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Philosophical Inquiry and Education 'through' Democracy

Promoting Cosmopolitan and Inclusive Societies

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ABSTRACT: *This paper takes its cue from one question, addressed through an educational lens: what could be the inspiring principles of a new democratic narrative to oppose the seductions of counter- and pseudo-narratives deeply undermining the very idea of democracy? The starting point of the argument is the hypothesis that the promotion of a cosmopolitan and inclusive society is a way to actualize the 20th century project of education oriented to democracy. This calls for a profound re-thinking of educational devices and practices. In this scenario, by espousing and elaborating on some ideas of the Philosophy for Children approach, we argue that the community of philosophical inquiry may be conducive to the cultivation of a 'cosmopolitanly' 'complex' thinking, which, by integrating critical, creative and caring dimensions, contributes to developing inclusive attitudes and caring habits towards oneself, others and the living world.*

KEYWORDS: *Philosophy for Children, Democracy, Educational cosmopolitanism, Inclusion, Caring thinking*

Introduction

In this paper, taking seriously the challenges of an era of 'post democracy' (Crouch, 2004), we explore the possibility of defining a new and different vision of democracy (§ 1), inspired and sustained by a cosmopolitan understanding of the world, construed in terms of an inclusive view of the society we live

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in (§ 2) and of a recognition of the presence of diverse cultural and existential backgrounds and a need for a sustainable approach to the resources we make use of (§ 3).

Cosmopolitanism, inclusion and sustainability are not, however, neutral concepts and, while being vehicles of 'immediate' hopes to counter pessimistic and even apocalyptic views of the future, they need a 'complex mediation' to animate the practices of human co-existence. Moreover, this complexity should be inflected in three dimensions (critical, creative and caring), to adopt the vocabulary of Matthew Lipman (2003), an author whose pedagogical project will play a major role in our argumentation.

Thus, in order to access and appropriate a different democratic imagery and a 'tool-box' to 'do democracy', we need pedagogical 'mediators' that operationalize, in the actual lived experience of youth, the discourses *about* democracy. We will suggest that the community of philosophical inquiry, according to the *Philosophy for Children* approach, could represent this pedagogical mediator (see §§ 2 and 3). Thereby, as argued elsewhere (Biggeri and Santi, 2012), democracy can turn into the real 'factor of conversion' that is available in communities in order to nurture the 'well-being' and 'well-becoming' of the life projects of each and every one.

1. Educating for or through democracy?

Within our 'globalized' world, economic and political tensions are strongly contributing to the development of an increasingly more influential narrative of democratic education (Hoskins, 2008), which has significant points of contact with other emerging narratives of inclusive education (Booth and Ainscow, 2002; Oliver, 1990; 1996) and intercultural education (Faas, Hajsoteriou and Angelides, 2013).

In this scenario, it is interesting to explore the role played by educational discourses and practices in the cultivation of democratic values and in the portrayal of a democratic society according to models that must be constantly re-defined and re-narrated (Benhabib, 2009).

It seems therefore useful to 'decolonize' the educational discourse regarding democratic education, by taking into account the different and unique educa-

tional platforms and relationships, which respond to specific forms of understanding, survival, sustainability and intergenerational growth in connection to specific local structures and civic communities (Abdi and Richardson, 2008) but also the world as a whole.

In this horizon, a priority for the survival itself of democratic communities and of democracy as a still challenging aspiration is a heuristic priority (all the more urgent in our pseudo-democracies, often already experienced as 'post-' even before having consummated their own agony): it is the priority of exploring the different interpretations of democratic education in the contemporary debate, where two options confront each other, 'education *for* democracy' and 'education *through* democracy' (Biesta, 2007). The distinction of these two interpretive trajectories is often blurred, although they refer to two different views of the democratic ideal and of educational institutions where democracy can thrive.

The advocates of 'education for democracy' (following a neo-liberal frame of reference) ground their vision of the educational task in an understanding of democracy mostly as a procedural and political form of civic life and government based on specific norms and rules; accordingly, the role of education is that of promoting the acquisition of specific knowledge and competences to sustain political engagement, connecting democratic education mainly to civic education (Bahmuller and Patrick, 1999; Himmelmann, 2002; Gotthard and Schiele, 2002; Sutor, 2002).

Within this framework, we can also acknowledge the guidelines of the Council of Europe, which are mainly focused on the acquisition of clearly identifiable competences and skills for democracy (CE, 2010; 2012; 2016).

On the other hand, the advocates of 'education through democracy' propose a 'moral' and educational vision of democracy, viewed (referring to a Deweyan understanding) as a form of associated life and as a collective practice, thus sustaining the necessity of a pedagogical framework to support educational processes aimed at promoting a wide democratic awareness as well as the development of democratic mindsets (Beutel and Fauser, 2007; Biesta, 2007; Chzehen, 2013).

According to this framework, democratic education should promote the development of democratic attitudes and habits (in a Deweyan sense) which will eventually sustain different forms of civic agency and social interaction.

Dewey pointed out how «the greatest problem of democracy» was to succeed in «bringing about an effective socialization of intelligence» (Dewey, 1985: 365-66) and highlighted the need to create educational spaces within which the coming generations may learn to «understand the social forces that are at work, the directions and the cross-directions in which they are moving, the consequences that they are producing, the consequences that they might produce if they were understood and managed with intelligence» (Dewey, 1987: 183).

As a consequence, schools must be organized to sustain the development of reflective thought through inquiry-based learning as well as through the possibility of allowing the reflective encounter with different approaches, attitudes, beliefs, and ideas in order to develop a democratic frame of mind.

Dewey's vision of democracy and democratic education has been explored and discussed within current political, social and philosophical debate, where deliberative and dialogical views of democracy (Guttman, 1998; 1999; Young, 2002) call for the acquisition and development of communicative and deliberative attitudes and competences. Conversely, scholars promoting more 'radical' concepts of democracy (see Laclau and Mouffe, 1985) highlight the need to cultivate spaces for discussion and debate, fostering critical engagement and participation (Carr and Lund, 2011; Todd, 2015), as well as, in different terms, ways of 'listening' and 'recognition' (Dobson, 2014; Honneth, 1994).

Within this context, we acknowledge the emergence of a new vision of educational institutions, understood as dialogical and deliberative arenas for collaborative forms of inquiry into issues of social justice and social development, strongly connected to community needs and goals; accordingly, education becomes an opportunity to learn and participate in a lively way in the construction of collective and public discourses (Snauwert, 1993).

There is indeed a strong connection between democracy, human rights and public engagement; democratic arrangements are therefore rendered insecure by encroachments on human rights, the lack of empowerment opportunities for all, limits to participation, and poor or absent public debate. However, there are also more profound threats to democracy: political insecurity, weak or dysfunctional institutions as well as the erosion of the rule of law, poor leadership, violence, sectarianism, radicalism, extremism, terrorism, intolerance, corruption and impunity. These elements are clearly indicated in the *Guidance Note of*

the Secretary-General on Democracy and in the resolution of the United Nations *Educating for Democracy* (see UN, 2009; 2015).

This implies the necessity of fostering the capacity to think critically and to reflect on the beliefs, norms and values that ground collective life. As it mainly deals with ethical and political issues, democratic education can therefore effectively benefit from the introduction and use of philosophical, conceptual and linguistic tools (Brosio, 2000; Echeverria and Hannam, 2013).

Philosophical inquiry, in the form of a collective exploration of ethical, moral and social issues, as it is proposed in the educational approach known as Philosophy for Children (henceforth P4C; see Lipman, 2003; Lipman and Sharp, 1978) is therefore an effective educational device to educate 'through' democracy, since it offers the opportunity of being actively involved in a democratic experience of 'conversational reasoning' (Lipman, 2003), which leads to the development of democratic attitudes, habits and understandings but also to the active engagement in processes of 'ethical inquiry' grounded in a powerful exercise of 'caring' thinking skills.

In the next section, we will focus on caring thinking and, in particular, on its elective affinity with the thinking of inclusion, a fundamental axis of contemporary reflection on democracy and democratic education.

2. Philosophizing as an inclusive and democratic practice?

Caring thinking, as Matthew Lipman and Ann Sharp call it, is an essential component of 'complex thinking' (Lipman, 2003). It relies upon the dimension of listening (and, thus, it implies the ethical respect for the other) and upon the practice of dialogue (and, thus, it implies the argumentative respect for different positions). In the light of these two implications, a view of P4C as an inclusive and democratic practice might appear as unproblematic. It entails, however, a conceptual and pragmatic step worth being explored in more detail.

First of all, it is to note that caring thinking does not correspond either to the Heideggerian care or to a generally Christian charitableness (resulting in a sort of supportive attitude); it is rather closer to the 'I care' advocated by the Italian priest and educator Don Milani against the selfish individualism and in favor of a community-oriented politics. Caring thinking is a 'concerned' thinking and,

accordingly, it is addressed to the otherness in its occurring as possibility, difference, surprise, emergence, distraction, distance, but also hope or utopia. While practicing reasonableness (and reasoning on practices), this thinking preserves the critical and creative components. It is an inclusion-oriented thinking, as it is directed also to any others (to come).

The reference to *inclusion* may be itself problematic because it is such a polysemous word that it risks being destitute of any meaning capable of orienting educational action. In international documents, the term recurs insistently (but also 'opaquely') and it is taken for granted as a positive value, especially for alleged (and desirable) 'collateral effects'. Miller and Katz (2002: 147) define inclusion as «a sense of belonging: feeling respected, valued for who you are; feeling a level of supportive energy and commitment from others so that you can do your best work». While inclusion does not coincide with belonging, mutuality and fairness, these are necessary properties of it as a process countering exclusion.

In this perspective, inclusion is often presented as an emancipatory process both of single people and communities. In the UN-Volunteers (2006, ch. 2, 'Inclusion and participation') we find a list of actions to sustain inclusion, ranging from the availability of information to the possibility of participation in decision making within dialogically communicative contexts. The title of the relevant section of this international document establishes a strong connection between inclusion, participation and empowerment, thereby clarifying what fosters the process of inclusion.

In an analogous vein, in the *mission* of the UN Department for social policies and development, we find a relationship between inclusion and peace building and between them and the creation of stable, safe and just societies. This bond refers to the commitments contained in the *Declaration on Social Development* of Copenhagen in 1995 (where, however, instead of 'inclusion' the word 'integration' appears, while there is the antonym *social exclusion*). In Commitment 4, inclusive actions are called for, which maintain justice, the protection of rights, tolerance, respect, equality, solidarity and participation. Thus understood, inclusion is possible only within a broader anthropological project of education and human development aiming, on the one hand, at countering the process of exclusion resulting in marginalization and poverty; and, on the other, at promoting new opportunities of development, which Sen would call *flourishing*,

in all community contexts. Sen's (1999) perspective is highly interesting in our reflection on inclusion, because it invites us – when looking at the issue of development – to shift the focus from what an individual or a community is able to produce to what they have the opportunity to *choose* as something valuable. Accordingly, inclusion could be construed in terms of a genuine opportunity of choice and initiative within a context.

A model of inclusion linked with freedom and development implies, as an added educational value, the ability to imagine open communities, in which being included is not merely a 'being inside' and being excluded a 'being outside'. It is rather a *being willing/able to be inside* always to be re-discussed and shared. Inclusion requires that – without any hierarchy or priority on account of the status – all those involved share not only a milieu but the willingness to change, adaptive and exaptive co-evolution, plasticity in transformation, readiness to risk and loss, resilience, unfolding of potentialities, resistance to efforts and a large amount of imagination.

If it is to be realized within communities potentially 'open' to any possibility and peculiarity, inclusion is more a 'tension' and an aspiration orienting choices than a stable relationship between individuals. In this sense, dialogue is the 'modality' of inclusion. And the emphasis, in international documents, on the communicative, participatory and dialogic aspects of the inclusive perspective, is completely on target. In *Participatory Dialogue: Towards a Stable, Safe and Just Society for All* (UN, 2007) dialogue is granted with a procedural function in order to create these relations:

> Participatory Dialogue is one of the chief mechanisms for encouraging full participation of all members of society, strengthening capacity building mechanisms, and preventing and resolving conflict. It adopts the guiding principles of unity within diversity with social justice. A dialogic approach values the art of communication and planning as constituting a process of 'thinking together' among a diverse group of people (*ibidem*: 4).

The authors define dialogue as

> the process of coming together to build mutual understanding and trust across differences and to create positive outcomes through conversation. Whereas in many settings the term 'dialogue' implies various forms of conversations, the derivation of 'dialogue' – from 'dia' meaning 'through', and 'logos' translating as 'meaning' – suggests a synergistic

> fit with the concept of social integration. Within the context of social integration, dialogue refers to interactions for the purpose of uncovering shared meaning and mutual accommodation and understanding (*ibidem*: 19).

The aspiration typical of participatory dialogue is not, therefore, merely that of including 'someone' but rather of including whoever remains behind – «everyone includes every last one» (*ibidem*: 12) – in an open-ended process.

It is against this backdrop that it becomes easier to understand in what sense philosophical inquiry with children and the P4C approach can play a major role. Along with being an interesting strategy to realize *real democracies through the democracy of thinking* (Di Masi and Santi, 2011), P4C is a real possibility of *promoting genuine inclusion through the inclusion of philosophizing*.

What allows us to consider philosophizing as an *inclusive activity*? We have to move from the just outlined ideas of inclusion as a regulative principle and a tension against exclusion (Santi, 2014a; 2014b) and of philosophizing as a practice of reflective inquiry, referred to the four fundamental Kantian questions (What can I know? What ought I to do? What can I hope? What is man [*sic*]?) and developed in a cosmopolitan perspective. Moreover, in philosophizing there lies a 'radical' attitude towards questioning itself, insofar as there is no assumption about the existence of *one single* answer, of *one single type* of answer or of *one privileged road to the answer*. Philosophical inquiry is constitutively open to the production not only of alternative answers but also of different ways of asking questions and it does not exclude the possibility of putting itself in question. From this viewpoint, philosophizing can be considered as an 'inclusive' activity precisely because it is radical and based on the absence of prejudices.

The educational approach of P4C is inclusion-oriented insofar as it deploys *philosophizing* as inquiry, and therefore as an expression of a rational *function*, and it does not invoke *philosophy* as a *structure* of rationality. That function comes into play whenever we enter into a relation with our natural and social world, whenever we take seriously the possibility of otherness and of an alternative within that relationship.

As 'radical' inquiry, philosophizing is non-exclusive both in that it is constitutively open to new manifestations of questioning and answering and because it starts with the assumption that every thinking being has the right to raise questions and to put in question what is taken for granted.

Finally, philosophizing and inclusion are to be associated on account of their dialogic dimension. Bakhtin (1983) – a major source of inspiration for Lipman – refers the meaning of philosophy to the reaction to crises and embodies it in the dialectic 'I for myself, I for the other, and the other for me', by thus offering the most powerful argument in favor of a conception of philosophy as an inclusive process and of the very act of non-exclusion as a philosophical necessity. There is a dialogicity intrinsic in philosophical practice, which (im)poses the 'foreignness' of thinking to itself (Kohan, 2005) and compels us to recognize the value of the other as a speculative necessity of dialogue and a factor generating constantly new possibilities. These are exposed to risk but they are also anchored to 'canvases', as happens in the improvisations present in everyday life (Santi and Illetterati, 2010; Santi, 2017). This is the strongest argument we can offer to vindicate philosophy as an inclusive activity and P4C as a model for its educational actualization. Such an activity should go hand in hand in hand with the courage of the Kantian motto 'Sapere aude!', a sort of Enlightenment manifesto for an inclusive idea of philosophizing and a cosmopolitan view of democracy.

3. Cosmopolitanism and philosophical inquiry

The previous two sections have been devoted, on the one hand, to a reflection on the intimate bonds connecting democracy, inclusion and education and, on the other, to indicating in the cultivation of abilities of complex thinking, according to the P4C approach, an educational strategy adequate to operationalize those bonds within classrooms. Both in reference to democracy (§ 1) and to inclusion (§ 2), the theme of cosmopolitanism has already emerged as an overarching horizon within which to make sense of this constellation of notions. Accordingly, in this section, we will zoom in on this theme and, first, we will introduce the reasons for choosing the idea of cosmopolitanism as what may orchestrate *in unitate* democracy-inclusion-education (for complex thinking) and, secondly, we will argue that the community of philosophical inquiry (CPI) – the setting of P4C – can be construed in terms of an embryonic cosmopolitan community.

We will take our cue from noting that the question of cosmopolitanism is key in the Deweyan framework in which P4C is inscribed. Indeed, the reference to cosmopolitanism appears in a pivotal place in *Democracy and Education*,

namely in the chapter 'The Democratic Conception in Education' and, more specifically, in the final section on 'Education as National and as Social'. After deploring the vapid character of the Enlightenment cosmopolitan ideal, Dewey remarks that in the 19th century «[t]he social aim of education and its national aim were identified, and the result was a marked obscuring of the meaning of a social aim» (Dewey, 1980: 103). At the same time, he highlights that the increasing «interdependencies and cooperation among the peoples inhabiting different countries» (*ibidem*) are in contradiction with the insistence on a merely national idea of sovereignty and he concludes:

> This contradiction (for it is nothing less) between the wider sphere of associated and mutually helpful social life and the narrower sphere of exclusive and hence potentially hostile pursuits and purposes, *exacts of educational theory a clearer conception of the meaning of 'social' as a function and test of education than has yet been attained* (*ibidem*: 104, emphasis added).

This argument culminates in the vindication of the need to instill «as a working disposition of mind» the idea of the

> secondary and provisional character of national sovereignty in respect to the fuller, freer, and more fruitful association and intercourse of all human beings with one another. […] *This conclusion is bound up with the very idea of education as a freeing of individual capacity in a progressive growth directed to social aims. Otherwise a democratic criterion of education can only be inconsistently applied* (*ibidem*: 105, emphasis added).

In Dewey's vocabulary 'social' and 'inclusive' are closely related (Dewey, 1984; Oliverio, 2013) and, in this sense, what Dewey has been arguing is that an education not animated by an inclusive tension is doomed to failure as democratic education. Moreover, as 'social' is opposed to 'national', Dewey is here invoking a kind of inclusion that breaks the stranglehold of national narrow-mindedness. However, as this train of thought is introduced by his objections to the vagueness of the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism, he is not calling for a wholesale disembedding from one's own cultural allegiances and the access to an alleged over-national or global belonging, but rather for an articulation of these two dimensions. To put it differently: in our reading, this Deweyan passage is the very source of two of the most interesting contemporary proposals in democratic

education, the *ecological cosmopolitanism* of Nel Noddings and the *educational cosmopolitanism* of David Hansen. Both are deeply rooted in the pragmatist tradition, by renewing its themes in the light of contemporary challenges, and both, as we will argue, can be appropriated to a fruitful dialogue with the P4C approach.

Noddings starts with marking a clear change in comparison with the 20th century (social and educational) concerns:

> We think of our country as both our homeland or home-place and our nation, but throughout the 20th century the emphasis was on the concept of nation – that is, a group of people with a distinctive form of government. […] We need not give up pride in our national heritage, but in the 21st century, we might adopt a more humble and critical attitude toward the nation and a more appreciative one for the home-place on which the nation has been built. The shift signifies deeper concern for natural resources – land, air, water, and the interdependence of all living things. […] It is a shift toward ecological cosmopolitanism (Noddings, 2013: 83).

With a Rortyan expression we can say that Noddings is here 'recontextualizing' the Deweyan difference 'social *vs* national education' in terms of a distinction between 'ecological' and 'national', so that the liberation of individual potentialities and the cultivation of forms of associated life based upon solidarity should not be confined to human beings but they should focus on the «lives of human beings *in natural environments*» (*ibidem*: 91, emphasis added).

In this sense, the interest in the human-cultural dimension is dovetailed with that in the natural-'earthly' dimension:

> If we love a particular place, we know that its welfare is intimately connected to the health of the Earth on which it exists […] Because I love *this* place, I want a healthy Earth to sustain it […] If the well-being of my loved place depends on the well-being of Earth, I have a good reason for supporting the well-being of *your* loved place. I have selfish as well as cosmopolitan reasons for preserving the home-places of all human beings (Noddings, 2012: 66).

The enrichment of the Deweyan device performed by David Hansen moves in another (but complementary) direction and focuses on *cosmopolitanism from the ground* as the very root of an educationally democratic project in our culturally differentiated societies. The notion of 'cosmopolitanism from the ground'

refers to two aspects: on the one hand, it evokes the experience of an educator who, observing what happens in schools with pupils with multi-ethnic cultural and existential backgrounds, notes that the 'wonder of communication' (Dewey, 1981) is constantly renewed, despite so many discourses about the incommensurability of different cultural identities. On the other hand, Hansen (2011) endeavors to provide a theoretical framework that makes sense of this experience and outlines a 'rooted cosmopolitanism' combining a 'reflective loyalty to the known' (that is, to one's own allegiances, which should not be dismissed but rather reflectively valorized, by avoiding any self-encapsulation in ethnic-nationalistic closures) and a 'reflective openness to the new' (that is, the willingness to meet what lies outside the orbit of one's own culture).

By idiosyncratically marshalling the motto of Terence (*homo sum humani nil a me alieno puto*), Hansen comments:

> [I]n enunciating one's humanity – in whatever idiom deployed – a person enacts the idea that nothing about other humans, who are also enunciating their humanity in their words and works, is alien. In polemical terms: there are no foreigners. People may find other persons, and themselves, to be strange, off-putting, enigmatic, and opaque. But that response differs from regarding those features as beyond the pale of the human rather than as marks of its character. This posture does not necessitate endorsing, much less adopting, other customs and beliefs, whether those of individuals or communities. However, it does not mean recoiling from others' lives as if they were creatures from another cosmos (Hansen, 2011: 100).

In this inflection of the democratic ideal, the cosmopolitan movement is 'social-inclusive' – in the Deweyan acceptation – as well as embodied in one's own existential and cultural world(s), insofar as the latter are animated by reflection and not experienced through an uncritical dogmatism. It is revealing (and pivotal within the horizon of the present argumentation) that, in sketching the profile of a cosmopolitan education, Hansen refers to the example of Socrates and his arts of living and thinking, which

> [i]n a critical spirit, […] welcome rather than merely tolerate new views and new people. […] I take Plato to be suggesting that resources from any society are welcome if they fuel inquiry into the most just forms of association. I also hear him implying that people everywhere can deliberate about justice and the good and that it is therefore important to keep the door, or port, open to their perspectives. This idea of an open door

> or port, a quintessential cosmopolitan trope, would apply as much to the individual mind as to the mind of a given community (*ibidem*: 25).

In this perspective, educational cosmopolitanism encounters the P4C approach. Indeed, as pointed out by Matthew Lipman (1988: 12), from Socrates P4C takes the idea that «*applying* philosophy and *doing* it are not identical» and that philosophy should be understood as a dialogic activity, through which we examine our lives, by investigating the web of concepts that constitute the fabric of our processes of *sense-making* (Lipman, Sharp and Oscanyan, 1980: xiii-xiv). As highlighted by David Kennedy this Socratic goal is sustained by a partly different methodology:

> [I]n CPI, the controlling factor in the direction of the argument, and the source of its self-correcting movement, is no longer one powerful, dominant member of the group, but the systemic, dialectical process of the group itself. In CPI, the deconstructive/reconstructive process that Socrates takes solely upon himself is distributed among all members, and has its source *between* them – that is, in their interactions (Kennedy, 2004: 744).

This difference stems from the grafting of a pragmatist motif onto the Socratic vector, by valorizing, in a typically Deweyan way, the theme of communication understood as the constant participation in and sharing of meanings, leading up to the continual reconstruction of experience.

The novelty of Lipman and Sharp's approach, in comparison with the Deweyan tradition, resides precisely in the appeal to the Socratic heritage: reflective thinking to be cultivated in classrooms turned into communities of inquiry is primarily fed by a practice of *philosophical* inquiry as a form of radical interrogation (see above § 2) that tackles the interpretive frames and meaning perspectives through which we make sense of our experiences. Thus, the Socratic tension in P4C grants a greater depth to the pragmatist educational project, which is fundamentally grounded in an alliance of the democratic ethos with the procedure of inquiry typical of science. Indeed, while assuming the Deweyan model of inquiry, Lipman and Sharp inflect it towards a kind of reflection aiming at the exploration of questions about existence and value and at the cultivation of abilities of judgment viewed not merely as a cognitive activity but rather as a form of wisdom and a manifestation of personhood in its entirety (Lipman, 2003).

Situating philosophical inquiry at the very core of the educational undertaking responds, thus, to the need to educate a thinking that does not consist only in the marshalling of logical-critical procedures but combines the latter, on the one hand, with an imaginative openness to unthought-of horizons, through a movement of self-transcendence exceeding the scope of the given frames of meaning; and, on the other, with a dimension of 'thoughtful caring' that addresses themes which concern us in the globality of our being-in-the-world. The Lipmanian notion of complex thinking, which keeps together the critical, creative and caring dimensions and refers to an education occurring in collaborative (= democratic and inclusive) environments, represents, accordingly, the pedagogical correlate of the cosmopolitan view outlined in the wake of Noddings and Hansen and offers a strategy for its operationalization. Cosmopolitan thinking cannot but be complex thinking and CPI, which educates students (and all of us) for it, is an embryonic cosmopolitan community. The interactions taking place within the latter not only cultivate that 'care' which Noddings (2013) has indicated as an essential ingredient of 21st century democratic education but they operate that double movement of reflective loyalty to the known and reflective openness to the new (Oliverio, 2017a; 2017b), which Hansen advocate as the way of inhabiting our condition of citizens in multi-ethnic communities.

Against this backdrop, adapting a Deweyan (1922: 334) phrase, we can say that classrooms as cosmopolitan communities of philosophical inquiry are 'supremely interesting places' and 'outposts of humane civilization' in that they represent the site in which to cultivate forms of democratic education living up to the contemporary challenges.

Concluding remarks

By taking our cue from the current troubles that the democratic experiment has been going through, in this paper we have endeavored to investigate what could be the inspiring principles of a new democratic narrative to oppose the seductions of counter- and pseudo-narratives deeply undermining the very idea of democracy. We have suggested that the ideas of inclusion and cosmopolitanism – both of which to be understood in a specific way, remote from any shallow or

rosy rhetoric as well as from overhasty simplifications – may represent a significant compass to navigate the contemporary scenarios.

By endorsing the view that what is important is educating through democracy rather than educating for democracy, the relevant educational question has turned out to be how to educate through 'educational mediators' which bear the mark of inclusion and cosmopolitanism and what these mediators could be. Or, to put it bluntly, how should we interpret inclusion and cosmopolitanism in order to translate the 20th century project of democratic education into terms which take seriously the challenges of the 21st century and how can we operationalize them within our classrooms?

We have argued that the promotion of abilities of complex thinking according to the P4C tradition may represent a promising option. Indeed, on the one hand, it keeps alive the Deweyan view of democracy as a form of life and of constantly communicated experience; and, on the other, by deploying the resources of philosophizing, understood as a radical way of questioning, it provides us with an educational strategy that can operationalize the inclusive tension and the cosmopolitan openness which should inhabit the democratic ideal in order for it to face new problems and unprecedented situations.

Finally, the emphasis of P4C on the dimension of caring thinking (as a necessary integration of the critical and creative components of reflective thinking) draws our educational attention to the idea of the cultivation of caring habits towards oneself, others and the living world which should animate democracy in the new millennium.

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