formations" that mediates between the State and the individual. This reformulation of the principal distinction would entail a re-definition of the entire social order. In particular it would require a new form of government, ethics, and politics for the social formations that will "make" the society of the 21st century.

In order to outline the prospects of the future of society, first I will briefly recall the history of the WS and the reasons for its present insurmountable limits. Then I will describe the current dilemmas and possible alternative solutions. I will outline the future scenario and the concept of the "new" society. And finally, to conclude, I will explain what I believe to be the great challenge of the 21st century: the "human welfare".
2. The crisis of the welfare state signals the end of an epic project and an entire historical order.

Since the time of Aristotle, politics has been understood as that activity which has human happiness as its end. Yet, the WS proper was born when it was concretely configured as a state of politeia ("good government") beginning with the "enlightened" absolute monarchies of the 1700's. It then developed during the last two centuries through various phases and models. There were first the national states with a constitutional regime, then the modern democracies with a presidential or parliamentary regime, and finally the contemporary neo-corporate democracies. Significant milestones in the growth of the WS include: Elizabeth I of England's laws concerning the poor; the enlightened ("police") states of Frederick II and the Austrian-Hungarian emperors; the famous constitution of the French Revolution; the events surrounding the Speenhamland Law (1795) and the successive British legislation concerning the poor (Reform Bill of 1832 and the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834); von Bismarck's famous system of social insurances begun in 1883; the social legislation of the early decades of the 1900's including the new deal begun after the Great Depression of 1929; and finally the economics of J. M. Keynes and the social security plans of Lord Beveridge. The incessant growth of the WS is a sign of the assertion of an ever-increasing package of social rights within the whole of the typically modern democratic citizenship.

Richard Titmuss (1974: 30-31) distinguished three models of the WS: the residual welfare model, the industrial achievement-performance model, and the institutional redistributive model. His threefold schema left out, however, what I have called the "total welfare state model", the prototype of which was the Soviet-Communist state (Donati 2000). In the course of its history the WS has been often seen as the product of a particular ideology. However, I think it would be mistaken to see only one political tendency within the growth of the welfare state. Socialists and liberals, humanitarian currents and Catholic thought, movements from the top and movements from the bottom, have all contributed to the growth of the WS. In other words, the WS has many parents. Sociologists have acknowledged that the traits and institutions of the WS can be very different. Yet, all seem to recognize a "common thread" which runs throughout the growth of the State, as Social State, from the beginning of the 1600's to today. According to Cloward and Fox-Piven (1971) the Social State is the "regulation of the poor". According to Foucault (1988) it is the modern spirit of Panopticon — a term borrowed from Jeremy Bentham — or of the "disciplinary society". According to Donzelot (1979) it is the "policing of families". And it was in France, home of the Jacobian WS, that the State was meant to be "État Providence" (Ewald 1986).

Despite the broad base of its support the WS entered a deep crisis on account of causes both internal and external to the State—understood in the
strict sense as a political-administrative system that decides and manages social policy and its relative apparatus. The causes internal to the State can be summarized in four types of problems. (1) *The problems of political and cultural justification.* How and to what degree is the State justified in making well-being a question of redistribution instead of direct exchange between the interested parties? (2) *The problems of organization.* Is the authoritative bureaucratic organization, acting hierarchically on the basis of the law, the best way to offer goods and services to citizens and social groups? (3) *The problems of social regulation.* How are welfare regulations to be established, and by whom (universal versus selective, uniform versus differentiated)? Should the regulations emanate from a central authority (the State) towards the peripheral of the society, or should the regulation be carried out by the very authors of well-being? (4) *The problems of resources and of cost.* From where does the WS draw its resources? How much should be obtained through taxation and how much from voluntary contributions? What is the efficiency of the WS (relationship between the cost and the value of services effectively distributed)?

The causes of the crisis of the WS which are external to the State may be summarized in four principal kinds of problems. (1) *The problems of economic input.* Supposing that the economic resources are drawn from the market, to what extent does the satisfaction of the needs and rights of the citizens depend upon the economic situation being favorable? (2) *The problems that come from intermediate social formations.* Supposing that the WS should, by its internal logic, regulate and/or progressively sustain the intermediate social formations, how many of the tasks formerly performed by these groups can and should the WS take upon itself? (3) *Changing demographics.* If the birth rate is cut in order to increase the well-being of the existing population while the number of elderly persons increases, how can one manage a system that has declining resources to meet the demands of growing needs and a potentially unlimited social security? And what about the immigrants that the WS attracts and is then unwilling to include? (4) *The difficulty of managing groups and members of society that are adverse to the WS.* What is to be done with the social minorities (including the underclass and homeless) and the cultural minorities (e.g., ethnic minorities) that do not accept the uniformity and inclusive type of regime that is proper to the WS?

Many of the external causes of the crisis are effects unintentionally produced by the WS itself. Its understanding of well-being and its method for seeking it have turned against the WS. Rather than resolving the problem of poverty, the WS is limited to controlling it. Among the vicious circles which envelop the WS, there are three principle ones. First, with every increase in fiscal pressure economic growth is dampened. Each decrease in economic growth dissipates the financial resources of the WS and eventually leads to fiscal crisis. Second, the more the WS intervenes in intermediate social formations, the more it weakens the very subjects of civil society upon which the civil infrastructure depends. This infrastructure sustains the solidarity
ethic of welfare by helping those in need, not just those who have already fallen into poverty. Third, the more the WS intervenes in family life, the greater the risk of rupturing and fragmenting the connective fabric provided by the family and the primary networks, provoking—paradoxically—a greater need for assistance in behalf of women, children and seniors. The greater the WS's success, the more it tends to self-destruction. This tendency to self-destruction is not merely coincidental, rather it results from the very logic of the WS which is reflected in a systematic pattern. The WS tends toward a downward spiral not simply because of contingent factors such as disputed issues of party politics or battles between special interest groups, but because of structurally inherent vicious circles.

The current crisis is in part due to conflicts of interest. Especially relevant is the conflict of economic interests. In the 1980's we witnessed strong critiques of the WS on the part of anti-WS political movements, in particular the tax welfare backlash movements, based upon conflicts of interest between particular social groups. Such conflicts are not, however, the major obstacle for the WS. Conflicts of interest can be negotiated. Economists can always find a new way to make the accounts balance. But more important, and more difficult to resolve, are the conflicts of identity inherent to the WS. It is more difficult to negotiate conflicts of cultural identity and to distinguish the various ways in which each cultural viewpoint understands its well-being (Sen 1999). And the WS leads to an ever decreasing identification of the state—especially on a national scale—with the citizens. The morale of the citizens is weakened when the WS is successful and even more so when it fails. The so-called "revolution of growing expectation", which modifies social and personal identities, is the most important aspect of the problematic of the WS's inherent and inevitable tendency to self-destruction.

An immense amount of literature has described and discussed these problems in the last two decades, without, however, clarifying the specific question of the connection between politics and ethics within the WS. The literature has concentrated for the most part on the instrumental and adaptive problems (the A-I axis of figure 1) without acknowledging in depth the problems of political and social justification (the L-G axis). The literature has given little attention to the relational conflicts which arise from the interactions of the various dimensions of the whole system of welfare. Much of the debate has limited itself to questions like the level of sustainable fiscal pressure, the level of contributions for the services of welfare, the cost of public medical services, the selectivity of tax credits and other financial support for families, retirement age, and so on. Although important, these problems are—under many aspects—technical, and may be solved by finding min-max solutions. Meanwhile not enough light has been shed on the fundamental defect of the WS: the lifestyles which the WS sustains—lifestyles that destroy social ties and provoke solitude and social fragmentation which the WS is then not able to remedy. There is much
debate about the extent of public consensus regarding the sustainable costs of the WS, but there is silence concerning the private and public, moral responsibility for the increase of such costs. In fact, the WS continues to be thought of and acted upon according to the lib/lab interpretation, that manages by sometimes pulling the lab lever of state intervention and by sometimes pulling the lib lever of market deregulation.

Ralph Dahrendorf's theory is emblematic of the paradigm which seeks compromise between liberalism and social-democracy. According to Dahrendorf (1994), the WS is the practical politics of the enlightened elite that extends entitlements to groups of individuals previously excluded, thus allowing them to take advantage of the goods, or provisions, produced by the free market. The ethic underlying Dahrendorf's theory is strictly individualistic and concessionary. The expansion of the WS consists in giving benefits to a growing number of individuals and in recognizing the fundamental rights of the person and of the social formations in which personalities are actualized. Today the WS continues to move forward according to a liberal model intent on guaranteeing stable conditions and social order by means of a macro-institutional, regulative framework of the social-democratic sort. The strength of this order should not be underestimated. In the course of the last fifty years it has guaranteed the historic compromise between social democrats and supporters of a free market. In order to do this, it has assumed a cardinal ethical principle: assure the maximum individual freedom, without society intervening to give any ethical-normative orientation to the citizens to whom it is obliged to give equal and unconditional benefits. The strength of this order is precisely in the neutralization of ethics, in a form of public ethics which is supposedly neutral towards all particular ethics. The ethical and political profile of this paradigm produces that phenomenon which I call the "privatization of the private"; that is, a progressive liberation of the individual from the bonds of social responsibility. In the end, this process erodes the very fabric of social solidarity, which ought to be the fundamental resource of the WS.

Few have observed that the lib/lab ethical order of the WS not only undermines the basis of social-democracy but is itself subject to the historical demise of liberalism which, in the WS and by means of the WS, "eats its own tail". The historic compromise between the state (democratic) and the market (liberal) becomes more difficult to sustain in spite of the governments' efforts to maintain it. If the politics of welfare wishes to maintain levels of connectivity and social solidarity sufficient to keep the WS from ruin, it must radically change its ethical basis and, beginning from there, change its relations with the economy and the spheres of social relations. As Zijderveld (1986) has observed, welfare systems are rarely moral (with the important exception of the United States), but more often are a-moral (like Italy's) or
immoral (like Holland's). Those that are moral deal with persons in relation to their behavior. That is, they take into account the moral responsibilities of single individuals. Those that are amoral consider the behavior of the person as morally indifferent when it comes to enjoying the rights and benefits of welfare. Those that are immoral offer compensation without conditions, or reward—directly or indirectly—morally irresponsible behavior. Only moral welfare systems can adequately deal with the social challenges that result from a constant and progressive inclusion of the population in the politics of welfare.

3. The difficulties of creating a new welfare state.

To overcome the crisis of the WS Western societies must solve the dilemmas inherent to the following pairs of contrasting goals: i) increase individual freedom, while increasing the citizen's responsibility for the consequences of private behavior; ii) increase autonomy (self-management) for intermediate social spheres, while directing them to the common good; iii) increase social security, while avoiding the bureaucratization of society; iv) increase social equality, while respecting differences (for example, cultural or gender differences); v) respond to the needs of individuals, while promoting solidarity among persons; vi) aspire to globalization, while responding to local needs.

It seems that the WS must do the impossible. Beneath the various ideological masks, the thrust of current historical processes is towards a "new" WS capable of untying a Gordian knot. The "new" WS must permit greater social differentiation while assuring greater integration. In other words, it must seek a less state-based society while offering more coordination and political direction towards the common good of the entire society.

The challenge of the "new" WS requires adopting courses of action that imply ethical choices. This, therefore, is the central problem to be addressed by the "new" society. Which ethical paradigms are available? Modernity has offered and continues to offer three. (1) The Mandevillian paradigm of the WS, according to which private vices can co-exist with or even generate public virtues. (2) The "national" ethic of the WS, such as Pierre Rosanvallon's (1995) proposal to "nationalize" the WS. (3) The ethics of obligatory assistance to those who are not willing to support themselves and who must be included by means of free acts of political solidarity. Can the modern WS resolve its dilemmas through the application of one of these three ethics? My response is for the most part negative, and not simply

42 Zijderveld's favorable evaluation of the morality of welfare in the United States is merely comparative. His affirmation that the WS in the U.S. is more moral is not meant to imply that it is always ethical, but merely that in the U.S. debate regarding the ethical criteria of welfare is more explicit and carries more weight than in other countries. For further evidence of Zijderveld's comparative claim, see Mead's Beyond Entitlement.
because these ethics are in historical decline, but because the modern WS — especially in Europe — has grown on the presupposition of the neutralization of ethics. To resolve its dilemmas, the WS needs a radical change of the ethical principles upon which it stands. To ask for a new WS is to ask that the political-administrative system put itself at the service of those ethical elements of society that are willing to deal with the aforementioned social dilemmas in order to achieve the paradoxical goal of both greater differentiation and greater integration.

Until today, these dilemmas have been dealt with according to various methods that would require too much space to recall and discuss here. In general, these methods have attempted to disembowel the welfare system from the state and make it a kind of intermediate field between the politics of the state and the so-called welfare society or caring society. Thus, there is an expansion of that social sphere which Hannah Arendt (1958) has called "non-political" or, in the words of A. Caillé (1993), "l'oubli du politique". In reality, this social sphere, situated between the state and civil society, is also the object of attention and exchange on the part of the market economy. In Europe the "non-political" sphere is primarily conditioned by the state, while in the US it is primarily linked to the market. In either case, the state and market tend to phagocytize that "non-political" sphere, at least in the sense of imposing ethical criteria dictated by politics or by economy. The phagocytosis of the "non-political" by politics or economy impedes the emergence of a new ethic of well-being and of adequate social institutions. In the West, many recognize the need to give the so-called "social sphere"—or the sphere of the extra-familial, associative networks—an autonomous constitution, making it a society on its own right. This sphere could thus become a truly Third Sector, symmetrical and on par with the other two spheres, the state and the market. The difficulty of such a project, however, is just as evident as its need.

Until now, the three great authors of a new societal order—the state, the market, and the third sector—have mingled together and combined among themselves in a confused manner. They have integrated without finding a social order that respects their differences in such a way that one does not colonize the others. If, as I claim, this has happened and continues to happen, the cause can be traced to the fact that the "fourth sector," which is constituted by the family and informal networks (relatives, friends, neighbors, etc.), has been suffocated and can no longer produce an ethics capable of influencing societal processes. The three institutional sectors of welfare (the state, market, non-profit) each proceed on the basis of their own morality, which may be stronger or weaker according to the nation or region, without having a common ethical bond. This common ethical bond can only come from the vital world of the family. It is difficult to say, therefore, how the dilemmas of the WS can be dealt with and resolved. Yet it is clear that the priority returns today to the vital worlds. Welfare must be designated as a problem of mixage, that is, of differentiation and synergy, among the various
sectors of intervention. New horizons of welfare pluralism must be sought. This is possible if and to the extent that the sector constituted by families and informal networks assumes a privileged point of observation and action, because it is there, in lifestyles, that the ethical resources and the possible courses of action of the other three sectors (the state, market, non-profit) are determined in regard to personal well-being.

Unfortunately, the solutions currently advanced in response to the dilemmas of the WS are not inspired by the type of logic that moves in such a direction. Instead there is, on the one side, the logic of systematic integration and, on the other, the logic of social deregulation. The first type of logic seeks to assure welfare by way of a system, and the second type seeks to assure it by way of a neo-liberalism that barely begins to meet the needs of the civil culture of the vital world. The first kind of solution involves government on the basis of a systematic logic. This model follows upon the primacy of politics and the functional primacy of the state (Marxism and various socialist ideologies), and is now designed to implement the primacy of systematic communication. In this framework welfare is managed by means of impersonal apparatus and "automatic" organizations that seek to distance themselves from human behavior (that is, from the behavior of persons with their own subjectivity). These organizations and apparatus are therefore open to the processes of globalization, understood not only and not so much as processes of growing functional interdependence on a world scale, but above all as processes that supply standardized forms of uniform and/or highly anonymous action, even in the field of welfare. The second kind of solution involves government on the basis of the logic of social deregulation. This model is based upon a liberalism that operates in view of the deregulation and emancipation of a new civil society in which individual subjects with their groups and associations construct well-being (caring or friendly society).

Despite some claims, the two methods described above are not opposed and conflicting. On the contrary, they are in large measure complementary and even synergistic. Their combination gives rise to what I have called the lib/lab model of managing welfare systems. The problem is precisely in the fact that the two logics do not interact with each other in a way that promotes the more virtuous among the two. Rather than having systematic logics that pursue the common good in relation to free and responsible subjects, there is a systematic logic that pursues all the particular ends possibly imaginable in relation to behavior unburdened of subjective responsibility. The systematic logics contribute to the creation of a specific "civil society"—in a modern sense which no longer corresponds to the facts—which unloads its responsibilities on to the impersonal, organizational machines of social security. The functioning of these two logics in reciprocal exchange may therefore be characterized as a perverse synergy. Instead of reinforcing the social subjects in daily life so that they are more autonomous and responsible, the systematic logics privatize them and alienate them even
more. It is as if well-being has been divided into two fields: that which is "public", left to the great anonymous machine of social security which is ethically indifferent; and that which is "private", where a humanization of welfare services is sought that—even if informed by ethical sensibility—nevertheless lacks the significant and foundational link between the freedom and the responsibility which constitute the good life. Lacking in ethical responsibility, such a civil society becomes un-civil.

The synergy between the systematic logic and the logic of social deregulation produces a form of WS that, rather than encouraging persons and social groups to take initiative to leave their state of need (the various forms, old and new, of poverty), immobilizes them and contributes, albeit indirectly, to the prevalence of the processes of the merchandising of human life. The various ethics of the vital world struggle in vain against these processes. A WS conceived as an "institution of moral unburdening" represents both the strength and the weakness of the so-called late-capitalistic Western society (Gehlen 1978). This type of WS generates the widespread impression that our society is moving forward like the Titanic. Song and dance continue while the ship heads straight for the iceberg. If the West intends to escape this contradiction, and from the collision course which is carrying it straight to self-annihilation, it must change direction with respect to the logic and to the concrete solutions by which it is still moving. But towards what course?

4. How we can conceive the new welfare society: the principle of “relational inclusion”.

The current situation is marked by a mixture of the methods of systematic integration and social deregulation. The two methods pursue each other in a perverse circle. The new direction to be pursued should break this perverse circle and produce a virtuous differentiation-integration between these two methods. That is, we need a model of social development which reinforces the best aspects of the systematic and integrating dynamics by taking advantage of their functional performances and the meaning which each logic can provide. We need a model which produces solid social relations and reinforces reciprocal human capacities, rather than nullifying, weakening, or destroying these relational qualities. A proposal for the "new" society must begin with the present societal conditions, that is, from the fact that such a new society of differentiation is being produced by a new scenario in which we find the four great sectors of welfare with their particular characteristics. Figure 2 provides a synthesis of the characteristics of each of the four sectors.
What are the political and ethical implications of this process of differentiation of the social spheres of welfare? First, politics becomes a "more widespread function". That is, no longer a monopoly of the state, politics takes on a variegated presence throughout the sectors of society. Every sector and every actor has and makes his own politics of welfare. Second, ethics likewise becomes a "more widespread function". It must be given adequate criteria in each specific sector and it no longer belongs to a sphere of its own, separate from society. On the one hand, it is true that in such a society the risks to politics and ethics are even greater than in the past.

| **Figure 2- Sectors that produce well-being and their relative indicators.** |
|-----------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| **Institutions**            | **State**       | **Market**      | **Civil Society** | **Family and Informal Networks** |
| Sectors that produce welfare | State Sector    | Market Sector   | Third Sector     | Informal Sector (family and primary networks) |
| 1. Principle of coordination | Hierarchy (command) | Competition       | Free will        | Personal obligation |
| 2. Supply side collective actors | Public administration | Private enterprise | Non-profit associations | Family and networks of relatives, friends, and neighbors |
| 3. Entitled actors (demand side) | Citizen (social rights of citizenship) | Consumer or client | Current or potential member of the association | Member of the community (familial, local, or personal network) |
| 4. Regulation of access | Right guaranteed upon legal request | Ability to pay | Sharing a need | Ascription or acceptance |
| 5. Means of exchange | Law | Money | Influence (topic, communication) | Value commitment (evaluation of value, personal attention) |
| 6. Central value of admission | Equality | Freedom of choice | Solidarity through rules of conditional reciprocity | Full reciprocity as symbolic exchange (altruistic) |
| 7. Criterion of the good added | Collective security | Consume (of private goods) | Social and civic activity (production of secondary relational goods) | Personal sharing (production of primary relational goods) |
| 8. Primary flaw of each sector | Carelessness concerning the most personal needs | Inequality due to lack of money | Unequal distribution of goods and services, ineffective structures and poor management | Limitations of free choice due to moral obligations of the person in the family and primary networks |
because there is no longer a center or vertex of ethics and politics. The decentralization of ethics and politics is a legacy of modernity which can no longer be eliminated. The increased contingency of society as a whole can be dealt with and resolved only to the extent to which persons can act in concrete and personalized spheres where it is possible to have a "societal community". It is necessary to have orienting common values which are drawn from universal principle, beyond the single and particular loyalties, associations, and attributive characteristics of individuals. On the other hand, the "diffuse" nature of ethics and politics should supply that generalization of common basic values needed to integrate—internally and with each other—the various spheres of welfare and of the various segments (networks) of society. By means of these processes of differentiation that never degenerate, a new culture of "making society" could be born. The basic difference between this new order and modern welfare is that the state is no longer the center and vertex of the organization producing well-being. In consequence, the very principles upon which society rests change profoundly. Well-being is no longer a question of individuals and abstract social categories but of association and communal networks. It is a matter of a pluralism of participation in the network of a "caring society" which is ruled on the basis of a post-socialist and post-liberal principle of subsidiarity. According to this order, the common good becomes a "relational good", attainable throughout the various levels of society.

In my opinion, the development of such a "new" society may only be achieved insofar as welfare is reformulated within the context of an after-modern citizenship that, while no longer absorbing the person, eliminates the distinction between *homme* and *citoyen*. This transformation of citizenship may be described as the transformation of State citizenship to societal citizenship. With societal citizenship society can be constructed in a different way and on a very different scale (territorial and communal), in which the person always remains the fundamental reference point. Although such a transformation will be very difficult to effect, it seems to be the only desirable outcome for the future.

In post-industrial or complex societies, social policies were designed according to a model in which the state acts as the general coordinator of a system which seeks a maximum of self-regulation. Figure 3 provides a schematic synthesis of the history of the social rights of citizenship.
### Figure 3

The system of social rights of citizenship (or welfare system) in three historic phases (early industrial society, industrial society, post-modern society)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Mutualistic model</th>
<th>State-based model</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Maximization of political inclusion</td>
<td>Generalization and differentiation according to memberships</td>
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<td><strong>Reference point for social policies</strong></td>
<td>Social classes and conditions of poverty</td>
<td>Social classes defined in relation to the capitalistic market</td>
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<td><strong>Risk coverage</strong></td>
<td>Mutuality and ex-post assistance with mixed forms of associative solidarity: State, local and professional solidarities</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Allocation rules</strong></td>
<td>According to assistance-based logic</td>
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<td><strong>Role of the state</strong></td>
<td>Residual welfare state</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Extent of citizenship</strong></td>
<td>Limited according to the social category of membership</td>
<td>Universal, but only for workers</td>
<td>Universal according to life conditions (age, gender, familial, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subjects of citizenship</strong></td>
<td>Individuals belonging to a traditional community</td>
<td>Individuals belonging to the work force</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The social policies of post-industrial, complex societies may be described as a "relational guide" according to which the society regulates itself by maximizing the social autonomies which cooperatively devise the rules used to determine universally binding decisions. The mutualist principle is once again applied, although with a very different meaning and a very different structure and function with respect to its origin in the society of
"mutual help" of the 1800's. In today's complex societies mutuality is now: (a) united by the social (market) division of labor, in insofar as it must correspond to the other social needs; and (b) is managed by means of a plurality or combination of actors where, in addition to the subjects of mutuality, the state (public or semi-public entities), market agencies, and families with their informal networks can all have a role.

Today some still think that citizenship can be guaranteed only if the market is controlled by operating rules that recover efficiency and productivity (by means of greater professionalization and new technologies) and render more resources available in order to include the weaker members of the population (for example, by reducing the hours of work or other measures). Nonetheless, the formula "more citizenship by means of more market" or "more citizenship by means of a more efficient market" is dubious and restrictive. The formula perpetuates the false idea that citizenship need be a question of a trade-off between the state and the market and limits the contents of citizenship to such an exchange. On the contrary, the post-industrial society represents a strong discontinuity, even a severing with the past. In particular, two great differences emerge. First, post-industrial citizenship becomes a complex design that must distinguish the various spheres (social, economic, political, and cultural) without either severing or confusing them. Consequently, it must find appropriate norms in and for each of the spheres. If this is done, the meaning and methodology of citizens' rights will not be the same in the economic, in the political, in the social, or in the cultural spheres. The reference point is no longer the worker, but the person. The new citizenship has its symbolic reference point not in the poverty or riches of industrialization but in a culture centered around the quality of life. Second, social policies are no longer limited to the state-market binomial, but demonstrate precise and differentiated dynamics in the other spheres (outside the market and the state) with their own actors, processes, and institutions. These subjectivities redefine the needs (as interests) and the rights (as identities) of the citizen, and generate contrast with the "politics-economics" ensemble. The ecological variable fosters a new reflection concerning the impact of social policies on the demographic, social, economic, political and—above all—physical environment. Social policy is no longer a question of the redistribution of the resources produced by the market, but a conflict of interests between the producers and consumers of the environment, as though between different socio-cultural identities. In this deeply modified scenario, new structural, functional, and moral foundations of citizenship are required, without which social policies cannot be taken forward.

I claim that a possible solution to the troubles of the WS lies in passing from the modern symbolic code of inclusion/exclusion (aut ... aut) to the after-modern symbolic code of relationality (et ... et), which means to include people in the welfare system not on the basis of state citizenship, but on the base of societal citizenship. The inclusion/exclusion code homogenizes
(standardizes) people according to the lib/lab logic, while the relational code respects and promotes the legitimate differences treating them according to criteria of subsidiary reciprocity.

The new moral bases of citizenship, both functional and structural, refer to a symbolic code which does not work any longer by using the distinction included/not-included in the state political system, but according to the distinction relational/not-relational in respect to what they need and what they can get in terms of social welfare within their social contexts, namely the social formations in which they can enjoy or not the opportunities they need.

The logic of inclusion/exclusion relies upon the argument according to which, if the market works well, then the social can get the needed welfare resources; or: no economic development without social redistribution. A logic which has been dominant in the decades of economic growth.

The relational logic, instead, argues in a different way: it says that society needs an economic development which embodies social development (fair and sustainable well-being). Consequently, it is better to give up some temporary economic advantages (profits) in case they produce social regressions or lead to the implosion of the civic and social fabric.

The lib/lab logic has the following motto: let us give people full economic freedoms and subsequently, when the free market will have produced more wealth, the state will be able to redistribute resources to the most vulnerable. In other words: first, give more liberty to the economy, and afterwards, control social conflicts, potentially linked to social inequalities, by distributing some social benefits to the poor.

The relational code, instead, says: economic freedom must have a social responsibility since its very inception; freedom and social control are constitutive of one another (which means that freedoms should be positive, and not negative, a quality which implies their being auto-normative and not only subject to external procedural rules!); there should not be any economic growth without social development. The basic idea of the relational code is: let us create a new social web by putting in synergy the economic means and the social norms enhancing human exchanges, so to configure a ‘societarian society’, i.e. a kind of societarism as the product of the effect of reciprocity (Wechselwirkung) between the economic and the social. Such reciprocity should be ‘normal’ in everyday life, instead of looking for an ex post combination of the opposites – i.e. lib (freedoms without control) and lab (redistributions without freedom) – as the modern code indicates. In this line, what we call ‘social welfare’ is not a benefit granted by an enlightened political élite – as Dahrendorf (1994) claims – but the outcome of a collective contract which a priori links the economic actions within the market to their social consequences.

The lib/lab logic works in two steps: first of all, it disengages people from their social bonds (i.e. those social relations which hinder the free market) and, in a second step, tries to compensate those who lag behind by
granting them public welfare through state apparatuses and means-tests that are forms of inclusion devoid of any relationality. The relational (societarian) logic works differently: it assumes that collective welfare is the product of social subjects who are oriented to each other according to principles of reciprocal subsidiarity (fair relationality), given the fact that what should be produced, i.e. social welfare, is in itself a relational good. An example of the latter are those employment contracts which I call ‘relational contracts’, i.e. contracts which do not give absolute primacy to the economic performance and its remuneration, but are focused on the subsidiary relationship between the workplace and the private life of people involved, so to provide them with the opportunities necessary to get a balanced and sustainable way of life on which personal and family welfare depends.

Differently from the lib/lab logic of social inclusion, which entrusts to the state apparatuses the task to include the excluded, the relational (or societarian) logic assigns the task of inclusion to each social sphere – with respect to its internal specific responsibilities – and then relates the different spheres of action on the basis of principles of reciprocal subsidiarity and solidarity (as we will see in the next section). This is what I call “relational inclusion”.

5. The challenge of a "civil welfare".

The current challenge for the West is the growing fracture between the social and the human which sharply exacerbates the problem of well-being (Donati 1991: 540-544). In the "post-modern condition" human well-being must be intentionally ("societally") produced, and no longer taken for granted as it was in the past. The social measures adopted by the welfare systems are not necessarily humane. Therefore, the human element can no longer be considered as intrinsic to social relations in the same way as it was in traditional and pre-modern societies. The "invention of community", as some have called the current historical process, is a highly artificial and technological phenomenon which no longer assures—without particular symbolic mediations—the properly human content and form of social relations. For this reason, the institutions meant to promote well-being are not necessarily humane or humanizing. The differentiation of social and human spheres is an inevitable and in some cases even useful process whereby automation and technology can facilitate social action. But this is not necessarily the case. We should not attempt to make the welfare system either amoral or immoral. The process of creating well-being must necessarily distinguish between its forms and its criteria; that is, it must make ethical choices concerning its guiding distinctions.

Contemporary society needs to change the principal distinction that has thus far been inherent to the creation of well-being. Following modernity, this distinction has faithfully followed (and continues to follow) the watershed between State and civil society. Social policies have been
conducted according to the idea that the good is in the State (welfare state) against the evil (warfare) that is inherent in civil society. What will the principal distinction of social policy be in the 21st century? In my opinion, the principal distinction that is becoming dominant in post-modern society is that between human and artificial. The principal distinction is becoming the distinction between the "human society" (in which well-being is intensive labor and is based on caring interpersonal relations) and technical society (which includes the vast structures of the welfare system, managed by impersonal bureaucracies). After-modern society will witness a dialectic between these two forms of welfare which I call human well-being and technical well-being. It is important that these two forms of welfare be distinguished without separating them.

The social movements that, in the course of the last two decades, have once again questioned the concept and the social practices of well-being and have called for a more balanced relationship with the internal and external nature of the person (with lifestyles less appropriative and material, less Faustian, less post-Fordist, and so on), reflect the claim of a human dimension that also calls for a "return" to civil society. This call for a civil society makes sense only insofar as the proposed civil society is not merely an attempt to recover the past. Tomorrow's civil society cannot be Aristotelian. It cannot be the entire polis and it cannot be constituted by a distinction, such as the Athenian distinction between "us" and "the barbarians". Nor can tomorrow's civil society be a reconstruction of the modern, either that of the Scottish Enlightenment (as market) or of the traditional European continent (as the Jacobian and later Hegelian State with all their derivations).

Rather, tomorrow's civil society must resemble the Tocquevillian society built upon the "art of association". It must be a society that arises from "taking social relations seriously". Furthermore, this society must establish social relations in terms of a human dimension and a technical dimension, where technical-artificial well-being must be and can be redirected to the human dimension, making it, therefore, meaningful and intentional. The civil society that must reform the WS is a society made up of free, responsible, equal, and united persons who work in the industrious silence of a daily life experienced as a continuous ethical challenge to one's own independent capacity to respond. It will grow wherever persons construct their own social relations—relating to each other on the basis of a fundamental sense of humanity. Such a society is hidden from the naked eye and largely ignored by the society constituted by "official" institutions and the establishment. It does not arise from political institutions, which instead provide motivations and reasons of democratic legitimacy. Nor does it arise from the market, which provides the cultural resources of mercantile morality based on contractual equity. Nor does it coincide with the sphere of the family, which instead offers support for an enlarged, non-particularistic social confidence. This civil society lives its own life, inspired by a universal
solidarity lived in the concrete in a context of social autonomy. It is better or worse according to the manner in which it is treated by the central institutions of society. In some countries, like Italy, it is still just a seed. In those countries where it has a longer tradition, like UK or the U.S., although in crisis today, civil society demonstrates the capacity to regenerate itself. It can either blossom or die, and can be made to grow only around the fringes of a system incapable of renewing itself.

A new scenario is now opening. This scenario is characterized by a specific dialectic between "the society of individuals" (as N. Elias 1991 has called it) and "the society of social formations", i.e. the society that feeds those social subjects that produce the morphogenetic processes leading to an after-modern society. Politics and ethics of the 21st century will be marked by this dialectic between "individuals" and "social subjects". This new framework can permit the rediscovery of the primacy of the human person within the social formations in which the person develops, and the articulation of society on the two cardinal principles of solidarity and subsidiarity.

The twentieth century bequeaths a WS conceived as a joint-ownership among many proprietors and tenants, which is no longer capable of satisfying the relational needs of people and generates malaise due to its purely functional concept of the common good. Today's societies need a supra-functional concept of social welfare. The challenge of the WS in the 21st century is to redefine welfare as a common good in relational term, i.e. as a relational good, which is the topic of the next chapter.
Chapter 5

In search of common goods as ‘relational goods’
that foster a new civil society

1. What are ‘relational goods’?

For some years now the social sciences have been highlighting the existence of a type of goods that are neither material things, nor ideas, nor functional performances but consist, instead, of social relations and, for this reason, are called relational goods.

We are seeing a relational good when the participating individuals themselves produce and enjoy it together. An example is the collaboration in a scientific research team. The participants can be not only individuals, but groups or social networks too. In the latter case, the relational goods take on a more complex organizational character. For instance, we could think of small associations of families constituting a second level network or association with goals of reciprocal mutuality; another example is volunteerism among single local associations. Or we could think of a second level network among single social cooperatives that create a fabric of strong cohesion and social solidarity in a certain territory. The relational good, in other words, primarily concerns people and their relations (primary goods). But it can also be situated at a level of secondary relations among people who do not directly know one another, as a result of their sharing an associative affiliation (in these cases, relational goods are said to be secondary because they do not involve face-to-face relations).

In essence, relational goods have the following properties: they are not “things” but consist of social relations that have a sui generis reality; they are produced and enjoyed together by those who participate in them; the good that they entail is an emergent effect which redounds to the benefit of participants as well as of those who share in its repercussions from the outside, without any single subject’s having the ability to appropriate it for him/herself. Relational goods have an intrinsically democratic character in that they distinguish themselves from bureaucratic organizations (such as the public administration) that act on command and generate goods that redound to their surrounding community’s benefit (whether territorial or not). They are not particularistic and closed goods, such as those sought by groups
connected to lobbyists or the mafia. Perhaps the best way to understand them is to refer to Alexis de Tocqueville’s key concept when he showed that the fundamental source of nourishment for a modern liberal-democratic society is “the art of associationism.” He gave an essentially civic version of this. For Tocqueville, in fact, democratic associations are those that gather together citizens in order to solve the problems of a political community (such as, for example, creating a public garden or placing a fountain in a square). Today we have at our disposal a more extensive and refined theory of those goods that pertain to the art of associating for civic ends.

2. Relational goods are a reality that escapes the public/private dichotomy.

The concept of relational good arises primarily from dissatisfaction with a dichotomy, introduced by modernity, between public and private, which separates and classifies every type of good into one or the other domain. That which is public is understood to be accessible to everyone and impersonal. That which is private is understood to be available only to autonomous subjects who are its owners. Consequently, society is distinguished into a public sphere, in which sociality is neutral and open, and a private sphere, in which sociality is particularistic and closed. It is obvious to ask: is there nothing in between? And in addition: if by chance there were something in between, would this possible “third” not be such as to redefine the two poles of public and private?

Once modernity obliges the social organization to divide social goods into public as opposed to private goods, it generates evident gaps and vacuums. Where can we then seek out those goods in which the sociability of human persons and their social networks is expressed without such forms’ having necessarily to be ascribed to the public or private arena?

With the term “sociability”, I am referring to social relationality, which can be interpersonal (face-to-face) but also more impersonal (as in organizations or social movements in which it becomes synonymous with a sense of belonging) on condition that the latter is active and consists of reciprocal actions (even if at a distance) that generate emergent effects of a prosocial nature. Just to give a few examples, we could think of friendship and neighborhood networks, self-help and mutual aid networks, and small groups that carry out many initiatives to help the weakest and least fortunate members of society; or, at another level, there are social movements (whether local, global, or glocal) that actively intervene in civic problems and peer-to-peer social networks that produce shared goods on the internet. In all of these cases, it would be difficult to ascribe the initiatives to the strictly private or public arena. There is an “intermediate” social space that remains little explored.

The concept of relational good fills in the gap between private and public goods. It points to a reality in which certain aspects of what is private
are intertwined with some aspects of what is public, without being either one or the other. In any case, relational goods are essential in order to make society less impoverished, risky, insecure, mistrustful, and pathological in many of its aspects. It is important to emphasize that these realities could not exist before modernity transformed the intermediate social sphere between public and private into a desert. Those who think of relational goods as a revival of things from the past that were typical of premodern society (such as the confraternities or charitable organizations) would be committing a serious error of perspective.

To say this better: the typically modern polarization between the public sphere (identified in the State) and the private sphere (identified in the capitalistic market) entails the birth of social forms that have a sociability of which the quality is different from the forms present in traditional societies, such as the medieval religious confraternities, the monte di pietà, the charitable entities for the poor and sick, and other similar institutions. The reason for the difference lies in the processes of multiplication of the intersecting circles that produce a new individuality and, consequently, a different type of sociability (Simmel 1972). In premodern societies the forms of sociability that create relational goods are generally of an ascriptive and asymmetrical type as regards power relationships: the positions of those who participate are not egalitarian but reflect stratification by class. In modernized societies, instead, they are of an acquisitive and tendentially symmetrical type as regards the power relationships among participants in as much as the old social stratification diminishes and a principle of equality asserts itself.

The notion of the relational good emerges when one becomes aware of the existence of other goods that are neither available on the basis of the prerogative of private ownership nor accessible to everyone indiscriminately. They are goods that do not have an owner, nor are they of the generically understood collectivity. They are the goods of human sociability, goods that are crucial for the very existence of society, which could not survive without them. If these goods are ignored dismissed, or repressed, the entire social fabric is impoverished, mutilated, and deprived of life blood with serious harm caused to people and the overall social organization. Those who do not understand this point or seek to trace relational goods to either the public or private arena fail completely to understand relational goods’ meaning, mode of being, functions, and social value. Let us consider a few examples of relational goods.

A group of parents decides to constitute an association for organizing educational services for their own children, which will also be available to other children in the community, and they obtain spaces and payment for utilities from the municipality while they themselves manage the actual service (for example, a nursery, pre-school, or primary school): is this initiative public or private? To modern eyes it would be private because the parents manage it, but the agreement with the municipality complicates things since it takes place on public property, and, moreover, the agreement
with the municipality stipulates accountability and inspections, or supervision, at the very least. Everyone sees that here the public/private categories do not grasp the initiative’s more truly social nature.

A group of families that share a given problem (they have a disabled child, a non-autonomous elderly relative, an alcoholic or dependent family member, etc.) create an association to help one another in turn (mutual aid) and to take actions of advocacy (demanding rights), both for themselves as well as for the other families facing the same situation: is this association private or public? There is no doubt that it is private, but does it correspond to modernity’s definition of the private (according to which the private is such because it lacks public responsibilities)? I think not.

More generally, we can think of the social goods produced by Third sector (non-profit) organizations that deliver care-giving services to people, not only to disabled persons or those with serious pathologies, but also to healthy people who have need of support in terms of educational services, social and health care assistance, sport and cultural services, and so on. It is obvious to point out that the grounds for activity of an associative and network type that we call “the domain of the social,” to use the social term for that which exists between the public and the private (Arendt 1958), does not only generate good things (relational goods) but also less good things (relational evils). For example, if we ask people who participate in an association whether, in recent years, trust toward other members of the association has grown or decreased, we can have cases in which trust has grown and other cases in which it has decreased. In the case of a relational evil, their answer will be of the following type: “The more I participated in the association, the more I saw that one cannot trust the other members of the association.” Social relations can thus generate negative instead of positive effects. Therefore, it is of the greatest importance to identify the (cultural, structural, agential) conditions in which relational goods, rather than evils, are generated.

Can we make a list of these goods? The type of good about which we are speaking is not a category that can be inventoried, as one does for material goods. This does not mean that we are dealing with a purely ideal good, that is, a value in an abstract or only symbolic sense. It is an intangible good in which energy and resources can be invested and from which energy and resources are drawn. If it is not taken to heart (cared for), the relational good deteriorates and can disappear. In essence, the relational good cannot be catalogued as a functionally specific good but, rather, is a way to generate goods -- which can be material or not, such as, for example, children’s education, the production of consumer goods, a sports team’s or an orchestra’s performance, a scientific research group’s results, the services offered by a volunteer group. These goods would be impoverished, commodified, or bureaucratized if they were not produced in this relational way. Using a questionable expression, we could say that what is important in relational goods is their “mode of production” because relational goods are
thus from the generative point of view (regarding how they are generated and work together to generate other goods). This mode of production requires particular social subjects. Precisely for this reason, both the relational goods and the subjects that produce them are fragile and vulnerable. In any case, the type of good that we call relational is not on the same plane as the public-private axis conceived in the modern sense. It exists on another level of reality, a level that is obscured by the public-private axis. How do we manage to see it?

3. How did the theory of relational goods arise?

The theory of relational goods did not arise out of nothingness but germinated in a terrain that had been previously tilled and sowed. This terrain is the one in which, given that social goods cannot be traced back or reduced to the modern categories of public and private, the concept of social private was elaborated. The term “social private” indicates every sphere that is private as regards property and management but which has prosocial ends, and not ends of instrumental expediency for the participants (Donati 2008: 13-47). Expediency for the participants is not excluded but cannot be the associative end, which must be social solidarity both inside and toward the outside. The conceptual category of the social private is incomprehensible for modern political and economic thought for which private actors are necessarily self-interested; otherwise, they must be impersonal (public) actors (aut... aut). For the modern economy, a private subject can only be one who pursues interests that are primarily to his/her own advantage. Non-profit or private charitable entities, which do not act for private interests, are indeed contemplated as positive initiatives, particularly in order to remedy social ills, but are not considered to be subjects that produce socially and economically significant goods.

At the time that the concept of the ‘social private’ was first proposed, there was still no relational theory of the social sphere available that should have underpinned a redefinition of the social private as a possible space for the emergence of relational goods. The notion of the social private, in any case, involved a conceptual framework that was completely new with respect to the sociological approaches then in existence; in particular, it aimed to overcome the dualisms peculiar to modernity. In 1988 I defined the relational good in the following terms: “Saying that human life is a “relational good” means to say that it is a type of shared good that depends on the relations enacted by subjects toward one another and that can be enjoyed only if they orient themselves accordingly. Human life is the object

of enjoyment (and thus of rights) not as an “individual” (in the sense of individualistic) good nor a “public” (in the modern technical sense) good, but precisely as a common good of the subjects that are in relation. Such a good must be defined not as a function of individual experiences taken singularly (privately) or collectively, but as a function of their relations.\textsuperscript{44}

In 1989 an American scholar, Carole Jean Uhlaner (1989), used the term relational goods to indicate local public goods produced by the sharing of the political objectives of people who encounter one another repeatedly. For her, relational goods are goods that cannot be enjoyed alone. Examples would include participation in a choir, soccer team, or some group volunteer activity. There is some relation between this idea and the model of joint production or the concept of “crowding in.” The definition of relational good that Uhlaner gives is the following: “Assuming that people are restricted to such ends [optimization of individually possessed goods] is neither necessary nor useful. People also pursue relational goods which cannot be acquired by an isolated individual. Instead, these goods arise as a function of a relationship with others. The relational goods can only be possessed by mutual agreement that they exist after appropriate joint actions have been taken by a person and non-arbitrary others”.\textsuperscript{45} These are thus goods (also things) produced by the consensus achieved among a certain number of subjects having interpersonal relations: an example could be deciding together to vote for a certain candidate in political elections.

The concept of relational good helped Uhlaner explain political participation in democratic states. Uhlaner wanted to understand why and in what way individuals actively participate in political life notwithstanding the sentiment that the individual vote has little influence on an election’s outcome. She found the answer in a model centered on individual rationality. In her view, relational goods are the product of rational individuals who together mobilize themselves in view of political elections in the same way as groups are organized to make political demands in everyday life. Relying on the rational choice approach, Uhlaner treated relational goods as public goods, an understanding of them that is completely within modernity and completely American. Since this author uses a rational choice approach (even if it is revised on the basis of a broader spectrum of strictly utilitarian motivations), her concept of relational good has had broad repercussions and has been widely used by economists.

Those who have followed in Uhlaner’s footsteps, such as, for


\textsuperscript{45} \textit{Ivi}, p. 254. In an attempt at identifying their nature, she adds: “Relational goods can only be shared with some others. They are thus unlike private goods, which are enjoyed alone, and standard public goods, which can be enjoyed by any number. Relational goods are a subset of local public goods, as they enter into two or more persons’ utility function” (\textit{ivi}, p. 254).
example, the economists Antoci, Sabatini and Sodini (2012), have treated relational goods as ‘things’ chosen by individuals in cooperative games. Social relations are considered as means for obtaining material goods: hence, these authors’ thesis according to which relational goods are interchangeable with material things for the purpose of obtaining people’s well-being. These are clear distortions of the concept of relational good because the relational good is not fungible (it is not interchangeable) with material goods. It does not consist in the well-being that it procures to individuals but, rather, in the relation among them, upon which this well-being depends.

In the past two decades economists have used the concept of relational good in various ways, but they have done so without having a suitable theory of social relations. For mainstream economists, in fact, social relations are individuals’ intentional projections and strategic choices. Relational goods are considered to be social relations that take on a particular affective quality and foster cooperative rather than competitive games.

For example, Benedetto Gui (1996) defines relational good as a special “encounter” between persons who exchange goods with a particular reciprocal fellow-feeling for each other; for him, relational goods are interpersonal relations that have a value to invest in for expressive reasons that make transactions more sympathetic and friendly. Benedetto Gui and Robert Sugden (2005) define relational goods as the affective and sentimental components (the latter understood as fellow-feeling) that support norms of cooperation. These goods are the added value created by doing something together as opposed to doing it alone. According to these authors, the added value consists in the people’s affective states that assist individual cooperative action. Here we are straddling economy and psychology within methodological individualism. Relational goods are found in markets for care giving services but also where the interaction is minimal, as in a walk in the mountains with a fellow hiker, for example. They are a source of direct value because they procure pleasure and individual well-being but are also of indirect value since they support the motivations necessary for generating the trust and reciprocity that serve economic growth. The tradition in which the thinking of these authors is operating is that of Adam Smith, and their analysis remains firmly anchored to economic debate.

In synthesis, for Uhlaner, Gui, and Sudgen, as for mainstream economists in general, relational goods do not coincide with relations as such, because social relations are assessed from the point of view of the feelings of individual agents. For these authors, for example, friendship is a relational good in that, since it is constituted by interactions repeated with a certain affectivity by two or more people, it grants them a certain empathy and mutual kindness. The relational good is a quality of interactions that are repeated, leading to the sharing of good feelings. In this way, the fact that the relational good is a relation that has its own reality (the relation’s order of reality) is fundamentally misunderstood. The fact that such a relation emerges because of a peculiar reciprocity (as a symbolic – not utilitarian –
exchange of an objective good) among participants is obscured. The reciprocity involved can be understood as *We-relation*, which confers the quality and powers peculiar to the objective (relational) good which is shared by the participants. In relational goods the “why,” that is, the motivation that propels one to act toward the other, is an essential element that cannot be reduced to convenience, even to an affective and sentimental sense of ease and, more generally, to the sense of well-being that individuals derive from the relation.  

A conception of relational good built on purely psychological bases cannot grasp the relational sense of the goods of which we are speaking.

**4. The turning point.**

A turning point in the definition of relational good came about when it was proposed to classify social goods on the basis of two axes, depending on whether the consumer is sovereign/non-sovereign and consumption is competitive/non-competitive (see figure 1). In this way, private goods are conceived as those characterized by a sovereign consumer and competitive consumption (cell 4), public goods are those characterized by a non-sovereign consumer and non-competitive consumption (cell 1) while in the second cell (non-sovereign consumer and competitive consumption) we find another type of goods, that is, secondary (i.e., associative) relational goods. In the third cell, we find goods with a sovereign consumer and non-competitive consumption.

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**Figure 1  The four fundamental types of goods produced in society**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-sovereign consumer</th>
<th>Non-competitive consumption</th>
<th>Competitive consumption</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong> Strictly public good</td>
<td></td>
<td>Collective relational good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong> Collective relational good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong> Primary relational good</td>
<td>B</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong> Strictly private good</td>
<td>A</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


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46 As Aristotle already reminded us, the highest friendship, which contributes to *eudaimonia* /happiness, can never be instrumental because it is a virtue.
Arrow A in figure 1 (between cells 1 and 4) indicates that private goods (\(lib\)) and public goods (\(lab\)) can be converted one into the other (the line is broken because this is a possibility). For example, if a set of private subjects that produce goods (such as electrical energy, transport, health services, etc.) are nationalized, private goods become public. Vice versa, if a good produced in a monopolistic system (such as telephone service, rail transport, the management of a water network, etc.) is entrusted to the competition of private subjects, we have the privatization of public goods. The user still receives the same functional service (even if at different prices). The nature of the good or service produced does not change.

Unlike private and public goods, relational goods are not interchangeable. They can indeed become private or public goods, but with this they perish because they lose the qualities and powers that are peculiar to them: they lose their peculiar relationality -- which does not happen when there is the privatization of public goods or when private goods become public (these goods can certainly change in certain ways but do not alter their functionality with respect to the service that they provide).

Arrow B in figure 1 (between cells 2 and 3) indicates that interchanges between primary relational goods and collective relational goods always exist (for this reason, the line is solid). Empirical research demonstrates that there is continuity, and not discontinuity, between the relational goods produced in primary groups and the relational goods of larger and more formal organizations. Primary relational goods contribute to reinforcing secondary relational goods, and vice versa (Donati and Tronca 2008).

This scheme has had various subsequent empirical confirmations of its validity, in particular, the connections between a community’s or association’s social capital and the production in it of relational goods (Donati and ColoZZi eds. 2006; 2007). At this point, I would like to synthesize what we know today about the requirements, qualities, and properties of relational goods.

(A) Requirements. In order to come into existence, the relational good requires:

(i) a personal and social identity of the participants; no relational good exists between anonymous subjects because the relational good implies that the actions that the subjects bring into existence refer to each one’s identity as a personal and social being;

(ii) a non-instrumental motivation of each subject in his/her involvement with the other: interest toward the other must be characterized by caring; it must be about taking care of the other and not turning to the
other to use him/her for some purpose other than the good that is intrinsic to the reciprocal relation as a good in itself, notwithstanding that it could also yield other outcomes (that is, positive externalities and an added social value);

(iii) that conduct is inspired by the rule of reciprocity: where reciprocity signifies symbolic exchange and not a do ut des; reciprocity implies that ego gives to alter that which alter needs or could give him/her pleasure, knowing that alter will do the same for ego when ego will have need of it;

(iv) total sharing: the relational good can only be produced and used together by those who participate in it, that is, it comes into existence if and only if the participants generate and enjoy it together; no one can produce it alone or can ask others to produce it without him/her, even only temporarily.

(v) in general, it requires elaboration over time (the relation’s temporal history) and a simple interaction in the moment is not sufficient, such as, for example, an act of kindness or reciprocal empathy in a purchase or in an exchange of objects; in short, the temporal register must be historical-relational and not interactional;47

(vi) a reflexivity that operates relationally, thus, not a reflexivity of an autonomistic type or one that is blocked or fractured; relational reflexivity is required in order for identity, reciprocity, and sharing to be enacted with reference to the good of the relation (as such), which must be produced and enjoyed together by the participants.

(B) Qualities and properties. The relational good has the following qualities and properties:

(i) it is an emergent effect, cannot be acquired otherwise, and is a way of satisfying primary needs. Saying that it is an emergent effect means that it requires a certain combination (not a simple aggregation) of factors, elements, or components as discussed above; its emergent character accents the fact that the relational good is a “third” entity that exceeds the involved subjects’ contributions and that, in certain cases, may not have been foreseen or thought of as the initial intention;

(ii) it can be produced and benefited from only by means of the relations that make that good, and it cannot be exchanged or replaced by anything else; in particular, it cannot be bought with money and cannot be produced on command or by law;

47 For the three registers of social time (interactional, relational, and symbolic): see Donati 2011b: 179-181.
(iii) it is a good in that it corresponds to the fundamental primary needs of the human person and social groups, needs that have to do with sociability without which individuals would be monads unable to realize themselves and be happy.

On the other hand, relational evils are the product of relations that do not have these ingredients and qualities. In relational evils we observe the lack of or deficit in one or more of the necessary elements (identity, non-instrumental motivations, reciprocity, sharing, temporal duration, reflexivity) or a lack of coherence or harmony among them. Above all, the relational evil is today connected to those pathological forms of reflexivity that are designated as blocked, hindered, or fractured reflexivity (Archer 2003).

In essence, relational goods are those immaterial entities (intangible goods) that consist of social relations that emerge from subject reflexively oriented toward producing and enjoying together, in a shared manner, a good that they could not obtain otherwise.

We could ask what the role of relational goods is in relations, even dialectical relations, between the State and civil society. To say it synthetically, relational goods are the new common goods, no longer understood as public things or public properties, but as goods co-produced by networks of persons and social formations (the relational subjects) that generate them and benefit from them continuously without their having an ‘owner’. In the following sections we shall explore this theme more deeply.

5. The concept of relational good redefines the map of common goods.

The common good is often identified with the public good. Relational theory, instead, posits a distinction between these types of goods. The common good should not be confused either with the private good or with the public good. What characterizes the common good is the fact that the advantage each person derives from belonging to a certain association or community cannot be severed from the advantage that others also derive from it. This means that each person’s interest is realized together with that of others, not in opposition to it (as happens with the private good) nor apart from others’ interest (as happens with the public good).

In this sense, the term “common” (communis) is opposed to “proper” (proprium in the sense of “one’s own”) as “public” is opposed to “private.” That which is not one’s own (private) nor of everyone indiscriminately (public) is common. The common good is the space of that which not only belongs to some people or even to everyone indifferently. It is not a collective good in the modern sense of a “state” good (belonging to the State). It is the privileged space of social relations when subjects are oriented toward promoting the good of the relations existing among them and thus, also, toward caring for the objects that represent these goods (that is,
common goods): for example, a shared house or a *commons* on the internet (such as Wikipedia) (Bauwens 2008; 2013).

The common good, in its relational version, is not a concertative idea either, as some understand it to be. It is not the practice of political concertation typical of the neo-corporate democratic government (Wilensky 1976). In the latter arrangement, actors hold biased interests and lay claim to them by taking a seat at a table from which they hope to rise seeing them satisfied, at least in good part, after a conflict characterized by bargaining. The relational good is not of this type. It puts the good of relations before that of individual, group, or categorical interests. The relations alluded to by this good are those of subjects involved in the common needs that also pertain to the surrounding societal community.

The criterion for identifying those particular common goods that are relational is based on the principle of positive reciprocity, and not on that of equality of individual opportunities (at the start or as a result), which is peculiar to individualism. Let us think about what this means for the relationships between the genders, between men and women, in families and in the public sphere. Today, the common good between men and women is generally understood as the sum of individual goods acquired through individual opportunities. This happens in the couple, for example, as well as in the job market where men and women face one another. The so-called “pure relation” theorized by Giddens (1992) is a relation in which each partner negotiates the maximum individual satisfaction; it is not a relational good. The equal opportunity programs in the work place try to equalize access to jobs and compensation between men and women as individuals; they do not have as objective the pursuit of a relational good. Instead, the relational good is a relation of reciprocity (or “symbolic exchange”) between individuals which aims to build relational goods for and between them such as, for example, the balance between work and family life. Relational goods come from being in a relation of full reciprocity. They are neither an aggregation of individual goods nor a collective good that must be distributed among the participants. Relational goods are sensitive to intersubjective relations and cannot be the result of individual advantages (they do not guarantee that each person can pursue his/her own particular interest if this is incompatible with the common good).

Relational goods are the subset of common goods that can only be generated together: no one who takes part in them can be excluded from them; they cannot be sub-divided and are not the sum of individual goods. *Saying that a common good is relational means that it is a type of good that*

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48 The term *reciprocity* here indicates relations in which the subjects give to one another and exchange things or services or, in any case, help one another in turn in a social network that acknowledges itself to be a circle of subjects cooperating among themselves. While being useful, reciprocity is not activated and maintained for instrumental reasons but for reasons of identity in belonging to a community of reciprocal assistance. For this reason, sometimes the term “reciprocity” is interchangeable with that of “symbolic exchange.”
depends on the relations enacted by the subjects toward one another and can be enjoyed only if the subjects orient themselves accordingly. In this sense, we say that human life is a common good in that it is the object of enjoyment and therefore of rights, not as a private, individual good in an individualistic sense, nor as a public good in the modern technical sense of a state good, but precisely as a relational good of subjects who are in relation with one another.

Present day society expresses the need for new common goods in a very precise phenomenological sense: common goods in the sense that only communities of people, only primary and associative groups, can express and safeguard them. This is a new generation of rights; precisely, the generation of human rights, beyond civil and political rights and those of socio-economic welfare. When we appeal today, for example, to the child’s right to have a family that cares for him/her, we are appealing to a right that is human, not civil in the modern sense of the term or political or socio-economic. What category of rights is this? The answer cannot but be: a human right that is intrinsically relational.

The legal system has only recently begun to understand the need to introduce this category of rights. We are referring to the type of rights that we can call relational because they involve a relational good (not a public or collective good). Beyond the grand assertions contained in international and national documents on civil rights of a liberal-individualistic matrix, it is necessary to develop a specific reflection on people’s rights to common goods and on the rights of common goods as such, in as much as they are relational goods. The latter are rights pertaining to those relational goods that enjoy the status of legal subjectivity (for example, a social cooperative: these are the rights of the cooperative and not only the rights of the individuals in the cooperative). This is a new area for reflection and social practices that is beginning to come to the fore in a mature way only today.

The proof that today’s public ethics does not involve a common good in a relational sense is found in the case in which, for example, the problems of peace, development, the environment, and also of new forms of poverty, are not confronted as problems of concrete human relations enacted by co-present subjects but are simply treated as ‘things’ to eliminate by marginalizing violent persons, punishing those who do not succeed in competing, banning polluters, helping the poor with measures that promote passivity. Problems are confronted by putting people in conditions of not causing trouble. These are false solutions to problems because they are not inspired by the common good in that they leave aside completely the necessity of involving poor and marginalized people, deviants, and even those prone to violence in seeking to solve problems as common, shared

49 I remind the reader that the term ‘civil rights’ refers to the individual rights promoted by market liberalism starting in the 1700’s (as the right to religion, opinion, association of the individual, and also the right of the person to physical integrity, due process in court proceedings, etc.)
problems. In the arena of social policies, it is very clear by now that these modalities for facing situations of distress, poverty, and social marginalization are completely unsatisfactory. Peace, development, a clean and safe environment, a decent life for everyone -- these are all goods that correspond to the relational character of these objectives: this is to say that they can only be achieved together; they are not a sum of individual expediencies but a function of the relational system that connects subjects in relation with one another and a function of their comprehensive internal and external relations.

Relational goods are the key for moving from the welfare state to the welfare society. It is important to underscore that the common good takes on the form of a relational good in all the areas of welfare in which relations among human subjects are in play. Figure 2 synthesizes the various areas in which socially significant goods are produced. Relational goods are found in the areas defined by cells 2 and 3. Outside of these areas of welfare, we find non-relational goods (and subjects). On the one hand (cell 1), we find public goods in a strict sense, which can and must be pursued through systemic or technological, redistributive apparatuses (such as the State’s fiscal revenues, public pensions, the State’s monetary transfers, services in which people’s participation is bound and constrained on the basis of legal requirements). On the other hand (cell 4), we find those strictly private goods (of the Darwinian market) that, in order to be satisfied, do not necessarily require a relation involving cooperation and reciprocity between buyer and seller.
It is nonetheless necessary to clarify that collective relational goods (secondary, associational), while they are peculiar to the Social private and Third sectors, can also be generated in the State and Market on condition that actors comply with the requirements that are specific to relational goods (which were discussed in section 4) because where they are produced is not important but rather how they are produced. They can be pursued within each of these spheres and between them. The fact that in the lib/lab arrangement they are weakened and marginalized depends on the non-relational way in which the lib/lab system has until now configured the State and market and their relationships.

6. Who are the subjects who generate relational goods? Under which conditions?

Generally speaking, relational goods are the product of processes of association among individual agents/actors. The agents/actors can also be collective. But in that case the conditions for generating relational goods are much more complex and onerous. For this reason, it is quite rare that relational goods are able to emerge among collective subjects. It is necessary that the social context be non-competitive (that is, not combative). Relational
goods can be and, indeed, are competitive goods, but in terms of solidarity in the sense of competition (*cum-petere*) as the search for the best solutions in a contest which is not detrimental to the other participants but stimulates each participant to contribute his/her best effort toward achieving the same common goal.

For example, the components of the same sports team can create the relational good of their team. But a game played between two football teams, as in every competitive activity that must lead to a victor or, at least, to a ranking of winners and losers, cannot create a relational good. The combative context and its rules prohibit this. Instead, a second level organization that unites two or more mutual aid associations for the purposes of reciprocal cooperation can, under certain conditions, create relational goods and therefore can be a relational subject that creates relational goods among participating associations.

Relational goods are produced by those relational subjects that operate according to the characteristics highlighted in the preceding sections (4 and 5). Figure 3 synthesizes the placement of relational subjects in the societal arena.

We can find them in lifeworld spheres as primary groups and in the spheres of civil society as Third sector organizations and volunteer associations. Collective relational subjects do not necessarily have to be bound to any particular territory because means of communication can also create associative forms at a distance. However, the distance must allow for a minimum of intersubjective relations. Figure 3 tells us that relational subjects cannot arise and exist either in the capitalistic market of a Darwinian type or in the bureaucratic organizations of states (state apparatuses, such as the public administration).
Primary relational subjects are those characterized by intersubjective, face-to-face relations (in cell 3 of figure 3). Secondary relational subjects (in cell 2) are created in the social networks that weave together formal (professional) relationships and informal (non-professional) relationships on condition that the organizational relations are not purely functional, but leave space to superfunctional action. The specificity of these networks resides in the fact of being institutions of social solidarity that produce positive externalities for third subjects and operate as training grounds for substantial, that is, civil democracy.

Relational subjects can be distinguished at three levels: micro, meso, and macro.

(i) On a *micro* level we find families, small groups, and informal networks that practice internal intersubjective relations with a relational reflexivity. Emblematic examples are many self- and mutual-help groups that present the characteristics discussed in sections 4 and 5.

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50 With the term “superfunctional,” I mean an individual or organizational action that is not oriented toward the specialization of roles (that is, it is not guided by functional differentiation) but is oriented toward the exercise of a plurality of functions that cannot be enumerated – and can also be latent – in that it operates with relations, on relations, through relations (relational differentiation). In order to understand the superfunctional reality of the social sphere, it is necessary to abandon modernity’s functionalistic approach as was theorized by Talcott Parsons (1951) and Niklas Luhmann (1995).
(ii) On a *meso* level we find organizations that are broader and have a certain formalization of their structures and activities. These are the organizations of the social private sphere, the Third sector, and civic associations such as associations of social promotion, volunteer organizations, social solidarity cooperatives, and social networks on the internet. These can also be for-profit economic enterprises on condition that they practice corporate social responsibility, that is, that they have as an objective the production of positive externalities (relational goods) in favor of the surrounding community and that this objective is not instrumental to making a profit for the company but is envisioned as an ethical criterion of entrepreneurial activity. This is the civil economy.

(iii) On a *macro* level we find second and third level organisms that organize lower level relational subjects in an associative manner. We can think of those international non-governmental Organizations that, unlike organizations that lobby States or international institutions, create a network of local associative units that operate on a micro scale. Once again, it is necessary here to see whether there exist or not the conditions peculiar to a relational subject’s action. We might wonder whether certain international organisms can be or become relational subjects. These could be the UN, the European Union, or the Mercosur. The probability that organisms of this type can be relational subjects is practically zero owing to the fact that they never have the conditions of intersubjectivity and reflexivity that are necessary for producing relational goods. These are, generally speaking, instrumental organisms that conceive of the common good in aggregative and combinatorial terms, and never in relational terms. Nevertheless, in the abstract, we could imagine that in the future it would be possible to create macro level organisms that adopt a relational culture and realize at least some of the conditions peculiar to relational subjects.

7. **The new civil democracy.**

Civil democracy (as distinct from economic, political, and social democracy) is the form of *societal governance* that pursues the common good not as a state of things, nor as a sum or aggregation of single goods, nor as a super-ordinated reality, but as the totality of those *conditions* of social life that allow groups, as well as their individual members, to achieve their own perfection more fully and quickly through the creation of relational goods.

Over the course of the 20th century this vision was translated into the idea that ensuring the conditions for the development of people and their social formations meant providing assistance and state sponsored redistribution using resources coming from the market. This way of thinking
and acting came from afar. It was a legacy of the Enlightenment State inspired by concern for the population’s well-being and managed from above as a form of ‘good government’ (*politeia*). It materialized starting from the absolute and later constitutional States established in Europe between the 17th and 19th centuries.

Today we find ourselves facing a distinct historical discontinuity. With respect to the past, generating the common good presupposes the relational participation of all those interested in such a good (which cannot be abstract entities but concrete personal and associative subjects in specific situations) and presupposes the nexus between each actor’s freedom and responsibility in producing the common good. Those who make reference to the classical political conception continue to identify the common good in the State, as its function and chief task. But there is a clear shift, even if it is gradual and tempered, of the concept of common good toward non-state political communities. The new welfare cannot be produced either only from below (from individuals), nor only from above (by an increasingly interventionist State), nor from a generic mixture of the two paths, but rather from a suitable relation -- involving both subsidiarity and solidarity -- among the members of a political community (understood precisely as the totality of those who must decide on their common good).

To arrive at a concrete definition of this vision, social theory must clarify the reality of the relational order, that is, the reality of the relations that substantiate the common good, and must see its autonomous potentialities in what we could call the “subjectivity of society,” which means seeing it in the capacity of civil society (defined as the totality of subjects – both individual and collective – that do not have roles in public institutions) to express social subjects (we should say ‘societal’ subjects) that generate relational goods.

To this end, it becomes essential that there is integration between a vertical vision of the common good (which only Authority can guarantee from above) and a horizontal vision (peculiar to the social order of relations among social subjects): in other words, the integration between the State’s *internal* subsidiarity (inside its hierarchical articulations), the subsidiarity in the relationships between the State and organizations of civil society, and the subsidiarity in the relations among the subjects of civil society.

**8. Implications for the future political organization of society.**

To the degree that the limitations and structural defects of the current model of the social State can be seen, the alternative idea of a *society of subsidiarity based on solidarity* gains ground, a society that is pursued through the expansion of relational goods. This goes beyond a *neo-lib/lab vision* of the social State and of well-being because it emphasizes three fundamental things. First, it redefines well-being starting from subjects, which are simultaneously its recipients and architects. Second, it confers on
the State the political role of guarantor of the common good, in as much as it
decides the general rules but does not produce civil society or, even worse, a
power system that sees (reads, interprets, enacts) civil society as a function of
political hegemony. Third, it abandons the philosophy of inclusion in a single
institutional arrangement to embrace, instead, that of promoting competition
characterized by solidarity among multiple belongings.

It is indeed evident that civil society produces relational goods if and
to the extent that it makes use of its own resources: in the first place, its
moral resources (i.e., values and virtuous behaviors), which involve relying
on a first person, rather than a third person, ethics.51 The failures of the
lib/lab configuration of society are due to the fact of having extolled third
person ethics, abandoning, indeed destroying, first person ethics.

We could ask: why is the societal vision of the common good as a
relational good, inflected in terms of a subsidiarity characterized by
solidarity, more human? This is due to three reasons, basically. First, because
it not only respects the choices of negative freedom (freedom from
constrictions) but nourishes the choices of positive freedom (freedom for –
i.e. in favor of – social finalities) of people and social subjects. Second, it
does not forcibly impose solidarity but produces it by incentivizing and
rewarding whoever adopts courses of action that produce relational goods.
Third, it does not privilege exit solutions or those of mercantile competition
but, rather, those that strive toward the construction of social autonomies able
to combine universalism and particularity.

The superseding of the 20th century social State in the direction of a
political system that promotes a civil society that can face the challenges
posed by a globalizing world that generates ever new crises is not a simple
operation. Certainly, it cannot be achieved within the framework of

51 I clarify the terms. First person ethics (also "ethics of virtue") holds that ethics is a search
for the global good of man, that is, the good of human life taken as a totality. It looks to the
acting subject, that is, to the person who, by means of his/her free action rooted in reason,
moves toward the ultimate good. The question arises: what is the truly good life that deserves
to be lived? How can we become better and live the better life, individually and together?
The answer must be constructed by considering human agency from the point of view of the
person who acts, the person in action; considering conduct not in and of itself, as being
abstracted from its author, but in as much as it is practiced by the subject. Third person ethics
(also "normativist ethics"), on the other hand, does not place at the center of attention the
consideration of the person with a view to achieving a good life by exercising the virtues.
The acting subject is rejected as a central category. Here the ethical problem consists in
identifying and following the norms that regulate the social relationships among subjects
who seek their own legitimate expediencies. The construction of a livable society must be
irrespective of the acting subject in that each one has his/her own conception of the good and
his/her own life project that is incommunicable with that of others since no truth exists
regarding the good in which each rational subject can recognize him/herself (it is assumed
that the consociates are morally estranged). For this, the solution of the ethical problem (that
is, the construction of social relations among affectively asocial subjects) consists in the
production of a complex of norms, of a legal system, exclusively of human convention,
excogitated from instrumental reason according to the purely formal needs of coherence,
functionality, and universality.
negotiations and compromises between market and political democracy, merely conceding gracious acknowledgements to the Third sector, which remains residual and dependent on the first two sectors. The passage to a new social order is happening today under the aegis of a social morphogenesis that is enfranchising an ‘other’ civil society with forms of sociality that are different from those of political institutions and the capitalistic market.

Modernity asked itself whether the social State should have been all of or only a part of society. It has oscillated, in its ideologies and practices, from one pole to the other, configuring the State as the synthesis of everything (polarization of a lab type) or, vice versa, as a residual sub-system (polarization of a lib type). We risk remaining stuck in this game. To the question that modernity bequeaths to us, and that is, “Must the State still be everything or only a part?”, the 21st century could answer by completely shifting perspective and configuring the State as a differentiated function of the political body specialized in making sure that social processes do not create poverty and exclusion but, rather, wealth and social cohesion through the production of relational goods. It addresses everyone (not only the poor), but as to this “everyone,” it is interested in what has to do with their conditions of participation seen as the result of a triangulation among risks undertaken, responsibilities assumed, and opportunities enjoyed. This means seeing the State as the specific sub-system that must politically govern society but must not replace it, nor colonize it, nor produce it. The State must come to a stop in front of that which does not pertain to it, that which is not available to it, such as the ethical sphere. It must be a means through which the community takes on the collective responsibility to include in social life those who cannot or do not succeed in becoming part of it.

The society of subsidiary solidarity has its political form in what we could call the “relational social State.” What is a relational State? In our opinion, it is characterized by the following modalities of configuration.

(1) The relational State is no longer conceived as the Vertex and Center of society but as a functionally differentiated political-administrative sub-system for the governance of a society that is observed and enacted as a network of social (public, private, and mixed) subjects and institutions. In its aspect of institution, the State becomes an ensemble of apparatuses that have specific political and administrative functions that must operate in a manner that is subsidiary -- and relatively symmetrical in terms of power -- with respect to other fundamental sub-systems of society, and that is, the market, civil society, and the sub-system of the family and informal networks.

(2) The relational State is configured as a legal and social system that must realize complex citizenship. Citizenship is said to be complex for three orders of reasons:

(i) because it recognizes not only civil, political, and economic-social rights (as theorized by T.H. Marshall 1950) but also human rights, which are the rights of the human person in relation to the social formations in which
he/she develops and conducts his/her activities; these refer to over four generations of rights, the last of which is still being defined;

(ii) because it interweaves citizenship in a state (traditional citizenship, defined as the individual’s belonging to a national State) and societal citizenship (defined as persons’ belonging to associative forms of civil society that are recognized as collective subjects – which are public but not of the state – acting with politically significant functions in the local, regional, national, or supranational sphere); and, with this, makes possible differentiated and multiple forms of citizenship;

(iii) because complex citizenship does not make reference only to individuals but also to social formations of civil society (which constitutes a reason for a sharp discontinuity with modernity); in effect, from a sociological point of view, the relational social State arises when typically modern (from the 19th-20th centuries) political constitutions are reformed through processes of constitutionalizing private spheres, that is, by attributing a political value (authorizing binding collective decisions for the common good), and the connected public functions, to organizations of a non-state type (Teubner 2012).

The relational State is de/centered and articulated in an associational (or federative) manner, whether upward (for example, the European Union) or downward (local communities and organizations of civil society). The consequences for social policies are of enormous import. The passage from the traditional welfare state to the relational social State entails, in fact, at least three great structural changes.

In the first place, the symbolic code that presides over social inclusion (or cohesion) policies changes: the prevailing symbolic code is no longer that of the state (by which the common good is by definition of the state) but becomes what we can call a relational symbolic code (by which the common good is the relational one). In the second place, social policies become a widespread function of society, that is, a function that is pursued by a plurality of actors, which are public and private, combined and intertwined (in relation) in various ways with one another (plural welfare, societal conceptions, multistakeholders of welfare organizations, and still others). In the third place, the social policies, which until now have been upheld primarily by the two pillars of freedom (the lib side or that of the market) and equality (the lab side or that of the redistributive State), must institutionalize a third pillar, that of solidarity, as an autonomous and distinct pole that cannot be derived from the other two. In this pole, ad hoc societal, plural, and subsidiary welfare institutions arise. Until now, social policies have treated solidarity as a by-product of policies pursued primarily through combinations of individual freedoms and equality of opportunity in welfare systems conceived as a compromise between State and market. It is not by chance that solidarity still does not appear as a value and end in itself alongside the other two values of the European Union’s master plan.
The relational social State expresses the need for a jump in quality toward a new configuration of freedom, equality, and solidarity that does not make social solidarity residual in that it does not understand the latter to be charity or compensation for the weakest or marginalized members of society but places it on the same level as freedom and equality of opportunity. It does so also in terms of the elaboration of rights (new relational rights) and the production of goods and services (new relational goods) of welfare.

To synthesize: the relational social State conceives the common good to be a good that valorizes relations of reciprocal enrichment of free and responsible actors who create welfare. It brings about a complex citizenship that operates by valorizing the principle of relationality applied to all of society’s spheres. Social policies are not understood as sectorial or residual policies for the poor or needy but as a general form of a reflexive action of society on to itself in terms of the production and distribution of social goods (in a broad sense), without separating normal conditions from particular conditions (those that indicate risk or are deviant or pathological). The relationality that connotes complex citizenship operates at all territorial levels and in every intervention sector as citizenship that must be extended to all potential actors (not as passive beneficiaries but, rather, as active subjects that choose it and put it into practice) (inclusive citizenship) and must be deepened, that is, made to be concrete and situated (deep citizenship). Relational modalities substantially alter the hierarchical, bureaucratic, disciplinary characteristics, as well as those regarding assistance and workfare, that have been typical of the traditional 20th century welfare state.

The contribution of relational subjects to substantial democracy consists in promoting the birth and development of civil welfare institutions that create relational goods by acting with ‘relational reflexivity’ (Donati 2011c: 295-306). Sociological analysis must be able to grasp those phenomena that indicate how morphogenetic society can evolve toward a structural and cultural arrangement able to promote the specific reflexivity that generates common goods as relational goods.
Chapter 6

Associative democracy through relational social capital

1. The issue: from Tocqueville to Putnam and beyond.

In his great work *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, Alexis de Tocqueville is universally known to have remarked that the rising nineteenth-century American democracy lay its foundations in civil and civic associations 52. Tocqueville there referred to the habit – so typical of the American citizen – of tackling social problems affecting the local community or the whole nation by setting up civil society associations. These would operate on an individual and voluntary basis and aim to solve community problems through strong participation and democratic governance. He emphasised that associating together is the typically democratic way of making society. Tocqueville’s fundamental claim is that ‘the art of associating together’ is the *humus* of republican democracy. To put it in an equation:

\[ \text{political democracy} = f (\text{number and strength of civil and civic associations}) \]

This remark has turned from an empirical to a normative one. In other words, it has been translated into the fundamental theorem which continues to sustain society’s modernisation processes. In such a context, modernisation is seen as political democratisation by means of a market

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52 The distinction between *civil* and *civic* associations is not a simple one. In the present essay I propose the following distinction. Civil associations are the ones in which private individuals manage their own business and put in place their own private exchanges according to good moral standards, whereas civic associations are the ones concerned with public matters with feelings, values, sense of responsibility for common goods (= civic sense). What civil and civic associations do have in common is their spontaneously originating from their members’ own ‘bottom-up’ initiative, and not from higher or external pressure. Yet, civil is synonymous with private as such (without public responsibilities), whereas civic is synonymous with citizenship action, that is an action carried out by private individuals in their capacities as citizens – i.e. referring to *civitas* or *polis* - without occupying institutional roles. Many authors, like J.C. Alexander (2006) and M. Emirbayer (1997), conflate ‘civil’ and civic’, which is misleading.
society rich of associations in every part of the world. Just to mention one example, think of the support given by the West to the democratisation processes of North-African countries (Tunisia, Egypt, Libya) in the years 2010-12 through the support of civil society associations.

At some point, above all through Robert Putnam’s work (1993), but without forgetting many other previous authors, Tocqueville’s equation was translated into the politological language of social capital, interpreted as the cultural heritage inspiring and sustaining strong civic associations, themselves fostering a better performance by political and administrative institutions. The three terms [civic associations, social capital, civic culture] have gradually started overlapping and almost become identical. In Italy the main follower of this trend has been Roberto Cartocci (2002; 2007), for whom these three notions coincide with the political culture of the centre-left side of the political spectrum.

In practical terms, civil associations have been interpreted as the context in which civic sense is generated and reproduced. This would be done through embracing a wide range of values on which those (potential and assumed) relationships based on civicness-nurturing trust and co-operation depend. The equation has become:

\[ \text{political democracy} = f \left( \text{quantity} - \text{i.e. spread and intensity} - \text{of civic culture present in a given area} \right) \]

In Cartocci’s argument, the terms ‘civic values’ and ‘civic culture’ become almost equivalent. The distinction between civil and civic is lost because civil reality is observed and evaluated as dependent on the political system. Cartocci follows Antonio Gramsci’s doctrine, for which civil society consists in the set of social and cultural forces underpinning political power. The notion of social capital is introduced in the above-mentioned equation simply as synonymous with and equivalent to civic culture. Indeed, Cartocci – following Putnam’s earliest argument (1993) – defines civic culture as a system of values which, to his mind, would be independent from the networks of social relationships of the living world. In so doing, both Putnam and Cartocci forget the richness of Tocqueville’s analysis of civil society, or at any rate make very little of it, because they interpret Tocqueville merely from a strictly politological point of view.

If the concept of social capital (henceforth SC) is equivalent to that of civic culture, why should SC replace the latter? In other words, the question has to be: have SC studies contributed something more and newer than Tocqueville theorem – the plentier and stronger associations are, the stronger democracy and economic and social development is?

53 Let me remind you that the indicators employed by Cartocci (2007) to measure SC are the following: (1) the spread of newspapers (purchase and reading); (2) polling rates; (3) blood donations; (4) availability of volunteers to implement basic sport activities. In my view, these indicators confuse civic values with civil ones and do not measure SC proper at all, because they never refer to social relations.
Methodological tools and/or mere empirical descriptions fall short of answering this question: we need to turn to sociological theory.

Indeed, the link between civil/civic culture and civil/civic associations cannot be taken for granted at all, in the sense that it is not universally confirmed. There are regions, even in Italy, where civic culture as defined by Cartocci is not shown by the number and strength of civil/civic associations, but depends on the funding and leadership of political parties which are predominant in those areas and govern the associations through a network of interests binding the associations and the parties themselves. Neither is civic culture as identified by Cartocci accompanied by a more accomplished form of democracy, if by democracy we mean not only a widespread participation of citizens in general elections, but also the presence of civil virtues which ensure the direct exercise of citizenship rights typical of associative democracy (Hirst 1994; Hirst and Bader eds. 2001). There are clearly some variables connecting civic culture with associative democracy we have to resort to, if we want to explain such phenomena.

Not all the so-called ‘civic’ associations experience the same civic sense. Not always does a certain civic sense manage to influence the political system of an area, increasing its democratic quality and its participation rate. Not always do the spread and strength of the so-called civic associations lead to a greater socioeconomic development. Other elements need to be factored in. What are they, then?

Usually, two kinds of factors are mostly referred to: the issue of ‘values’ (what values are truly civil and civic?) and the issue of ‘social networks’ (what networks are more democratic and more capable of supporting a people’s development and well-being?). Some scholars have focussed on the values dynamics (Gubert ed. 1992; ed. 2004; Gubert, Pollini eds. 2009), others on the social networks dynamics (Donati and Colozzi eds. 2001; 2006; 2007).

In the present essay, I would like to argue that there is multiple empirical evidence suggesting that the results of these studies should be connected. To make these connections, we need to use a specific concept linking cultural values and social networks. This concept is precisely that of social capital (SC), which so far has been used separately on either side, on that of values or of networks, as if these two aspects were independent from each other.

In my view, the investigations I have just referred to point to the need to look for a new theoretical approach to SC which may be able to differentiate the forms and inherent dimensions of SC, in order to connect civil and civic values with the quality of the social networks in which they emerge and are expressed.

2. The need for a new theory of social capital
To say something more precise than Tocqueville and Putnam, the notion of SC must not be a mere synonym of civic culture, nor simply be assigned to the social networks metaphor. As I will say below, we need a realistic and “emergential” approach. That means an approach which may highlight SC’s autonomous reality and display its character as an emergent phenomenon in relation to values (that is the civil/civic culture). Values must not be thought of as individual orientations, but as expressions of a relational context.

In the present contribution, I intend to outline such an approach. It must fulfil the task of showing that SC is a complex, multidimensional entity, which does not coincide with civic values and it is different from the mere notion of a social network of acquaintances which individuals use to draw certain advantages from.

This approach has to show that if Tocqueville’s equation \[\text{democracy} = f(\text{number and strength of civic associations})\] lacks an elaborate notion of SC, it is problematic and not explanatory, whereas it becomes explanatory and understanding, if one introduces a complex notion of SC.

In other words, the equation becomes:
\[Y(\text{democracy}) = f(\text{spread of SC, by types, quantity & quality})\]

In brief, the hypothesis I am putting forward here is that the notion of SC is more informative than Tocqueville and Putnam’s one, provided that SC is observed as a unique (sui generis) factor which is not yet present in the definition of the concept of civic association employed by Tocqueville and Putnam themselves. It is, as I shall say below, a real factor (endowed with a quality and causal powers of its own) which connects civil/civic culture with the associative social networks it is nurtured by.

To understand this point, SC needs to be seen as an intervening variable which can modify the relationships between democracy and associations. In short: whether civic associations produce democracy and how they do, depends on how SC operates (figure 1). The discussion may be widened by also considering economic development, but I will not do that here.
This approach enables us to differentiate the various forms of association and to evaluate the differential relationship with the outcomes I call ‘associative democracy’. Indeed my argument is that SC theory introduces into Tocqueville’s equation \( \text{democracy} = f(\text{associations}) \) some explanatory factors which are not immediately visible in the term ‘associations’ and which contribute to seeing their different ways of being and acting. In particular, introducing SC as an intervening variable makes it possible to see that:

(i) First, members of associations join them endowed with a different SC from the associations themselves; such asymmetries are not irrelevant for the association’s ability to produce SC;

(ii) Secondly, being associated is not enough to produce SC; the type and quantity of SC that is produced depends on the type (quantity and quality) of individuals’ participation;

(iii) Thirdly, social networks arising from associations do not always act in favour of democracy and/or of economic development, because this depends on their culture.

On the basis of these remarks a general theory of SC is thus needed to be able to show the existence of a differentiation of SC according to the different ‘associational worlds’ (of which the Tocqueville-type civic ones are only a part) and to their way of influencing political democracy.

In fact, Tocqueville’s description of associationalism in America is rather vague. When Putnam wanted to make it more precise and to measure it through his SC concept, he came up with a number of contradictory conclusions. At first, he argued for a decrease in SC in the US (Putnam, 2000) and then changed his mind (Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen 2003). The
point is that Putnam’s arguments are very controversial. As far as I can see, Putnam’s theory falls into the category of non-decidable (in the sense of non-falsifiable) theories for the following reason. It measures SC by the number of associations and of their members. To identify SC with associations, then, is misleading (i.e. not falsifiable, even though not necessarily wrong) for various reasons, first of all because, if people do not take part in association, or if they take part in a contingent way or only under certain conditions, this does not automatically mean that SC’s hallmark relationality is created. Furthermore, even supposing that people take active part, this does not automatically mean that the associations in question do in fact generate relational goods – ‘relational evils’ may also emerge, – whether they want it or not. In other words, Putnam’s theory is untenable because the quantity of associations may or may not generate SC, and yet his theory itself does not enable us to verify that.

3. Two paradigmatic ways of interpreting social capital which have prevailed so far

How should one interpret and measure SC? To put it briefly, since approximately the 1970s two main research paths have developed. Let me summarise them for clarity’s sake.

On the one hand, there has been a boom in research projects highlighting how the blame for many social inequalities may be put on individuals having different life chances according to the quantity and the quality of significant social relations they have access to in the context they live in, as a means to get help and resources. Attention has been drawn to this by some authors who have since become famous, such as Granovetter (1973) and then Bourdieu (1980) and Coleman (1990). Associations obviously offer a privileged arena of significant relations with people who can be sources of instrumental resources. On the basis of these premises, a tradition of SC studies has later developed, which has been named ‘micro-relational’.

On the other hand, some have remarked that certain circumscribed communities (local communities, industrial districts, etc.) and also entire geographical areas (regions or even countries) prosper more inasmuch as they have a stock or asset of SC, defined in terms of collective cultural traditions, and more specifically civic cultures facilitating associational co-operation. I am thinking of authors such as Putnam (1993), Fukuyama (1999), Cartocci (2007). This second line of thought has expressed an approach to SC which may be named ‘macro-structural’, in which the word ‘structural’ is to be referred both to social and to cultural structures.

To generalise these two lines, then, these numerous definitions of SC can be said to point in one direction and to one distinction – between micro (individualistic) and macro (holistic) approaches.
(I) The micro approaches take the view of methodological individualism, that is they observe SC from the individual’s point of view, in order to explain his behaviour and successes or failures in social life. There are obviously many variations, on the basis of individuals’ different features.

(II) The macro approaches take the view of methodological holism, that is they observe SC from the point of view of the ‘whole’, that is a collective entity (be it a social community, an institution, an organisation, a political, religious or cultural collective body) which the individual’s actions relate to, with their successful or unsuccessful outcomes in their social life. Here too there are many variants, due to the fact that ‘the whole’ that explains social capital may refer to a social structure, to a dominant culture in a certain geographical area, to a prevailing economic form, or to a specific religion.

The two ways of considering SC (micro and macro, individualistic and holistic) remained for some time separate, until the problem of connecting them was posed. In fact, the two ‘types’ outlined above (micro and macro), despite being theoretically conceived as wholly distinct, are rather seldom used in a ‘pure’ way in observations/empirical research. Most researchers attempt to see SC as a resource of goods and/or contacts or social ties, partly deriving from individuals’ acts and partly from structural constraints. For most theories, SC is in itself a resource activated by individuals who play in a restrained structural context. So, most authors mix and match the two micro and macro paradigms in various ways.

The variations in the ways of reading SC through mixing combinations of methodological individualism and holism have produced a very widespread definition of SC which I call lib/lab SC (or lib/lab mix of SC). According to the latter SC is seen as a resource which is available for the individual’s free acting (on the lib side), but is influenced by the position the individual occupies in a social and cultural structure (on the lab side). SC is the individual quality of a positional good. So, in my definition, the lib/lab conception of SC considers the social relationship instrumentally, as a ‘vehicle/channel’ of structural resources – subject to the political set-up, on the lab side, – which are used by individuals in one way or another depending on their degrees of freedom – on the lib side.

So, the point I want to stress is that the lib/lab view of SC offers an adequate reading of associational networks, the basic reason being that the micro-macro link is made in such a way as to make the meso level residual.

54 A survey of such mixes would be useful. It can be widely found in the main authors (Lin, Cook and Burt eds. 2001). For lack of space, it suffices to cite two emblematic names: P. Bourdieu and J. Coleman (eds. 1991). Authors such as A. Degenne and M. Forsé (1994) assign a prevalence to the structural holistic side (lab). Others assign a predominance to the micro-relational (lib) side (Coleman 1990: 300-321). However, the two aspects recall each other. An attempt to go beyond the lib/lab conflation has been made by Forsé and Tronca (2005), who move away from those mixes, since they propose a particular combination named ‘structural interactionism’.
The reading of SC as an individual resource or quality of a positional good leads one to view associations as segmented, stratified or functional entities, while denying their peculiar relational qualities. The micro and macro levels are considered as opposite or complementary poles, which have to be mutually combined and mixed. This happens if one handles their relationships in an almost exclusively conflating manner, i.e. where the SC meso level mostly becomes a form of conflation between mutually generating individuals and structures, where their different properties, powers and effects become blurred.

4. A new approach to social capital: the relational viewpoint.

The novelty introduced by the relational approach lies in seeing SC as a quality of social relationships, rather than as a distinctive quality of individual or social and cultural structures, or as their mutual mix. Obviously, individual and structures ‘make’ social relationships (various types of SC), but the latter are an emergent phenomenon in opposition to their determining factors.

In the relational approach, the meso level is considered the ‘focal’ one, since it is the starting point for a better understanding of how the other two micro and macro levels are activated and work.

On these premises we can found an SC view of the individual and of the whole society which we can call societarian pluralism, instead of lib/lab.,

The relational approach takes as its starting point a concept of capital as a social relationship. Capital is not seen as a ‘thing’ (a material good or a concrete type of social relationship allowing for functional equivalence through money), but as something that values social relationships as such, something through which a certain social relationship has some value and which consequently defines the shape of that relationship itself. What is this something?

Before looking for an answer, it is worth repeating that ‘social capital’ differs from economic, cultural and political capital. In particular, it cannot be assimilated to an amount of money or any moveable property or real estate which may be ‘owned’. It is not a possession or an asset of a territory, a culture, an organisation, a religion, or an individual. Rather, it is that type of relationship that enhances the value of what is considered a good or a service through exchanges that are neither monetary, nor political, nor based on clientele, or on a ‘pure’ gift, but are social exchanges of reciprocity. Reciprocity there is not a primarily utilitarian ‘give and take’ (do ut des) behaviour, but it is a symbolic exchange which ultimately goes back to the act of ‘giving first’ (by an initially free act) and acts as the propeller of the social relationship in a circuit of supra-functional reciprocal provisions and counter-provisions. Reciprocity means giving without monetary calculations on the part of Ego, who knows that, whenever they need to, they will be supported by Alter, who belongs of the relational network underlying
associative actions. Giving, receiving and returning favours are behavioural patterns that are normatively expected within a social group sharing the culture of reciprocity.

Tentatively we may say that a social relationship qualifies as SC provided it is based on trust as an initial gift (trusting first), and on what derives from that act of trust in terms of willingness to co-operate and to reciprocate other members of a social network. According to the relational approach, SC may be observed (and it exists) in two ways:

(i) **As an actor’s (individual’s or group’s) inter-subjective network** if the network is seen as a set of interpersonal trusting relations within a set of actors who trust one another, or who can feel mutual trust, either because they feel they owe something to someone in the circle of gifts and returns, or because they are willing to join that circle.

(ii) **As a structural relationships network (the network as such)** involving impersonal actors who support a gift and return circle. In such a circle SC exists and operates as an emergent effect producing and reproducing the relational network as such. In this case it is the way that network works that produces more or less SC, or that uses it up. In any case, SC does not refer to an individual, or to a presupposed entity, but to the cultural, normative, finalistic, adaptive features of the relational network as such. An ‘ownership’ notion of SC (as a stock, asset, etc.) may be understood only if it is meant to refer to a network capable of offering potential resources. However, the network is dynamic and has variable boundaries, nor can it be assimilated to a given entity whose only role, as a thing, is to confine, to constrain and to be used in a utilitarian fashion by a rational-instrumental individual.

For the relational approach, **SC is a special relationship** which, because of its social nature, is comprised of four analytical dimensions, which in turn give rise to a structural setup, where each of them orients/mobilises/guides/utilizes the other dimensions, to different degrees and in different ways, thus producing an emergent effect. Defining SC as a social relationship means identifying the special features of those four dimensions and of their interacting way which produce a peculiar emergent phenomenon (figure 2).

Let us look at the four dimensions of the social relationship as such (let me just say once more that these dimensions are considered in an analytical and not in an empirical sense).

E) The ‘economic’ dimension of SC lies in the way in which the relationship in question can be used as a means or as an instrumental resource. Not all relationships have this potential. Certain hierarchical relationships, for instance, cannot be used this way by those who are in lower positions, unless other conditions are added (such as friendship or a special mutual feeling). Which leads us to point out that, just as it is true that SC has to be useful, so it is equally true that this usefulness can be calculated in
various ways, being either more material or more symbolic, either more centred on the ego or on the group, and so on. If this usefulness is not material and immediate, but immaterial and deferred in time, the value of the relationship taking priority over the things it can transmit, then we realise that the economic dimension of SC is subordinated to its non-economic value.

P) The ‘political’ dimension of SC lies in the way in which the relationship in question is likely to be mobilised for a goal which is shared by the subjects involved in the relationship. Not all relationships can work like that. The availability of those relations which are of a merely instrumental and self-centred kind to be mobilised for a common goal (shared by the members of the same social network) is limited, contingent and conditional.

N) The ‘normative’ dimension of SC lies in the fact that the relationship in question has to be governed by trust-based expectations and by co-operation and reciprocity rules. Not all relationships are or can be, not even in a network of acquaintances and of people spending time together.

V) The ‘value-based’ dimension of SC lies in the fact that the relationship in question is considered positive in itself (it is appreciated and promoted as such), it is a meaningful model for acting (acting has a meaning because it generates or reaffirms the value of that relationship). Here we find value models, relational lifestyles which provide the criteria (the distinction lead) to enhance the value of the relationship which has been, or may be activated as SC.
Some scholars see only or mainly the economic dimension of this good, others the political one, others the normative one, and others the cultural one. The misunderstandings of many definitions of SC in an individualistic (lib) or holistic (lab), or mixed (lib/lab) sense, derive from reducing SC to one of these dimensions (figure 2) or to one matching combination between them, without seeing the emergential nature of the relationship we call SC.

As for the more instrumental approaches (Bourdieu and some types of network analyzies) conceiving SC as the number and strength of social ties a person can count on to receive any kind of help, we need to repeat that SC is not the resource an individual can mobilise by instrumentally using that relationship with the person they can get it from. For instance, SC is not the bicycle Ego can get from a friend who can lend it to them. In fact, it is the relationship itself, if it is and because it is a relationship with the potential to be the source of a social exchange taking place in a unique way – it is neither commercial nor does it convey (political) power, but it is an act aimed at a goal which operates through trust and co-operative norms, by mobilising accessible resources.
SC is both an *explanans* (an explanatory tool) and *explanandum* (something to be explained). It is an *explanans* whenever it works as a starting-point, that is to say because it is a pre-acquired relationship which is restored. It is an *explanandum* (an outcome) because it is produced *ex novo*. In any case, it emerges as a unique relation arising from an *interplay* between the components of social relationships (and only those), which enhance the value of the relationship and of its recognition as the source of a reciprocities exchange.

This is a primary relationship, in the sense that it is endowed with autonomous powers and properties: it is neither a mere projection of the individual’s qualities or properties (let alone of his/her psychological qualities), nor a pure structural effect of the social system (community or local society, etc.), even though it is activated by individuals and has to take account of the context’s conditions.

In other words, SC is not any relationship whatsoever, nor a relationship based on the actors’ generic mutual acquaintance and on the effect of reciprocity. It is a relationship in which the good or service is incorporated in the relationship itself, it cannot be separated or utilised autonomously on the basis of two conditions: (i) the good/service always entails a debt, which is a relationship, expressed in the willingness to return (as part of a giving and reciprocating circle); (ii) should the relationship fade away, the good or service fades away too.

Civil and civic values remain uninfluential in terms of their causal powers unless they are continuously generated and regenerated in their supporting social networks. Whether those values are more or less present, they are lived out to differing degrees, are more or less influential on the social life of a group, depends on specific environmental conditions. It is the socio-cultural context, located in time and space, that makes them more or less present and influential. And ‘social context’ is synonymous with the social relationships agents/actors are involved in. This is the argument underlying the relational analysis of values. The correct connections have to be made between:

(i) civil/civic values, that is civic or generalised SC based on *solidarity through identification* with a collective culture, and

(ii) social relations, that is SC in the relational sense (= family, community, associational SC, giving rise to civic or generalised SC), depending on the ways of taking part in social networks, i.e. based on *solidarity generated through interactions and interdependences*.

Reimer, Lyons, Ferguson and Polanco (2008) have presented a framework for social capital that highlights the normative structures through which it is manifested. Their focus is on the ways that norms structure the relationships in which social capital is embedded. To this end, they introduce four types of normative structures which condition social capital: market, bureaucratic, associative, and communal. A field site in Japan is used to illustrate how different aspects of social capital interact. The central
arguments are that 1) social capital is organized in different ways by the normative structures in which it is embedded; 2) there are important interactions between these different aspects of social capital that are often overlooked by simpler frameworks; 3) a useful distinction can be made between *available* social capital and *used* social capital; 4) access to social capital can be used to analyze power relations; and 5) distinguishing different aspects of social capital makes areas visible that are overlooked by other understandings of social capital.

We may generalise the argument saying that SC is the *(quality of the)* relationship that is typical of relational goods. Let us look at the potential implications of this.

### 5. Associational social capital and relational goods.

I am asking myself: are associations SC or have they got SC simply because they are associations? I would like to answer this complex question by relying upon a series of surveys on representative samples of the Italian population carried out in the years 2001-2007 (Donati and Colozzi, quoted in the bibliography).

In many studies, claiming to refer to Tocqueville, associations seem be synonymous with SC or to possess it simply because they are civic associations. Yet, according to the relational theory, this is not exactly true.

To put it briefly, SC is not synonymous with association, because an association can have or produce more or less SC, may even fail to produce it, may only consume it, may produce it or possess it in only one part (a specific network within the association itself) and not in other parts.

To understand this, let us ask ourselves: why do people associate together?

In previous works (Donati 1991: ch. 3), I myself developed a sociological theory of associations, from which I simply draw the idea that individuals can associate together for different reasons. Those reasons can be related to four underlying analytical factors: (E) economic factors; (P) political factors; (N) normative factors of a social (relational) kind; (V) cultural factors (values, lifestyles, etc.).

The question is: do people associating together (‘forming an association’), each on the basis of one of these types of factors, produce SC? If they do, what type of SC is it and how do they use it?

After careful examination (figure 3), we may say what follows.

(E) Those who associate with others for economic reasons do not aim at enhancing the value of the relationship as such, but at benefitting or gaining from it or producing a useful good or service. Yet, if the goal (good or service) consists in generating a social relationship valued as such (for instance, whenever one associates together with others to perform solidarity or care activities representing a social form endowed with an economic, but
not a commercial value), the association that is created or operates for economic reasons can generate SC. On the basis of this argument, we can distinguish various types of ‘economies’. The associations acting in the profit market only bear SC as a derivative and as an “excess” product, not directly. For the market to be an opportunity for associations to create SC, transactions (interactions) have to pay a certain kind of attention to social relationships. The typically capitalistic market bears SC only if it pays its debts to factors that are, so to speak, external to the economy’s self-reference, that is if it incorporates ethical values. In other words, for the economy to bear SC it has to be an economy that sees the relationships’ context as an argument of the economic function. In the classic capitalistic market enterprises use SC to economic ends rather than producing it, but in the new civil economy enterprises can become producers of SC (for example, whenever they set about organising corporate social responsibility/CSR programmes for their local communities).

(P) Those who associate with others for political reasons pursue a goal which concerns the acquisition and management of political power, or at any rate of some influence upon it. Here too relationships are conceived instrumentally. A political association can only indirectly enhance the value of social relationships as SC. That is possible in certain political cultures but not in others. The public spheres of political-administrative institutions produce a civic SC which fosters and is in turn fostered by collective movements invested with a political function. Here SC is again used in an instrumental way, for the pursuit of political power.

(N) Those who associate with others in pursuit of social integration aim at producing social solidarity. What arises in this case are the genuinely social associations (for social promotion) and the civil spheres of not-for-profit associations. These create SC because SC is the fabric they are made of, as these relationship spheres work on the basis of social reciprocity (if and when they are true to themselves).

(V) Those who associate with others in pursuit of an expressive value (cultural reasons) aim at generating expressive values. The family spheres and those of informal networks (groups of friends, neighbours, charities) are associations of this kind. They produce SC, but it is of a different kind from the previous one, due to the different way of being (meaning and functions) of these forms of associations.

Generally speaking, the economic (E) and political factors (P) use SC, but they do not produce it, except derivatively. Properly speaking, the direct makers of SC are the factors of social solidarity (N) and of cultural value (V) (figure 3).

Why do the spheres of social associations (N) and cultural value (V) ‘generate’, and not only ‘use’, SC? Because in those spheres: (i) the social relationship has a value in itself, and (ii) goods/services are incorporated in the relationship. These are precisely the relational goods (Donati and Solci 2011).
SC cannot be assimilated to an association *sic et simpliciter*, but only to the associational forms which are configured as relational goods.

Thus we come to the relational theory notion of social capital (SC). SC is a type of relational good which is not a personal endowment or an individual property of people, nor is it a social structure’s (institution’s) collective endowment or property, but it is a certain relationship configuration in which we as people take part to achieve a good which could not possibly exist outside the relationship.

Such a configuration can only be put in place by people, with their own identities, interests, motivations. It has a unique constitution, which is extra- and super-individual, which does not consist in a structure determining

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Types of reasons/motives to associate together</th>
<th>Spheres</th>
<th>SC generation (in its various types: family, relations, wider community, civic) (*)</th>
<th>SC use (in its various types: family, relations, wider community, civic) (*)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Economic reasons</td>
<td>Private market spheres</td>
<td>SC is generated in intersubjective relationships exceeding the functionality of economic transactions-interactions</td>
<td>SC is used in a way that is instrumental to economic parameters (profit, productivity, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Political reasons</td>
<td>Public spheres of political-administrative institutions</td>
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<td>Relational reasons (social integration)</td>
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<td>SC is generated by reciprocity as a generalised symbolic means typical of associational networks (secondary groups)</td>
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<td>Cultural reasons</td>
<td>Family spheres and informal network spheres</td>
<td>SC is generated by trust as a generalised symbolic means typical of families and of informal networks (primary groups)</td>
<td>SC is used as a generalised symbolic means typical of families and of informal networks (primary groups) in the gift relationships</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

individual’s acts (downward conflation), nor is it an effect produced by the simple interaction between individuals as such (upward conflation), nor, let alone, is it a confusion between what social structure and individuals are (central conflation), but it consists in what in my relational sociology is called ‘the order of the relationship’ (Donati 2011a; 2011b; 2013).

The order of the relationship is the framework or configuration or contextual set-up marked by a modal type of relationships (by modal I mean that there is a mode of relating to one another that is typical or specific of that context, for a certain type of actors). The relational order is a set-up of forms and contents (or meanings of acting), which provide for normative expectations among a certain type of actors who are connected by a specific network – be it a family, a family tie, a group of friends, a local community, a civic association, etc. Therefore, in fact, it entails a ritual, but it is more than a ritual, because it is a certain social sphere’s way of being.

Social spheres can be defined according to their way of dealing with relationships. We can identify four exemplary types of spheres:

(E) The spheres that deal with social relationships in a neutral or neutralising way (i.e. where the relationship, in principle, has a neutral value – neither positive nor negative – for that context), which is typical of the for-profit market of private goods, even though a positive evaluation of the relationship can facilitate transactions (although transactions have to comply with non-relational rules).

(P) The spheres that deal with social relationships in an undifferentiated way (i.e. without making any difference between them, even though they can give them a positive connotation), which is typical of the political-administrative apparatus.

(N) The spheres that value relationships as sources of integration and social cohesion, through exchanges (social, non-economic and non-political) that are activated by social relationships and that use means and resources to get to produce social relationships (according to the sequence: relationship-thing-relationship). Here they generate the networks that may be observed respectively as structural or macro or generalised SC (civic culture, civickness), relational or meso SC (relational goods), or as micro or individual (agential) SC.

(V) Cultural spheres – not primarily moved by economic, political motives, or even by the pursuit of social cohesion, which consider relationships in an evaluative manner. The evaluation may be positive (when relationships are seen as resources and enabling factors: relational goods) or negative (when relationships are viewed as binding and constraining ties which generate pathologies, as in certain totally closed families and informal networks: relational evils).

As a result, while neutralised and undifferentiated relationship spheres consume SC (because they use social relationships instrumentally to turn things into other things, that is they follow the sequence thing-relationships-thing), the spheres that value social relationships and promote them to foster
integration and social cohesion generate SC (if and inasmuch as they follow the sequence relationship-thing-relationship, that is they use things to generate relationships).

6. The associative social capital mediation

Let me go back to my starting point, Tocqueville’s and Putnam’s arguments on the strong and positive connections between civicness and associationalism. I ask myself: is there such a thing as an ‘associative (or ‘associational’) social capital’? If so, what is its connection with civicness and what matters for the production of civic commitment?

In order to answer such questions, sociological research has to look into what the people that are most involved in associations are like, whether (and how) the commitment to associations does or does not produce associative SC, whether (and how) associative commitment and SC are (or are not) connected with civic commitment. This analysis has been carried out in a research project on a representative sample of the Italian population in the year 2006. As for the technical details on sampling, interview and data processing techniques, as well as for statistical tables, I refer the reader to the above-mentioned study (Donati and Colozzi eds. 2007). Here I will only very briefly summarise its results.

The answers to the questions just specified are as follows: (1) associative SC does exist and has its own importance; it is consistent both internally and with the other social capital indicators; (2) as for its impact on civic commitment, relationships are very composite and have to be read within a rather complex framework.

Associative SC ‘mediates’ between individuals’ commitment in associations and their civic commitment for only a portion (subset) of their members [that is only for 29.3% of total members in Italy (members, in turn, are only 26.9% of the total Italian population), in an age group ranging from 18 to 65].

The members within this subset display the following features:
(a) As for the type of association they belong to, their commitment is primarily exercised in trade unions (38.1% of total members), in volunteering organisations (32.4%), in social associations (including family and sports associations) (26%), in social movements (20%) as well as in the other types of associations.
(b) The areas of activity they are mostly committed to are: social work (36.9% of total members), labour issues (35%), religious activities (31%), leisure time (sport and tourism) (27.1%).
(c) Associations are more significantly present in the North-East and in the Italian main Islands (Sicily and Sardinia) and in medium-sized cities (between 10,000 and 30,000 inhabitants). The mediation of associative SC runs into difficulties in small towns, and drops dramatically in metropolitan
areas, despite reappearing in city centres, where the level of security is the highest.

d) Political orientation is not a significant differentiating factor, even though left-wing positions in the political spectrum are slightly more represented among members.

e) The religious variable, despite being a differentiating driver of civic values, does not produce social capital itself, except through adequate family and community contexts.

In general, contextual variables are much weightier than subjective ones (motivations, values, etc.). Yet, it is certainly more appropriate to claim that subjective and contextual variables have to meet and intermingle, if commitment in associations is to become social capital and if civicism circuits are to be created.

If we wanted to use an image to picture processes, we might say that the strong nucleus of those who, by committing themselves in associations, produce associative social capital (then overflowing into civic SC) is very limited (about 30% of members) and it then drops and fragments itself within different areas, as it moves away from its elemental parameters (those listed under letters (a) to (e) above).

In other words, the fact of associating together, or at any rate committing oneself within associational networks, does not by itself produce either social capital or civic commitment. There is a latent pattern of fully and genuinely ‘associational’ culture, which can be estimated to include around 7% of the Italian population, accounting for 29.3% of association members (Donati and Colozzi 2007: 62-80). Beyond this first circle (the very genuine associational nucleus or pattern), there is a second circle in which the associational quality gradually gets fuzzier and weaker because trust and co-operation relationships between subjects in different contexts decrease. We finally come to the third circle, including members who are such only from a formal point of view (they have merely enrolled) or at any rate take little or no part in the association’s activities. Beyond those boundaries there are non-members, who are in any case the great majority of the Italian population (around 73.1%), for whom associational SC does not exist.

We can sketch a sort of map of SC, which shows how the various forms of SC are interconnected: from a limited area of family-relations and community SC arises that associative SC which enhances civic SC. The map of SC displays very well how SC extends from family to relations, to the wider community, to civicism. There are no discontinuity gaps. Rather it is about modulating the positive relationships of trust, help and mutual exchanges according to proximity.

In brief, we may say that Italians appear to be very weak in terms of associational culture. As well as being weak, societarian culture is also fragmented within itself and subordinated to the other prevailing cultures, a State-oriented and a market-oriented one. In fact, among association
members the State-oriented culture supersedes both the market and strictly associational cultures. Associational SC ‘mediates’ between individuals’ commitment within associations and civic commitment, which means that it plays an autonomous role only for 28.5% of members (accounting for 7% of Italians, i.e. 140 of the 2002 members of the representative national sample interviewed). So, in the end, only a small minority (7%) of Italians produce genuine associative SC, turning the associational commitment in one’s own daily life into active civic commitment.

Associational culture is also very fragmented internally. Cluster analysis identifies three main internal components.

The first subset includes so-called niche members, or ‘defensive’ ones (41.8%), because they belong to close-solidarity niches, which act within associational networks close to their family-relations, give priority to liberties (to market-associations connections), are mainly located in the North-East, in small towns, are comprised of people of a lower socio-economic status, act mainly in social charities, primarily for religious activities and human and social rights protection; they carry out activities which are mainly focussed on the individual (they vote at European general elections or contribute with donations to social fundraising programmes, but they do not take part in activities involving relationships, such as signing petitions and taking part in general community meetings); they show a medium associational commitment; they are located at the centre-right of the political spectrum; they have a high family, kinship and societarian SC, but not a community one. They are mainly women aged 35-44.

The second subset includes members that operate under the umbrella and at the service of public institutions: they are called ‘delegating’ (36.9%) because they mainly delegate activities to the State, and interpret their associating role as a form of opinion sharing to influence public institutions; they primarily exercise their commitment within political parties and social movements; they are located in the North-West and in the South; they are very religious; they are widespread within all political parties, equally split between right and left, with a 15% pure centre element; they display a low associational commitment, vote at European elections, but they do not organise petitions or community meetings or donations, and, except for a little family SC, they are negative on all other social capital indexes. They are mainly men aged 25-34.

The third subset is that of the so-called ‘proactive’ members (21.49%), because they are the most committed in associations and civic activities, mostly focussing on the State and on associations, excluding the market; they display the highest index of associational SC and civic commitment, which turn out to be related to both family and kin SC, but not to community SC; they can be found in Central Italy in cities with from 10,000 to 100,000 inhabitants; their religious affiliation is undifferentiated (there are a little, quite and very religious ones); they enjoy a medium-high social status; they stand out in social co-operatives, but also in parties, NGOs,
social movements, volunteering, religious movements, and finally in trade
unions, by performing multipurpose activities; they are centre-left wingers.
They are mainly men aged 35-54.

The three subsets are extremely different in their relational styles: in
the first one, members have short-range relationships, which only extend to
some aspects of the social sphere; in the second one, relationships are of little
importance, there is a strong delegation to public institutions; in the third
group, relationships are more intense than in the second one and extend from
family-kin to associations, like in the first group, but they are more open than
the latter to the civic activities entailing participation, such as public petitions
and meetings where community issues are discussed.

Civic commitment to a large extent certainly depends on other factors
which are not simply about ‘forming an association’. Yet the fact that these
other factors, such as personal virtues and private commitment, are not
translated into an associational action capable in itself of producing a
significant level of social capital indicates how fragmented and how little
coherent Italian society is. The reason is precisely that personal virtues, if and
where they are present, do not find an associational way or solution to
express themselves. As a result, these private virtues and commitments risk
being ineffective, having no follow-up, and constantly keeping civil society
on the brink between State and market dominance.

7. Conclusions.

Civic culture, civic commitment, associationalism and SC are co-
related but distinct notions. Against sceptics I have argued that the concept of
social capital is indeed necessary and can tell us more than what Tocqueville
has observed and theorized on the art of associating together. Although many
of the sociological notions conveyed by SC can be dated back to the
beginnings of modern sociology (including authors such as F. Le Play e K.
Marx), I have tried to show that the relational concept of SC brings new
insights, and in particular it contributes to shed light on associational
dynamics. Yet, one needs to develop a more complex and differentiated
concept of SC than authors such as Putnam and Cartocci have.

In conclusion, it is wrong to claim that the current notion of SC
overlaps with that of civic culture, and that civic culture is a synonym for
civil values. The concept of SC does not reproduce old ideas but is precisely
needed to distinguish between civil and civic cultures. I have tried to make
the essential point that, to be able to see new things, a relational theory of SC
has to be developed. With this theory we can go well beyond Tocqueville and
Putnam.
Prospects

The “relational reason” for a common world

1. Globalization vs universalism?

Some people think that, under conditions of post-modernity, viable solutions to the difficulties of a multi-ethnic and multicultural coexistence might come from those processes of globalization that produce a set of ‘universal values’, so far unspecified but generally referring to the overcoming of particularistic, ethnic and local values. Many others are doubtful about that. I believe that we must distinguish carefully between globalization and universalism.  

According to some scholars, the more society becomes globalized the more ethnocentrism and racism lose their importance or at least can be restrained. This claim can be exemplified by the picture of Tooting, the "global village" within the Great London described by Martin Albrow (1996). In my view, such a perspective cannot be generalized. In many areas, it seems that the contrary is true. Globalization does not entail the end of ethnocentrism and racism automatically.

As a matter of fact, not only in developing countries, but in advanced societies too the failure of the rule of modernity and the crisis of many control mechanisms set up by the welfare state seem to produce a revival of ethnocentrism and racism. The urban dynamics seems to create "ethnic villages" again and again, as E. Anderson (1990) has described for an American town.

Of course, one can observe that the U.K. is not equal to the U.S. But, to my mind, the persistence of ethnic and racial discriminations does not depend only on the different context, i.e. on the peculiarities of each country. One could notice that ethnic and racial discriminations tend to re-emerge within the same contexts in which they were supposed to have been overcome.

55 By universalism I mean a cultural order based upon values common to all human beings, or values which ask for the maximum respect of the human persons as such. In my relational perspective, values and respect are to be conceived as social relations. By globalization I do not mean only inter-dependence on a global scale, but a peculiar dynamics of social and cultural networks which exceed any fixed, closed, local system.
We should pay attention to the fact that ethnocentrism and racism (like other cultural forms, e.g. nationalism) are becoming more and more different from the past.

Despite the fact that these cultural forms cannot presume to get a cultural hegemony, they can reproduce themselves here and there more easily than yesterday. As a matter of fact, ethnocentrism and racism become more and more social constructions which are useful to redefine social relationships "locally". What is implied here is certainly the redefinition of power relationships (both internal and external to a social group). But, more generally, what is implied is the control over the resources affecting all the identities and interests of social life.

To the extent that society enters into a configuration of advanced modernity, so to assume postmodern features, as it happens today in Europe and - in a different way - in the U.S., the clashes between cultures change their meanings and their functions:

- generally speaking, cultures are no longer global ideologies that fight one against the other at the higher level of the cultural meanings, but they become local representations which are used for much more limited and contingent goals and strategies;
- generally speaking, the cultural dynamics no longer has the function of closing the boundaries of each culture towards its external world, but, on the contrary, it has the task of including more complexity from outside, so to stabilize itself through a 'chaotic order'.

Under these conditions, it seems impossible to resort to a universalistic system of symbolic and structural references in order to find out a solution to the issue of a multicultural coexistence.

It is trivial to observe that on the earth there was never a factual universalism among human populations. But it is nevertheless true that there were and still are many systems of thought which pretend to bring about some form of universalism (they correspond, in fact, to patterns of civilization).

As a matter of fact, globalization does not eliminate ethnocentrism and racism; globalization makes them only more latent, more "wadded", and under many respects it privatizes them (as it is clear in the picture offered by the empirical survey done by M. Albrow in Tooting); in sum, globalization seems to be not a culture properly understood, but on the contrary a kind of "sterilization" of culture.

Globalization means much more a treatment of commercials than a linguistic, expressive or symbolic communication able to sustain real and meaningful social relationships. For this reason, globalization - as modernity understands it - comes to be a new cultural Babel which does not really help much in the multicultural dialogue. Dialogue is a matter of interpersonal socio-cultural relationships, not a mere juxtaposition of individuals sharing a common symbolic code through which they can exchange informations.
What I want to underline is that globalization and universalism are not synonymous.

Globalization means a process of standardization, particularly the standardization of the mind, that stratifies, separates and connects people through an implicit cultural determinism. It is a structural process (one could say: a "structural effect") that leaves small room to both intentional action and symbolic evaluation.

On the contrary, universalism is an intentional and value process, one which must rely upon the presence and the contributions of human subjects. It aims at connecting human beings without confusing them (it makes them similar not identical). Universalism refers to human subjects who cope with existential issues by interpreting their situation as a problem of mutual reciprocity.\(^{56}\)

In sum: globalization is a systemic process (a process of system integration) whereas universalism relies upon a relational process of social integration centered on the human person (Carbaugh 1994). Both of them are useful, but we must not get confused as to what is their different orientation to what, in social life, is 'human'. While in the case of globalization the human person is reduced to a sign, i.e. a reference for a merely performative communication, in the case of universalism the human person is and must be conceived of as the focus of a moral conscience.

2. Is a "new universalism" possible? Which universalism?

The idea of universalism can be understood in many different ways. In general, anyway, those who appeal to universalism do that by having in mind one target: to urge the observer to learn how to see "the Other" as a human being instead of something else, e.g. a specimen of a "race".

It is precisely this distinction which is (and must be) used in evaluating and selecting the types of possible universalism. For a good selection one is sent back to a relational thought which must be able to see the singularity of the human person as a "concrete universal", not as an individuality of a species.

It is from this angle that the functional equivalence among the different forms of cultural universalism fail.

Let us consider the different forms of cultural universalism. A tentative list could be the following:

- the *substantial or comprehensive universalism*, according to which there are objective human rights which are universal in the sense of being out there;

\(^{56}\) From this point of view, it is interesting to notice that the culture called *streetwise* develops in the context of experienced interpersonal relationships through which individuals "may learn to see people rather than race and to rely less on prejudice and stereotyping" (Anderson 1990: 253).
- the *deliberative universalism*, according to which we can arrive at decisions who are taken by a "discursive community" of people making reasonable choices;

- the *conventional universalism*, according to which "there is nothing deep down inside us except what we have put there ourselves, no criterion that we have not created in the course of creating a practice, no standard of rationality that is not an appeal to a such a criterion, no rigorous argumentation that is not obedience to our own conventions";

- the *functional universalism*, according to which the two sides of the distinction particular/universal are interchangeable, so that the universal is only an operator of differences;

- the *symbolic universalism*, according to which mankind is able to elaborate cultural patterns that can be meaningful for everybody.

Each of these types of universalism has different capabilities in order to produce a viable and meaningful distinction between a (human) person and a non(human)-person.

What must be underlined is the fact that today most forms of universalism articulate such a distinction through oppositions (binary distinctions) which impede a relational management of the two sides of the coin.

Substantial universalism is opposed to conventional universalism, deliberative universalism is opposed to functional universalism, and so on. Each form is interpreted and developed through the negation (both internal and external) of its opposite. By this way universalism becomes a paradox: not only it denies its own universality, but it comes to deny the globality of the human person which should precisely be the focus of its directive distinction.

For instance: the very modern citizenship of the nation-state, which is at the basis of our troubles in achieving a sound multicultural society, has been established in such a way. We must remember that the nation-state stems from a binary logic according to which a majority of people is supposed to be identified by a common history, common culture and language (and more and more accepted as some kind of "original unity"), against the so-called "national minorities", which are supposed to be detrimental to a harmonious state development.

The national state has been built up as an explicit and intentional negation of a multi-national state. National citizenship, therefore, is a form of restriction of what is "civil" in the sense of being able to recognize the human person as such against other features of the individual (such as his/her language, religion, the colour of the skin, and so on). It would be useful to remember the controversy between John Stuart Mill, who was a supporter of the nation-state, and John Dalberg-Acton who, on the contrary, argued that the combination of various nations within a state was a necessary condition of civilized life.
What is at stake is a kind of universalism which we could call "universalism of multiple loyalties" as conceived and practiced according to the Gospel dictum: "give Caesar what is up to Caesar and give God what is up to God". We are still within a form of universalism in which one loyalty (for instance to a nation-state or a religion) is supposed to absorb all other memberships and symbolic references.

3. After-modernity and the differentiation of the universal.

Under conditions of social complexity, as it happens today, the major trouble for a universalistic perspective is to put the human person as the focus of social action so to avoid any reduction of the person to something alien to her dignity.

Such an orientation is something necessary for a multicultural society which wants to deserve the title of 'human'. But the universalism of multiple loyalties is very difficult to be conceived and managed. One should be able to avoid a kind of hierarchy between different memberships which can be detrimental to the human conscience, as well as to avoid a fundamentalist perspective. One must be able to activate a relational management of the loyalties to different values and norms.

A culture which can be able to perform these operations is not available yet. For this reason, the universalism of multiple loyalties keeps being very weak, and sometimes seems to have no premises.

Perhaps today we can think of its premises as lying in a different vision of the human individual as an intrinsically relational being. It is on this general presupposition that we can found a relational universalism, as distinct from all the other kinds of universalism having no relationality properly.

Relational universalism does presuppose a certain cultural vision of society, i.e. a certain idea of the process of civilization. It implies a concept of societal citizenship rather than state citizenship.

Relational universalism emphasizes the capability to relate what is different, i.e. to manage the difference by seeing a synergic relationship instead of an opposition (or binary distinction). From this point of view, we can see how far it is from violence as it is incorporated in the use of the binary oppositions proper to modern thought (think of Luhmann's logic), starting from the dialectic master/slave as theorized by F. Hegel.

Relational universalism presupposes the maximum feasible interior freedom of the individual at the same time that it requires the maximum adhesion to the Alter as a bearer of a (human) condition which needs a comprehension and a sharing in terms of basic values and norms. Is it a paradox? Under many important aspects, the answer can be positive. But this paradox can be highly instructive, since it can be coped with only by resorting to a peculiar notion of common good.
Such common good, which might be properly called relational good, does not require equality in the identities of the people involved in it. It requires that the good be produced and enjoyed together by every participant in the game.

In order to manage this paradox, modern Western culture has resorted to many devices: i) the reference to the "Reason", or to a systemic functional equivalent of it (as it has been stressed in Parsons and Luhmann); ii) the reference to a "subject" (rediscovered by A. Touraine); the reference to the "human existence" (following M. Heidegger).

More recently, particularly in sociology, it has appeared a new form of management of the paradoxes connected to a universalistic stance which is called "euryalistics": it consists in asking the observer to change its position (the point of observation) continuously so to escape from the paradox in which one risks to be imprisoned (Luhmann 1990). But evidently such an euryalistics does not solve the paradoxes, it only reproduces them or bring them to the paroxysm.

What is interesting to observe is the fact that, step by step, in all these perspectives, a progressive obliteration of the reference to the universalism of the human rights has taken place. The legitimation for such a result is nowadays that there is no anthropology available for supporting the universalism of human rights. It is no accident that the universalism of human rights has gone away together with the notion of a common good and an anthropology able to see it.

To me there is no real difference between the paroxysm of cultural differences (as emphasized by Luhmann's euryalistics) and the aestheticism of the postmodern culture. Both of them spring out from the fear they have in common in coping with the issue of interpreting (giving meaning) to cultural differences. Both of them are unable to elaborate symbols which can represent the difference as "familiar". Can we look for another way out?

I think that we can. The name of this way is “relational universalism” supported by a “relational reason”. Let me devote the last paragraphs to elucidate such a possibility.

4. Rethinking the issue of a globalized multicultural society in a relational framework.

The contemporary challenge of multiculturalism is different from the past and therefore must be thought of in a different context and under different historical circumstances.

Certainly the kind of universalism we are looking for can be neither naïve nor idealistic, as it has been in the past. It can be supposed to spring neither as a natural drift nor as a spontaneous generation of values patterns (eigen-values). There is no alternative to a cultural elaboration of what is and should be universal in social life of human beings. For this purpose, it can be helpful to think that, contrary to the major strand of modernity, 'the universal'
can be differentiated, i.e. we can produce new distinctions within and between the same universal symbols, such as citizenship, family, human identity, or whatever. But, in order to do that, we need a relational approach which can be able to avoid both the separation and the conflation between and within the different forms of 'the universal'. In particular, such an approach is needed when we must cope with the issue of relating the citizen and the human person to each other.

All the forms of universalism which we know up today show serious shortcomings in contributing to the solution of multicultural issues:
- what we call substantive or comprehensive universalism runs the risk of imposing a particularistic (i.e. Western) version of human rights;
- universalism practiced as a mere convention or contract is not a solution, for those who adopt it end up with forms of cultural regression;
- functional universalism is more and more revealing itself as a technology, not as a cultural solution, since it finds itself lacking a value pattern which shall give meaning and legitimation to the social system;57
- deliberative universalism appears to be dependent upon conditions and stipulations which presuppose value patterns.

We need to pursue a new road to a possible human universalism. Personally I would call this road "relational universalism", which is characterized by the fact that it puts its directive distinction neither in the individual as such (with the request of some change in the 'self'), nor in the social structure as such (with the formulation of some project of social engineering), but in the management of social relations as such. The assumption is that social relationships constitute human persons as well as social institutions. It is in the relationship - with its human requisites - that we can look for, and find out, 'the universal'.

Such an universalism must be conceived of as an adequate management of cultural differences understood as memberships which, contrary to modern citizenship, are meaningful and relevant to the new complex of societal citizenship. Instead of relying upon the habitus of coining labels (Bourdieu 1992), it must look at the capabilities of people to act reflexively upon each other through the activation of a discourse on what is human (Buber 1988). It must delegitimize the concept of race as a representation useful to and meaningful for the handling of social relations, i.e. for the recognition of what is human.

Relational universalism is not a form of syncretism. It is neither a bridge, nor a mixture. It requires to put oneself on such a level of discourse as to produce a different observation: how to find the universal not in the

57 Neo-functionalism cancels out cultural values as a requisite of social action. This outcome is very clear when we consider how the Parsonian theory of AGIL has been wholly erased by Luhmann, by denying that culture (the Parsonian L-Latency) can be a system and therefore by considering the value patterns as byproducts of communications and only of communications subject to unlimited contingency.
abstract, but in the particular (a place, a single person) and vice versa, so not
to reduce anything to something else. It is precisely the opposite of reduction and
colonization.

Now, the challenge of the postmodern age is that, differently from the
modern, it includes the possibility to differentiate the universal: human
beings can be similar by being different. At the political level, this
perspective is not far from the idea of "complex equality" (or complex
citizenship) put forward by Michael Walzer. At the cultural level, the idea of
relational universalism emphasizes the detachment from what has been called
the "neutral power" of modernity, i.e. the tendency to neutralize "coloured"
identities.

Relational universalism is not very far from the idea of a multiple
citizenship, as a political arrangement which can recognize multiple loyalties.
It can be a substitute for an abstract idea of citizenship ('universal' in so far as
it is thought of as worldwide or supranational) as it is envisaged in the
Kantian ethics and in many contemporary authors (such as Jürgen Habermas,
Klaus Eder and others): the universality (and solidity) of the 'universal' can
and must be exercised in the multiplicity of the loyalties which define a
situation (unitas multiplex).

We need a complex of citizenship which can be able to produce a
high degree of social differentiation and integration both in the internal and
external relationships of each human person.

The idea that citizenship (or a political order) can solve the problems
of cultural conflicts - and in particular racist attitudes and behaviours -
through the inclusion of people into the welfare state can stand or collapse. It
depends on the chances that citizenship has to get a cultural elaboration able
to produce empathic forms of cultural differentiation, having in mind what is
properly human in societal relations.

Only if our society will succeed in putting its cultural focus on inter-
human relations, not on individuals or social structures as such, we can hope
to avoid the dramatic clashes of civilizations which are brought about by
false universalisms.

Today the search for a new citizenship is more and more pursued
through the request of a new "politics of difference" (Young 1990). This
request emphasizes the process of differentiation, but puts in danger the
integrative forces of society. It can become useful only to the extent that it
can be managed in a "relational way" (this means for instance that a "quota
system" - as a criterion for managing social policies towards ethnic groups -
should be excluded, since it leads to segmentation and segregation).

As an example we can look at educational policies in Sweden in the
area of minorities and immigrants, by referring both to formal decisions and
their implementation. Swedish educational policies have met three distinctive
periods. The first period (roughly in between the early 30's and the late 60's)
was characterized by the assumption that school mainly serves state interest
and therefore loyalty to the state should be imposed on citizens irrespective of their ethnic membership. In the second period (1970-1989), school policy was assumed to serve individual rights within the context of state regulation and participatory democratic procedures; this has involved conflicts both between state and local school authorities and between these authorities and immigrant groups. Cultural and linguistic diversity were still conceived as possible only within a general context of individual solidarity to state citizenship. In the third period, beginning with the 1990's, a new approach has been adopted, which is characterized by free choice within a context of group initiative and market mechanisms under democratic rule (in what is expected to become later an "ethnic democracy": Peled 1993). This approach allows a greater recognition of minorities and ethnic diversity, particularly in schools (for instance the teaching of many languages instead of one language - the home language -). Within and through this new approach, which is also a politics of recognition (Taylor 1992), the citizenship of multiple loyalties become a possible alternative pattern in many areas of social life. Of course societal citizenship should provide that standards of "equality of treatment" be set up and enforced by the state as a collective guarantor or "general regulator".

The inclusion of ethnic minorities into the complex of state citizenship, even when policies of affirmative discrimination are considered, has come to its limits. Ethnic groups need a model of mobilisation which must go well beyond the ideology of 'participation'. New forms of ethnic mobilisation are an essential requirement for a multicultural society. They can be addressed towards many different goals and can adopt many different styles of social, economic and cultural policies, including forms of class mobilisation (Rex 1995) and/or forms of lobbysm or poly-corporatism (Teubner 1993). All these forms have their own rationale as to what it means to strive for a 'possible universalism'.

To me, there is another chance, which I would like to call the mobilisation for a relational society. It implies peculiar "association styles" among individuals and social groups within and between ethnic identities, under the heading of what I call relational universalism. The latter is based upon what connects (relates) the citizen and the human being, as well as the public and the private sphere, in a "complex of societal citizenship" where intermediary social networks are developed as sources of a new societal community, producing a "normative pluralism" together with "relational goods". The rationale for such a perspective basically consists in the opening of new chances able to avoid all kinds of hegemonic universalism as well as all kinds of radical relativism. It can help us to learn what it is like - in poet

58 The idea of ethnic mobilization put forward by Rex (1995) suggests that each ethnic minority should have to win its own rights, through the sequence "struggle-compromise-establishment", according to the modern competition among social groups in the public arena. It seems to me that this idea of class mobilisation comes quite close to a well known interpretation of the Marxist idea of class struggle.
Emily Dickinson's words - "to dwell in possibility", i.e. the possibility to have migrations without all the human hardship stemming from nationalism and particularistic ethnic relations.

The search for solutions seems to be stalemate. It is evident when it comes about the theme of liberty of the human being (agency) towards the socio-cultural structures. For the culturalists, the person is a product of the society; it is entirely socialized by the society, so that the cultural debate stops in front of the declarations of the different identities. For the rationalists, the person is a pre-social individual that socializes itself basing on its own internal propensions, so that the cultural debate takes place making the identities nominalistic.

The contemporary human being is needful to leave cultural determinism through reason. But reason at its disposal is insufficient. Multiculturalism undermines all the existing forms of rationalism: instrumental, substantial, procedural and deliberative. The Western rationality is put in crisis and cannot find any argument in front of the requests of the ones not recognizing it (that are not only abroad, but also within the West). Should we renounce to reason?

5. In search of a common world: the theory of interculturality.

Today, there is a possible way out thanks to interculturality. With this term, we generally mean a coexistence way basing on dialogue and the open debate between different cultures, which renounce both to the dominance of one on another (assimilation or colonization) and to the division without mutual communication (balkanization). One appeals to the “intercultural communication”.

Certainly, the intercultural communication has a lot of credits, but also some manifest limits. Its main credit is to affirm that there is an intermediate space between the "full comprehension" within every single culture, and the "complete non-involvement" between cultures. In this way, it avoids the idea that a common world is impossible because of the dualism between the full comprehension (reachable only within a single cultural community) and the non-involvement (the complete alterity between different cultural communities), as claimed by the cultural relativists. Nonetheless, it meets with the limit of not being able to manage the borders between the three domains (intra-cultural, inter-cultural and multi-cultural), if not as pure communication.

Another credit of the intercultural position is to underline that the debate between cultures may constitute a positive and useful exercise of values' investigation (an exercise inside people's ability of axiological research: Touriñan López 2006). But such axiological exercise, which may be considered as a way for persons to give themselves reasons for their lifestyles, does not explain how individuals may find some common reasons.
Other Authors underlined the benefits of intercultural integration as 'conviviality of differences'. In particular, Stefano Zamagni (2002: 240-266) suggested a model of intercultural integration based upon five principles: 1) the primacy of the person as regards both the cultural community and the State; 2) the recognition that liberty, as self-realization, needs the relation with the other as a value in itself; 3) the principle of neutrality as impartiality (not indifference) of the State towards the cultures "brought" by their dwellers; 4) the principle of integrating ethno-cultural minorities within a common national culture, in order to which the (lay) State has to adopt "a nucleus of inalienable values" (liberty, human dignity, respect for life, minimum welfare) that, being as such, are valid for all the human beings, no matter for their cultural belonging; 5) the fifth principle is that of a "conditioned tolerance": the State, in the name of the citizen's rights (that, unlike the human's, have no natural law basis), has to assign resources to the various cultural groups, in proportion to their engagement in making themselves keepers of an integration project, based on the fundamental rights of the human being.

The intercultural model proposed by Zamagni is certainly shareable and full of interesting hints. Nonetheless, it presents some limits. I am pointing out just one of them: it refers the intercultural project to the national culture (its nation-state and its political constitution), while the latter becomes more and more problematic vis-à-vis the globalization processes. To be realized, the intercultural model needs a context of sociological reflexivity referred to the cultural globalization. In my language, it exacts a meta-reflexive subject and a new societarian reflexivity.

My purpose is to show that the intercultural solution cannot be understood – as done by someone nowadays – as a sort of "mitigated multiculturalism", sweet, moderate, which looks for the agreement between cultures, pushing individuals towards common reasons that are just external and not internal to the single cultures.

To be effective, the intercultural solution needs a deeply reflexive reason, able of rooting the ultimate values to a solid and common ground. This is the real problem: where to find this reflexive reason?

4.3. Intercultural comprehension needs a relational interface: the problem of boundaries (semantics of difference).

Cultures debate today within the public sphere, having no clue on how it is possible to have something in common apart from the mere interest. This happens because the different cultural identities are not able to dialogue between them in terms of identity.

The modern Western society invented some devices to treat the clashes of interest through the market, and the clashes of opinion through the rules of the political democracy. But it has not found the instruments to treat the clashes of cultural values. The latter must then be addressed within the framework of the relationships between religion and culture, because this is
the context where the instruments to handle the clashes of values should be found.

The problem must be framed considering that, in a democracy, the single religions should be able to distinguish between their internal dogmatics and what they can and must submit to their reciprocal confrontation in the public sphere, namely in the civil society, which legitimates the democratic political system.

In such a frame, the key-problem is the one of boundaries between the different faiths (religions) and the public sphere. The public sphere needs a common reason, reachable only if the various religions are innerly reflexive enough to distinguish between reasons given to interlocutors in the public sphere, and their faith (their inner dogmatics).

This is not an exercise up to the individual persons, but it involves religions, thought as cultures. People's inner reflexivity is not enough, it is necessary to make religion reflexive, and so the culture in which it is embodied.

In other words, here there is a process of morphogenesis both of socio-cultural structures (the elaboration of new symbolic and relational patterns) and of agency (the self-reflexive activity of people in their free acting), through the interaction of the individuals. The intercultural theory may stand only if it is possible to realize such complex morphogenetic process.

To perform such operation, it is necessary that people put in action a Reason, which no religion (as a culture, not as a faith) can entirely possess all alone, going across them (it is trans-cultural). It is their own reason to exist as religions in the public sphere (i.e. particular systems of values), beyond every single faith that, being a faith, is innerly incomparable.\(^{59}\) The interstitial area between religious faith and public sphere is the area of religions, meant as cultures that have to be interpreted and acted by the human subjects. Multiculturalism stops on the threshold of this interstitial area. It supposes a coexistence between cultures (religions) without seeing how they can interact one another and act in the public sphere, as to contribute to shape a common reason.

To understand how it is possible, we must observe that, appearing as a culture, the religion depends, from the one side on faith (transcendental reality), from the other side on how the human nature (of the person) expresses itself in the life-world relations. The theory of interculturality may be a solution beyond multiculturalism, only with some assumptions.

Here are the main ones: first, it must be assumed that the culture does not absorb the human nature; second, it must be assumed that the citizenship cannot absorb the *homme*: third, it must be assumed that people's living

\(^{59}\) Here, I refer to the well-known distinction between faith and religion proposed by Karl Barth, without accepting his theory of an intrinsic opposition between them. In the perspective of the relational sociology, it does not mean to put them in opposition, but instead to see their inner and necessary relationality.
experience in the life worlds may find some forms of agreement (empathy, comprehension: Gomarasca 2004) that, being pre-cultural and pre-political, may modify the cultural expressions (included religion as a culture, not as a faith). So, the faith in transcendental realities becomes a device helping meta-reflexivity (of the individual and the relational context altogether). In this way, the reason's reflexivity may exceed its purely reproductive ("communicative") and decontextualized ("independent") forms.60

There are two alternatives: either we drop reason as a veritative principle (of recognition), or we should make efforts to "widen the range of reason". The so-called "limited rationality" is an empirical condition (of individuals and functional systems), it is neither the mankind's nor the civilization's destiny. That means that the expansion of reason may be rational, namely it may happen basing on matters related to a more comprehensive reason, not basing on dogmatic or extra-rational reasons. I will talk of it in the next passage.

6. Secularity guided by a relational semantics of cultural differences.

Which secularity should be practiced in the public sphere? In North America, multiculturalism serves to justify a public sphere where everyone has the right to appear with its own identity, without relegating it to the private, though no one is legitimated to support it as the only and true identity. In continental Europe (in the Countries with no Anglo-Saxon tradition), instead, multiculturalism is interpreted in a different way, which I would call "statist". This quite peculiar version of multiculturalism is usually translated into political programs, where the State should assume a "lay" position (i.e. to exercise an active neutrality) in front of the pluralism of values and identities, of the ways to think, to live and to die. The State must not only recognize, meaning to let them enjoy freedom, but also help and support diversities (for instance, concerning the sexual preferences and the subjective identities of gender) through an interventionist welfare state. Paradoxically, to say "multicultural society" means, to many people, not only that cultural identities cannot be neither judged nor compared, i.e. they should make no difference in the public sphere, but, more than that, that they should all be publicly supported by interventions of "equal opportunities".

Even with different shapes, in front of the conflicts between cultures (sometimes especially within the Western modernity, as concerning hetero vs. the so-called homosexual marriage) on the two sides of the Atlantic, the State's secularity is demanded more and more as a decisional principle in the public affairs. But what is "secularity"? What does it mean to assume a "lay position"?

60 As for the various forms of reflectivity (communicative, independent, meta-reflexive, fractured or disabled): cf. Archer (2003).
To make it easier, there are two answers. (i) In the original sense (going back to the first Christianity), secularity (laity) means "spirit of distinctions", providing autonomy to the secular realities towards the supernatural ones, without breaking their relation; like this, secularity leads to rational argumentation and to meeting (not to clash or to mutual denial) between different positions, as between faith and reason. With this meaning, secularity consists in providing public reasons that everyone may understand, even if not necessarily share. (ii) In the modern sense (after Hobbes), secularity means to set aside from a religious point of view. With this meaning, it corresponds to the assumption of an agnostic point of view; secularity becomes secularism, which implies a break between secular and supernatural realities; the breaking of the relation between secular and not-secular realities becomes an ideology in itself, and secularism becomes laicism (as shown by the French case: see the Stasi Commission Report 2003).

In the EU version (where the welfare state is notably stronger and more pervading than in North America), multiculturalism is intended more and more as an ideology supporting the second meaning of secularity, that is the active secularization of the public sphere. Its strength lays on its ability to manage the difference between secular and not-secular (ultimate, i.e. religious) realities, basing on a symbolic binary code, which erases the relational character of their distinction. But this is also its weakness. Hence, its inner crisis and the inability to solve problems that comes from the cultural conflicts.

In the perspective of a reflexive interculturality, to give a lay answer to cultural pluralism does not mean to put all cultures on the same level, because this solution, with its big wicked effects, is neither theoretically nor practically viable. Secularity does not mean indifference towards cultures, but ability to examine every culture in the light of the human rights, namely the distinctions of a reason that can reach the deepest human truths and, as such, pertains to human beings as such, not just to a part of them. The answer to the mere fact of pluralism (multi-ethnical and pluricultural society) does not consist in avoiding, annulling or equalizing all differences in the public sphere, creating a context (wholly formal and rhetorical) of "equal opportunities", but in being able to synergically and reciprocally manage the differences. This means to have a lay mentality in dealing with cultural relations. Secularity does not mean to let do everything, on the only condition that the actors do not violate the other's liberty. Such a principle is self-destroying. Secularity means tolerance, meant not only as a mere "let do", that is a negative liberty, but instead as assertion of positive principles of mutuality, brotherhood, solidarity towards the neighbour with its legitimate differences, the ones that are an expression of the human. This is just the opposite of secularity, meant as ethical neutrality and breaking of the relation between reason and religion/faith.
The problem, on which I am concentrating, is the following one: *what is meant by “relational unity” between faith and reason, or between religion and culture?* Certainly, it is the unity of a difference. But how do we conceive this difference?

It is necessary to elaborate a new theory of difference (as for personal and social identity), permitting us to understand it and manage it in a relational way.

To observe a difference is to trace, or to map, as I would say, a distinction. To talk of relational unity between two terms implies to see their distance (distinction) as a boundary relation. The boundaries' management depend on how the differences between terms are conceived and handled. Modern science recognizes two kinds of operations: dialectic and arithmomorphic operations.\(^61\) I suggest adding a third kind: distinction as a relational operation, conceiving difference through a relational interface.\(^62\)

Since distinction is a reflexive operation, we should refer to the ways reflexivity surveys and judges differences. I would distinguish between three fundamental ones: *dialogic, binary* and *relational* (triangular) reflexivity. These are three semantics of difference (see figure 1), which are three different ways to conceive and manage boundaries (boundary as a point of contact/clash, as separation of two domains, as a relation emerging from the disposed combined of *refero* and *religo*). I put on the side the theories claiming that it should be and must be possible to "cancel boundaries" because, in that case, there would be a central conflation between the two terms.

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\(^61\) A *dialectic* concept is a concept which boundaries are *not* strictly defined, because it lays partly with other concepts on their respective boundaries (in a sort of "twilight"). Namely, the concept of democracy may have several partly overlapping meanings. To them, it could not be applied the principle of not-contradiction of the classical logic (according to which B cannot be A and not-A at the same time; instead, if B is a dialectic concept, it can be part of A and not-A at the same time). An *arithmomorphic* concept, instead, is a discrete concept, therefore being strictly definable. For instance, numbers (1, 2, n), symbols (z, y, etc.), the concept of triangle or circle. Computers operate with the most arithmomorphic of the distinctions, the one between zero and one. Their characteristic is to be clearly distinguishable one from the other, because they have no defined boundaries and they are not overlapping. According to the logic positivists, these are the only concepts qualified to operate in the world of science. So it is clear why the positive (technical) reason is basically arithmomorphic.

\(^62\) The *relational* concepts, unlike the arithmomorphic ones (that are divided by a blank space: "the one or the other"), share with the dialectic ones the fact to have boundaries that overlap and cross with other, even opposite, concepts. But – unlike the dialectic concepts (which boundary is a shady space) – they are characterized by the fact that the space dividing them is made of a relation, with personal and *sui generis* powers and properties, not modifiable at will or by dealing, because such relation is a not-fungible qualification, with the characteristics of an emerging effect (generable only on certain conditions).
find an accord or a synthesis. The idea is the one of an Ego-Alter relation, which identities have a boundary where they meet (and eventually clash), and where they discuss and negotiate their own identities. What is "between" them is a sort of externality for the one or the other. It concerns which of the two terms may take possession of it or, instead, how they may share it or make it a space of input-output (one another) sharing. Between Ego and Alter, there is no sharing of specific identities, but rather an assertion of two identities comparing with each other. Reciprocity, meant as a symbolic exchange between Ego and Alter, does not require the recognition of a common identity; it may happen just near their boundaries, but not in their inner identity. Cultural unity is possible only if one may find an Alter-Ego in the other, at least under some aspects (namely, about the co-inciding part along the boundaries). Such is the Habermasian solution, according to which the civic values define the common boundaries between different cultures. The difference is perceived as a problematic experience of an Ego desiring to achieve a commonality with an Alter-Ego, frustrated because of the gap, always rising again, with Alter. The search of a common world takes the shapes of a dialectic, maybe discursive (e.g. the discursive ethics suggested by J. Habermas), which can find only temporary and situated solutions, because in principle Ego and Alter have a divergent and clashing identities.

Such semantics support the way that reflexivity is meant in the literary field (Sandywell 1996). It prevails in narrative, hermeneutic and semiological social disciplines.

II) Binary semantics: the difference is conceived as a discrimination and incommunicability. The boundary between Ego and Alter is a sharp distinction (division); it is a separation, an incompatibility, an impossibility to share mutual inputs and outputs. Distinction is defined as a discrimination between a class of phenomena and the (negative) complement of that class, which can coexist with purposes or not, depending on the kind of system operating the distinction. Division generates asymmetry (i.e. as a logic of the distinction system/environment). Alter is the denial of Ego and cannot be "included" by Ego (and vice versa). These semantics are those supporting the theory of autopoietic and self-referential systems, of mechanist, functional and automatic nature (Luhmann 1995). In such version, culture is a mere by-product of the hypercycles of interactive communication. So, there is no chance for a real common world, but only contingent mutual expectations between Ego and Alter. What they share is only the way of turning the world (their experience of it) into a common problem, in order to try to face the paradoxes of the systemic functional Reason.

63 In the book The Inclusion of the Other (MIT press, 1998), J. Habermas claims that "inclusion does mean neither assimilative engrossing nor narrow-mindedness towards the diverse. Inclusion of the other rather means that the community's boundaries are opened to everyone: even – and above all – to those mutually extraneous and willing to remain extraneous".
III) Relational semantics: the difference (the gap, the space dividing Ego and Alter) is conceived as a relation. Such relation is not an interaction that may be defined as free in the void. It is not mere communication. It is structured. It has a shape that emerges from the properties of the relation's terms, because it can raise only from them under particular conditions. The relation is constitutive both of Ego and Alter, meaning that Ego's identity is shaped through the relation to Alter, and vice versa. The boundary is certainly a field of conflict, of clash, of negotiation, but it is also a mutual belonging, a constitutive element of both of them. Hence, the recognition of a real alterity (not of an Alter-Ego), because relation calls distance, in some aspects even separation, but at the same time it calls sharing between two uniquenesses (and not two reflections), keeping their impenetrability without synthesis. Alterity does not mean irreconcilable contradiction, insofar as Alter is another Self ("the other as myself", says Ricoeur, not as a same one, but as an ipse). If Ego and Alter coincided and were assimilable one another (= idem), the relation would fall (disappear). If, on the other side, the relation were completely external and unrelated to Ego and Alter, we would fall on the two former cases (semantics I and II). The cultural debate must look at the relation that, even if in different ways, constitutes Ego and Alter, without conceiving it, as in the latter Hegel, to be destined to a synthesis.

The Western culture used, up to today, the first two semantics, wavering between them. I am convinced that, in a globalizing climate, and as provided by the disastrous experience of multiculturalism, a third kind of semantics is emerging.

The third kind of semantics, namely the relational one, points out the cultural differences as they are generated by a "common world" (that "includes" Ego and Alter), which is different and regenerated (re-differentiated) through some forms of relational differentiation – more or less fit to the situation – between Ego and Alter.
The aim to make cultural differences/diversities not only compatible, but also relationally significant, cannot be obtained from dialectic and binary semantics. It needs a relational code. The secularity of the public sphere (and of the State) does not emerge, due to the fact that it is necessary to answer to the growing cultural pluralism brought by migrations. Instead, it corresponds to an original and primary fact, namely the different inflexions of the human reason (on the side of Ego and Alter). Secularity is the same reason for existence of the human being, which builds its own personal and social identity through the cultures it meets. Secularity is the justifying reason of cultural pluralism, when it rises from the very social relations. To analyse thoroughly this point, it is necessary to turn to a relational semantics that permits us to see the unexplored aspects of human rationality: the relational reason. What does it consist of?

7. The relational reason: widening the human reason through social relations.

6.1. Understanding the relational reason.

Relational rationality is the faculty through which the human being sees the reasons (‘good motives’) concerning inter-human social relations (inherent neither in individuals as such, nor in socio-cultural systems). The simultaneous presence of different cultures spurs the widening of the individual rational (axiological) choices within the individual reflexivity. But this is not enough to configure the inter of interculturality as a social relation. To achieve the “inter” as a common ground, the public sphere needs a rationality able to give account of the differentiation between cultures as a relational one.

In other terms, cultural identities are different because of their different ”way” to interpret and live the relation to common values. The way refers to the reason’s instrumental and normative dimensions, while “values” refer to the reason’s axiological and purposeful dimensions. The so-called policy of equality of differences, which neutralizes or makes relations indifferent, may only generate new differences, finding no relational solution, but only new forms of dialectic or separation.

The example of marriage is meaningful. If marriage is considered from the point of view of the equality of individual opportunities, gender identities (male and female) are made indifferent, because their relation (the male-female relation) has no peculiar reason to affirm and promote. There is no more need to talk of male (i.e. paternal) and female (i.e. maternal) symbolic codes, because it is just their relation that has been annulled. Similar considerations are worth for the difference between monogamic and polygamic marriage. For the ones supporting the policy of equal opportunity (the lib/lab policy, which even Amartya Sen 1999 relies on), these are just two relations, offering different opportunities to the individuals, and nothing more. They do not touch the sense and shape of the marriage relation as such.
In the relational perspective, instead, we find human values (and rights) only if we affirm the rights to differences (of relations!).

To make social relations in-different, taking away the differential reasons pertaining to each genus, means to cancel what is unique and specific to that kind (or form) of relation. It means to annihilate its value as a *sui generis* reality. For instance, in what pertains to the marriage example, to speak of a "unisex marriage" does cancel the nuptial value inherent in the relation of marriage (and its consequences), since two persons of the same sex cannot have the same relation that exists between a man and a woman (George and Elshtain eds. 2006). In relational terms, the unisex relation does not constitute a “couple” able to give birth to a family, properly speaking, insofar as it is another kind of relation with different relational reasons (they may be reasons of friendship, mutual aid, eroticism, and so on).

The reasons of the human relations are those which correspond to the dignity of the human being. Such reasons are latent, and they may develop a criticism of the cultural drifts, both of anti-humanism, of trans-humanism and of traditionalist fundamentalism.

In order to support an interculturality able to create consensus on the basic human values, it is necessary to adopt a relational paradigm able to see and articulate the reasons shaping the inter-human, what is "between" the subjects. The field of bioethics offers several examples: the embryo's right to life, the child's right to a family, the right of an education fit for a human being, and so on. These are all relational rights, because these are rights to relations (neither to things nor to services). Relations have their reasons, which the individuals may not know in an explicit (discursive, linguistic) way, but which they understand depending on the kind and level of their reflexivity, insofar as they can see the reasons of relations implied by the fact of being human, in the natural realm sooner than within culture.

The so-called cultural mediation can overcome the obstacles of prejudice and intolerance, only if people are able to relationally combine values, giving them some relational reasons.

Relational reason is able to value cultural differences without hiding them; this is why it is able to overcome the forms of distinction between cultures, which have been dominant in the past (i.e. the segmentary differentiation in primitive societies, the stratification of cultures by social stratum/status in premodern societies, the functionalist differentiation in the first modernity). These are all forms of differentiation unable to reach a shared public reason within a globalized society.

Relational reason shows us the alternative of the relational differentiation, namely the creation of a religiously qualified public sphere, where religions might play the role of defining the public reason, since they steer people into a reflexive comprehension of their cultural elaboration within the vital worlds.

Such reflexive understanding relies upon an expansion of reason, feeding and increasing it. Therefore, it is possible to go beyond modern
Western rationality, which is still standing at the distinction between *instrumental* and *substantial* rationality. According to this distinction, the relation to cultural values is not-rational. It may just be affective or traditionalist, because the very values are not-rational. *Relational reason comes to tell us that just the opposite is true.* It shows the different modalities through which Ego can relate with values, besides as with the Other, not basing on feelings, moods, emotions, irrational preferences or acquired uses, but basing on reasons that do not consist of "things", but of goods (values) linked to properties and qualities of the present and future relations. These are the relational goods.

Here I suggest to revise the theory of rationality as it was formulated by Max Weber (1978).

Human rationality cannot be reduced to the two types theorized by Weber, i.e. *Zweckrationalität* and *Wertrationalität*, at least as they have been interpreted by the social sciences during the last century. These two concepts are full of ambiguities. As a matter of fact they have led to innumerable confusions. *Zweckrationalität* refers to the calculation of the means useful to achieve a goal/target, but the goal can be seen also as a means, so that the observer cannot distinguish between what is a means and what is a goal. Therefore the concept becomes useless. *Wertrationalität* refers to the value as it is subjectively understood by the social actor/agent, but the value can be either an objective good, valuable in itself, or a mere subjective choice or preference. The concept does not allow any distinction between the two. That is why the reformulations of the Weberian theory of rationality made by many authors (such as Parsons and Alexander, who have translated them into the couple *instrumental rationality vs normative rationality*) proves to be wholly unsatisfactory and misleading.

In order to overcome these shortcomings, I propose a redefinition of rationality as a faculty of human agency constituted by four components or dimensions (which must be interpreted within the relational version of AGIL, which is not a fixed structure, but only a compass for the orientation in the social space and time).

1. The component of *instrumental rationality*, which refers to the requisite of efficiency; it concerns the means; and, as such, it is the adaptive dimension (A) of thought and action; its analytical correlate is the economic dimension of rationality, while its empirical macrostructural correlate is the economic market.

2. The component of *goal oriented rationality*, which refers to the situated goals; it concerns the achievement of definite targets (efficacy), and

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64 ‘Instrumental rationality’ is conceived as the one that, given certain aims, focuses on the means to realize them; the means are technical instruments to achieve ‘values’ which, by their nature, are indisputable and incommunicable (Max Weber’s polytheism of values). The instrumental reason searches for convenience, utility, efficiency, while ‘substantial rationality’ is the one that focuses on values as ultimate concerns subjectively defined by the agent/actor.
therefore it is the goal-attainment dimension (G) of rationality; its analytical correlate is the political power, while the empirical macrostructural correlate is the political system (the state).

3. The integrative dimension of rationality, which refers to the dimension that links the other three dimensions of the human reason; it is the normative dimension I in the AGIL scheme; it decides about the internal morality of rationality and preserves its autonomy towards its environment; it is the rationality of the relation in itself; that is why I call it relational rationality (or, in German, Beziehungs rationalität) which means that it is the nomos building dimension of rationality.  

In other words, social relations do possess reasons that do not pertain either to the individuals or to the social systems. Individuals and systems may not know these reasons, and certainly they do not possess them. The dimension of relational reasons has as its analytical correlate the social bond, while its empirical macrostructural correlate is civil society defined as an associational world.

- The value dimension of rationality corresponds to the L dimension, i.e. the directive distinction that guides human agency towards what has a value in itself (what is an end in itself, what has a dignity in itself, or what lies behind the actor’s ultimate concerns, at the border with the ultimate realities). This is the component of value rationality, or axiological rationality (or, in German, Würderationalität), the rationality of what has a true worth, what is worthy and good in itself. One should be well aware that value rationality refers not to a situated goal (the Wert, which has or can have a price, as it is in the Weberian Wertrationalität), but to a value which has no price, that no price can buy. Axiological rationality is not contingent upon the situation. It inheres to the dignity of what deserves unconditional respect and recognition (Würde) in so far as it is distinctive of what is human (w.r.t. what is non-human or inhuman). Therefore it concerns first of all the human person as such (not the individual’s behaviour). Its analytical correlate is a value per se, i.e. a symbolic reference to what is not negotiable, what is distinctive of a person or a good in respect to other realities. Its empirical

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65 The moral norm is what, at the same time, binds (connects) the other dimensions of the social relationship and distinguishes the relative autonomy of any social relation from other kinds of social relations. For example, the relational rationality of the family as a social relation consists in connecting its human dignity with its situated goals and the instrumental means to achieve them. So that the autonomy of the relation-family is configured as distinct from other types of social relations which are not family, although they can have some dimensions in common with it.

66 Vittorio Mathieu (2004) rightly suggests to distinguish between Wert (the value of what has a price or monetary equivalent) and Würde (the value which has no price, i.e. anything that cannot be treated as a means and no money can buy). Anyway, he does not see the value of the inter-human relation, and therefore he fails in indicating the relational reason which links (mediates) the value in itself (axiological reason) and the other dimensions of rationality.

67 The value rationality (or axiological rationality) is inherent to the process of recognition properly understood in its three aspects: 1) as a cognitive identification of an object; 2) as a validation of the truth it bears with it; 3) as gratitude or thanks giving.
The four dimensions of the Reason (instrumental, goal oriented, relational, and value oriented to what is worthy in itself) are the constitutive dimensions of what I call the “complex of the (human) reason”. Or, if you like it, the reason as a complex human faculty. I synthesize this way to understand the human reason in a scheme (figure 2) that must be read and interpreted in the light of the relational paradigm. Within this paradigm, every component is essential in order to have the emergence of a full human reason, both as a theoretic and practical faculty. The recognition, understanding, explanation and implementation of what is ‘rational’ are outcomes of that complex faculty which we call reason as seen from a relational standpoint.

From the sociological point of view, the human reason is a social emergent phenomenon. As a matter of fact, a purely ‘individualistic’ reason does not exist. Rationality cannot be a faculty operating outside social relations. Reason is a faculty which emerges from the operation of its constitutive abilities and potentialities. The latter have their own different properties. Reason is a faculty which comes out as an emergent effect from the combination, interaction and interchange among the four fundamental dimensions which constitute it (figure 2).

Those forms which we call “procedural rationality” and “deliberative rationality” are expressions of particular combinations among the above four
dimensions (figure 2). Here I cannot comment upon these (and other) forms of rationality for lack of space.

6.2. How does relational reason operate?
Relational reason is that human faculty that operates:
(i) with relations (namely, in the perspective of relations, not of individuals or systems), in a contextualized way, in the perspective of culture as an expression of a community; it is made of relations that are put into practice or could be practiced basing on the values of such culture;
(ii) for relations (namely, in view of improving relations that promote some definite values of such culture);
(iii) in relations (namely, through relations, acting – practically and analytically – on existing relations, in order to create new ones).

On the whole, relational reason comes into existence every time that the reason for action includes the good of common action.

Relational reason is therefore the reason of a cultural mediation, intended not yet as "betrayal" (Franco Crespi) or "paradoxicality" (the paranoia of Jacques Derida and Niklas Luhmann) of people's free natural acting, but as the expression of the need of the human living experience to be naturaliter contextualized within a relation, to be directed towards a mediation, to operate through a mediation.

Relational reason is that faculty, proceeding through four components (aims, means, rules, values), relating them inside and with their "environments". We may distinguish the relational reason when it operates inside (theoretical reason = intentions, means, rules, values) and outside (practical reason = heteronomy, instrumentality, autonomy, gratuitousness) (Donati 2011b: 224-230).

In such a framework, values are necessarily on the border between reason and its transcendental environment (faith). On such border, reason, culture and faith necessarily interact. Values should be seen not as models to maintain and preserve (in an inertial vision of the social system, as done by Talcott Parsons), but as propellers of social relations. Cultural values are not only bonds and limits (with zero energy and maximum function of control), but also resources and perspectives of sense (having a proper energy, often more entropic than negentropic).

With his theory of incompleteness of formal systems, Gödel taught us two things: (i) each system needs to relate to an other than oneself, to find a situational and formal completeness [in the formulation of this Author, the formal needs the informal (intuition, creativity)]; (ii) the "total completeness" comes from the relation between all the systems (or rather, it lays on the relations between the systems' relations). This is worth also for reason, when considered as a system oriented to knowledge and practical action.

If we conceive of reason as a reflexive faculty of the human being, consisting on the ability of one's I to converse with its Self on its own I and the world, then to expand reason means to expand such reflexive ability
(choosing aims, means, rules and values) through relations implied with the Self and the world, through its own Self. Thus permitting the person to root its own cultural identity inside its own human nature, expanding outside it in the culture, and interacting with it in the various spheres of life, where the I becomes Me, We, and You.68

The Greek Logos says: "know yourself", as it was written in the front of the temple of Apollo at Delphi. The exortation nosce te ipsum (Saint Augustine) has become the focus of introspection in the Christian spirituality. Relational reason observes that such self-reflexive precept risks to fail and to fall off into subjectivism. It makes us understand that, without the Other, the I cannot know itself in a fully human way. Therefore, the Logos should make itself relational and recognize that: "without You, who are Other than Myself, I cannot know myself" (where You is both the Other human being at the level of the immanent existence – horizontally – and God at the transcendental level – vertically). Relational reason shows that there is no opposition between Me as the Other (Idem) and Me as a sole and unique being (Ipse), as claimed by some philosophers; instead, there is synergy, because the singleness of the person (ipseity) emerges from the background of what is common (sameness).

To talk of relational reason is to enter the reflected thought (reflexivity). It requires changing the observational point of view, being no more the one of the single terms or of a presumed "system", but that of a relationship. It means to enter into another order of knowledge (the order of relationality).

Relational reason offers good reasons, autonomally understandable by everyone irrespectively of his/her specific religious faith, because they refer to the development of the human nature as a reality provided with own properties and powers as regards culture, even if culture should combine with nature. What makes "good" the agent/actor's reasons is their relational character as referred to the human, where "human" stands for what can be only an end in itself, never a means to other than itself, because it refers to the species-specific quality of the human person, perceivable and recognizable by everyone.

6.3. Relational reason offers the necessary mediations for a veritative recognition of the cultural identities.

The citizenship we need must allow people, families, social groups and communities, belonging to it, to combine their own culture (and religion) with a growing differentiation of the individual (due to the various circles of identities intersecting in him/her). Thus, the individual should be put in the position to identify its own belongings and to determine the hierarchy of his/her ultimate concerns.

68 Me as a social agent in primary relations, We as a corporate identity, and You as an individual actor in a social role (cf. Archer 2003).
If everybody, whatever his/her culture/religion, may identify in the slightest of a common world, this world cannot consist neither of a state citizenship neutralizing social relations, nor of a multicultural citizenship making the relations between culture indifferent, because identity depends on relations.

The common world is the necessary mediation elaborated by the reason (commonly shared by the human beings), so that every single person may live in the public sphere, even being of different religion or faith. Only in the interface of the inter-subjective relation, reason recognizes the reasons of faith, and faith recognizes the reasons of Reason. Only through their relational values, Reason may open to faith and vice versa.

The lack of relational mediation puts all religions, and not only Christianity, into crisis. We may see it through the growing entropy of all the world's religions. Christianity is certainly the one that has absorbed and expressed the most the spirit of distinctions, thus the most differentiated inside as regards the use of reason. It is inside, and not outside Christianity, that anti-Humanism and trans-Humanism do generate (for the eastern religions, these terms have little or no sense).

The differentiating reason of Western modernity produced multiculturalism as an ideology. Only relational reason may cure the consequent pathologies, drifts, deviations and implosions.

The common world is secularity inside the natural law, but it may be caught only updating the notion of natural law by means of relational reason. The attempts to redefine the natural law by means of orders of recognition of the past, as the ancient ones of narrative feature and the modern ones of proceduralism (Ferry 1991), are no more suitable.

Secularity needed by multicultural societies consists of a new spirit of distinctions, which does treat social relations neither as dialectic oppositions, nor as binary ways to discriminate human persons. Such a spirit must transform social relations in an experience of recognition within a complex circuit of mutual gifts. This is a relational spirit, because it uses relational semantics of distinctions, as actions inspired by the rule of reciprocity. In this way, it generates a secularity, which is a recognition of the relation between different identities, as a free act of gift and acceptance of its responsibility (in fact, the gift is an answer to former gifts, and it leads to a reciprocation).

The question of the recognition of different cultures implies three steps, related between them: the attribution of an identity, its validation and a sense of gratitude (thankfulness) for its existence. These three steps represent the gift circuit that, differently from the animal realm, is a constituent of the human's sociability. Human recognition would not be possible if the identity was not a relational one, and if the common world was not relationally constituted.

Finally, it is clear that the biggest and more specific performance of the relational reason is the one of solving the inner difficulty of
The vicissitudes of multiculturalism show that we live in a world, in which the Hobbesian solution of the social order is no more suitable. Institutionalized individualism (individualistic liberalism), assessed by the Hobbesian solution, falls into crisis. There is no more a political power (Leviathan) that may guarantee individual liberties, neutralizing the cultural (and religious) conflicts within the public sphere. The ideology of multiculturalism is not a solution to the ethical void which widens in proportion to the fall of the Hobbesian national State. Which are the alternatives?

A "universal culture" is not thinkable as a world culture (corresponding to the world system) in a functionalist meaning. The current debate on the difficulties to achieve a theoretical universalism in culture (Browning ed. 2006) clearly demonstrates it. The Western culture, based upon its Judeo-Greek-Christian roots, may certainly propose its own vision of universalism. But, without a relational interface, the Western vision is inevitably perceived as particularistic. A universal culture is possible, instead, as the spirit of an ethically qualified secularity, constituted as a common world, which may be drawn through the relational reason, in relationally differentiated social spheres.

Beyond the deficits of multiculturalism, the solution could be provided by a renewed secular sense of culture, as a common learning space
through practices of daily life, where mutual recognition sets aside from the world of signs and cultural traditions, in order to grasp the primary experiential sense of the inter-human. In such a situation, the lay character could assume the connotation of an independent reason, looking at the sense of human relations, without depending on justifications based on the sole faith (namely, committed to dogmatics inside the single religion). In order to let such a secularity emerge, it is necessary that people and cultures learn to operate differences, no more in a dialectic or binary way, but through a relational symbolic code, according to which the autonomy of subjects is not a separation (or continuous clash between them), but a choice of the "environment" to depend on. Relational reason should have the task to avoid every kind of conflation in the cultural conflicts: top-down conflations (as in the case of Jacobin assimilationism), bottom-up conflations (as in the theory of an unlimited community of discourse), and central conflations (peculiar of the relationism that we find in the pragmatics of a coexistence understood as a conflation or hybridization of cultures).

When relationally intended, secularity promises a new coexistence between cultures, not based on the waiver to their content of civilization, but on its renewal, through the recognition that one's own identity is relationally constituted through the relation to the Other. This idea is the backdrop of what I call societal constitutionalism.

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