

Giovanni Pampanini, *Il Pedagogista Scalzo (The Barefooted Pedagogue)*, Catania, Latessa, 109 pp, 1996.

Is it possible, given the complex society in which we live, to find a new way of educating and conceiving of a new philosophy of education? This is the poser that Pampanini grapples with in his essay, *Il Pedagogista Scalzo*. This is not an easy book. On the contrary, it presupposes a sound philosophical background on the reader's part, but it is to this book's credit that it encourages the reader to problematise western culture and to explore the basis for a meaningful encounter between Western values and those of 'the other'.

At the outset, the author enquires about the meaning of education in this day and age and, above all, whether there can be an educational theory removed from practice. In answering this question, Pampanini maintains that it is not possible to formulate a new educational philosophy which bears no relationship to practice. With this in mind, he gleans useful ideas from the thought of different authors. The author stresses the importance of engaging critically with educational issues and with society in general. He shows that contemporary society is a global and multiracial one where different races are looking for a way to live in common. In a similar context, it is surely a difficult task to educate people for a reciprocal responsibility. The educator must help the person "*to be ethically able to combine his/her own happiness with that of the whole of humanity*". To reach this aim, the educator should help develop in persons an open mind and a great sense of tolerance; but nowadays these intentions sound very commonplace or rhetorical.

Pampanini explains that Kant very much helped to remove rhetoric from pedagogical reflections. In *Critica della Ragione Pratica*, the German philosopher asserts that persons live with the aim of gratifying their own desires in order to achieve happiness. "*But happiness is a complex word*" says Pampanini who demonstrates that it is not possible to identify tout court happiness with the satisfaction of one's own needs. Kant dwelt a lot on the inborn struggle between desires and ethics. A strong sense of morality leads us to recognise happiness in the well being of humanity at large. Pampanini understands Kant's message and underlines that the human being has to learn to struggle to achieve the necessary freedom from external conditioning. Human beings can master their own passions by using reason and by refining their ethical sense. In this way they acquire what Kant calls '*tugend*', that is: moral intention which is not acquired once and for all, for one must constantly struggle to maintain it. Today it is said that education, which entails information and the process of forming, should aim at "*facilitating social communication, the free access to the rights of citizenship, and international comprehension*". From the Kantian point of view, it is quite difficult to attain these aims. Pampanini concludes that education is characterised by '*difficilizzazione*'.

'*Difficilizzazione*' means that education entails the onerous task of revealing the complexity of the set goals. Pampanini points to the example of the so-called 'third generation of human rights'. He refers, in this context, to Human Rights Education, Peace Education, Education for Development, Health Education and Environmental Education. They are all interconnected, so that peace permits development, but the latter must occur in a manner that is not harmful to the environment and therefore to our health. Educators must analyse all the elements, bearing in mind their reciprocal influences, and then identify the tools which would be useful for them to realise their objectives.

So Pampanini examines the theories of Apel. Starting from the Apellian principle of the 'unlimited community of communication', he shows that, in a mixed group, composed of people of different race and culture, a common linguistic tie on its own cannot resolve the social problems of a multicultural community. Such a community is characterised by different ways of thinking. Arabs and Europeans have different conceptions of education, justice, law, human rights and so forth.

The educator should set an example by engaging in comparative practice, the critical cognitive vehicle for a truly meaningful process of intercultural education. Drawing from Apel, Habermas, Derrida, Marx, Bion, Freud and others, and taking on board psychological and social viewpoints, Pampanini lucidly and synthetically explores the ingredients for a comparative approach that can engender a genuine dialogue between cultures. In this context, he utilises Huxley's metaphor of the home. Human beings, whatever their culture may be, are driven by a constant desire to learn: this thirst for knowledge matches the desire to make ourselves, and our philosophy of life, known to the other people. This human characteristic gives one the appearance of a "*door which is left ajar, lying open between home and street*".

The educator must encourage such broad-mindedness, preventing the subject from remaining entrapped within his/her cultural boundaries. In so doing, Pampanini accords pedagogy a new definition. It is a pedagogy of research and communication. Pedagogy is research because it has to "*be improved to improve the relationship with difference*", whatever the latter may be: different race, different language, different religion and so on. The educator must understand and explain every aspect of this reality. So, the author maintains that pedagogical research must measure up to every human science: "*the pedagogical research... is a cultural ...research, that includes very different spheres of knowledge: psychology...philosophy, history..*" This way, pedagogy must remain true to its mission, that of not being a barren form of erudition but a process whereby one obtains the tools for understanding oneself and others.

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