I sincerely thank Alejandra Marinovic for her kind and insightful comments on my paper. In turn, I would like to point out a few things. Marinovic writes:

However, as the light of the charism of unity is understood as a source of social transformation, it is conceivable that social structures and cultures can also be changed.

Di Nicola calls our attention mostly to this “micro” focus of Lubich, centered in the transformation of interpersonal relationships and the structures of the religious organization Lubich founded. Nevertheless, time has shown that key categories advanced by her charism also have the potential to affect “macro” aspects of society deeply, including the sociological, political, and economic arenas.

It seems to me that the split between charismatic-spontaneous relationships, on the one hand, and structured social and institutional relationships, on the other, cannot be perfectly reconstructed (see Hegel and his writings on Christianity). A charism always affects social, economic, and political structures and urges their transformation. But it would be simplistic to think that the utopia inherent in a charism can solve the complex dynamics that regulate systemic and objective structures of society. As Marinovic says, structures can create ideal conditions for changes, but they cannot create changes in minds and sentiments because the institutions are created only to establish order and give rules to social dynamics. There will remain always a gap that is essential to maintaining the innovative character of a charism and preserving it from being homologous to the status quo. Models, logics, and languages remain, and should remain, different. It is obvious that what is valid when you are using—in the words of Simone Weil—the “language of the bedroom” is not valid when you are talking to a crowd in a city square.

Later Marinovic writes, “Lubich’s conception of human relationships based on Trinitarian bonds directly addresses both the micro and macro aspects of relations of not only relationships between men and women but also relationships in general.” My reply is that when we say “based on Trinitarian bonds,” we assume we are talking about the Trinitarian model. But our model of the Trinity is always affected by our interpretation of Revelation. We know very well that God is a mystery and that our interpretation will always be limited and susceptible to change over time. The Orthodox and Catholic visions of the Trinity, or those of a Church Father and a contemporary theologian, have significant differences. For instance: What are the dynamics of interpersonal
relationships if there is a hierarchy among the Three Persons? And what characteristics of the female and male gender belong to each Person of Trinity? Although we might share a common faith in the Trinity, the risk is to model human relations on an ideal type of Trinity that, in the end, is just our projection.

Marinovic continues:

It is not about who has the power, or sharing the power, or how much of it either gender can exert; rather, it is about gratuitousness and love. Relationships are not a means for achieving power, or a place to wield it; they are essential to personhood and are to be characterized by the giving involved.

Relationships should be reserved for gratuitousness and love, but they are not so in reality; if they were, we would not have conflicts, wars, lawyers, even in the church and in the Christian movements. Such important words as gratuitousness, gift, peace, and love indicate to us the ideal coexistence between differences, men and women, people, religions, and so on. But they do not help us to organize society and prevent conflicts on the micro and macro levels if we do not take into consideration the complexity of the human soul that often cloaks in gratitude and love its own interests, impulses, and aspirations. The motivations of such “gifting” are not easy to interpret and are not always inspired by the love of Christ. Even Nietzsche said, “I have just what I gave,” but he also spoke of the exalted ideal of the “superman.”

Marinovic goes on to say that “Lubich proposes Mary to both men and women. As a Christian, she also proposes Jesus to both of them. Hence, masculinity and femininity are renewed when putting gratuitousness and love at the core of relationships.” Yes, it is a merit for Lubich to propose Mary and Jesus to both men and women. But in fact, in society and particularly in the church, Jesus and Mary play quite different roles in which power is attributed to Jesus and loving service to Mary.

I strongly agree with Marinovic’s following comment:

Di Nicola discusses this requirement in her sections on the conversion of masculinity and of femininity. One could expand her logic in these sections to the conversion of other significant concepts beyond the realm of sociology. For example, it can shed light on the situation of female workers and how families and companies view parenting from an economic perspective. . . . Both aspects—namely, a rich experience of living the Gospels concretely and the intellectual efforts of understanding unity—are essential.

Marinovic further notes, “Perhaps the manner in which people of the Focolare have tried to live their understanding of unity has gone more toward uniqueness or distinction over time. But this search for how the charism might illuminate the ways of society must unravel in history.” Yes, respect for difference demands that we accommodate the rhythms of the other, that we listen to him or her deeply and do not impose what we think is good for him or her. Love must be combined with modesty, respect, distance, attention, and patience; “unity” as a concept is at risk and requires an attitude that is learned over the course of our lifetimes, and never definitively.
Finally, I agree with and thank Marinovic for this comment, which sums up the difficult but important task I think we all must take up:

The Petrine charism, for example, remains associated with authority and with the role of mediator. This reasoning can be extended to the many circumstances in which social structures still reflect strong differences between men and women, as well as other differences such as wealth and religion. The passage from Trinitarian interpersonal relationships to social structures based on fraternity therefore appears to be a formidable challenge.