

# Europe and the pedagogical challenge of interculturality: awareness and personal participation beyond the utopia

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In western states today, and not only in these quarters, there are noteworthy and dangerous oscillations between extreme forms of nationalism and more democratic trends. There is a tendency to shut off towards other nations, to see one's own nationality as a cultural and traditional dimension in need of protection, currently under threat from invasion by other ethnicities, who cannot easily be assimilated to one's own values and principles. How, then, is it possible to overcome the appeal of ideologies of resistance of nationalistic, conservative type? In all probability, an excellent first step is offered by the new pedagogical rationality of education for democracy, which is at the head of the current of critical pedagogy of emancipation, calling for responsible choices and direct participation in the democratic life of a civil society.

**Ключевые слова:** integration, culture and democracy, responsibility, direct participation, racism-separation.

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## Foreword

"Unity in diversity", is the motto of the European Union, which was first coined in 2000, and clearly shows the intention to «[...] indicate how, through the EU, the Europeans have been able to work together for peace and prosperity, maintaining at the same time the rich diversity of cultures, traditions and languages of the continent»<sup>1</sup>

In reality, if we consider certain sectors of scientific study and of civil society in the modern age, the message most frequently encountered is either that "integration does not exist", or that it cannot exist. There are numerous efforts made in order to favour the peaceful co-existence, at a continental level, of the European peoples, and to take a planetary, humane (or, humanitarian?) perspective on an attitude of welcoming inclusion towards an ever-growing number of immigrants. Hence, such a

<sup>1</sup> «Il Motto della UE», in [http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/motto/index\\_it.htm/02-16](http://europa.eu/about-eu/basic-information/symbols/motto/index_it.htm/02-16).

judgement might appear to be rather harsh, even cruel; however, it is evidence of a double attitude towards the potential of immigration. On the one hand, it shows how the feeling of belonging, in an exclusive way, is becoming more rooted, which is thanks also to media campaigns that seduce the ears of listeners who are only waiting to increase their own already existing category of “enemies”, fearing the threat of possible disruption of the traditional order. On the other hand, distrust towards the integration or inclusive processes, are of a strictly ontological or phenomenological type; resting, that is to say, on the differences between ethnicities and cultures interpreted as incompatible in their daily manifestations. The historical context, undoubtedly, is not characterised by that serenity, that peace of mind which encourages people to reach out and embrace the other. Rather, fear and anxiety are the sharpest weapons, being wielded by those who use terrorism to subvert and destabilise the centuries-old values of cohabitation. Bloody threats and violence have long been the most devastating weapons for generating confusion and unrest in democratic contexts. For these reasons, it would be most useful to offer a pedagogical reflection on the motives that induce people to resist integration, in an implicit if not in a direct way, and try to understand the scope of prejudice in contemporary thought.

### The contexts and their problems

There is talk, of not too subtle a kind, of doubts, and the deconstruction of certainties about the structure of integration itself, which is seen as the foundation for peaceful coexistence and harmony among ethnic groups. This is telling, especially in a historical and social context in constant change towards global and planetary multiculturalism. In this scenario, the encounter with otherness will be increasingly characterized by personal experience. When one hears it said that integration does not exist, it is appropriate to fix certain points on which to reflect, to try to understand how a principle upon which historians, lawyers, anthropologists, educators and sociologists have concentrated on so much, may reveal such uncertainty, especially at such a delicate moment of political and cultural upheaval.

As Casamassima claimed, at a certain moment of the relationship between autochthonous and allochthonous, there presents itself «[...] the problem of integration. Which does not exist. Not the problem, integration. In the sense that there only exists acceptance of the dominant culture of a territory [...] (Southerners) have accepted the customs, traditions and habits of the Piedmontese. In their case, the “terroni” have continued to speak their dialects, to eat their dishes, to direct their children towards the values of their native lands. Integration has only occurred bit by bit, with small steps towards cohabitation on both sides»<sup>2</sup>.

It could, then, be argued, that in the period preceding extra-EU immigration, Italian society demonstrated a form of reciprocity that was in any case limited to work for the few foreigners already present and for the numerous immigrants from southern Italy, which was circumscribed to the exchanges and interpersonal relations between natives. In this sense, Casamassima’s example is striking, and allows us to draw attention to the context of *separation*<sup>3</sup>, which has perhaps been neglected, but which has an undeniable force in the case of relations between autochthonous Piedmontese or Lombards and southern immigrants between the '50's and the '80's of the XXth century. It recurs today as a potential (and, alas, ever more concrete) factor of destabilization in the delicate processes involved in the approach to a more distant type of otherness, following the growing

<sup>2</sup> P. Casamassima, *L'integrazione non esiste*, «Corriere della sera», 23 gennaio 2016. Immediately afterwards, regarding internal Italian migration of the '50's from South towards the North, he adds that «“We were waiting for arms, and men arrived”, was the lament of prof. Valletta, watching the siege at Fiat by labourers arrived from the South. Ex farmers and manual workers, who for long years were not integrated».

<sup>3</sup> The term *separation*, from the point of view of social context, indicates the «maintenance of one’s own language and culture, at the margins of the host culture», cfr. L. Amatucci, *La cittadinanza e l'educazione nella società multiculturale*, in L. Amatucci, A. Augenti, M. Matarazzo, editors, *Lo spazio Europeo dell'educazione. Scuola, Università, Costituzione per l'Europa*, Anicia, Roma 2005, p. 185.

waves of immigration from around the globe. The elements that foster it are no longer differences of dialect within a common language framework, or dietary habits, as was previously the case. They concern the deeper religious, existential and cultural spheres, which is why separation goes beyond mere semantics and appears to be a space for non-meeting, which oscillates dangerously towards confrontation. It is thus evident that reciprocity is reinforced among the indigenous, while it has almost completely disappeared with regard to the foreigner, who is also framed as a competitor in the sphere of labour.

The factors so far considered are contributing to the delineation of a picture of progressive distrust towards integration in the European context, and in fact, it is said that «We are witnessing the slow agony of the dream of European integration, disintegrating without a single demonstration occurring anywhere, among its 500 million citizens. It is clear that European institutions are in an existential crisis but the debate is only at intergovernmental level. This proves clearly that European citizens do not feel close to Brussels»<sup>4</sup>. A feeling of distance from Europe, then, is openly discussed among ever-growing sectors of the Ancient Continent. If we then consider the differences in religious faith between indigenous and foreigner, we see how distrust and fears may lead to ostracism, in a blind circle of intolerance, which is worsened by the terrorist campaigns of fundamentalist groups against western democracies.

In this regard, it is important to remember the view of the EU Commission, in their communications of 2000 and 2001, where they outlined a certain number of principles to which integration policies were to be aligned; the most relevant of these principles is the necessity for a multi-sectorial approach, which considers not just the economic or social dimensions of integration, but also issues relating to religious and cultural differences, to citizenship, to participation and to civil and political rights. However different may be the exigencies of one territory from another, it is essential that policies of integration are planned according to a general, long-term logic. At the same time, answers must be found for specific needs of certain groups, responding to local limitations. Such methods must aim at creating partnerships between a multiplicity of interested parties, and consequently, they require adequate resources. Members of the migrant communities, including women and subjects enjoying international tutelage are required, according to the Commission, to participate in the planning, the implementation, and evaluation of projects and policies that relate to them<sup>5</sup>. In principle, it is absolutely necessary to acquire awareness of the enormous scope of the complexities deriving from the constant progressive changes underway in our society. These are of quantitative nature, and directly concern the construction, in most important places of the west, of ever larger cultural minorities, evidently differing one from the other; and also qualitative, since they materialize in the legitimate requests on the part of these ethnicities, to be hosted and treated not just as a collection of single subjects, but as a community with their own structures and their own identity<sup>6</sup>.

An important document of the Salto-Youth Cultural Diversity Resource Centre of 2012 fixes certain fundamental standards in order to counter the insecurity that derives from multicultural and intercultural processes in a strict sense, declaring that «Self-reflection and personal feedback are mentioned as the main tools used for dealing with insecurity as well as support from the group, which is considered as an important factor to feel safe and secure»<sup>7</sup>. However, personal reflection and the

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<sup>4</sup> R. Savio, *Disintegrating Europe met with indifference*, in [www.italianinsider.it/?q=node%2F3626](http://www.italianinsider.it/?q=node%2F3626), Tuesday Feb. 09, 2016.

<sup>5</sup> Cfr. *Comunicazione della Commissione al Consiglio, al Parlamento Europeo, al Comitato economico e sociale europeo e al Comitato delle regioni su immigrazione, integrazione e occupazione*, Brussels 3.6.2003, COM (2003), p. 336.

<sup>6</sup> Cfr. A. Gambino, *Gli altri e noi: la sfida del multiculturalismo*, il Mulino, Bologna 1996, pp.55-57.

<sup>7</sup> P. Bortini, B. Motamed-Afshari, *Intercultural Competence. Research Report*, October–December 2011, Salto-Youth Cultural Diversity Resource Centres, Council of Europe, pp. 28-29.

search for feedback in otherness are not sufficient in themselves, if not supported by constant personal participation and the attempt to create empathy and a critical thought, since «Empathy is seen by the respondents as an important quality in order to listen actively and communicate properly. The emotions shall be given adequate space and time, in order to make oneself understood and understand the other»<sup>8</sup>.

To emancipate oneself from fear and distrust through direct participation is, therefore, the crux of education for democracy, the knot to be loosened by a discipline such as pedagogy, which, in the modern period can never be deaf to voices of change. The fundamental assumption is that intercultural education requires a solid ethical and moral dimension, which is personal and social before it is political and administrative; only when the consciousness of inviolable human rights of individual men and citizens emerges from below is it possible to organise action in terms of educational choices, in order to avoid the diffusion of racism and prejudices that only aim to defend the interests of the few with respect to those of a community.

Alleman-Ghionda has argued for a long time that «according to a certain number of empirical research projects, there is no country of the European Union where scholastic structures and curricula have been reformed or renewed in such a way as to correspond to the pedagogical ideals of an intercultural education which is aware of otherness»<sup>9</sup>. The intercultural approach concentrates on difference, which necessarily implies respect and interest towards plurilingualism, and frequently conflicts with the doctrines, myths and pedagogical and educational activities which are customarily found in an educational institution. The objectives to pursue, then, must be the capacity to live with pluralism, openness to dialogue, the will to meet and communicate, in a perspective that sees identities as in continual evolution. This is an undeniable, universal assumption of modern societies. We are doubtless faced by a universal renewal, which will necessitate, first of all, a change in *forma mentis*. Indeed, Cambi specifies, the development of a new *forma mentis*, which goes beyond belonging, predisposed to put a high value on dialogue and collaboration will be necessary. Such changes require preparatory work, both in the deepest parts of each individual and in collective life. Cambi, in fact, speaks of «pluralism, of integrated and dialectic socialisation, of identities that are neither dogmatic nor self-sufficient»<sup>10</sup>. Remembering the term separation, this can partly be traced to Casamassima's assertion regarding immigrants of Muslim religion, since «Once they have arrived in our places, whoever belongs to the Islamic faith obeys our rules, our laws, our customs. However, they are not able to accept our culture, because this would imply a blasphemous contamination, which leads us to the problem of the Islamic world: modernity»<sup>11</sup>. From this point of view, the factor in question is not just the essence of empathy itself, but principally its function as a support to possible integration. The focus of pedagogical reflection on the topic of integration will position itself more and more between the ability to efficiently manage migratory policies and that of constructing solid links between the territory and the institutions, in support of integration policies, overcoming prejudices and ethno-centric resistances. In this regard, Fiorucci explains, decisively, that «The current difficulties of integration policies, like their possible future outcomes, are closely connected with the capacity to govern this complex process of economic, demographic, cultural and more generally social transformation that we have seen over the last twenty years. [...]. The capacity to develop a culture of welcome and of integration in terms of social equity, aware of the migratory experience and of the

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<sup>8</sup> Ivi, p. 30.

<sup>9</sup> C. Allemann-Ghionda, *Educazione per tutti, diversità e inclusione: prospettive Internazionali*, in Corsi M., a cura di, *La ricerca pedagogica in Italia tra innovazione e internazionalizzazione*, Pensa MultiMedia, Lecce 2014, p.1.

<sup>10</sup> F. Cambi, *Incontro e dialogo. Prospettive della pedagogia interculturale*, Carocci, Roma 2006, p.11.

<sup>11</sup> Cfr. P. Casamassima, *L'integrazione non esiste*, «Corriere della sera», 23 gennaio 2016.

turbulent and flexible transformations in postfordist society will become the foundation stone on which to base the future of our democracy»<sup>12</sup>.

Fiorucci's contribution helps draw attention to the concept of integration in its connection to that of social equity, which in its turn raises two fundamental principles within the life of a democracy: respect for law and for rules, which are unequivocal and shared, and equality of opportunity, reinforced by solidarity. In our humble opinion, without a minimal focus on axiology, and on the crisis that it is currently undergoing in the contemporary period, without awareness of the most elementary of human rights, it is impossible to construct a common platform of interaction with otherness, with its world, its culture and its essential values. In fact, the fundamental error on which commonplace mediatic campaigns are based, regards otherness understood in its monocultural sense; it regards only the extra EU immigrant of black skin, when, from a humanitarian point of view, all of Us are potentially others for those who do not know us, or who know us only superficially. We are a source of difference, in antithesis to the potential Them, inasmuch as we are the bearers of thoughts, spiritual beliefs, sentiments and sexual, cultural and existential orientations; which is why it is necessary to participate. To participate, in order to overcome obstacles which draw their origins from our own consciousness, first of all, rather than from the undoubted difficulties we face of a contingent nature. To succeed in managing these factors will be the true challenge to education and to democracy.

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<sup>12</sup> M. Fiorucci, *Integrazione, educazione e mediazione interculturale*, in A. Mariani, editors, *Venticinque saggi di pedagogia*, Franco Angeli, Milano 2012, p. 159.

# Европа и педагогическая проблема межкультурного взаимодействия: знание и личное участие за пределами утопии

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Данная статья посвящена решению лингвометодических проблем (содержание, формы, исследования и методическое обеспечения), которые связаны с законами становления и развития двуязычия среди дагестанских школьников. Второй язык формируется в процессе преподавания русского языка как неродного в дошкольном и начальном образовании.

**Ключевые слова:** социальная и языковая ситуация, модели образовательных организаций, двуязычное образование.

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