

## **A modern political education. Nonviolent perspectives**

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**Abstract.** *The article deals with a nonviolent perspective of political education and with some theories that may conjugate these two domains: Nonviolent Culture and Political Education. Methodologically an approach rooted in the theoretical and bibliographical research has been privileged. The discourse investigates the causes of the actual political disaffection, and follows the purpose to highlight the irrevocable role of a structured nonviolent perspective (like Gandhi's one), in the rehabilitation of politics. Nonviolence does not remove Marxist elements of legitimation in their entirety – as Gramsci's theory will highlight – provided that they correspond the “conquest of violence” that needs to succeed first and foremost in the “intimate” individual's awareness. Moreover, the importance of contemporary ecological theories, which embed the nonviolent perspective in a general epistemological view, will be also discussed to reaffirm the crucial significance of the latter. Through this path, different authors, hailing from diverse backgrounds, such as philosophical, pedagogical and anthropological studies, show meaningful affinities and matching points, presenting, in some case, political education in terms of education and training of the “political emotions”. The reflection highlights the relevance of an expanded political participation and experimentation through praxis, as ways of an actual political education, in the belief that emphasizing the pedagogic dimension of political activity, means nothing less than searching for its deepest fundament.*

**Keywords:** *political education, nonviolence, Antonio Gramsci, Gandhi, Martha Nussbaum.*

Since a democratic society repudiates the principle of external authority, it must find a substitute in voluntary disposition and interest; these can be created only by education. But there is a deeper explanation. A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint commu-

nicated experience. The extension in space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own, is equivalent to the breaking down of those barriers of class, race and national territory

which kept men from perceiving the full import of their activity<sup>1</sup>.

### Introductory Themes

The ongoing relationship between citizens and politics and political engagement is a very difficult issue. There are signs of disengagement, unmotivation, rage and distrust, spread all through the Western countries and beyond. The so called “moral question” expands in different situations and territories, from national parliaments to municipal administrations and has become in some countries *the main political question*, its key-issue.

However, a rapid look at the young people’s attitudes toward politics (which are important for the understanding of a whole society’s inclination), could make us partially change our minds. According to a statistic study referred to 2004<sup>2</sup>, when the highest political application by youth in *twenty years* was recorded, the juvenile attitude had not always been characterized by disaffection and disengagement, but rather by an unavailability towards traditional forms of political activity, such as party work and administration, and the tendency to avoid mandate and to direct participation at democratic life.

So, the question is: Isn’t there a need to shift our view? To move further on from our crystallized look at the 1980’s, where after decades of political enthusiasm, we discovered an ebb that seeped in all social experiences? Politics and political expe-

rience are dimensions that carry a big contradiction: from the inner political apathy (*qualunquismo*, which means, disguised as its opposite, the greatest indifference towards the “human destiny”), to the most authentic sense of responsibility, which, according to Hans Jonas is total and continuous and concerns the human being towards the younger generation.

Investigating the most important philosophical roots of the Western political thought, it is possible to discover the tight link between the care of oneself and political engagement<sup>3</sup>; this intuition, which we owe to Socrates, though, has gone lost in the further development of the Western civilization, while it has become, on the contrary, a major focus in Gandhi’s view. Gandhi has shown the inner connection between man, animal, nature, regarded as a whole system, while in occidental philosophy, we can find, as for instance in Heidegger’s existentialism, the three dimensions of the “care of oneself”, “care of others” and “care of the world”. In the second half of the XX century, some scholars showed a more integrated perspective. An ecological paradigm, for example, would make it clear how mind, self and society are intertwined; in this *Weltanschauung*, every act of care towards the system is an act of care towards the tiniest part of it, including the individual.

There is no automatism in the relationship between nonviolence and political ideology and action. An out fashioned but important study of Joan

Bondurant, also dealing with the question of the political translation of Gandhi's nonviolence, shows how Gandhi refused to classify himself through an ideology and how nonviolence can somehow go beyond political distinctions. Yet, nonviolent thought and action open a whole new path for politics:

Gandhi did not proceed from any specific political ideology, and yet the significance, for political theory, of his action on the practical field of politics, is inestimable. The contribution has been not alone to the development of a social and political method. It extends further into the realm of political thought and challenges the substantial presuppositions of the mainstream of political theory.<sup>4</sup>

We believe that, even if nonviolence doesn't proceed from any specific ideology, as Bondurant claims, it can certainly approach a socialist, progressive view, as the ideologies with common aims and mission. Nevertheless, the Gandhian philosophy of conflict adds a new quality to the political perspective.

First of all, there is, in Gandhi, no real separation between the political, the philosophical and the religious domain: all of them surround man and nature and are characterized by the unity of ends and means<sup>5</sup>. Traditional political theory tended up to divide, something what Satyagraha, in an uneasy and painful task, wants to reconcile. Reconciliation is a keyword for nonviolence, but it is not to be intended as a simple pacification

or compromise; Gandhian dialectic struggles to resolve conflicts in an effort to bring them on a higher level, making the opponents perceive a new meaning of the circumstances of their origin. Especially this point has to do with confronting with power in an unpredictable (somewhat "un-political") way<sup>6</sup>.

Exactly because of this new opening and openness, nonviolent thought lends to political theory and action, fully touching its unalienable utopian dimension, it has changed for good our idea of democracy and democratic life (even if nonviolent principles are, in reality, more than ever disregarded) and must lead and accompany a modern political education.

Hannah Arendt offers a fundamental contribution in her understanding of the meaning of the essential human activities, describing in *Vita activa. The Human Condition* the political dimension of the human being as a quality of language, namely the active, per-formative character of it, which has already become an issue of another scholar who was deeply influenced by Arendt's work like Judith Butler. The philosopher had developed the per-formative nature of language especially in the shaping of gender oriented acts. For H. Arendt – a thought, which had been carried through by her acolytes – human beings are intrinsically plural and in a condition of co-habitation<sup>7</sup>: this are the authentic reasons that lie on the base of an actual conception of peace and multiculturalism.

It seems to us, that while political culture and a culture of politics as a value touch a bottom of depreciation, by the other hand many search for its ethical roots, finding them lying close to its foundation and essence. All this, though, leaves the question unanswered upon the educational ways to spread out the fore mentioned notions in the society and its institutions and groups and it explains the need for a pedagogical confrontation with this subject.

### **Hints on Marxism and Nonviolence**

A. Gramsci developed a particular point of view on the relationship between society and education. Moving from a Marxist perspective, which assigns a major weight on economic balances of power in shaping all social dimensions, he developed an idea of education, culture and cultural action as structural and not super-structural dimensions. Gramsci laid the focus on the *pedagogic* organization of workers, who would be led by “organic intellectuals” to develop what the Author called a “counter-hegemonic” movement.

According to the Italian author, workers and people belonging to the socially underlying classes should master the hegemonic class’s culture – thing that reflects the big importance assigned to school and school education – in order to elaborate their own cultural synthesis. In Gramsci’s *utopia*, it would be this cultural

movement to carry the politic one, changing the real work relationships and the power balances.

Gramsci believed in the educational task of the “factory councils” (*consiglio di fabbrica*) as spaces of cultural elaboration, moreover, his pedagogical perspective included the view of an *educating society*, in which every institution or association takes part of the pedagogical processes<sup>8</sup>.

Although this author has not been immediately linked to a nonviolent perspective and has been, on the contrary, mainly affiliated to different interpretation schools (especially for his claims upon the pacifist movement<sup>9</sup>), we would draw attention on some points, possibly leading back Gramsci’s thoughts to a general, non-violent conception. Among this issues there can be recalled his position on the way the working class should have carried through its conflict against the owners: the scholar conceived the idea of the “war of position” (*guerra di posizione*) instead of a traditional “war of manoeuvre” (*guerra di movimento*). As some authors suggest, the two different kind of struggle can also be seen as two different phases of the class struggle; in this piece, we point out especially Gramsci’s focus on the war of position as a slow – not open but submerged – conflict, which consists in the step-by-step infiltration of capitalist structures and institutions by people, ideas, claims, linked with the underlying classes<sup>10</sup>.

Moreover, Gramsci, inspired by a Leninist principle, thought of war, meant specifically as military opposition, as something that does merely advantage the capitalist and thoroughly exploit the working class, since it provides richness for the first ones and misery for the second.

Finally, the whole Gramscian perspective – that makes it so deeply influential in education – is built upon the primacy of ethic, pedagogic and cultural characters of the class struggle and the aspects that are part of a more traditional Marxist view of the revolutionary conflict appear to be shoved to the edge. All in all, the tools the scholar thought were needed by popular workers against the bourgeoisie, could all be brought back to the specific means of nonviolent resistance, more than to the blood spreading means represented by the Soviet Revolution of 1917.

The fore mentioned interpretation of the links between Gramsci's view and nonviolence could be criticized for being somewhat reductive, bringing back nonviolence to a mere non war situation, which we are aware is an unauthentic understanding of nonviolence. Nonviolence, as we know, doesn't describe an absence of physical violence, more than it describes a tendency to rework physical, moral and psychological violence underlying the conflicts spread through all different components of society, into an organic resolution view. It has to be considered, though, how Gramsci's perspective precedes an events-rich century, in which mankind has been

confronted with the destruction of two World Wars, of the holocaust and of other genocides. The Twentieth Century has seen big tragedies (not newly in human history, but certainly new for their cosmic features and internationalization) and at the same time the spreading of a renewed global consciousness, represented by the constitution of organizations like the United Nations. The percept not to kill, even if constantly disregarded, has received new life-blood by the dissemination of the Gandhi perspective and other pacifist movements.

The nonviolent thought did focus especially on the idea that the overcoming of the enemy should have been replaced by the overcoming of the point of contention through the moving on of the involved subjects. In some way, there is always a tight relationship between opponents, whose definition of identity depends from their position in the conflict, but this tight relationship should become the nourishment to move farther and reconsider its own placement<sup>11</sup>. This is a very important spot in P. Freire's theory as he points out the leaning of the oppressed to "host" the oppressor in himself, having internalized the latter as his only true model. The process of *conscientization* doesn't leave the oppressor to himself, but includes him, in a radically changed position, in a new world's perspective. This process, in other words, saves the oppressor as well as the oppressed<sup>12</sup>.

In his Oeuvre, Gramsci never really describes the intention of dele-

ting bourgeoisie in the sense of eliminating its members, but in the sense of removing the historic role of it and, thus, making bourgeoisie disappears as a class. Defining as one of the working class's tasks the mastering of the hegemonic class's culture, he approaches somewhat the nonviolent perspective in an idea of melting and mediation, more than in an issue of breaking and rip. This is a point, in Gramsci's thought, that can be represented as an anticipatory intuition of a more complex idea that would emerge later in the century, upon which the same author couldn't have a clear consciousness, for historic reasons, and that would surface in the view of scholars like A. Capitini and what he did represent for an Italian way towards nonviolence.

### **Into the nonviolent perspective**

Aldo Capitini had been defined "The Italian Gandhi" for his relevance in this country's perspective of nonviolence. His thought does not only carry implications for nonviolent theory, but also for his expressed interest for political education. It would be an uneasy task to give an account of his whole political view, even in a synthetic way, in particular because his perspective is signally interlaced and organic: It can hardly be represented as political, philosophical or pedagogic. It belongs to all the mentioned fields and goes even beyond them.

Capitini believed in an open society, led by the complete openness (*apertura*) to all beings; his conception of *compresenza*, which could be translated into "being present with and to others", describes the complete interaction of all beings: humans, animals, earth, the ones who ceased living, the ones who still live, in every condition, may it be the most precarious and marginalized. On a political level, the com-presence found expression in the original idea of "omnicracy" (*omnicrazia*), as a way to radically redistribute power in the human assembly and its articulations.

Capitini founded and experimented ways (the hint is mainly on *Centri di Orientamento Sociale*), through which people would be allowed to participate to administrative, social and political life by letting the aspects of their all-day life surface in all their political dignity. In this process, Capitini, did no less than shape a political education model: He stated that he was no longer sure as if COS were to be meant as political participation means or as educational structures; Was the main objective to condition a central power through the needs and applications of the popular classes, or to *learn* a way to be part of their own community<sup>13</sup>?

We believe that the latter meaning of Capitini's social work, which is not detached from the whole body of his thought, is the most significant and timely suggestion in order to construct a modern civic and political education, in a way we will explore in the further parts of the text. Of

great importance is also the conception of the educational institutions – above all, school – as democratic *centers*, that mirror, in their inner structure, a model of *open communities*, in which students exercise and learn political participation<sup>14</sup>.

The reference on this thinker's thought might show how a definition of political education, and even more of civic education, can't be shaped without resorting to a nonviolent thought. Even if we know all too well how political conflicts use and abuse violence in its many features, politics in itself and in its original definition arises to conquer violence in canalizing its forces into redistributing processes.

There has been many writings and essays on the connection between education and politics in Freire's work, so we will not try to recollect its main features, but only recall how Freire's pedagogy is openly and deeply political<sup>15</sup>. Firstly, in the sense that it is aimed at achieving a kind of conscientization that makes an individual aware of the balances and disparity of power they are living in; moreover, in the sense that in his oeuvre Freire stresses liberation through the uniting of people in a community.

Can Freire be thought of as a nonviolent author? While an answer to this kind of question is blatantly clear by Capitini, not the same can be said for the Brazilian pedagogue. Though, Freire has been considered – especially by his pupils and supporters – worth receiving the Nobel prize for Peace and at a nearer observation,

as already noted, all his pedagogy focuses on how to overcome conflicts without eliminating adversaries.

What is possibly more interesting in his theory, as for the shaping of a model for a modern political education, is the tight connection between *learning and education*. This topic in Freire's view has been, interestingly, not often acknowledged by scholars, or at least not as much as the mere political dimension of his thought. That one, elaborated as critical pedagogy, became in the Eighties and Nineties a leading pedagogical approach for some important authors such as Henry Giroux, Peter McLaren and others, but the more epistemological side of his theory has been somewhat neglected, except for some scholars such as Mezirow. What is it about? Freire showed clearly what scholars found out since millenniums but rarely had been represented in such a bright example: the fact that learning processes never take place in a political and social vacuum and that they involve persons in their whole being, in their "reading the word and the world"; that is, even such a basic and *elementary* learning process like literacy.

For Freire (who recognized that Gramsci's thought had influenced him before he even knew his writings<sup>16</sup>), it was not much of a question to distinguish a technical from a humanistic or a political education. This point seems to us very important, because it gives us an insight on a format in which political education should or could be organized in modern society.

Particularly interesting for our issue seem to be the deeply ecological conceptions, such as Gregory Bateson's. In some articulations of this scholar's theories (which are philosophical, psychological, anthropological, sociological), he appears to have somehow assimilated theories of Gandhian origin on an epistemological level: Embracing these theories leads to the thought of the total interdependence of the system and the systems. Empiricism and Dewey already proposed the idea of the immanence of mind but now, according to Bateson, the new scientific and philosophical findings, especially in the field of cybernetics, assert this immanence as a matter of fact<sup>17</sup>.

Dewey, in particular, was concerned with the critics of the dualistic philosophies. He showed the historic evolution of thinking through which the individual self-detaches himself from a general intelligence:

The identification of the mind with the individual self and of the latter with a private psychic consciousness is comparatively modern. In both the Greek and medieval periods, the rule was to regard the individual as a channel through which a universal and divine intelligence operated. The individual was in no true sense the knower; the knower was the "Reason" which operated through him<sup>1,8</sup>

For Dewey, the individual, in a progressive society, must regain a place among the general traditional beliefs, but also in no way be considered as an isolated entity.

Especially this latter point is stressed by Bateson and it bears great importance for our discourse: Overcoming the dualism between body and mind, it leads to conceive the interconnection of the individual and the system not only on a physical and organic basis, but also on a mental and moral basis; It tells us that we are constantly related to everyone and everything else, even in what we consider our very own: Our mental identity; Since, although it exists as a single entity, it is related to a greater, general Mind<sup>19</sup>.

In this same context, the individual learning, knowing and thinking can be thought of as a tool of self-adjustment and adaptation of the systems. This means that we constantly *learn* to adapt our microsystems to the general systems; political learning and education can be observed as improving the efficiency of the society, as to mend its gaps and lack of democracy.

But all this reflection could seem to remain in a mere deterministic level of thought, in which there is no place for the autonomous and creative play of the single person; On the opposite, Bateson often stresses creativity as the typical human (even if not *only* human) response to the demands of an ecological cosmos. At the same time the existence of interpretation, as the very own way of knowing of the individual, makes sure that the single movement of thinking, learning, knowing and acting differs, if only minimally, from the other. Moreover, no less interest can



be found in the principle of a human intervention that doesn't alter the system's homeostasis, nor in the direction of other living beings (humans and animals) nor in the direction of the living environment (nature), which leads us back to environmental and nonviolent education.

### **Actual issues**

Seeing the difficulties that emerged during the last decades in the relationship between citizens and politics some suggested that the essence *and* the image of politics should undergo a big change. The main problem – as M. C. Nussbaum argues – is the «silent crisis» of all world's societies relative to the loss of human values in the administrative and political action and the stress around profit as the only remaining landmark<sup>20</sup>. In that sense, what really makes political activity seem far to citizens is the fact that it *is* far, since its aim is no longer the public good. This distorted conception of political essence bears also effects on the evaluating of what public good really is. The only employed measure is the P.N.L. rate, that can't genuinely include a true well-being of a certain population: Initially, because a mere numerical calculation, as we all know, can overlook big economic gaps that exist in the same social group under examination; Later, because economic standards emphasize certain aspects of wellness but completely neglect others, that are, nonetheless, highly predictive for a life quality.

A profit-oriented society and its administration products several victims: The first one is education, since all financing and investment is devoted to other aims, such as plainly economic and/or military advances. This fact could be read more than as a mere carelessness of education, as an orienting of it towards economic aims<sup>21</sup>, while some scholars believe that education should be intended in its integrated dimensions, aimed at promoting the whole human development. Meanwhile, several more radical authors, like Henry Giroux, speak of a real «war on youth», growing in the Western societies, that consists in the economic (disinvestment in public education) and symbolic (surrendering educational values) depreciation of young people<sup>2.2</sup>.

A society disinvesting in public education, neglects on one hand democracy in all its aspects, not fulfilling its main principles of equal opportunities and creating poor critical sense; and causes on the other hand the use of violence to face internal and international conflicts, as it seems clear enough that the major world conflicts depend on a big deal of irreducible economic interests.

The profit-oriented education and instruction system marginalizes humanities as worthless, denying the importance of imagination and creativity, but also of human attachment, devotion and compassion, a whole pedagogic tradition that from Socrates reaches to Dewey, to Gandhi and Tagore, by whom Nussbaum seems continuously inspired.

Even more interesting, for our subject, is Nussbaum's idea of the education of political emotions: What is political education, if not a meaningful balance of a human's most essential emotions? A young child – writes the author – lives constantly between the feelings of omnipotence and total dependence towards their caring adults. If their environment isn't able to put some boundaries on both of these feelings, the child may grow up either as a totally unsure or shy adult or as a self-centered, narcissistic person. Indian culture can teach some precious points upon this subject, such as the Gandhian idea that the «conquest of violence» has to succeed previously inside the individual and can only that way become a political habit. Such internal conquest leads the way to the achievement of empathy and moral sense, that aren't synonymous, but qualities that complete one another: This intuition, that brings emotional and political education very close, seems to us a poignant peak in Nussbaum's theory, referring to which she speaks of education aimed, at the same time, at the individual and at the situation<sup>23</sup>.

The theory of the need of humanities in democracy can be compared with other ideas, which developed in other historical circumstances: E. C. Lindeman, who can be looked at as a key-author in respect of the question politics-education and who draws directly from Dewey's thought, understands science as the crucial human tool to gain power. This exercise, though, has its limits, since:

Man succeeds in accommodating himself and his purposes to the order of nature, by means to adjustment *to* and *with*, not against natural processes. Human nature is itself a part of the order of nature and cannot escape its naturalness.<sup>24</sup>

In the moment Lindeman recognizes how instrumental science is for human progress, in the field that is most interesting for him and for us: Faith in intelligence, creativity, critical sense, in the same time he sees how this exercise has to be limited in order to maintain that same authentic progress. Especially, science can lead the human being to overlook the most important aspect of dealing with power:

No human being can safely be trusted with power until he has learned how to exercise power over himself<sup>25</sup> and this is a task in which the scientific perspective in itself appears to be insufficient and it needs to give in to a more integrated look, although the writing we previously mentioned shows how far we still are from that consciousness.

Finally, we would point out another American philosopher's position, like Judith Butler, with whom Nussbaum started a controversy, maybe denying the true aims of her speech. Butler's conception is one of an intellectual who doesn't "stand still" and although dealing with difficult and specialized texts, constantly seeks the way to join the public opinion, without reducing the significance of the writings they comment. This is a task that political

education, in which understanding different contexts and different subject matters is always implied, can't do without.

Moreover, Butler, highlights the actual crucial problem of dealing with violence and responding to violence without becoming violent. This question is set by the philosopher on a perspective which is more than just individual, but extends on a social, cultural and historical level: On hand of a survey of different authors, who can be seen as connected to the same cultural roots, she shows how collective memory can be relived in order to observe other communities dramas in their real features and to gain a more human and authentic perspective of it<sup>26</sup>.

### **Towards an ending: participation, experimentation, praxis; ways of political education**

As observed, it is pivotal to regain the ethical and educational roots of political theory and action, accomplishing a deep reaction against the distortion of politics. It is a reaction that seldom finds productive ways to represent itself and often remains an act of depreciation that lacks of a positive perspective.

The centrality of humanities in the political domain, as a way to snatch it from an all technical and also plain economic dimension, crosses the subjects and the scholars' thoughts, confronted in our text, well before its

latter formulation, and is already shown in some versions of the late XIX and early XX century, on which we have previously got a closer look. Politics is a human activity that supposes some degree of control by the human being over the processes he is involved in; In that sense, politics always strives for autonomy from any other domain and is – in its ideal form – irreducible to any of them. This points out the modernity of Gramsci's by dialectical materialism influenced view: It visualizes a human being that creates his history in cooperation with other human beings, an aspect remaining at the core of any proposal of political education.

As we have tried to expose, there cannot be any authentic political education outside of a nonviolent perspective, not just out of a mere historical point of view, but because the reverse gear should concern exactly an actual political scenario, where the uncovered logics of power are at the bottom of a brutal explosion of violence. Thus, nonviolence constitutes ends and means of a political education intended as an autonomous, personal and critical path, made up of individual and collective, formal and informal experiences.

On hand of the theories sketched, we have implied a sort of political instruction that grows out of the people's all day life: Workers organizing themselves in councils, where the questions of their power relationships are discussed; Citizens meeting in given spaces and times to discuss

questions of the civic life and administration; Peasant laborers encountering to achieve literacy. These activities have a meaning in themselves, in their closest aims, but they have also enormously wider aims of symbolic, social, political and existential nature. This has been showed by Freire, regarding the latter example, in a particularly clear way. He pointed out that in the process of learning to read and write words, this same words gain a wider, richer, new meaning, and that individuals see themselves in a new relationship to these words and the concepts they imply.

It becomes possible to enlighten the idea of *praxis* in the suggested direction: Not as mere activism but as a way to work out life experiences in a manner that comes out to be politically educational. Praxis mustn't be confused with practice, since it requires a more complex combination of reflection, action and *critical distance*. The stress that recently, especially in the field of adult education and in all issues regarding adult learners, is put on the idea of validating competences, could be thought of as a way to promote the culture and the knowledge of the socially disadvantaged people, in order to enhance their political weight. The highlighting of individual competences is, instead, more frequently understood in its formal, professional and technical meaning, which tends to leave out the aforementioned categories.

Educators and learners – so we read – need to start from their existential situation. They then engage critically

through praxis, the obtaining of critical distance, to uncover the underlying contradictions of one's reading of the world, history, specific situations etc.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, the research about political education deals with issues of "accommodation and resistance", and, as P. Sissel writes:

To think politically is to think critically about how we negotiate, accommodate, or resist hegemonic structures, frameworks, and practices<sup>28</sup>.

We also believe that an important part of the educational processes under observation, often neglected and erroneously labeled as opposed to them, is, like it was mentioned before, the education of "political emotions", the enhancing of one's most relational, caring and social feelings such as solidarity, compassion, community. The principles we have indicated, like the education of social and political emotions, an active and at the same time reflective attitude, the gaining of critical distance, seem to completely overshadow the issues of formal political education, such as civic training for adults and youth, in school or extra-school contexts. In fact, all this necessarily belongs to the experience we're talking about, but can be effective and avoid the destiny of being merely formalistic, if not directly hypocrite, or worst, covertly violent, only under the features we've mentioned before, that should be seen as *necessary conditions*.

Hence, political education develops through exercise and experi-

mentation, through the joining of Dewey's pedagogical principle of "learning by doing" and forms of "community participation"<sup>29</sup>. A big part of political education grows out of an individual's consciousness of his capability in solving life problems that have a social resonance and since the human condition is a plural one, in its essence – as Arendt argued – there can be no separation between

politics and life. Participation alone can conquer or at least reduce the gap between masses and political class and this for two reasons: First, the debate upon issues takes the place of the bare parliamentary mandate; Second: political exercise produces politics "recovery" in the sense that it embodies the essential values of its human core.

## Note

<sup>1</sup> John Dewey, *Democracy and Education. An Introduction to the Philosophy of Education*, The Free Press, New York (NY), 1997, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> Deborah De Luca, "Giovani divisi fuori e dentro la politica", in *Rapporto Giovani. Sesta indagine dell'istituto Iard sulla condizione giovanile in Italia*, C. Buzzi, A. Cavalli, A. de Lillo (coord), Il Mulino, Bologna, 2007, pp. 289-299.

<sup>3</sup> Luigina Mortari, "Agire con le parole", in *Educare alla cittadinanza partecipata*, in L. Mortari (coord.), Bruno Mondadori, Milan, 2008, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Joan V. Bondurant, *Conquest of Violence. The Gandhian Philosophy of Conflict*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N J, 1988, p. 189.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 230.

<sup>6</sup> Mohandas K. Gandhi, *La resistenza nonviolenta*, Newton & Compton, Rome, 2000, pp. 19-45.

<sup>7</sup> Hannah Arendt, *Vita activa. La condizione umana*, Bompiani, Milan, 2011, pp. 21-57.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Mayo, *Gramsci, Freire e l'educazione degli adulti*, Carlo Delfino, Sassari, 2007, pp. 60-68.

<sup>9</sup> Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, V. Gerratana (coord.), Einaudi, Turin, 2007, pp. 748, 1775.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 1614-1615; 1566-1567.

<sup>11</sup> Judith Butler, *Parting Ways. Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2012.

<sup>12</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogia do oprimido*, Rio de Janeiro, Paz e Terra, 1987, pp. 30-44.

<sup>13</sup> Aldo Capitini, *Educazione aperta 1*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze, 1967, pp. 253-267.

<sup>14</sup> Gabriella Falcicchio, *I figli della festa. Educazione e liberazione in Aldo Capitini*, Levante, Bari, 2009, pp. 132-140.

<sup>15</sup> Paulo Freire, *Politics and Education*, UCLA Latin American Center Publications, Los Angeles, 1998, p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Peter Mayo, *Gramsci, Freire e l'educazione ...*, p. 25.

<sup>17</sup> Gregory Bateson, *Verso un'ecologia della mente*, translated by Giuseppe Longo and Giuseppe Trautteur, Adelphi, Milan, 1977, p. 363.

<sup>18</sup> John Dewey, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>19</sup> "Which many call God", states the author: Gregory Bateson, *op. cit.*, p. 502.

- <sup>20</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *Not for Profit. Why Democracy Needs the Humanities*, Princeton University Press, Princeton N.J., 2010, pp. 1, 2.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 13-26.
- <sup>22</sup> [http://www.henryagiroux.com/online\\_articles.htm](http://www.henryagiroux.com/online_articles.htm).
- <sup>23</sup> Martha C. Nussbaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-46.
- <sup>24</sup> Elena Marescotti, *Il significato dell'educazione degli adulti di E. C. Lindeman. Un classico dalle molteplici sfaccettature*, Anicia, Roma, 2013, p. 146.
- <sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 154.
- <sup>26</sup> Judith Butler, *op. cit.*
- <sup>27</sup> Peter Mayo, "Learning with Adults: The Role of Practice in The Formation of Adults", *Concept*, Vol. 5, No. 3, Winter 2014, p. 2.
- <sup>28</sup> Peggy A. Sissel, "Thinking Politically: A Framework for Adult and Continuing Education", in *Understanding and Negotiating the Political Landscape of Adult Education*, C. A. Hansman, P. A. Sissel (coord.), John Wiley & Sons, NY, 2001, p. 10.
- <sup>29</sup> Luigina Mortari, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57.

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