

Recensioni

Fedeli, M., Frontani, L., Mengato, L. (a cura di). (2014). *Experiential Learning. Metodi, Tecniche e Strumenti per il Debriefing*. Milano: Franco-Angeli. pp. 176.

by Gaia Gioli

Studies in the field of human capital education agree that the development of workers' skills first passes through the reflection and the assessment of the possibilities of development and, only later, from participation in courses, seminars, etc.

This is the case designed by the much-reputed golden rule in the second half of the Nineties: the professional growth depends on the educational quality of the workplace, i.e. experience and practise (70%), reflection embedded into work practises (20 %) and formal organisational learning (10%).

Data from the OECD's Survey of Adult Skills, also known as International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), confirm that adults require certain foundation skills to achieve successful economic and social outcomes and implement their life-project and their acquisition mainly depends on the on-the-job training, namely actions developed in the workplace and to which the literature attributes effects in terms of changes in technical knowledge and professional skills of workers.

It is no coincidence, then, that in the last two decades the study of experiential learning and reflective practice emerged as necessary for the construction, re-reading and reflection on knowledge and expertise, given the exponential growth of technological applications in every economic sector.

In the reflective practice, tools such as *Career learning portfolio* and *learning journal*, the use of images in experiential learning have become indispensable for trainers and trainees. On the one hand, they allow the trainers to review their actions and rethink their epistemological paradigm of reference to strengthen teaching and professional practices implemented.

On the other, enable the learners to reread their skills and their actions within the environment in which they operate daily, and challenge them to apply new, challenging and competitive elements to their training.

The work of Monica Fedeli, Leonardo Frontani and Luigi Mengato, with contributions by Julie Dinesen, Valeria Friso, Daniela Frison, Cristina Ghiringhello, Valentina Grion, Andrea Petromilli, Anna Serbati and Gert Winters, falls within this area of research, providing the literature with an innovative perspective of analysis.

The curator focuses on the study of reflective practice and transformative learning – key concepts in the national and international scenery of educational research and training – and also enriches the text with the epistemology of practice, making it accessible to a wider readership that can use it as a guideline thanks to case studies and cards realized by expert trainers who have directly tested the training tools presented.

The text is an example of University-Business Dialogue, or, as defined by Marina Pezzoli, a site for experiential learning. Features that distinguish “Il Cubo Rosso”, the project launched by Fòrema in late 2011 with the aim to promote the experiential method as a vehicle to transmit knowledge, followed by the homonym series published by Franco Angeli, which the volume is part of.

According to Monica Fedeli view, “the need to always understand what you’re doing” and the professionalism of the trainer are essential to experiential learning.

Speaking of trainer’s professionalism we refer not only to knowledge and the experience gained through training but especially to his approach based on planning, monitoring and sensibility on promoting climate conducive to reflection on action, which then leads to transformative effects on the experienced process.

Through reflection on action the trainer and the trainees become more self-aware. Key areas for self-awareness are analysis of the possibilities of improvement and of strengths of their action, and integration of the prior knowledge with the new information, fruit of the reappraisal of the situation.

This is the main feature of reflective practice highlighted by the curator who – with the help of four researchers – presents some of the main tools used, aware that a proper management of the training tools is able to produce positive effects not only on the individual, but also on the corporate organization which he/she belongs to.

The reference to the training of trainers is always present in the volume. In this regard we recall, the contributions of Valentina Grion and Valeria Friso who focus respectively on the Professional portfolio and *raisonné* autobiography in the Desroche and Draperi style as a tools for self-education and self directed learning, essential for those who find their vocation in training, or for who wants to be in life “sculptor” of his professional career and that of other individuals, “rather than sculpture of someone else”.

Anna Serbati instead urges the use of the instrument of the “Diary of events”, or rather to its writing, as a tool for workers’ training and acquisition of self-awareness and awareness of an individual’s skills. This allows the worker to put in words and then reflect back on the process undertaken

up to that time, the path to the acquisition of those skills and theorize on it in a critical manner. All in complete autonomy, but then share it later.

Visualization technics are then presented by Daniela Frison. Suitable for groups of people, the Photolanguage and epistemic-operative interview mediated by metaphoric and/or symbolic representations are useful for stimulating discussion groups on specific topics, overcoming the fear of public speaking.

Any type of reflective practice comes from a careful and effective methodological reflection.

So at the end, in the best tradition of “Il Cubo Rosso”, the operational tools available are described in a reasoned way and easy to understand.

The aim is to focus on the available techniques for enabling experiential learning and reflective practice to lead the individual and the group out of the “comfort zone” and facilitate the process of transformation, understood as learning and skills development, starting from the review-revision of the “known”.

The curators’ intent can be said therefore fully achieved: the volume has the merit to volunteer as useful tool for study, training and self-training, as well as a stimulus to reflection among experts, trainers, manager of business and students who are involved for various reasons in the study of experiential learning and reflective practice. The volume is then the indispensable link between theory and practice.

Boffo, V. (Ed). (2012). *A Glance at Work. Educational Perspectives*. Firenze: Firenze University Press, pp.167.

by *Concetta Tino*

This book offers a remarkable reflection on work as a dimension of the learning process, and on the relationship between the human condition and the *transformation of working/ professional life*.

The book represents not only an important collection of essays written by some prominent scholars, but also an important contribution to a new Pedagogical vision about work. It offers a *trans-disciplinary* viewpoint to investigate “work” and to debate on it as an “educational emergency”.

It consists of an introduction and an essay by the editor Vanna Boffo, and of other six essays: 1. *Work and Person: Sense, Care and Relationships* by Vanna Boffo; 2. *Work and Person: Places of Labour as a Divided Territory* by Pietro Causarano; 3. *Migrant Jobs and Human Cultures: Transformation through a New Formation* by Clara Silva; 4. *Migrant Jobs and Hu-*

man Cultures: Tangible and Intangible Know-How by Giovanna Del Gobbo; 5. *Childhood and work: Protection and Obscuration* by Emiliano Macinai; 6. *Young People and Work: Commodification and Perception* by Stefano Oliviero; 7. *Diverse Jobs: Atypical Work and Formation to Support an Unstable Balance* by Maria Rita Mancaniello.

The introduction presents the concepts around which the essays, originated in the Seminars on work, are grouped: *work and person, work and migratory processes, children/ young people and work, work and diversity*. It is a way to help readers to recognize suddenly the book's *leitmotiv*: the work as an essential dimension of people's life. Hence the editor's need to highlight the role of Pedagogy, as science of man, to investigate the meaning of the work's transformation and its influence on human beings' life.

Reading this book an important question comes out: Why does working dimension influence people's life? The aspects analyzed by the authors around this topic are different; the aim is to encourage the understanding of the strong relationship between *work and human conditions*.

The value of workplace is the first of them. It is here considered in its deep pedagogical meaning, as a space where people *are formed and transformed*, where relationship influences the personal and collective people's growth and where *action as creation* and not just as production, and *care as responsibility* toward others people are nearly connected with cultural growth of workers. (Boffo). All this is a proper manner to focus the readers' attention on the current need to recover the important role of work as a way to assure personal and collective happiness, escaping from utilitarianism's trap and from feeling of insecurity and of being lost. Therefore, in the current globalized time, where the evolution of work system has caused its fragmentation and its decontextualisation, its relocation outside of each subject and each natural space, its frequent request of new competencies to avoid remaining outside world labour, it is important to know how all that has given to work a new sense that is included in the economic profitability's meaning. Exactly this awareness of loss work's human dimension should help us to rethink work as a "*localised figuration*, a social institution with forms and contents that create a physical territory with its dynamic space-time and cognitive/cultural dimensions, where subjects can measure their toil and fatigue, where they bring and take away something in symbolic terms" (Causarano), recognizing it as a place of learning experiences and not as a prison's profitability.

The second important aspect is the delocalization of work, that is another globalization's result. It is here identified as a phenomenon that has run over people's life in all countries, and their cultural products. The delocalisation has caused the interdependence among markets, the movement of

production and the *migration* from richer areas to poorer areas, where unqualified labour is required and where immigrants hope escaping from poverty and finding a chance of success. At what price all this? The risk for all people is being trapped in the new economic system that declares itself the power to demand them to focus on goods, giving up their identity and their capacity to reflect on the value of their existence. Therefore seems strong the author's consideration about the "priority our human culture on man in opposition to denying man's centrality in market system." (Silva). The delocalization phenomenon interests also cultural products' value about which less and less we are accustomed to think. Around this concept is developed the theme of work as producer of culture, as a space of meeting among culture, work, and migration and where the formative power of the tangible and intangible forms of "know – how" can have expression. (Del Gobbo). The tangible outcome of work and implicit value, recognized also by communities of origin, represent the twofold dimension of work that delocalization risk separating them, causing the loss of product's value when it is taken out of its context. Once more work is a vital space that fosters people's growth at personal and social level; where people can share and improve their "know-how", made up of knowledge, skills and culture; where they can experiment feeling of inclusion or exclusion. In this sense, in the current time of the globalization, the task and the responsibility for post-modern society are well-defined: if the role of work as a place of cultures' meeting, of a constructive relationship and a pedagogical "know-how" will be recovered, we can hope in a future democratic society and in the solution of common problems.

A third aspect that influence people's life is the contradiction between childhood/youth state and work's role. Around the relationship between childhood and work appears a twofold reality: the need for childhood's protection and the risk of its obscuration. The reader is informed that despite the evolution of the idea of childhood with its needs of protection, still now some children live in a exploitation's condition. It is a clear focus on those situations from which children need to be protected and how the adults have often looked away from their conditions. At the same time here it is denounced "the child work's existence that can't be seen and that seems to belong to another world". (Macinai). It is an attempt not of obscuring but of giving visibility and value to that form of child work that in some contexts contributes to improve families and communities conditions creating opportunities for themselves to exercise their rights. Also the relationship between work and young people is here presented with its contradiction as a consequent of work's transformation from human activity to an ordinary commodity that can be sold and bought. The work for young people, as the

author (Oliviero) underlines, shouldn't be connected, as usual with the idea of secureness and the opportunity to build their future and their identity? At this point, we have to recognize that even if the pairs work and personal and collective growth, work and wealth, work and future, work and workers' rights, work and security, work and education, have always had a strong bond, giving young people the idea of a possible future development, today "work" associated to precariousness has lost its important meaning, but it has confirmed its strong influence on subject's personal and social identity and above all for young people, who need to become really creative and experts if they want to live and take part in this complex society.

Last part of the book focuses on the ambivalence of precarious work and the power of education. If on one hand the employment instability influences negatively some people's life, on the other hand for others it is an opportunity that assures them freedom to build their paths. It is about a form of freedom connected to the risk for young people to lose their orientation and their capacity to plan a coherent and meaningful life plan. Once again, the powerful role of education, as it happened in reconstruction's years between 1950s and 60s, is here recognized. It has the task to help contemporary subjects *to learn to learn*, in order to take part in different contexts with their different languages, relationships, roles and rules. The acquisition of these competencies within a flexible participatory and pedagogical formative process will help them to avoid their "disintegration". (Mancaniello). All this necessarily refers to the responsibility of schools and universities whose task is giving a real response to subjects and the world of work.

To sum up this book offers a whole and coherent reflection on the current and different human beings' conditions in their weak relationship with a life's essential dimension: the work. It can be considered a substantial contribution to Pedagogy, because looks at person in her/his different conditions, but also takes an interest for his needs, his actions and his products. On one side it analyses through historical lens the role assumed by work in the people's life and how its different organization has always influenced personal and social lifestyles in each time. On the other side it invites us to rethink about our human work culture that goes beyond the current productive and utilitarian dimension, considering the individual as central element of each human action. That is confirmed from the value given to the tangible and intangible dimensions as inseparable aspects of each work process, where the implicit component collects personal and collective knowledge, culture and traditions. Therefore, work is here presented as fusion of person's higher dimensions: spiritual, ethical, cultural, cognitive, partecipa-

tory, operational, motivational, socializing and creative. So, it is not only an implicit educator, an expression and fulfillment of person's operational capacities, but also an organiser of subject's identity and personal self-fulfillment. In this perspective, this book helps us to reflect on the failure of modernization and market's development if the human work dimension won't be recovered.

Federighi, P. (2013). *Adult and continuing education in Europe. Using public policy to secure a growth in skills*, Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, pp. 104.

by Nicoletta Tomei

In the past ten years public policies on adult and continuing education have been at the centre of a broad debate concerning their function and efficacy. As a result of the central importance allotted to learning processes and knowledge management in the competition between enterprises, regions and countries since the transition to so-called "post-Fordism", today the exchanges between individuals and society are being redefined around processes of the (re)production, use and "ownership" of knowledge.

In this context, by commissioning this study from Paolo Federighi, the intent of the European Commission, and in particular the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation, was to reflect on the importance of upholding the learning processes generated by this complex set of exchanges within production systems. *Adult and continuing education in Europe. Using public policy to secure a growth in skills* links in with its author's research interests to present and discuss the main challenges that public policies have to respond to with regard to adult and continuing education.

The author makes use of a considerable mass of international data and recognizes the importance of an evidence-based approach to point out the contribution, at times decisive, that public policies can give to satisfying the new skill/competence requirements manifested by workers and companies. In so doing, he nevertheless does not shirk from highlighting some of the problematic issues in a sector in which public policies and educational actions often serve contradictory ends (p.48).

With regard to the structure of the work, the author immediately clarifies the functions requested of public policies (Ch. I). Subsequently, by using some particularly effective interpretative categories, such as "community of dynamic learning" and "workplace learning potential", he focuses on different areas of intervention (Chs. II-IV). Finally, on the basis of a careful

and documented analysis of the market and the adult and continuing education system (Ch. V), a summary is given of the proposals progressively put forward on the priorities that the political decision-makers should set themselves. These are then linked to the commitments that, in parallel, research should assume to guarantee support to the decision-making (Conclusions).

With respect to the prevalently economic functions indicated in the short foreword written for this work by the Commission's Director General for Research and Innovation, the author places central importance on the andragogical perspective. He underlines the bond between the provision of suitable skills for economic growth, correction of the imbalances produced by traditional systems of initial instruction and training, and support for trends of social cohesion and inclusion.

In the light of these important premises, the exhortations made in favour of the use of continuing education to reduce the number of less qualified workers appear wholly in line with the data on the increased propensity to develop skills (see box 9 and box 10, p. 23). Hence, the author identifies the policies that the territory is able to propose as the main variable upon which to intervene. These, by underlining the significance of some excluding factors and the role that social capital can have, end up including actions that support the networks of informal learning generally excluded from public intervention strategies.

The author's perspective in this study follows the line of his previous reflections devoted to learning in the workplace. As a result, his treatment of this topic is applaudable owing to its capacity to read what happens in these contexts on the back of a construct that highlights its formative value. While it is indeed possible to claim that «all companies offer training; it is impossible to think of a company that does not found its existence on its ability to produce knowledge» (p. 34), only an analytical understanding of the learning potential of workplaces manages to justify the importance attributed to public investments in favour of managerial training, an attentive analysis of the demand and personalized training interventions.

The reference to highly personalized training is of capital importance to introduce the topic of public support for training actions oriented towards innovation. The possibility to thematize workplaces as places of innovation is indeed linked to the possibility of integrating discretionary and embedded learning in the work activities. While complexity, a high degree of contextualization, and autonomy in task solving and in assessment are among the main antecedents to innovative processes, once again the data tells us how participation in continuing education proves to be the determining factor in the knowledge absorption and transformation process, without which the simple transfer of innovation proves to be insufficient.

This complex work of analysis leads the author to highlight how «understanding and monitoring the progress of the training industry is precondition of effective governance of the assets that contribute to the growth» (p. 60). This awareness gives rise to the interest in looking at the educational system in such a way as to highlight its nature as a service-oriented system and to clarify the action that the various actors could carry out. While companies and individuals are given the responsibility to provide for personal and professional growth, governments are entrusted with the task of removing the economic and cultural barriers that limit it through concrete measures that can favour the expression and satisfaction of the educational demand.

In the concluding pages, this task of removing the barriers, which in substance can be summed up in the commitment to «encourage the propensity to invest in adult and continuing education and to guarantee the reduction of educational exclusion» (p. 7), is enriched with some interesting indications, at this point not aimed at the political decision-makers but at the researchers. While the invitations to provide increasingly sophisticated economic analyses on the education market and to promote evidence-based research may not come as a surprise, the invitation to capitalize on existent knowledge of policy impact through the production of an intelligent decision support system that can foresee future educational demand definitely opens a new chapter in the study of adult and continuing education processes and policies.

Paolo Federighi's concise study, organized around the main topics of continuing education, in particular has the merit of succeeding where many other summaries have failed. Indeed, in recent years countless publications have been dedicated to the category of "lifelong learning", but only a small minority of these have given a response to the growing tension encountered by those tasked with forming a system and promoting different learning pathways. This study proves to be particularly useful in the difficult attempt to form educational policies around the necessities of production contexts consisting of individuals, that is, not just workers but also people learning in the territory-context where they live their lives. In addressing the policy makers, the author gives them some precious pointers so that they may structure suitable territorial policies supplying skills for the growth of employment and enterprises and support for activities aimed at re-distributing educational opportunities both inside and outside work contexts.

Artis, A. Q. (2014). *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide*. New York: Focal Press, pp. 369.

di Federico Siniscalco

Today the world of education appears to be experiencing a somewhat paradoxical condition: a deluge of digital media is materializing within it, yet at the same time educators, scholars, and students remain basically incapable of playing an active role in using filmmaking to further the processes of research and learning. Thanks to the digital revolution, video is accessible as a new language through which to enhance communication. Through the Internet and web sites such as YouTube and Vimeo it can be made available to millions of people who are able to retrieve it at the blink of an eye. To re-word Alexandre Astruc's notion of *camera-stylo*, we can now speak of a true "video writing", in other words of a medium that can be actively used by anyone. One would think that for purposes of research and education this would open up exciting new possibilities, and yet, in the majority of cases video merely entails the passive act of watching a screen.

This situation may be explained, in part, by the fact that, although capturing video requires little more than pressing the "record" button on our recording device whether this be a smartphone or a video camera, making a coherent film capable of transmitting meaning is an entirely different story. What is necessary is the acquisition of a basic grammar of the moving image together with the ability of conveying a subject through a story that is composed of a beginning, a middle and an end. Anthony Q. Artis's well-conceived volume represents a valuable guide with which to achieve these skills.

Much of the available literature regarding filmmaking is dedicated to video-making instruction aimed at either those people who are approaching the field as a hobby or at those who intend to become professionals in the media industry. Instead, *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide*, while perfectly suitable for media students, seems particularly appropriate for those who intend to use the film medium to communicate non-fictional content while, at the same time, do not necessarily wish to be engaged with the technical jargon of the movie industry. All that being said, this volume is still highly regarded within the industry as attested by its favorable reviews. Moreover, it is frequently adopted within academic film programs such as the well-known Tisch School of the Arts at New York University, where Artis has taught at length.

The book's nine chapters, interspersed with testimonials from filmmakers and industry people, systematically attend to the three major phases involved in the creation of a film: pre-production, production and post-

production. Not surprisingly, the book opens with a statement aptly entitled “Why make a documentary?” by the internationally renowned documentary filmmaker Albert Maysles. Strong of his own contribution to the non-fictional representation of numerous facets of American society, Maysles wholeheartedly states that ...*very simply put one of the great needs ... is for us to know one another, to know what’s really going on in the world around us and to feel a commonality of need and purpose with other people ... and the documentary allows us to do that* (p. 6). True to this noble ambition, Artis proceeds in the pages that follow to illustrate clearly and without superfluous technical jargon the intricacies of documentary filmmaking.

In the chapters dedicated to pre-production, Artis underlines the importance of the preliminary research necessary for making even a short documentary. Though this might appear obvious in an academic environment, for the novice filmmaker it is a well-stressed point, as there is a concrete risk of being carried away by the latest digital device, and by those overly publicized must-have-gadgets that may in the long run distract from documentary filmmaking’s ultimate goal: that of conveying information about the world. The essence of film medium, Artis reminds us, is communication, and telling an engaging story is the best way to do this. As we proceed through these first chapters we learn that the identification of a topic, careful research, the definition of a main idea and the development – possibly through storyboarding – of a well-structured story are elements necessary to create a successful documentary.

There is another aspect in Artis’s approach well worth underlining. It is known that video is often used by academics as a source of documentation within their fields of research. Today interviews, seminars, lectures, public events, performances, and many other kinds of interaction between specific subjects are easily recorded. Without a doubt this represents an invaluable potential offered by the medium (something which was much more difficult in the age of analogue cinema where high costs of film-stock extensively limited the option), yet this kind of documentation has very little in common with documentary filmmaking. In every form of filmic representation “natural time” must be elided through careful shooting and editing so as to create “film time”. A daylong event, a folk festival for example, realistically needs to be condensed into a short film that ideally conveys all of its important moments. The process of elision and organization is ultimately what makes the recorded video viewable; whereas an unedited, overly lengthy video is doomed to only occasional and random screenings. In contrast, an edited video ranging in length from just a few minutes to a maximum of two hours becomes readily viewable and today, thanks to the Internet, may in fact be watched by thousands of people.

Pre-production, then, is where the major leap from random video making to documentary filmmaking begins. It is here, Artis shows us, where major decisions concerning style and approach are necessary: will there be interviews, off-screen narration, recreations, or simple unobtrusive observations of reality? Naturally, these preliminary decisions determine the actual phase of production – the subsequent area of documentary filmmaking discussed by the author.

In the chapters on production, Artis delineates the major building blocks of filmmaking including: framing, types of shots, lighting, audio, and equipment. Interviews, which in many ways are particularly relevant to scholarly and academic filmmaking, are analyzed at length. Artis explains how to put the interviewed subjects at their ease, how to optimize questions so to generate exhaustive and articulated answers, how to frame the picture and what angles to favor, how to use lights if needed, how to optimize the audio and how to obtain the necessary release forms so that the captured content may be legally used and distributed.

Inevitably, the production chapters are also the most technical where extensive and detailed information is given on the equipment as well as on other issues that characterize digital filmmaking. It is quite evident that this part of the book is meant for those students who will indeed undertake a professional career in digital media. The basic assumption, however, is that anyone can produce a coherent documentary film, and that perfectly acceptable results can be obtained even by using a simple smartphone as the primary recording device (there are a few very useful pages which show how to optimize results if this is the way one intends to film).

Post-production, or editing, occupies the last chapters of the book. Here, Artis explains that without this final and crucial phase there is no documentary film but just unorganized, lengthy, and basically unwatchable footage. Crucial to this phase is the process of screening, selecting and organizing (logging) the acquired footage. In the pre-digital age a post-production studio would have been necessary (for several hundreds of euros a day) to complete the film. Today this can be done at home on a personal computer in a process that in many ways is not too unlike that of word processing: one attempts certain solutions, views the results, changes one's mind and tries again until the final result is satisfactory. Once again the *camera-stylo* comes to mind: it is analogous to writing with video and it is readily available to anyone determined to practice and learn. Artis's book shows us the way.

I am confident that *The Shut Up and Shoot Documentary Guide* will encourage many scholars and students to make their own documentary films. It provides the world of education with a tool to overcome its passive atti-

tude towards video and to use it as a new and exciting means of research and study.

Kohan, W. O. (2014), *La filosofia come paradosso. Apprendere e insegnare a partire da Socrate*. Roma: Aracne, pp. 114.

di *Stefano Gonnella*

Insegnare filosofia è una necessità impossibile. In questo ossimoro è racchiuso il senso più profondo dell'idea che Walter Kohan vuole presentare nel suo testo. Un'idea che appare fin dall'inizio come un Giano bifronte, con due facce contrapposte e antitetiche, ma dialetticamente inseparabili. Insegnare filosofia è impossibile e necessario al tempo stesso. Insegnare filosofia è impossibile, perché se di autentica filosofia si tratta, l'atto di insegnare non può che essere il paradossale incontro tra due pensieri: il pensiero dell'insegnante e quello dell'allievo. Il paradosso è una sorta di corto circuito, una reazione chimica che si scatena tra il docente e l'allievo quando entrano in contatto attraverso la filosofia. O meglio, che si scatena quando nel campo della filosofia – esercizio estremo del pensiero – entrano in contatto due particolari modalità di pensiero: l'insegnare e l'apprendere. Ma insegnare filosofia è anche necessario, perché quel paradosso innescato dalla filosofia è la condizione ideale per poter cogliere il senso stesso della filosofia in campo educativo. “Quando non percepiamo questa dimensione paradossale o impossibile della filosofia, quando diamo per scontato che essa deve e può essere insegnata, stiamo trascurando qualcosa di molto peculiare alla sua natura e, nello stesso tempo, un punto di forza per il suo insegnamento” (p. 9) Nello spazio aperto dalla filosofia c'è dunque una tensione ineliminabile ma al tempo stesso feconda per l'insegnamento. Ed è appunto di questa tensione costitutiva, di questo vitale paradosso che Kohan vuole occuparsi, “per poter irrobustire le forze e le potenzialità che abitano il pensiero di coloro che apprendono e insegnano filosofia” (p. 11).

Walter Omar Kohan è uno dei più prolifici e innovativi ricercatori nel campo della filosofia per/con i bambini, formatosi come allievo di Matthew Lipman, con il quale ha conseguito il suo PhD, e Ann Margaret Sharp. Attualmente è professore di filosofia dell'educazione presso l'Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), dal 1999 al 2001 è stato presidente dell'International Council of Philosophical Inquiry with Children (ICPIC) e ormai da quasi un ventennio sta esplorando la peculiare relazione fra bambini e filosofia, accompagnando la riflessione e l'elaborazione teorica con attività didattiche sperimentali presso le scuole dell'America Latina, soprat-

tutto Argentina e Brasile, e in varie parti del mondo. Uno dei presupposti ricorrenti nella sua nutrita bibliografia, solo parzialmente tradotta in italiano, è che l'incontro dei bambini con la filosofia – e della filosofia con i bambini – sia un'operazione che conduce inevitabilmente a modificare il modo di concepire l'educazione e le sue pratiche.

Per comprendere pienamente il rapporto tra bambini e filosofia occorre un radicale ripensamento del senso stesso dell'educazione. E anche in questo testo, uscito in prima edizione nel 2008 a Buenos Aires con il titolo *Filosofía, la paradoja de aprender y enseñar*, Kohan mostra come apprendimento e insegnamento siano due momenti, due parti non indipendenti di quell'intero che è l'educazione. Ma quando come materia di insegnamento entra in scena la filosofia, è la struttura più profonda del rapporto didattico ad essere messa in questione. Si apre uno spazio di incertezza e creatività, dove si può giocare un gioco paradossale le cui regole consistono nel mettere in questione le regole stesse. Walter Kohan ci invita appunto a pensare o a ripensare quel particolare gioco “che un professore propone ai suoi alunni per giocare nel campo del pensiero, sotto il nome di filosofia (...)” (p. 12).

L'ipotesi presentata nel libro, ancora una volta, è che nel campo del pensiero ci sia, connaturato, un paradosso inevitabile. “Questo paradosso, invece di limitare la filosofia e l'educazione, è la loro stessa vita” (Ibid.) E di questo paradosso deve farsi carico chi intende occuparsi di una educazione filosofica, sottoponendosi magari a una preliminare ginnastica mentale. Alcune delle metafore più ricorrenti nella prosa di Walter Kohan ruotano in effetti attorno al concetto di forza. Occorre rafforzare il pensiero, bisogna “irrobustire le forze e le potenzialità che abitano il pensiero di coloro che apprendono e insegnano filosofia” (p. 11) Ma in che cosa dovrebbe consistere un pensiero “forte” da questo punto di vista? Rafforzare il pensiero vuol dire “renderlo più attento, sensibile, complesso” (Ibid.) A dispetto della chiarezza con cui solitamente Walter Kohan tratta ed espone le questioni di cui si occupa, non si comprende cosa voglia dire effettivamente rendere il proprio pensiero più sensibile e complesso.

La filosofia come paradosso non è un testo facile, proprio perché non intende abbassare la salutare tensione che abita la filosofia. Bisogna dunque rafforzare il pensiero. E per irrobustire le forze di chi insegna e di chi apprende la filosofia occorrono «compagni potenti», che siano in grado di sostenere quella tensione e indirizzarla. Tra questi, la figura di Socrate mantiene la sua posizione predominante e paradigmatica. Socrate è il filosofo che incarna l'enigma-paradosso della filosofia da lui stesso inaugurata. Figura poliedrica e sfuggente, nonostante la mole di scritti che si è accumulata sul suo personaggio. “Per quanto ci possa dispiacere, non c'è modo di

vedersela direttamente con Socrate. Bisogna cercarlo dove non c'è, dove la sua figura assume le maschere dei personaggi che Platone ha voluto attribuirgli” (p. 16) Ma in ogni caso, è la vita di Socrate a segnare “la stessa nascita della filosofia e del suo insegnamento” (p. 19) È dunque con Socrate che bisogna tornare a fare i conti, come periodicamente accade e accadrà nella storia della filosofia.

Per affrontare questo compito, Kohan chiama anche lui in soccorso dei “compagni potenti”, interlocutori che a loro volta hanno dato una lettura di Socrate capace di evidenziare alcuni aspetti del paradosso costitutivo del suo fare filosofia. Si tratta di Michel Foucault, Jacques Rancière e Jacques Derrida, ai quali Kohan riserva un capitolo ciascuno, in cui l'enigma-paradosso del filosofo viene illuminato riflettendo su alcuni brani di questi autori, riportati poi alla fine di ogni capitolo.

Il primo capitolo è dedicato a *L'enigma-paradosso del professore (Socrate e Foucault)* (pp. 21-52). Paradosso che Kohan prova appunto ad esporre ricorrendo alle analisi fatte da Michel Foucault nella sua lezione del 15 febbraio 1984 al Collège de France, all'interno del corso intitolato *Le courage de la vérité*. Innanzitutto, “Socrate aiuta a pensare l'impossibilità o l'inopportunità di separare il filosofo dal professore” (p. 21), anche se non è facile cogliere il senso di questo vincolo inopportuno o addirittura impossibile da sciogliere, se teniamo presente che l'unico sapere dichiarato da Socrate era il sapere di non sapere. Infatti, “Socrate non concepisce la filosofia come un sapere” (p. 26). Vale a dire che “la filosofia non occupa il luogo di un sapere in più; non è un altro sapere che si sa quando si sa la filosofia; è, prima di tutto, una relazione con il sapere ciò che predomina” (p. 29).

Tematizzare la relazione che gli uomini intrattengono con il sapere, quindi, è uno dei compiti primari del filosofo, ma assolvere questo compito implica necessariamente un confronto con il pensiero degli altri. Un confronto che movendo da un'iniziale ammissione di ignoranza, arriva a mettere in questione le false certezze e i saperi fasulli. Non ci sono dottrine da insegnare, saperi da trasmettere, e tuttavia “la filosofia, almeno ‘alla Socrate’, non può non essere educativa” (p. 34), perché è la sua stessa condotta di vita ad insegnare agli altri. In questo senso, come sostiene Foucault, “Socrate respinge il ruolo di maestro per rifondarlo” (p. 43). Dunque, “[n]on c'è nulla da insegnare, se non mostrare un certo modo di attraversare la vita” (p. 34) Quello compiuto da Socrate con le sue pratiche di vita è un vero e proprio rovesciamento, ribadisce Foucault. “Laddove il professore dice: io so e voi ascoltatevi, Socrate dirà: non so nulla, e se mi occupo di voi non è per trasmettervi un sapere che vi manca. Mi occupo di voi affinché, capendo di non saper nulla, impariate per ciò stesso a occuparvi di voi stessi” (p. 52).

Nel secondo capitolo, *Politiche di un enigma (Socrate e Jacotot/Rancière)* (pp. 53-76), Kohan presenta alcune considerazioni critiche nei confronti di Socrate sviluppate dal filosofo francese Jacques Rancière nel suo *Le maître ignorant*, testo dedicato alla figura di Joseph Jacotot (1770-1840), pedagogista rivoluzionario, promotore del metodo dell'emancipazione intellettuale in campo educativo. Rancière, introducendo alcuni temi chiave del pensiero di Jacotot, vuole mettere in evidenza un aspetto equivoco del metodo socratico, e per far ciò prende spunto dal famoso episodio del *Menone* (82b – 85e), in cui Socrate aiuta lo schiavo a ricordare ciò che sa, senza apparentemente insegnargli nulla. In accordo con la teoria pedagogica dell'emancipazione, secondo la coppia filosofica Jacotot/Rancière, "Socrate abbrutisce e non libera, perché non permette né favorisce il fatto che lo schiavo cerchi da sé stesso, che incontri il suo proprio cammino, e anche perché c'è qualcosa stabilito in anticipo, qualcosa che Socrate già conosce, che lo schiavo deve conoscere" (p. 54). Se il maestro che emancipa è colui che non trasmette un sapere preconstituito, bensì si interroga e interroga gli allievi "perché vuole ascoltare un'intelligenza inascoltata" (p. 53), allora Socrate, più che un "maestro ignorante", nel *Menone* risulta "padrone di un sapere positivo che gli permette di guidare lo schiavo fino ad una risposta corretta" (p. 55). Dunque Socrate, non solo nel *Menone* ma anche nei dialoghi giovanili di Platone, emerge piuttosto come un maestro tradizionale, che sa già quello che l'allievo deve arrivare a sapere, e lo guida con le sue domande fino al punto voluto (p. 57).

Nel terzo capitolo, *L'enigma-paradosso dell'apprendere (Socrate e Derrida)* (pp. 77-104), Kohan cerca di mettere a fuoco il genere di relazione che intercorre tra Socrate e i suoi discepoli, riportando alcuni esiti delle ricerche filologiche compiute da Francis Wolff sulle scuole filosofiche dell'antichità. Socrate in effetti stabilisce relazioni differenti con i suoi vari interlocutori, che possono così essere amici, o compagni, o discepoli. Ma per sciogliere questo rompicapo apparente, per comprendere la natura di queste oscillazioni, occorre secondo Kohan rivolgersi ad un altro e più radicale enigma, ovvero l' "impossibilità costitutiva di dare un unico senso all'insegnamento e apprendimento della filosofia" (p. 80) Questa impossibilità costitutiva può essere confermata ripercorrendo tutta una serie di antinomie che coinvolgono l'insegnamento e l'apprendimento della filosofia, e che Kohan presenta seguendo il solco tracciato da Jacques Derrida in un suo breve testo, "Le antinomie della disciplina filosofica", ricordando che in ogni caso si tratta di una selezione arbitraria, utile essenzialmente per mostrare come quello filosofico sia un campo irriducibilmente aperto e inesauribile (p. 80).

Kohan presenta sei di queste antinomie, doppi vincoli che abitano la fi-

losofia, laddove Derrida nel suo testo ne introduce sette (*sept commandements contradictoires*). Facendo a nostra volta una selezione arbitraria, ci soffermiamo sulla seconda e la terza di queste antinomie, che riprendono in maniera più decisa il filo già dipanato nei primi due capitoli.

La prima di queste due antinomie riguarda il compito insostenibile dell'insegnamento filosofico, che si trova inevitabilmente costretto a trasmettere ciò che non sarebbe trasmissibile (p. 85). Siamo di fronte ad un doppio vincolo, poiché da un lato la filosofia non può essere ridotta alla trasmissione di contenuti filosofici, ma dall'altro sarebbe ingiustificabile anche l'assenza di una qualche forma di trasmissione.

Ma cosa si trasmette insegnando filosofia? Ancora una volta l'esempio di Socrate ci indica una possibile risposta. "Socrate esce a vivere la vita, a esercitare il suo gesto filosofico, e in questo gesto inizia e termina la messa in scena pedagogica della filosofia o, meglio, di una educazione filosofica" (p. 86) Dunque un gesto che inaugura e apre lo spazio del pensiero, e che, in sé stesso, non può certo essere trasmesso o insegnato (p. 85). E tale gesto consiste in una relazione con la conoscenza, non è la summa o il veicolo di un *corpus* stabilito di conoscenze (p. 86). Dunque, e qui si intravede una possibile soluzione dell'antinomia, perlomeno quella auspicata da Kohan, "[c]hi insegna afferma un gesto. Può essere che chi apprende lo percepisca, accetti l'invito e, eventualmente, lo ricrei" (Ibid.) Altro non può darsi, perché l'esperienza della filosofia, come ricorda Derrida, non si insegna.

L'altra antinomia è quella che riguarda la relazione ambigua tra sapere e ignorare. "In principio, l'ignoranza è un vuoto, una mancanza, un difetto, e la sapienza il suo contrario. Socrate rovescia le cose e sostiene che questo gesto lo faccia diventare filosofo" (p. 88) Tra le tante varianti del paradosso della filosofia elencate da Kohan, questa sembra essere la più profonda e nascosta, perché il gesto di Socrate, quel rovesciamento che fa sì che sia l'ignoranza a determinare il sapere, viene in un certo senso sacralizzato dall'oracolo di Apollo a Delfi, che sancisce Socrate come il più sapiente fra gli uomini. Nella formulazione che ne dà Walter Kohan, Socrate "sviluppa la sua ricerca, grazie all'oracolo, per legittimare e dare un valore indiscutibile alla sua posizione di confutatore" (p. 89).

Dunque alle spalle di quell'ignoranza propedeutica sembra trasparire una forma di sapere dai connotati inafferrabili. E la narrazione dell'oracolo che Platone ha ritenuto necessario inserire nelle sue pagine, sembra rinviare ad una fonte inattingibile ed estranea al logos di cui vive la filosofia stessa. "La filosofia, desacralizzante rispetto a tutti i saperi, rende sacro il proprio punto di partenza" (p. 88). Molti sentieri sarebbero da percorrere, sullo stimolo di queste brevi note.

Walter Kohan, in conclusione, non intende decifrare l'enigma-paradosso

rappresentato dalla figura di Socrate. Anzi, la sua ricognizione, complessa e avvincente, si chiude con una sorta di richiamo all'esigenza di alimentare tale enigma, come il fuoco di una fornace indispensabile per forgiare nuovi pensieri. (p. 97).

Dunque il paradosso che la filosofia rappresenta per l'educazione, quel paradosso che investe e riguarda l'apprendere e l'insegnare, assume la forma di un'apertura verso una trasformazione radicale. In effetti, come più volte ricorda Kohan, "Socrate suggerisce che la filosofia consista in un impegno per la trasformazione del pensiero" (p. 94). Ma se di autentica trasformazione del pensiero si tratta, questa non può non estendersi e investire l'intero essere, le relazioni tra gli uomini, le pratiche di vita. In questo "Socrate è il primo educatore che non insegna perché gli altri sappiano ciò che non sanno, ma perché trasformino la loro relazione con il sapere. Lì si enuncia un'altra educazione" (p. 88). Senza decifrare l'enigma, ma coltivandolo e abitando in esso.