

ON CURRENT EDUCATION

EDITORIAL

What urges us to question the concept of education is its spreading to all realms of reality, its losing the well-defined boundaries that characterized it previously, its self-presentation as unavoidable and at the same time as extremely problematic. To educate oneself and others everywhere, at all stages in life, is seen as a priority that is justified with great reasons, most of them negative, tied to crises of various nature ultimately having to do with *trust* and *trustworthiness*. Education is no longer considered simply as the action of transmission of knowledge and values from the grown-ups (parents, teachers, spiritual guides, community) to the yet immature members of a group; nor does education appear as a preparatory period with a beginning and an end, a period devoted to learning and assimilating at the end of which one is ready to take up one's own role within society.

A common and generally accepted analysis of this phenomenon ties it to the decline of authority, to the polytheism of values, to complexity and change. Educational sources are not reliable because they lie in the past, and the past is in discontinuity with the present. Problems are not consumed through the answers that one finds as their solution; they do not give way to repertoires that can be reused because they have an ever new disquieting/exciting nature, which consists in their generating ever new and discontinuous problems. Change within discontinuity seems to be the central core of the questions that concern education and educability, thus pressing their conceptualization into a grip that explains their unavoidability and instability, their extreme relevance and almost irrelevance.

The change is seemingly so capillary and unforeseeable that it requires a constant dose of adaptation and apprehension, and thus of education. If education is required by environmental conditions that are changed and in constant change, the competence that is always still to be educated can least of all be *transmitted* because it is not in possession of someone who can avail him or herself of it, can consolidate it, can shape it into models and then transfer it.

This awareness does not impede but rather intensifies the effort, which is incessant and almost obsessive, to transform experiential materials into educational tools. The tendency is that of assimilating all contexts in which there is a need to learn new things to the context of the production of outcomes and of planning via goals and markers. One must demonstrate that one is useful, that one is selling a good product that can be weighed, quantified, that will produce tangible outcomes for the consumer, that education has an impact and is not just smoke.

We should also not forget that our cultural and aesthetic climate is very nostalgic for smoke (let us recall Paul Auster's unforgettable screenplay for the movie *Smoke*: «the most precious things are lighter than air») and that the intertwining of these needs happens despite their incompatibility, with alienating effects.

Like in many other human affairs, one applies the automatism of edification—one acts *as if* the extreme need, generated by the crisis, to have even more *adequate* means to confront life, coexistence, work, the prolonged duration and flexibility of all three of them were to generate by itself the resources for adaptation. Except that one then realizes that the resources are not at all adequate (and how could they be?). The issue is that what should be—in terms of needs—then does not necessarily happen.

The most interesting things we have seen these days in the pedagogical field in a broad sense do not lie in the attempts at enforcing order and discipline by suggesting fears of various disfunctionings. Accelerated human beings, filled with “advanced” competencies and without the time to pause, reflect, search, think, realize, recognize themselves, and cross the deserts are prevented from finding their own way to be educated by life, death, truth and its lack, experiences, feelings, failures, alterities because the strategy by which they are driven clings to the obtuse intention of delaying the encounter.

In order that what is real and powerful in things, people, and ideas discloses its educational potentialities we need injections of emptiness; but that would not be enough. We need to gather courage and patience, effort and unconsciousness, and not give up trying to think about these virtues in relation to what they must confront time after time. Nowadays, it is no longer the same courage what we need so as to be fathers, mothers, teachers, and even masters; and yet we are still fathers, mothers, teachers and even masters, and not only of ourselves. We find we are all these things and we find we must reinvent courage and all the other virtues.

The attempt we make in these pages is, as usual, a slalom between the need to historicize concepts and gather from time the features that reshape them constantly as common notions, and the need to guard their being bearers of the truth, to guard their revelatory and not only expressive nature (as Luigi Pareyson would say), which is entrusted to time for its revelation without being entirely exhausted in the contingent reality that hosts it.

In this sense, one should not *build* but rather *protect* the potentialities inherent in the concept of education, the potentialities capable of reopening reality when it appears as stifling and caught in the historical grip of contradictions that kill motivations. In other words, we should not hold onto a *historical* concept of education—the one provided by the dictionary—and look for someone to whom to apply it, or something to teach anyway (teachings, piles of manuals on how to do something). Nor should we anesthetize in the younger generations the conflictuality that demands education, but not the current education. The task is that of defending and letting disclose what, in the ideas, is eternal and eternally transcending reality. The transcendence that is internal to concepts only discloses itself when it is in touch with the reality of aspirations, the reality that aspires to self-overcoming. The current education does not satisfy its own very concept even more than the market needs. We try to work on this.

Luciana Regina

(Translated by Silvia Benso)