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La domanda educativa in Luigi Giussani

ABSTRACT

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ABSTRACT

The issue of education is the main aspect of Don Luigi Giussani's personality and thought; although he was an enlightened thinker and a keen scholar of philosophical and theological questions, the focal point of his efforts revolved around education, which he conceived as a "wisdom" path, fit to realize fully the substance of the human person, to open it to freedom, responsibility and complete understanding, as it was fully tested, of the being as well as of the world, as "communication of himself and his way of dealing with the real. "

Originally taking up and developing the perspective of the Austrian theologian Jungmann, the priest of Desio faced the problem of education in terms of an "introduction to total reality, where reality is conceived as an event that provokes, (in the etymological sense of the term), calls and invites to an inexhaustible search for meaning, calls for the interpretation of the "whole in which we are immersed, and that man is called to identify."

In his approach, the need to recover the reasons and the basis of education sinks in a lucid and still very topical analysis of the socio-cultural climate of the modern age, which is characterized by an "anthropology of dissolution", in other words, the reduction and mortification - done in the name of an idea of man as "master of his destiny" - of the categories of reason, freedom, conscience, culture, which have been progressively emptied of their deeper meaning.

Undoubtedly, Giussani fully expressed, in a systematic and reasoned way, his concept of education in his perhaps best known work, *The Risk of Education*; however, to understand fully the vision set out in the book, on one hand you must place it inside the fundamental features of his thinking, characterized by an original personality, on the other hand it is necessary to find out the reflections on educational dynamics that appear in virtually all his essays, as well as in his conversations with students collected in several books and interviews appeared in magazines and newspapers.

First, we felt it was vital to clarify the aspects of Giussani's reflection on Christian experience as *an event* that illuminates every area of the individual, and to explore the details of his anthropology, which focuses on the human person as a substantial reality, characterized by the dimensions of temporality, communion, encounter and transcendental. As mentioned above, Giussani's personalism is characterised by originality, since he founded the anthropological structure of the person on what he calls *the elementary experience*: a spring experience, whose core consists of "a complex of needs and evidence by which a man is shown in comparison with all that exists "and which support him in the understanding of reality as a whole, including first of all the requirement of justice, truth, beauty and love.

If you connect this anthropological conception with Giussani's notions of *reason* (which goes beyond the Enlightenment conception of verifiability, measurability, controllability to be seen as "an open look, an open window on a reality in which it has never stopped to go in.") and *reasonableness*, which outline in their interrelation a unique epistemological perspective, it is easy to understand the peculiar conception of the self "in action"; the person is trained as such in the impact with the reality, which arouses an invitation to search, a tension to question and decipher the meaning in the marks of the world and existence.

Hence the special review, in Giussani's thought, of the concept of *analogy*, on which in particular Angelo Scola drew attention, tracing the theoretical ancestry in the perspective of Von Balthasar. Hence, above all, the idea, full of suggestions, of *begging*: when the subject puts himself in a condition of systematic and critical self-consciousness of reality, through a tireless commitment to question, research, curiosity, in constant comparison with the original requirements, this characterizes the man as a beggar, a man who is seeking the truth appealingly.

Constitutively incomplete and characterized by begging, the man is, however, in his essence of a person, free: *freedom* in Giussani's interpretation must be understood not as the absence of ties and then dominated by instinct and unconditioned self-affirmation, expression of a relativistic attitude but as "power of adherence to reality and being, adherence to someone else than oneself, that makes, grows, builds and realises our person."

A person's development is therefore, in itself, a process of education and self-realization: and it is in the light of the theoretical categories of reference indicated that it is possible to deepen the pedagogical perspective of the Author.

Giussani identifies in the connection with the *tradition* one of the original factors of the dynamics of the educational event. It is the starting point to promote a potential of trial and then of criticism, in order to introduce the young to discover reality and its meaning; it represents an "explanatory hypothesis of reality" experienced by the educator first and foremost, which is called tirelessly to make it right, and then it is offered to the learner's freedom, who, in comparison with his own heart, will verify the correspondence and the reasonableness of the proposal received.

The second factor is identified with the *authority* of the educational process, which represents the location and the condition of the educational relationship and of the hypothesis offered to the learner, since it is the "criterion of experimenting the values provided by the tradition. According to Giussani, the engine of education is the "master" who, through his testimony, characterized by consistency, loyalty and commitment, accompanies the youth in his experiential path, offering him the necessary elements to understand and judge reality.

Inevitable condition of an authentic education is the personal *verification* of the hypothesis explaining reality: we must encourage the learner to compare personally the proposal received with his *elementary experience*, i.e. with the need for meaning, beauty, truth, justice, happiness that is in the heart of everyone; it is necessary to introduce him to the understanding of reality, arousing in him the desire to investigate its meaning and value in a path of adventure and discovery that see him actively engaged. The youth, therefore, has the responsibility to personally verify the proposal received by the master "in the undertaking as a condition for a genuine existential experience of truth, and therefore for a conviction."

At the heart of the educational experience there are two people, *the educator*, as the witness of a culture communicated, and the learner, as a presence that stands out in his uniqueness, in its singularity and its wealth, who has the passion to search for truth and, therefore, for freedom. Both of them are involved in a relationship, that is the result of a meeting between two freedoms, which in the continuous and tireless commitment with reality, are exposed to the test of the risk. The main educational feature of Giussani's thought is to be found, then, in a category that can synthesize dialectically the other factors of the educational event, that are tradition, authority, testing: this is what the author defines *educational risk*, outlining, in this sense, the risky role of educating acting to which man, in his essential freedom, is exposed.

On the one hand the experience of risk affects the person of the educator, who is called in the first person to expose himself "taking care" of the other, showing him, before all, his own way of experiencing the real, embodying in his person the possibility of sense offered to the learner's freedom. On the other hand, the young, in his meeting with the teacher, is provoked "to the personal and increasingly independent meeting with the reality surrounding him [...], since it is precisely from the risk of confrontation that the youth's personality is born, in the relationship with all things - and his *freedom* 'takes place'.

The originality of the educational contribution offered by the priest of Desio is to be found in having clearly outlined a *method*, in the etymological sense of the term, not limited to technical or abstract precepts, but "extramethodical". A method, he loved to repeat, is not a technique, made up of automatic steps, but it is the road to reach the goal, the steps that must be done, and how they must be done to come to an end.

This method, as we have said, finds in the dynamics of authority / tradition / freedom its backbone, and acts as a guide along the way of the introduction to total reality. The "totality" is the key word in the process, since it indicates the direction and the purpose: as Don Giussani says, totality "means the development of all the structures of an individual until their full realization and, at same time, the affirmation of all the possibilities to connect those structures with reality." It is

clear that these are not two distinct phenomena, one concerning the man and his size, and the other concerning its relationship with the world: it is the same phenomenon that involves the man in all its extension, who develops the totality of his being in the relation of discovery and experience of reality in pursuit of full awareness of himself and of the world.

Education means to accompany someone to the encounter with the total reality, to support the other in the process of identity building and responsible freedom, to lead to the discovery of question the meaning of life, to indicate the traces which at the same time reveal and continuously feed the mystery of being. This implies for the "master" the ability to get fully involved in the relationship, which must be embodied and living, with the learner, in the project and risk of education: to face the project and the risk we need science", that is culture and its relationship with tradition, and "consciousness", an ethical and utopian dimension that takes the form of gratuity, availability, further tension, hope. "The great tenacity, or the greatness of mind, of the educator is indefatigable, constantly being proposed, *'in spem contra spem'*, hoping against all evidence."