

Education and Citizenship - forming the citizen in a Salesian way

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The drama of humanity today is the rupture between education and society, exacerbated by the ever-increasing divide between schooling and citizenship. Allow me to begin this address by paraphrasing a famous sentence of Paul VI (EN 20), because it permits me adequately enough to lay out a serious problem today regarding education as well as an appropriate solution by integrating education within culture – particular and universal – and within schooling, through education to values. This is the only way that education will be fully humanising – like culture – and the only way that schooling can become the promoter and creator of responsible citizenship.

1. Education and Citizenship

No society can survive without at least a basic form of education thanks to which values, ideals, understandings and the perception of a common destiny are passed on to the younger generations.¹

Informal education – historically the first educational model – is imparted firstly in the family and then through a gradual initiation into community: relationships with family and neighbours, various forms of learning, work involvement, feasts, celebrations, religious worship. This is where the child acquires language and understanding, customs, beliefs, traditions, behaviours and social rules needed for integration into the group; the occasion for education is always societal, civic or family.

With society's progress, education developed as a specific function entrusted to particular groups or institutions: the elementary, middle, senior school, the university, all of which had the task of continuing this process of civil enculturation, that is, integration of the individual into his or her respective society, at the same time assimilating society's progress. Formal education, tied to the educational systems in different countries, has in fact the role of preserving the precious heritage of the past in order to respond to the challenges of the present and prepare for the future.

1 L. Kroeber, one of the great cultural anthropologists, illustrated this point thus: "If you take an ant egg of each gender: fresh. You destroy all the other individuals and all the other eggs of the species. You care for this pair of eggs with respect to warmth, humidity, protection, nurture. The entire ant 'society', with all its skills abilities, accomplishments and the activities of the species will be reproduced, and without diminution, in a generation. Instead place on a desert island or in a fenced off enclosure two hundred children of the best physical condition, the highest class of the most civilised nation, give them the necessary nurture; isolate them totally from their species and what will we get? The civilisation from which they were taken? A tenth of the same? No! Not even a fraction of the results obtained from the most backward of tribes. Only a pair or a few mutes, without arte or understanding, without fire, order, religion. Civilisation would be cancelled from within those borders; not disintegrated, not wounded while alive, but cancelled in a single blow. For the ant heritage saves what is needed, from generation to generation. But heritage would not maintain, has not because it cannot, one tiny element of civilisation, which is the only thing specific to human beings" (Quoted by G. P. Murdoch, *Cultura y Sociedad*, México, 1987, 72).

1.1 Classic *paideia*

Fundamentally, the educational model of modern society finds its origins in Greco-Latin and Judaeo-Christian culture.² For good or for ill, this model of schooling has characterised the West, as also all other countries that have taken on economic, political, social and educational modernisation. It is good in the sense that it has encouraged the unity of the human family, bad in the sense that in sacrificing particular cultures, this unity has sometimes been confused with uniformity. Doing things for 'Civilisation' has meant sacrificing inculturation and imposing 'transculturation' or a hegemonic transferral of one culture to another!

The Greek educational ideal proposed a humanism of the 'citizen' meaning to say city dwelling made for the human being. This original form of pedagogy, called 'paideia', was driven by a wholistic formation: body, soul, imagination, reason, character, spirit. The young person developed through gymnastics, music, dance, mathematics, grammar, reading, letters, sciences, rhetoric, art, philosophy. Familiarity with great authors offered models for courage, noble behaviour, and this way youth began to imitate its heroes. We need to especially note that the Hellenistic genius created all the intellectual, practical, artistic disciplines which make up our education systems today (grammar, mathematics, geometry, history, theatre, sculpture, music, law, rhetoric, philosophy, political science, medicine, physics).

Following on from the Greeks, the Romans became propagators of a humanist pedagogy tied to classical culture. Cicero translated 'paideia' as 'humanitas', thus shifting the purpose of education, no longer centred on accompaniment but directed to the full development of the human being.

1.2 Christian pedagogy

The spread of Christianity throughout the Roman Empire brought about a new cultural synthesis where the classical values were integrated, thus becoming enriched with the Gospel's view of the world and human destiny. These values focused on a certain view of the human person and his transcendent destiny, on an ideal of the family and the common good, on a concept of work and rapport with the natural world, on a view of economy and politics, on a way of thinking about one's own country and one's relationships with the rest of the world. This was the context in which the rights of the human being were born, along with democracy, modern science, the representative State, the exploration and exploitation of the earth, universal law.

If we wanted to briefly describe the typical values brought about by this model of education in the culture of the modern human being, we would need to acknowledge the following elements: its view of the happiness of man in the light of the divine economy, respect for the spirit and for freedom, a taste for creation and for human dominance of it, rationality faced with a universe to to get to know about and to exploit, the need to undertake things and to differentiate, the search for excellence, the sense of competition and emulation, concern for the cuty and for human rights, the attitude of serving the common good through competence in work, the idea of the person created in the image of God and called to an eternal destiny. Classic education achieved its objective when young people were convinced, as Pascal said, that "l'uomo supera infinitamente l'uomo". [tr. note - the meaning of this is unclear, so I have left it in the Italian!]

2 It is true that the traditional cultures of China, India, Egypt, have produced admirable pedagogical forms which can still inspire our world, but their educational methods have not known the systematisation nor the universal spread of the Greco-Roman model in the West.

1.3 Towards a new cultural and educational model

By some kind of paradox, it was actually the success of classical education which brought about its lack of direction, since this pedagogy favoured the prodigious development of understandings which led to the technological revolution and the birth of the modern spirit. Today it is an effort for education to define itself in a culture marked from then on by pluralism in beliefs and behaviour, the frailty and rapid substitution of what is known, socialisation of cultural goods, generalised schooling and university for the masses, the dominant role of the media in modern culture, development of the 'fourth sector' which privileges constant innovation and research.

There should be nothing strange then about the fact that traditional educational institutions, the school or university, are really in crisis faced with this world of accelerated change, which accepts élites and pre-established hierarchies only with difficulty, and where there are strong anti-intellectual currents attacking those who possess knowledge, whose power, they say, will certainly lead to social domination, militarism and ecological destruction.

It is worth the effort to emphasise certain basic elements of the current state of pedagogical and philosophical reflection:

1. Today more than ever it is important to redefine the aims of education. Tradition and the two thousand years of classical and Christian education offer an ever more valid response by affirming that the aim of education is the formation of a spirit able to judge freely and become a responsible part of society. It is a pedagogical contradiction to reduce the school to a simple means of ideological reproduction, political indoctrination, a kind of military training, or simply a technical formation required by the economic system. Without denying the practical aims of education, its higher purpose is of a humanist order; working with the young in the difficult art of learning to be a person demands to be firmly reclaimed.
2. We need to follow a delicate balance between the personal formation of the student and his or her encyclopaedic learning. The prodigious development of knowledge in all fields now makes impossible for there to be any synthetic assimilation of all there is to be known. In modern culture from now on we need to learn to live with an immense margin of things unknown: the vast areas of science reserved to the experts in ever more specialised disciplines. As a consequence this imposes a common effort to perceive and affirm the humanist and ethical purpose of the learning which is imparted. Schooling has to make the effort, for its part, to make it understood that understanding is still more important than knowing, since it is the only thing leading to moral responsibility and wisdom.
3. The family as the first setting for education, and professional teachers keep their place in modern society. We cannot, without falling into contradiction, change schooling into an instrument of power, financial manipulation, social or ideological reproduction through some pretext of political and economic rationalisation. Experience shows that no educational project can achieve success without the participation of the family, competent teachers and the lively elements of culture. Education policy in a country is especially called to foster equality of opportunity with regard to instruction at every level, putting the State's resources at the service of the educational system. The role of stimulating, animating and coordinating educational effort belongs to the State, but the mission to educate and instruct belongs to the human community, families, the school, university, all cultural institutions which make up the educational setting properly so-called.
4. Even if there is a need to defend the humanist perspective on education, we need to recognise that in the past the school was able to foster, more or less consciously, an individualism that was little concerned with the responsibility of teachers and students facing up to social change.

We need a revision of cultures which gives value – at least intentionally – to solidarity and everyone's aspirations to development and justice. If a person's humanist formation is to keep its validity, we also need to accentuate, more than in the past, the social function of education. One of the most profound changes in our time is the growing belief that societies can change effectively through common human effort. This demands an education to social responsibility in a civic and political sense, understood in the widest sense of the word, 'builders of the city' This aspect of education is burdened with particular urgency in a world in search of justice and universal participation in culture. Education, from now on, is understood as service to the individual, certainly, but also as a factor of the development and promotion of society as a whole.

5. A capacity for social and cultural analysis, then, is an integral part of any human formation. This does not mean that each student should specialise in sociology, but that everyone in a culture undergoing accelerated change needs discernment, in a context of pluralist values and contradictory ideologies. Formation to social discernment is a need, if we want to avoid ethical indeterminism and loss of identity. In times past a stable setting and its institutions helped individuals to situate themselves at the heart of culture. Now this responsibility has, to a great extent, become a personal one. Classical education taught how to analyse the great literary works of the past; modern education, without overlooking this approach, has to prepare students to analyse living cultures, their dominant values, their evolution, their impact on mentality and behaviour. Educating today means teaching the individual how to educate him or herself without other support in a fluid cultural environment and in a society in constant evolution. This is where we find the need for ongoing education which has become an unavoidable requirement.
6. In modern society cultural pluralism poses new and difficult problems for those responsible for education. A solution of false rationality induces certain governments to adopt an educational policy which simply prescind from the religious and moral beliefs of the family, relegating these values to the private sphere. This means forgetting about the primary right that families have to pass on to their children their own beliefs and spiritual heritage.³ An education policy which respects cultural pluralism will reserve a legitimate place for religious teaching and moral formation. This is one of the more perfect concretisations of the 'freedom of education'.

As we can see, managing a modern education system presents society with very complex administrative problems; but the greater challenge is of a moral and cultural order.

2. New cultures - the context of education today

The birth of 'new cultures' is a phenomenon repeated throughout history, characterising all great historical moments of change. A new culture is always difficult to interpret, since it is a reality 'in fieri', a phenomenon in process. Our own era, perhaps more than any other, has tried to understand the state of mind that will characterise succeeding generations. The expression 'new cultures' was coined precisely to accommodate the values and counter values that form the spirit of our times.

3 John Paul II, speaking to members of the Pontifical Council on Culture, said: "Often the ideas about man in modern society have become systems of thought tending to distance themselves from the truth and excluding God, thinking that thus they can affirm the primacy of man, in the name of his supposed freedom and full and free self-realisation. Working this way, these ideologies deprive man of his constitutive dimension as a person created in the image and likeness of God. This profound mutilation becomes today a threat for man, because it leads to thinking of him as without any relationship with transcendence" (19 November 1999)

The novelty of the expression does not in itself indicate the creation of absolutely original values, but rather the different accents placed on hopes, anxieties and desires distinguishing our society from earlier ones. The occurrence of a new culture is often accompanied by the growth of a counter culture, which puts the hitherto accepted values and institutions into crisis.

2.1 Typical tendencies

A first quick overall observation reveals a curious configuration of tendencies which are relatively new and contrasting, many of them presenting as movements: ecology, pacifism, feminism, importance of developing nations, liberation movements, religious re-awakening. And while there are more than a few generous examples, there are also some worrying ones around: moral permissiveness, a dominant individualism, unbridled consumerism, widespread drug use, 'gay' movement, etc. Analysts come from all sides with their various interpretations of the basic tendencies and they vary according to the point of view of each.

2.2 Five principal features

I would like to signal five features which seem to be particularly apt for describing the new mentalities. I am talking about directions that seem general, lasting, and seem destined to be shaping our future. They are as follows: an overall disquiet concerning the future, a universal need for justice and peace, the emergence of new values, a new kind of man-woman relationship, an aspiration for a conscious building of the future. Some brief indicators which will help me be more specific.

1. Almost every society has seen a gradually developing feeling of fear and anxiety with regard to the destruction of nature and the environment (cf. the last UN Summit in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 October 2002). Everyone is afraid of the unforeseeable consequences of biological experimentation and are concerned about the future of the human family faced with the unbearable risks of nuclear apocalypse. A sense of existential anxiety provokes in everyone a basic reaction, a radical search for the survival of the human race. Culture now reveals not only a crisis of customs or atheism, but it is mankind's very existence which is in question. The problem of religion which the young Marx spoke of, is not just one belonging to the proletariat. A spiritual void now strikes all classes making up modern society. The great temptation in our day is fatalism and a sense of powerlessness faced with extremely complex problems that seem to be too much for us to overcome. This notwithstanding, better spirits reject this cowardly temptation to abandonment, this tragic determinism which paralyses our contemporaries, closing off their sense of moral responsibility.
2. The universal search for justice and peace is expressed strongly in recent times. Finding themselves in agreement amongst themselves, our contemporaries find it ever more intolerable that poverty and opulence coexist. Even if I am aware of the lack of ingenuity of certain movements, I think the "Social forum" or the "Antiglobals" can be listed amongst these. There is a heightened universal aspiration in the world for the realisation of a principle of unity, justice and shared responsibility for freedom and respect for all human beings. A kind of cultural universalism is being formed. More than ever the defence of human rights appears as a need and sign of liberation. There are huge numbers who find it unbearable that the modern world denies them basic freedoms, the right to development and especially to full freedom. No wonder then that Pope John Paul II himself spoke of the need to globalise human rights, solidarity, peace.
3. The emergence of new values gives the educator new tasks. Are we sufficiently attentive to the values that many of our contemporaries are in search of, especially the new generations and

young nations? Let us try to understand the anxieties expressed through values affirmed energetically today, like for example respect for identity, quality of life, access to education, to culture, to communication, the new role of women, esteem for work and free time, search for community life, new interest in religion, re-evaluation of tolerance, pluralism, re-discovery of family, dialogue between generations, attention given to the differently-abled and the universal aspiration for peace and concord. We need, besides, to know how to discern that curious search for religious experience, the “New Age” kind, showing up as a new need in different settings, especially amongst the young. Amongst the new values we need to reserve a special place for the general awareness people have of their own dignity and rights, and that they can legitimately aspire to a free participation in common events. These cultural tendencies never present without some ambiguity but they certainly bring hope. This new hope is perhaps one of the clearest signs characterising new cultures. Educators especially have responsibility for understanding, discerning and handing on these values.

4. New man-woman relationships also constitute a cultural change of historical import. We are not dealing with a simple movement involving a claim, belatedly recognised. But we are faced with the search for a new set of circumstances for women in modern society, especially in nations or cultures which up until now have denied them a voice and social opportunity. There is a search for a new balance in the feminine role at every level of society. This cultural fact is now better received in all its complexity and with all its implications. If women gain equal freedom and responsibility with men, collectively speaking they gain access to a greater humanity. And all humankind will benefit from that, in terms of its feminine and masculine dimensions. From this perspective we can see that both men and women are called to be the subject and the agent of change in the role of women. In other words both men and women are called to grow together in their essential complementarity. Here we are dealing with an evolution concerning all of humankind as such, and with one of the most profound changes known to modern culture. We are only at the beginnings of a cultural evolution which calls on everyone, especially politicians and educators, to render an indispensable service to the human being as such.
5. The entire human family aspires to a conscious building of the future. Never before have human beings had such a similar awareness of their proper unity and interdependence. For the first time in history, humanity as a whole is called to take in hand its own future and to consciously build a new world, worthy of each human being and mankind. This is a view of culture that goes beyond a simple accommodation of dominant values of a society guided especially by economics. The culture of the future will be one in which human beings will construct themselves beginning with their own beliefs and most noble imaginings. Culture appears essentially as creation and freedom, thus it is a moral work. It is precisely the affirmation of this ideal that younger generations and new nations expect from their educators, and intellectual, political and spiritual leaders.

3. The Catholic school, an educational agency

For centuries the school has been identified with a certain idea of civilisation recognising that it carries out its own special civilising role. This seems to have collapsed today, since the new culture is now being produced and handed on by powerful rivals that have invaded the fields of teaching, research, documentation and information. Schools have yet to discover how to pass from competition to cooperation with these new agents of cultural production. We think, for example, of the communications media, cultural industries, data banks, satellite communications, teaching and study tied to private and State industry.

The principal challenge for the school will be that of defining its own role in the effort to reconcile economic, technical and scientific growth with progress in being human. We think of a theorist of neoliberalism, like Francis Fukujama and his thesis about the end of history.⁴ The cold rationality of pragmatism, profitability, competition don't sit easily with the logic of knowing, nor the gratuity of solidarity. As you can see, the question at the bottom of it all – a moral question - is that of the cultural role which corresponds to schooling.

In society today, where all ideologies are in crisis and where pure pragmatism reveals its dramatic insufficiency and its destabilising effects, education has to affirm itself as a reserve of ethical values and a place for generating motivation, dedicated to the search for meaning, a centre of free reflection and just socialisation, essential for the health of a nation.

Faced with this panorama of challenges it is natural, then, that the school, at least for the most part in the western world, has to really struggle to adapt/agree on plans and programmes, as we see from educational reform that has been or is being carried out for a number of years in many countries. According to Hannah Arendt, education is located “between the past and the future”, between stability and change, between tradition and innovation.⁵ Despite that, it seems to me that more important still is the global change in the school, determined especially by a modification in two sets of relationships: the relationship between school and education, and that between school and society; and if we consider it, in a school with Christian inspiration, the relationship between school and evangelisation.

3.1 School and education

Over years gone past, family and school marked the whole range of education for the young person. There was no margin there for other educational or 'mal-educational' influences. Today we count on other educational agencies, at times carrying more weight than family or school themselves.

- a .The media (social communications media), that have passed from being just an information chain to a true and proper network for education, creator of a new culture, with all that this implies: where models are forged, values spread; a way of organising life, interpreting reality, etc. Given the media's efficiency and continuity, even if they do not present themselves through formal educational proposals, their percentage clout in terms of influence on the one being formed is high.
- b. Settings for free time and freely chosen activities have multiplied, and are not determined by a scholastic programme. They also exercise an influence on the building of the personality and contribute to its shaping .
- c. Settings of socialisation which belong properly to the young, where they encounter adults and companions, places that become a kind of “university of life”, where a way of looking at life and rules for behaviour are developed.

Here is the first change: the new distribution of occasions for education. School and family continue to carry out an important role but they are not the only ones intervening in the educational process. They have to recognise that today we live in an atmosphere of pluralism of offerings and that therefore more

4 Cf. F. FUKUYAMA, “Occidente puede resquebrajarse”, an article where, even if he questions “whether «West» is truly a coherent concept”, writes “The terrorist attacks of the 11 September were a significant event, but in the end modernisation and globalisation will continue to be the principle structural bases of world politics” (El País, edición internet, 17/08/2002).

5 Cf. Pilar Del Castillo, “El futuro de la sociedad es el presente de la educación”, en EL PAÍS – edición internet – 16.IX.2002. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, Spain, explaining the urgency of educational reform clearly claims that “countries must periodically adapt their education systems”. He says “Education is, in some ways, the 'place' where society and culture play with what they are and what they wish to become”.

than before they have to take on the role of converting what are maybe parallel or even divergent proposals and stimuli into convergent influences. Here we see a new need experienced by schools whereby they are not simply information supermarkets, passing on data, but have to try to witness to values and develop values which hold together, or serve as a critical filter for the multiple influences which are today besieging people, especially the young.

3.2 School and Society

The second notable change refers to the relationship between the school and the human community in which it operates. The school is no longer the property of a group of educators – religious and State, and families are not simply clients of a business operation which they entrust their children to, demanding a paid-for specific service directly (private school) or indirectly (state school).

Today the school is ever more integrated into the dynamics of the civil community, which has a role – must have a role – of responsibility for planning and management. In some places we find community management of the school sanctioned by legislation. The relationship between School and Community today is marked by what we call participation. Both family and society are no longer located outside of school. They are no longer content just to provide the pupils. Now they claim their right to participate in drawing up the educational project and norms which serve to guide education.

3.3 School and evangelisation

Another element of change: the School – Evangelisation relationship (or scholastic planning – Christian formation). The change focuses on the kind of presentation of Christian formation: based not so much on curriculum requirements, as on the proposal of life offered the young, who have to take this offering up in a climate of freedom, free choice, without any form of external manipulation.

For evangelisation to be offered in the school we have to be aware of the climate of pluralism within the school itself: many teachers, families and students are not believers or belong to other religions. Indeed, educating to an openness to the religious and ethical dimension is in agreement with the “consolidation of a complete humanism”, as John Paul II said.⁶

This situation challenges the Catholic School to rediscover its identity as a setting for evangelisation and examine how this is carried out with regard to the religious quest of all members of the educative community. It follows that the Catholic School:

- - must privilege witness to faith over simple theoretical explanations for the truths of the faith. And this can only happen if members of the educative community have a personal experience of God;
- - it gives greater importance to the witness of life of the educative community as community. The kindness of certain specific teachers is no longer sufficient, but there needs to be a community living which makes this alternative way of living visible;
- - witness alone is insufficient. In the Catholic School it is necessary to develop a culture truly inspired by faith and impregnated with Gospel values, translated into choices, criteria, method, organisation. Only thus can the anthropological and humanising dimensions of faith appear with its contribution to building civilisation;
- - beyond the synthesis of culture and life another is required, the synthesis of faith and life

⁶ John Paul II, Message for World Day of Peace, 8 December 2000, n. 20: “Education can contribute to strengthening a complete humanism, open to the ethical and religious dimension, which attributes due importance to an understanding of and esteem for cultures and the spiritual values of different civilisations”.

represented by the educators. “In the educative project of the Catholic School there is in fact no separation between moments of learning and moments of education, theoretical or technical moments and those of wisdom. Each discipline does not only present understandings to acquire, but values to take up and truths to discover.”⁷

Given the current situation of Catholic schools, with few religious and many lay teachers, the formation of the latter and their commitment to the education process which is the focal point of Catholic education today is more than ever necessary. This is one of the elements that makes Catholic education prophetic and meaningful. It is not, naturally, about a “fait accompli” or a “necessary evil”, but an awareness of the call and mission of the laity, whose presence in temporal activities, leading them as Christians and permeating them with the Christian spirit, is typical of the baptised person. Education is one very important element in these tasks.

4. The proposal, day by day, offered by the Salesian school

In this epic process of change, it is vital that the Salesian Catholic school knows how to keep its identity, drawing from Don Bosco's pedagogical intuition and fronting up to the daily challenges coming from our society.

Don Bosco's educational 'system' was practised, tried out and perfected in what has ultimately been called the 'pedagogical workshop' of Turin-Valdocco; it is decisively 'dated' inasmuch as it fitted in with a world that no longer exists; but it is always up-to-date and vital, uniquely so when – and if – it is seriously updated (“translated”, inculturated, rethought), in the light of modern educational problems obviously unknown in Don Bosco's times.⁸

4.1 The educational project

For Don Bosco the presupposition for a true and proper educational project was a solicitude for satisfying the most fundamental needs of the young: food, clothing, somewhere to live, security, work, physical and psychological development, fitting into society, a minimum of values etc. Then - but the two are not chronologically separable - the real education itself of the young aimed at fostering and expanding the cognitive, affective and ethical dimensions: competence in decision-making, a capacity for moral and civil responsibility, the essential basic and professional culture, and a conscious and coherent religious commitment, etc.

These aims still seem appropriate today, considering how, given the profound transformations in society, there can be a decisive recovery of social values in the Salesian educational project, as also of values belonging to the affective, moral emotional, natural and supernatural sphere.

Today the task of education has broadened and the educator's tasks are more difficult to follow through and to evaluate. If once there was just the courtyard, church, workshop, school, today we are faced with different kinds of schools, educational and therapeutic institutions, reception centres for young people in difficulty, prevention centres to deal with drug dependency, consultors, humanitarian intervention for street children, refugee camps with huge numbers of children, reception centres for migrants... all within a complex and cosmopolitan society.

Don Bosco summed up the aim of education with a simple and easily understandable phrase: getting

⁷ The Catholic School on the threshold of the third millennium. Congregation for Catholic Education, 28 December 1997.

⁸ Cf. MOTTO Francesco, *Elementi di attualità del Sistema Preventivo di Don Bosco* (2003) Conference given to the 22nd Salesian Family Spirituality Days, Rome 22-25 January 2004. in CD-rom ed. Julio H.Olarte.

young people to be “an honest citizen and a good Christian”. By this he wanted to express the completeness of his ideal: forming builders of the city and believers. It takes into account all the dimensions of the personality.

The honest citizen of the third millennium, it is clear, is no longer what was understood by Don Bosco, a child of his own times where there was no concept of the “politically active citizen” unless for the rich and privileged minority, and so hardly available for his poor or even better off pre-adolescents and adolescents in his own Houses. Nor is he the one who, in the analysis and evaluation of social problems, tends, as did Don Bosco, to see their cause solely in the moral and religious responsibilities of individuals and not in the situations and determining factors of an economic, political or social kind. And he is not even that rather passive kind who obeys the laws, gives no problem to the Law, and thinks only of “his own deeds”. The passage from absolute monarchy to liberal parliaments, first, and then to democracy, the arrival of the “social question” with socialism, marxism, unionism, the Church's social teaching, the universal demand for active and democratic citizenship etc. have left their clear mark. Just as other things leave their mark today - the unstoppable advance of pluralism, globalisation, modern information technology, widespread multiculturalism.

Along similar lines it is also evident that today's good Christian can longer be thought of as Don Bosco did and many others like him: a minimum of religious formation, regular reception of the sacraments, devotion to the saints as models and ideals of Christian life, exclusive reading of “good” books, absolute obedience to the legitimate ecclesiastical authorities in the one true Church, the Catholic Church, a life of progress in virtue which comes to its conclusion happily with a virtuous death. A century of theological reflection and a Vatican Council II would have passed in vain and today's multi-faith setting in the world would have told us nothing.

So we need to be aware that the well-known formula “honest citizens and good Christians” is to be given a new basis today both anthropologically and theologically, and is to be historically and politically re-interpreted.

A fresh anthropology should identify, amongst the values of the tradition, which ones are to be emphasised in postmodern society and what new ones instead should be proposed; a fresh theological reflection should clarify the relationship between faith and politics, and between different faiths; a fresh historical and political analysis will re-frame education and politics, education and social commitment, politics and civil society.

4.2 *The educational setting*

The Salesian school offers a second distinctive element: it is the human atmosphere or ‘environment’ one breathes in a Salesian school. We become aware of it only when we stop to think about it. So it can happen that for the child or the young person the environment may be undefinable even if they perceive it. It is what we tend to call ‘the family spirit’. And it is this climate, a kind of formative ecology, one of the essential constitutive elements of the Preventive System of Don Bosco, that makes it so valid in whatever cultural or religious context, as is our solid experience in Asia and Africa, where the greater number of our students, parents and co-workers are not Christian, but find in the Salesian school a family atmosphere that makes them feel at ease, at home.

This environment was one of Don Bosco's concerns. At a time when rules dominated, he highlighted the spontaneity and space that needed to be given. At a time when there were many levels of authority, Don Bosco stressed the need for familiarity and living together with the person being educated, because education for him was really “a question of the heart”, a vital transmission of values, creation of an ecosystem which breathed optimism and goodness, and where a range of values circulated which helped shape the personality of the young person.

Our task, he used say, is to help the boy become so much our friend that he opens his heart, and so that we can influence him to begin from the very centre of his life. This way it will be possible not only to offer him the tools to move deftly within his own circumstances, but more, accompany him in developing his criteria and plans for life. This aspect becomes even more relevant today when we note the lack, in many cases, of an experience of family as a true school for life.

This 'familiar' relationship is the most effective way, even if we are not always aware of it, of living in community and being introduced into society. There can be cold and distant relationships based on authority; an educational formality or there can be instead a relationship of sympathy, intimacy and constant service; this latter is shown through an availability to talk, live with, broach topics of interest to the youngster. Such was Don Bosco's educational environment.

The first task of the educator, then, is to be there and not remain aloof from the scene where the game is being played. If it is true that in educating there are all the dispositions for bringing about life in its fullness, it is just as true that, left to oneself, one runs the risk of not bringing into play all or at least not completely, the possibilities for growth.

The certain and re-assuring educator, aware of his or her tasks and responsibilities, authoritative but not authoritarian, tries to establish an authentic dialogue and a constructive encounter with the young. Vitally implicated in the educational relationship, personality, past, fears, anxieties all influence the formation of the one being educated. It is the human being who educates

The young person is no longer seeking in the educator so much the father who thinks of everything for him, the friend who organises his free time, the brother who is interested in his growth, the adult who hands out the orders, the overseer who threatens punishments, but the human being able to be beside him, who is more attentive to who he is as a person than generic educational needs, who is more available to offer him a positive contribution in developing his unexpressed potential, and who is not interested in only neutralising the negative and counterproductive elements.

The educators, then, do not see themselves as the sole owners and interpreters of the system, in order to impose it or to offer certain preconceived certainties; but they make themselves available to interpret those needs which young people find it difficult to express for themselves, to accompany them in the not so easy search for answers to the basic questions of life, and respect them in their right to be and to feel they are active agents of their own growth. Educators allow themselves to be educated while they educate, both when on easy ground and also when on difficult but just as useful ground when there's a case of the inevitable conflict.

4.3 *The educational space*

Don Bosco tried to put his plan into action with the help of many groups of people. In the utopia of a vast movement like the world has dreamed of - the cooperation and complementarity of all very active Catholics and all people of good will interested in the future of humanity. Concretely however his experience took place mostly in an institute: an institutional system, closed, apart, a-political, autonomous, where everything happened within a precise educational and self-sufficient space, where the officially recognised teachers were Don Bosco and his "sons" and where a simple and singular culture reigned: a Catholic culture of the ordinary, popular class of people, whose only aspiration was to have sufficient means for an earthly existence, while awaiting the heavenly reward for such an existence.

In order to be able to create this space today it seems we need the greatest involvement, with relative moral responsibility, of everyone who is an "operator" in education, and hopefully of all adults who, in their different ways, influence the education of the young and their ability to achieve their existential

choices: parents, teachers, educators, social workers, etc.

Forming alliances by sharing strategies, occasions, and ways of acting logically implies not a few difficulties, given the lack of homogeneity and the divergent forces involved. But we are dealing with something *sine qua non* if we want to bring about the fruits of our educational task and obligation to establish a strong, warm relationship amongst educators.

Educators can have three kinds of relationship: a working relationship, reduced basically to the minimum: offering a service and being appropriately remunerated; or a professional relationship, where beyond service and remuneration, there is friendship and exchange of topics belonging to the shared profession; or a vocational relationship, something which belongs specifically to educators who are convinced of the value of education and carry it out as a mission.

Being a professor today is a technical profession (teacher), but especially a personal vocation (educator). Forming and educating, guiding and teaching call for a demanding preparation, and when it is put into practice, leaves the educator dependent on his or her own creativity, perceptiveness and kindness, because the person the educator is dealing with, with his or her lively intelligence and active freedom, is always a mystery with unsuspected actions and reactions. They need everything and, at the same time, nothing is quite enough.

Well then, the vocational relationship between educators is what binds them together through ideas of life and similar values nurtured in common. This kind of relationship is what best points to a group of educators who wish to carry through an educational project which is coherent and becomes gradually better understood. And finally, it is based on the conviction that there is a whole set of values which we are nurturing and a mission we are accomplishing together.

From this sort of relationship there follows the possibility of a greater personalisation of it with respect to the effective 'freedom' of the one being educated, his or her requests for autonomy in the choice of objectives and the ways to achieve them, the "energies" within, which are to be respected and helped to develop through differentiated resources and means in the various stages of life.

Educating thus leads to the proposal of valid and involving experiences, helps young people grow from within by highlighting inward freedom in contrast to limiting external factors; "conquering the heart" of the young to calmly draw them towards values, correcting deviations and containing their passions; it prepares them for the future by matching the formation of the mind with the acquisition of practical skills; it arrives at the point where these lie hidden and it provides an anchor for the behaviour of the young to develop in them a personality capable of its own decisions and discernment; it enables the young to take a concrete part in social and church life: this then is the difficult task of the Salesian educator.

5. Conclusion

"Today our problems are not only political ones. They are moral (and cultural) and they have to be looked at with a sense of life. We have taken it for granted that while there was economic growth all the rest could be relegated to the private sphere. Now that economic growth begins to be interrupted and the moral ecology is in disorder, we are beginning to understand that our life in common needs something more than an exclusive concern for accumulating material things".⁹

Societies today have a basic task, one they cannot put aside: preparing human beings to be more

9 R.BELLAH (ed altri), *Hábitos del corazón*, Madrid, 1989, p. 374.

human! The concern is not a new one: Socrates used to be amazed that there were schools to prepare horsemen, sailors, soldiers to exercise their professional future, but no schools to prepare people to be human beings. Education is carried out in the context of a people, it is at their service and occurs within the process of their humanisation. The school must take account of the socio-cultural reality of those it exists for and remain open to a complete humanity.

The objective of education in Europe must be that of building a more dignified human future for the young. If education limits itself to achieving simply economic objectives or the accumulation of material goods, which globalisation today seems to focus on, it betrays its very mission. It calls for a profound moral and cultural reform, if our world wants to continue to be the master of its own common destiny. And this reform is the task, the first and principal task, of education.

The education of the human being, with the background on one side various dogmas, militancy and proselytism; on the other side pure, cold, hard technification, followed by the disappearance of meaning, by discouragement and demoralisation. This is the crossroads we are at at the moment. The crossroads can lead to a more complex citizenship, one accepting of difference and enriched by other horizons cultivated by other human strands, giving rise to a new symphony of values and hopes. But this all requires an effort to rediscover the common humanity, the transcendent universal and the sacred dimension in every human face. Otherwise there will first be conflict and then, the desire to exclude. Only the search for communication, realistic acceptance of differences, will make Europe a peaceful and reconciled land.

The new Europe has admirably recovered the desire for concord and the defence of human rights of all. But these great results and conquests bring their own problems, challenges and new responsibilities.

Educating in a society which is tossed around by customs and ideas different from those which had previously configured Europe's moral view, determined today by a radical individualism, where the principle of seduction substitutes that of belief; where each person is elevated to being an absolute, distant from or indifferent to his neighbour, where for the most part shaping public life there is depersonalisation amidst mass media and messages; where there is narcissism and cynicism on the one hand, violence and lack of solidarity on the other.

Educating in a society ever more determined by ideological, religious and cultural pluralism, fruit of the unstoppable process of globalisation. Educating for justice and solidarity, for respectful and cooperative coexistence, where there is necessary respect for the values and ideals which make up national communities tied at the same time to the complementary values of minorities. Educating personally when television and internet have become the first agents of education and almost no institute has the courage to go beyond the technical understandings or strictly legally required information to offer values, meaning and hope to others which open up to life and make society complete.

In order to achieve the goal of the complete formation of the person with respect to democratic principles of coexistence and rights and fundamental freedoms, education will have to embrace formation and information, technology and values, in a way that first forms human beings, then citizens, then professionals. These three objectives are sacred for the schools, State or non-State public schools: humanity, citizenship, profession.

They pose new challenges to teachers, educators and politicians. How do we educate when there is no shared cultural anthropology? How do we channel new generations, help them to be happy men and women, when there are no clear ideas and goals for humanity, in the light of which we can discern what is true from what is false, what is just from what is unjust, what dignifies from what degrades, in short, what is human from what is inhuman? Nurturing and defending human rights, the meaning of citizenship, the ethical, aesthetic and religious dimensions, realising common projects: all of this is the

moral imperative for this historical moment. But action needs the assistance of reflection, which explores the anthropological basis of our existence. Peace is built on consensus and the accords achieved, but no less so on the real problems that have been confronted, on beliefs and ideals shared. The human being, every human being, has a sacred foundation which he or she must discover, in order to go beyond self and which leads well beyond self: God.