



CLASSICS OF THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION. EDUCATING FOR PEACE AND A PEDAGOGY OF HOPE

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ABSTRACT

In explaining their thinking, authors whose works have become classics of the history of education have reflected on the founding theoretical, practical and poetic elements of the discipline. Their ideas enable us to attribute multiple meanings to the fundamental terms of the topic, combining philosophical, scientific and ideological theories with educational practice. Reading the classics as part of an active learning process stimulates our intellectual capacities, but also promotes our emotional understanding and personal interpretation, which are also of huge educational value. This article concerns a topic of great interest today, and one that is also discussed in the classics: education for world peace.

KEYWORDS: classics; history of education; canon; educating for peace; history of educational ideas

1. CLASSICS OF THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION

All scientific disciplines acknowledge the works of some of their scholars as “classics”. The importance of these works, the relevance of the ideas they contain, their originality and expertise have led to the development of theoretical-epistemological models that are broadly applicable, richly faceted, complex, and steeped in meanings and cultural references.

Authors of the classics of the history of education¹ have reflected on the cornerstones of pedagogy as a discipline in its theoretical, practical and poetic aspects. Their ideas thus enable us to attribute multiple meanings to the

¹ Cf. G. Cives, G. Genovesi, and P. Russo (eds.), *I Classici della Pedagogia, Atti del seminario del CIRSE. Cassino, 3-4 December 1997* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 1999).

fundamental terms of the topic, bringing together philosophical, scientific and ideological theories with educational practices.

These meanings relate partly to the historical, political, economic and social context of the authors' times, and are partly universal, going beyond their historical context. They are forever modern. Studying them leads us to delve into the texts to conduct a personal, in-depth investigation into the authors' thinking, and also to examine the sometimes far from linear course taken by the history of educational ideas. As well as arriving at a philological understanding of the content of the texts, readers are bound to engage in a careful interpretation of the meaning of the discourse. They will discover what makes these texts universal, or what we might also call "human".

The classics provide the weft in the fabric comprising the "canon" of a discipline because they indicate an "exemplary pathway" that filters "the value and function of the past in and for the present day"². That is why the classics take on the epistemological, educational and historical value of the canon: they describe models of knowledge that have a cognitive and ethical, and consequently also educational value.

At times, these same classics may also serve as an "anti-canon" because they move within the discipline's pluralism (which may sometimes be conflictual). They act as "antibodies" to a tradition that may, at times, leave fundamental aspects of education in the background as it travels along well-charted courses, making no room for change. As an example, suffice it to consider how much a pedagogy attentive to the learner's freedom has struggled to find space in the West. It has come up against a strict discipline imposed for centuries by authoritarian approaches justified by theories and ideas widely shared by education theorists, even of diverse cultural orientations³.

If we adopt the definition of education as a science that strives for human emancipation, we discover lesser pathways (those leading towards an anti-authoritarian education, for instance, or those of modern times proposing different concepts of schooling⁴) that represent the warp of the fabric forming the canon, contributing just as much as the more dominant ideas.

² F. Cambi, "Il 'canone' in pedagogia: presenza, struttura, funzione", in *Sul canone della pedagogia occidentale*, ed. F. Cambi (Roma: Carocci, 2009), 13. On the topic of the pedagogical canon, see also J. Meda, *I "Monumenta Italiae Paedagogica" e la costruzione del canone pedagogico nazionale (1886-1956)* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2019).

³ The importance of discipline has dominated the educational relationship for centuries: from the medieval cathedral schools to the Jesuit colleges, to Makarenko's communes, to mention just a few examples of the places providing even very different types of education. The inflexible rules dictated by religious or ideological principles were approved by many educational practitioners. Among the numerous volumes on this topic, see Foucault's "classic" work *Surveiller et punir: Naissance de la prison* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

⁴ Consider, for instance, the works of Tolstoj, Korczak or, as concerns Italy, the books by

This is precisely why reading the classics always stimulates not only our intellectual capacities, but also our emotional understanding, inducing us to arrive at personal interpretations that can be of huge educational value.

The authors of the classics came up with ideas that were almost always revolutionary. Even when they appear orthodox today, they often assigned new meanings to well-known concepts. If we include the classics in the history of ideas, we can agree with Bauman when he said that: “ideas begin their lives as heresy, continue into orthodoxy, and end as superstition”⁵. Re-discovering the innovative reach of the concepts contained in the classics can thus help educational research launch novel pathways because they demonstrate that it is possible to envisage other possible worlds.

If we consider cultural and social history as it has been described in recent decades⁶, we will also agree with the Polish sociologist when he says it is useful to concern ourselves with what went wrong in the past. In other words, we should think about all those ideas that have been neglected, rejected or simply forgotten. This makes us want to get to know and understand the past because there was probably something that we tried back then that is better than what we have today. Bauman said: “These possibilities are not dead. They have simply been temporarily pushed aside – not been tested or put into practice. They must be preserved for future times”⁷. Some educational and pedagogical models proposed in the classics have all the features of pathways that have been abandoned, but can be discovered again, because they show us possible representations of the future.

These are the unused opportunities of history. We need to learn about them in order to retrieve them, even if only for a little while, instead of just letting them go. In fact, the classics also reveal the different temporal persis-

Borghi (e.g., *Educazione e autorità nell'Italia moderna*. Firenze: La Nuova Italia, 1950), and the different ideas of schooling that emerged in the 20th century: Maria Montessori's children's house, respectful of the characteristics of childhood; the community school and the laboratory school proposed by John Dewey, where theory and practice were constantly interacting; the full-time school adopted by don Milani in Barbiana, intended to shape “sovereign citizens” capable of taking part in the dynamics of society; or the better-known experience of the libertarian Summerhill School opened by Neill with the intention of leaving young people freedom of choice.

⁵ Z. Bauman, *A tutto campo. L'amore, il destino, la memoria e altre umanità. Conversazioni con Peter Haffner*, trans. M. Sampaolo (Bari-Roma: Laterza, 2021), 118.

⁶ Among the numerous volumes, in addition to the work by Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), see T.S. Popkewitz, B.M. Franklin, and M.A. Pereyra (eds.), *Cultural History and Education: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Schooling* (New York and London: Routledge Falmer, 2001); P. Porrier (dir.), *L'Histoire Culturelle: un “tournant mondial” dans l'historiographie?* (Dijon: Editions Universitaire de Dijon, 2008).

⁷ Z. Bauman, *A tutto campo. L'amore, il destino, la memoria e altre umanità. Conversazioni con Peter Haffner*, 119 and 49-50.

tence of certain ideas that we come across in history, as the scholars of the “Annales” explain in their elegant considerations⁸.

It is within this fabric, where past and future are interwoven, that the classics are a precious reserve of the models, ideas and language of educational thought⁹. Their authors are perceived as masters, whether their ideas found acceptance in their own or in subsequent times, and whether their thinking was opposed, disputed or abandoned.

Reading the classics thus brings us to the heart of education as a discipline, to discover the epistemology of the science and its practical-poietic nature. They chart the fundamental stages in the development of educational science through the solutions proposed by the great scholars when they debated the most fundamental theoretical and practical problems.

To give just one of the many possible examples of what we have been saying, we can take the educational antinomy or polarity inherent in “human vis-à-vis social education”, and apply it to a universal and extremely topical problem: educating for peace. Given the vast array of meanings attributed to the term “peace”, we need to say that a personality that we can identify as peaceable strikes a balance between its various physical, cognitive, affective-emotional and relational components through a particular pedagogical process of “self-care”. This is intended as a “disposition to cultivate ourselves, to construct our own identity through strategies of promotion and containment that aim to forge our personal ‘style of activity’”¹⁰. Self-care consequently combines our personal education (which is always incomplete and can always be improved) with our actions and behavior in the social setting¹¹. A peaceable society is therefore one in which not only is there no war (in the sense of violent and devastating fighting between peoples or nations),

⁸ See, for instance, F. Braudel, *I tempi della storia. Economia, società, civiltà* (Bari: Dedalo, 2001).

⁹ Cf. F. Cambi, “Rilettura di classici della pedagogia: criteri ed ‘exempla’”, in *I Classici della Pedagogia*, eds. G. Cives, G. Genovesi, and P. Russo, 81-82.

¹⁰ Cambi, quoting Foucault and Elias, proposes the notion of “self-care” in referring to contemporary individuals and their task of giving themselves shape and identity. The pedagogical significance of this category of education – also taken up by other education theorists like Riccardo Massa and Duccio Demetrio – emphasizes the importance of an individual being self-aware, even with the problems this entails, and the value of certain technical tools, such as autobiographies, which become an adventure of self-reinterpretation, self-control, and re-design of one’s own existence. Cf. F. Cambi, *Saperi e competenze* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2004), 129-130. On this topic, see also A. Bellingreri, *La cura dell’anima. Profili per una pedagogia del sé* (Milano: Vita e Pensiero, 2010); V. Boffo, *La cura in pedagogia* (Bologna: CLEUB, 2006).

¹¹ Boffo says: “but the real dimension of the *cura sui* is not the interior, individual dimension of someone in search of a personal and private self. [...] Self-care is a genuine intensification of social relations. We can contain this idea in the formula: care for yourself to care for others, and care for the world”. V. Boffo, *La cura in pedagogia*, 3.

there is also an active effort to promote social equity, respect for human rights and for the planet on which we live, solidarity, and – last but not least – the teaching of human duties. Among those listed in the Declaration of Human Duties, article 12 includes the need to: “work for maintenance of world peace, condemn war, terrorism and all other hostile activities by calling for decreased military spending in all countries and restriction of the proliferation and dissemination of arms, in particular, weapons of mass destruction”¹².

Reflecting on our duties as well as our rights focuses our attention on the educational element that they implicitly demand. To be able to develop properly, a non-violent and “actively” respectful behavior needs to be taught – even assuming there is a *natural law* that drives us to do good and to avoid evil. Adopting Maritain’s concept, the jurist Flick defines this *natural law* as a profound anthropological structure. The crucial point is to succeed in activating our ability to listen carefully to ourselves so that we can come into contact with this source, and pay attention to our inner discourses, which take place in silence. But, even if we accept the theory that all human beings have this “inner compass”, it seems obvious that only a proper education of our personality can give us the maturity we need to engage in this particular way of listening¹³.

2. EDUCATING FOR PEACE AND THE PEDAGOGY OF HOPE

Driven partly by historical contingencies in which they came to be living, some authors of the classics of educational thought worked on the idea of an education that could train individuals to develop a personality capable of re-founding a society disrupted by violent political, social or religious revolutions. Even when they moved from an initial social or sociological analysis

¹² The Trieste Declaration of Human Duties was drawn up in 1993 by the International Council of Human Duties, and promoted at a meeting in 1997 by its president, Rita Levi Montalcini. For more on this subject, see G.M. Flick, *I Doveri Umani nel terzo millennio* (Trieste: Meudon Istituto Jacques Maritain, 2020); R. Levi Montalcini, *Human Rights and Duties on the Threshold of the 3rd Millennium - Diritti e doveri dell'uomo alle soglie del terzo millennio* (Trieste: EUT, 2013).

¹³ Cf. G.M. Flick, *I Doveri Umani nel terzo millennio*, 12-18. On this topic, see also Z. Bauman, *The Art of Life* (Cambridge: Polity, 2008). According to Papisca, respect for human rights relies on a culture of peace. “Education and teaching are even more powerful tools because they go into the depths of the mind and the heart. They facilitate the interiorization of the great universal values and, by disseminating awareness, convictions – in short, by taking effect *ante factum* – they provide the most dependable way to prevent violations of human rights”. A. Papisca, “La pace come diritto umano: *vox populi*, ma non ancora dell’UNESCO”, *Pace e diritti umani* 2 (2005): 9.

to the idea of an education that would enable individuals to behave appropriately in society, and strive to improve it, the educational antinomy between human and social education identified solutions (albeit never final) capable of delineating ideal models that could stimulate both personal and collective action.

In a Europe torn by wars of religion, Comenius recommended education for everyone, and devised strategies for teaching people to read and write¹⁴. The dual aim of his proposal to educate everyone – based on the well-known pansophical ideal *omnia omnibus omnino* – was to train each and every individual to be part of a pacified society in which three international bodies (the *College of Light*, the *Dicastery of Peace*, and the *Ecumenical Consistory*) could act as peacekeepers¹⁵.

The conflictual relations between different societies (especially from the religious standpoint) is therefore not a consequence of globalization alone. Its roots go much deeper, in the history of modern Europe at least. In Comenius's time, the religious conflicts were all within Christianity: by giving rise to the reformed churches, the Lutheran reform also obliged the Catholic world to review its methods regarding education.

In recent times, Edgar Morin (a sociologist whose writings have now come to occupy a place among the classics of educational thought) came up with some useful ideas for constructing a “world-society” or “community of human destinies” that can put an end to the increasingly conflictual nature of human relationships. Morin's considerations begin with a philosophical and sociological analysis of the processes of globalization, but also draw on his experience as a Sephardic Jew who joined the Resistance in 1942. Coming to the individual dimension, he suggests that a new type of education is needed, characterized by a triple reform of the way of knowing, thinking and teaching¹⁶.

Morin's educational thought is also influenced by the setting: a monotheistic religion that remains in the background, interfering with people's

¹⁴ J.A. Comenius, *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (Noribergae: M. Endteri, 1658). Also available in English: *The Orbis Pictus of John Amos Comenius*, trans. C. Hoole (Syracuse: C.W. Bardeen, 1887). Cf. A. Cagnolati, “Alcune riflessioni sull'edizione quadrilingue (1666) dell'*Orbis Sensualium Pictus* di Comenio”, *Quaderni del CIRSIL* 2 (2003): 1-13, in <http://amsacta.unibo.it/959/>.

¹⁵ Cf. C. Callegari, “La dimensione storica in Educazione comparata ieri ed oggi”, in *L'educazione comparata tra storia ed etnografia*, ed. C. Callegari (Roma: Anicia, 2016), 63-64.

¹⁶ Cf. E. Morin, *La tête bien faite. Repenser la réforme, réformer la pensée* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1999); E. Morin, *Les sept savoirs nécessaires à l'éducation du futur* (Paris: Le Seuil, 2000).

awareness of their identity¹⁷, and their ideological inclination towards communism.

Only an education that restores the connection between scientific knowledge and the complexity of human passions, emotions, joy and pain, in our imaginations, our inventions, and even our risk of madness¹⁸ – or, simply put, that acknowledges the incompleteness of human beings and the uncertainty of life – can hope to develop in people the “complex thought” or “well-made heads” needed to promote a human ethics that places personal responsibility and social solidarity in a democratic context¹⁹.

Morin claims that human beings are “trinitary”, as individuals, societies and species. As individuals, “L’être humain est à la fois physique, biologique, psychique, culturel, social, historique. C’est cette unité complexe de la nature humaine qui est complètement désintégrée dans l’enseignement, à travers les disciplines, et il est devenu impossible d’apprendre ce que signifie être humain”²⁰. It is the human condition in its complexity that must be the object of education. If we teach history of the planetary era without concealing the cases of oppression and violent domination, we can succeed in teaching that all human beings live in the same community of destinies. We will learn that:

la compréhension, la bienveillance, la reconnaissance vont permettre non seulement un mieux vivre dans la relation enseignant-enseigné, dans toute relation d’autorité, dans toute relation humaine, mais aussi combattre le mal moral le plus cruel, le plus atroce qu’un être humain puisse faire à un autre humain: l’humiliation. La conflictualité ne saurait être totalement abolie, mais elle pourrait être minorée ou surmontée par la compréhension. L’harmonie qui abolit tout antagonisme est impossible et même non souhaitable. Mais quel progrès éthique si nous nous égarons moins, si nous comprenons mieux! Ce serait cela poursuivre l’humanisation!²¹.

An education that is global and not partialized would therefore nurture

¹⁷ Pasqualini wrote: “Morin defines himself as *neo-marrano*, the son of a cultural syncretism of different worlds. In his family, whose forebears had been nonreligious for at least three generations, the word ‘Jew’ was never spoken. It was replaced by the term *los nuestros* with which they only meant Spanish Jews, however”. Morin himself wrote: “Hence my confused identity: I was a non-Jewish Jew, a Jewish non-Jew. I was a part of the group to which I did not belong, and I was not a part of the group to which I felt I belonged”. E. Morin, and C. Pasqualini, *Io, Edgar Morin. Una Storia di vita* (Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2007), 25.

¹⁸ Cf. E. Morin, É.-R. Ciurana, and R.D. Motta, *Educare per l’era planetaria: il pensiero complesso come metodo di apprendimento* (Roma: Armando, 2004).

¹⁹ Cf. G. Chiosso, *Sperare nell’uomo. Giussani, Morin, MacIntyre e la questione educativa* (Torino: SEI, 2009).

²⁰ E. Morin, *Les sept savoirs nécessaires à l’éducation du future*, 2.

²¹ E. Morin, *Enseigner à vivre* (Arles: Actes sud/Play Bac, 2014), 121.

planetary human beings who are willing to be benevolent and maintain peaceful social relations. This would enable them to be more human, to achieve their anthropological nature better and in more depth, creating a virtuous circle in which human education and social education nourish one another.

Morin's sociological background always led him to consider in the foreground the social and legislative aspects of educating for peace, which consequently become particularly important. His interest in pedagogy can only really be understood by looking at another way of conceiving "peace" – in the sense of the adoption of good behavior.

This concept is also clearly stated in the *Declaration on a Culture of Peace* approved by the United Nations in 1999. Before outlining the role of sovereign states, article 1 states that: "A culture of peace is a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behavior and ways of life based on: (a) Respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation. [...] (d) Commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts".

As part of a similar concept of education, Bogdan Suchodolski (a scholar in Eastern Europe) also imagined a more just and peaceful society in which a new human being could cope with the terrible problems posed by the historical events of the Second World War. As he wrote in a note on the Italian edition of his best-known book (*La pedagogie et les grands courants philosophiques: Pedagogie de l'essence et pedagogie de l'existence*, 1960), he wanted to show that, by adopting a new way of living, man can also educate himself²². Starting from a theory of the social nature of humans, the Polish scholar said: "What is important is to make such conditions possible, provide encouragement, guarantees and organization, which are the basis of development and of training, the basis for creation and of the human essence"²³. In an ideal conception set against a background of socialist and communist theories – that he shared with his master Sergej Hessen, with Morin and also with Bauman²⁴ – Suchodolski sees as an educational goal a future free of the conformism of the present. Through a formal, social and lay moral education, we must learn to develop an ineffable heartfelt impulse that trains individuals to become citizens or, in other words, responsible

²² B. Suchodolski, *Pedagogia dell'essenza e pedagogia dell'esistenza*, trans. U. Barbano (Roma: Armando, 1965), 7.

²³ M. Debesse, "Preface", in *Pedagogia dell'essenza e pedagogia dell'esistenza*, B. Suchodolski, 11.

²⁴ Hessen's ideal was a legal socialism, while Bauman claims to have been a critic of the Leninist regime and to have been expelled from the army, the University and his country (Poland) for this reason. But he also says that he has remained a socialist to this day. Cf. Z. Bauman, *A tutto campo. L'amore, il destino, la memoria e altre umanità*, 16.

members of a democracy. When he writes that: “it is only by taking part in the struggle to create a human world that assures everyone’s living conditions and human development that we will be able to really educate the younger generation”²⁵, the Polish education theorist offers a model of personal and social education that proposes to achieve the irenic ideal of democratic society.

The scholars discussed here do not found peace on political negotiations, nor do they rely on the exercise of power to imagine a pacified world. Instead, they propose educational strategies that can lead to a balanced development of human beings capable living together – if not entirely without conflict, at least with respect for one another.

Maria Montessori was also concerned with educating for peace. This could even be said to have been at the very heart of her thinking. For the sake of brevity, we only mention here her book entitled *Education and Peace*²⁶, but all her works – like her life – are steeped in pacifism and a culture of peace²⁷.

She saw the battle between adults and children, in families and at school, as an incessant war that is degrading for the children. It prevents them from developing by experimenting with their own creative energies. This lack of respect for children lays the foundations on which future wars will be built. Through an education that is a “normalization”, on the other hand, children will be allowed to grow up independently and develop their own character. If, instead of interfering, adults help children to do things by themselves, limiting their own action to orienting a child’s life and soul, psychological activity and physiological growth, then the child will no longer be weak and poor. The child will be “the father of the man”, and education becomes a weapon of peace. This concept was reinforced in Maria Montessori by her encounter with Mahatma Gandhi²⁸, who also used nonviolence as a form of

²⁵ B. Suchodolski, *Pedagogia dell'essenza e pedagogia dell'esistenza*, 119.

²⁶ M. Montessori, *Education and Peace*, trans. H.R. Lane (Chicago: Henry Regnery Company, 1972).

²⁷ Pacifism is the set of doctrines, ideas and movements of opinion that reject war as a way to solve international conflict, and promote a permanent peace between states. The *Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace*, approved by the United Nations with resolution 39/11 of 12 November 1984, also demands that State policies focus on the task of peacekeeping. The concept of a culture of peace, on the other hand, was formulated at the *International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men*, held in Ivory Coast in 1989. The UNESCO recommended working for a new vision of peace based on the universal values of respect for life, freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between men and women. This concept certainly comes closer to a “pedagogically” conceived peace, in the sense used by Montessori, as educating a democratic society.

²⁸ Cf. G. Honegger Fresco, *Maria Montessori, una storia attuale. La vita, le opere, le testimonianze* (Torino: Il leone verde, 2018).

political struggle, but in the ashrams of India it was above all a way of life, and the form of education *par excellence*.

Montessori thus shifted the attention from a political construction of peace – that States are incapable of achieving and maintaining – to a pedagogical concept of peace capable of educating morally and psychologically healthy men and women who will not need to fight one another. According to Montessori, the emancipation of childhood from adult domination, and the adults' acknowledgement of anthropological diversity in terms not of inferiority, but of difference, are the prerequisites for building a single human nation and a universal citizenship. Her proposal contains echoes – also in lexical terms – of Morin's ideas: though the premises and settings differ, it seems clear that a “pedagogy of peace” can only be constructed through an education that accepts all human diversities, and makes them the principle on which human society is built.

Today, now that the goal set at the World Forum in Dakar²⁹ of defeating illiteracy by 2015 has not been met, we are still far from teaching all the world's children to read and write. We can see every day how heavily this weighs on our failure to ensure that people can live alongside one another in peace. In many countries, children who lack any formal education become victims of all kinds of physical and psychological violence, be it their early enrolment in regular and irregular armies, or their submission to ideologies that exploit them for terrorist goals³⁰. Finding new ways to implement strategies to defend children and ensure mass literacy, also with the aid of a wise and widespread use of modern technologies, can reattach that thread of an education for peace that – as we have briefly outlined – comes down to us through the reflections of the authors of the classics, arriving in our modern times charged with a pedagogy of hope. While nourishing utopian ideals for regulating human living³¹, it also finds completion in the concrete action of education.

²⁹ The 164 countries that took part in the World Forum on education held in Dakar in 2000, decided an agenda based on pursuing six goals. The second involved ensuring universal access to a compulsory, free and good-quality primary school education for children everywhere, and particularly for girls who live in difficult conditions and belong to ethnic minorities.

³⁰ Cf. L. Tarobelli, *La questione sociale dei bambini soldato dal coinvolgimento alla riabilitazione* (Civitavecchia-Roma: Prospettiva, 2015); S. Luca, *I cuccioli dell'Isis. L'ultima degenerazione dei bambini soldato* (Milano: Terra Santa, 2020).

³¹ Bauman wrote: “If it is true (and it is) that each set of circumstances contains some chances alongside its dangers, it is also true that each is as pregnant with rebellion as it is with conformity. Let's never forget that each majority started from being a tiny, invisible and unnoticeable minority. And that even hundred-year-old oak trees have grown from ridiculously minute acorns”. Z. Bauman (with Riccardo Mazzeo), *Conversazioni sull'educazione* (Trento: Erickson, 2012), 35.

This hope echoes, once again, in the words of Bauman when he says: “I think of myself as a ‘man who hopes’. [...] You have to carry on and try again. [...] Attempting the impossible. Understanding ourselves as the product of our own doing and creating”³². This is the premise for forging “moral communities” of people who are free, responsible and peacefully creative, capable of finding new solutions to old human conflicts.

CONCLUSION

The classics of the history of educational thought – set within a history of theories and ideas that intersect with philosophy, sociology, the sciences and ideology – have a cultural bearing that is inseparable from our understanding of the epistemology of our discipline. They are works that also guide us towards a more open and multifaceted conception of an education that interprets the past. They provide us with countless “stories”, also describing pathways that have been ignored or abandoned, niche traditions and customs in education that explain why some ancient ideas have survived to the present day. They also give us opportunities to design the future by returning to pathways left incomplete.

That is why the classics are an excellent educational tool. They stimulate our intellectual capacity and personal commitment, but they also give us the pleasure of reflection. They offer us a participative and collaborative encounter with pedagogical culture and with ourselves. In the classics, we can also recognize our own educational experience, and be inclined to revisit it and take possession of it again with a greater awareness. Reading can give us an opportunity to deconstruct or integrate our own thoughts. It can be a crucial exercise for renewing our intellectual capacity.

Through the classics, we can acquire and constantly nurture a historical approach that we can apply to the way we try to diagnose problems, and grasp their connections and extensions³³. Such an approach connects events not only in the chronological sense, but also thematically, or it may help us to capture historical pauses as movements of progression or regression. Reflecting along these lines, the first requirement for a good reading of these classic works is to contextualize them in their own time in order to understand the contingent situations from which the ideas developed. Then we can

³² Z. Bauman, *A tutto campo. L'amore, il destino, la memoria e altre umanità. Conversazioni con Peter Haffner*, 137 and 149.

³³ Cf. R. Fornaca, *È finita la ragione dello studio dei classici della pedagogia?*, in *I Classici della Pedagogia. Atti del seminario del CIRSE. Cassino, 3-4 December 1997*, eds. G. Cives, G. Genovesi, and P. Russo, 28-29.

examine the social point of view from which the solutions and proposals emerged³⁴.

The classics of education thus represent direct sources for us to use in the classroom as a valuable teaching tool because they help us to make sense of a pedagogical knowledge-action that reopens a space both for a critical historicization, and for a critical-interpretative theoreticality, thus becoming the key to a thinking in motion, a way of perceiving education.

The classics also give readers a chance to become emotionally involved: because they promote self-care, they also induce us to analyze our own reality, and to find new and creative educational solutions for today's problems.

The above reflections of authors of the classics on educating for peace and hope aim to serve as examples of an educational thinking that wonders about how human and social education can be genuinely pedagogical, and they cannot fail to promote improvements. This is not because we can imagine a constant and linear development, in the positivist sense of the term, but because education can take us slowly and effortfully – sometimes stopping or even backtracking – along a path towards the emancipation of all human beings, to be achieved in societies that are “good”³⁵ and supportive.

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³⁴ C. Callegari, *La storia della pedagogia tra ricerca e didattica* (Lecce: Pensa Multimedia, 2012), 91.

³⁵ Cf. Z. Bauman, *A tutto campo. L'amore, il destino, la memoria e altre umanità. Conversazioni con Peter Haffner*, 116.

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