

## EDUCATING IN A DISCOURAGED EPOCH

Andrea Dessardo\*

**Abstract** We are going through a time of transition, a change of epoch symbolically started with the attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, that is perhaps declaring the end of post-modern. While the latter was characterised by nihilism and lack of clear targets, the time that is being outlined seems instead to claim for a new axiology, as the previous moral apathy was no more sustainable. Our society is more worried by the need of protection and control, and invokes for limiting freedom in order to guarantee security.

This general perspective has unavoidable consequences also in education, that is maybe experiencing a quick change of paradigm. The present essay tries to outline this new trend, particularly through the analysis of some recent books for children.

**Key-words** hyper-modernism; axiology; Covid-19 pandemic; environmentalism; feminism.

**Résumé** Nous traversons une période de transition, un changement d'époque symboliquement amorcé par les attentats du 11 septembre 2001, qui annonce peut-être la fin du post-moderne. Alors que ce dernier se caractérisait par le nihilisme et l'absence d'objectifs clairs, l'époque qui se dessine semble au contraire réclamer une nouvelle axiologie, car l'apathie morale précédente n'était plus soutenable. Notre société est davantage préoccupée par le besoin de protection et de contrôle, et invoque la limitation de la liberté pour garantir la sécurité.

Cette perspective générale a des conséquences inévitables sur l'éducation, qui connaît peut-être un changement rapide de paradigme. Le présent essai tente d'esquisser cette nouvelle tendance, notamment à travers l'analyse de quelques livres récents destinés aux enfants.

**Mots clés** hyper-modernisme ; axiologie ; pandémie de Covid-19 ; environnementalisme ; féminisme.

### Education and pedagogy in the change of age

Francis Fukuyama, who in 1992, after the Soviet Union collapse, solemnly declared *The end of history*, was clearly wrong, we can serenely affirm today without any doubt. But also that time,

---

\* ORCID – 0000-0002-8074-5306

Associate professor in History of education and Children's literature at Università Europea di Roma, Italy.

Contractor teacher in General pedagogy at Pontificia Università Salesiana, Rome, Italy

Contractor teacher in Children's literature at Università degli Studi di Udine, Italy

Contacts: via San Melchiade Papa, 86 / 00167 – Roma / Italy / andrea.dessardo@unier.it

while they were fighting in Yugoslavia, sincerely it seemed too early. In fact, how we had always known, history never ends, if anything it re-presents itself always again in different forms.

The time we are living, for instance, has something in common with what our ancestors experienced a century ago, when a long period of economic development and wealth, the so-called *belle époque*, suddenly vanished in the World War blood-bath, to which at least twenty years of totalitarianism followed, until another war blew up, greater and hugely more savage and violent than the first one. Also the new war, that is now being fought in Ukraine, is most likely another phase of the long and troubled historical transition we are going through, and that began in the 90s, when naively Fukuyama thought it was over. It is by now quite clear that the “special military operation” led by Russia is the premise for an adjustment in world geostrategic and economic balance.

Other important milestones of this transitional period were clearly the terroristic attacks on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 – this event was an evident watershed in our lives, as we realised in those exact moments –, followed by the wars in Afghanistan and in Iraq together with a massive wave of Islamistic terror all around the world, then the Lehman Brothers’ bankruptcy in 2008, the short era of the “Arabic spring”, followed by the massive migrations from Africa to Europe, and perhaps also the Covid-19 pandemic, that increased the general feeling of insecurity and, consequently, the public control on our everyday routine. We well know the rule of this trade-off: ceding freedom for security.

In the present paper I would like to present a reflection, that could be successively deepened, about the responsibilities of education and pedagogy in the time we are going through, a time that seems to be marking an authentic turning point in the values we share, in the economic system, in the geostrategic scenario. As I am going to explain in these pages, it seems that the way we used to educate children in the past decades is outdated, because the axiological frame in which it was conceived, has been overcome. Through the concept of “hyper-modern” suggested by some scholars, I will try to outline the main characteristic of our epoch, supporting the idea that something crucial is going on also in educational matters. I decided to face this particular issue through a brief review of some books published in Italy in order to illustrate to children the Covid-19 pandemic: in my opinion the main approach adopted in these books clearly describes a vigorous change in critical thinking, obedience and compliance to rules, roles of family and institutions and, generally, trust in the future, in human faculties and in science.

Italian scholar Romano Luperini (2005), among others, situates the end of the so-called post-modernism on September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001, arguing that it changed, from different points of view, common people perception of their reality. Among them, he identifies a general renaissance in civic and moral responsibility and a lesser inclination to the black humour, a typical post-modern

characteristic and literary *topos* of the second half of 20th century. Facing the downfall in invincibility of these Western countries winners after the Second World War and in the cold war, intellectuals and scholars felt the duty to product counter-narratives, that oppose to violence and fear of terrorism.

Pope Francis (2015) sharply observed that ours is not just an age of change, but instead a change of age. He affirmed that in Florence in 2015, during the Italian Catholic congress about “new humanism”. Another famous definition he expressed, it is that we are already fighting the Third World War, but “into pieces”.

As Christians engaged in education, it is our compulsive duty to reflect on the values and the ideologies that this time is carrying on, because – I believe – they could have serious consequences on the way our societies would be shaped and built up, and of course they affect directly education and pedagogy, considered as the philosophical thought on education and its needs and goals.

We are called to meditate – looking at the Jubilee of year 2025 - about hope and trust, when the attitude in thinking the future and the place of human beings on planet Earth is in fast transformation, and when even what actually is a human being, is no more so evident. Also the very ideas of hope and trust are in question, when the only accepted authority seems to be the positive science: but we know that hope is not just a statistic projection or a mathematical probability calculus.

### **Post-modernity is over (or it was just an illusion)**

This change of age is been defined by some scholars in the first years of the new millennium (Lipovetsky, 2004; Ascher, 2005; Aubert, 2004, for examples), as “hyper-modern”, in order to mark the discontinuity with the previous period, that we used to call with Lyotard – especially in the United States - “post-modern” or, after Zygmunt Bauman (2000), “liquid modernity”.

While post-modern was characterised by a general sense of nihilism and lack of stability in ideological issues and in axiology, hyper-modern seems to try, in an instinctive, confused and de-structured way, to frantically restore the most affordable aspects of modernity, looking for new meanings. This effort is largely spontaneous and not properly organised, but presents some common signs. “Lipovetsky highlights how hyper-modern does not see just consumerism and hedonism extension [...], but also the affirmation of some forms of solidarity, of ethical responsibility, of ecological activism: a logic of emergency [...], which prevents to speak of a current nihilism dominion, since it represents instead a remedial” (Donnarumma 2014, p. 21)<sup>1</sup>. Raffaele

---

<sup>1</sup> All the translation from Italian into English are made by the author of this paper.

Donnarumma, trying to justify its choice for this definition of our time, explains that the prefix “hyper- is the must to be of contemporaneity, its prestational obsession” (*ibi*, p. 20). While he, after Gilles Lipovetsky, prefers to label our years as “hyper-modernity”, other authors have explored different possible definitions, like “new realism” (Luperini, 2005). Umberto Eco (2012) rather used to refer to the attitude of living in this period as “negative realism”.

The most significant characteristic of our time - I believe - is the reaction, maybe not always totally conscious, to the values depreciation, in a sort of “comeback to order”. “Comeback to order” (“*ritorno all’ordine*”) was also the main cultural and artistic manifesto in Italy in early 1920s.

This renewed impulsive need for order and clearness translates, on one hand, into the request for social control, security and protection, as shown by the increasing results of populist and right-wing parties worldwide, especially in Western countries, and on the other hand with the growth and strengthening of laws, rules but also social conventions and judgments, a sample of which is offered by the woke movement and the cancel culture, and, on a different level, by the empowerment of supranational organisations like the United Nations, the World Health Organisation, NATO and the European Union, to which the global government is progressively transferred, often without directly consulting the citizens. These organisations are no more just organs of coordination among allied sovereign countries, but they tend to state rules and mandatory political goals, that seriously limit the voters’ freedom.

We can remember that Jacques Delors, referring to the European Community, used to say that its development is caused and quickened by crises rather than by affluence periods and wealth. Nowadays we can at last understand how cynical this statement was and how dangerous, because it means that the emergencies are functional to the power, that could be tempted to create them, when they are not, in order to reach its goals.

In a pedagogical perspective, we can notice, instead of the support to critical thinking, that was the basis of education in the second half of 20<sup>th</sup> century until the 1990s, a new wave of conformism and the demand of compliance is arising, some-way that is similar to the social context of years 1920s. Also a hundred years ago, in the middle of the post-war crisis, European societies reacted with a strong and dramatic demand for safety and control in politics and in economy, that, as we know, tragically carried to authoritarianism.

### **Memory of pandemic**

I believe that the way we faced the recent pandemic in 2020-2021 offers a persuasive evidence of what I mean.

I analysed, in some previous studies (see, in English, Dessardo, 2022) some Italian books – but abroad it would have been likely the same - that tried to explain the pandemic and its medical and social effects to children and teenagers, looking for their educational aims. I think that a fruitful perspective to analyse how the emergency has been perceived and, above all, which values and practices have been particularly promoted, is to read books and magazines addressed to children, because of their intrinsic and necessary clarity and conciseness. A book conceived to be read by a child (or with a child) must avoid complexity and it expresses unambiguously the message the author means the most urgent, with simple words, convenient examples and with persuasive narrations. I have reviewed some of the main works published in Italy in the last three years, with an analysis approach of qualitative type, in order to classify the primary elements of what we could name the “social pedagogy” of the Covid-19 pandemic. I have identified the most sold books and the ones printed by the main national publishing houses and then I have observed who the authors are, on which aspects they focus, which style they adopt, trying to sum up the “pedagogical code”, that seems to be promoted among the youngsters facing the medical emergency, but also in a more general perspective. In facts, we can infer that some suggestions do not seem to respond just to the present conjuncture, but they hint to long-term horizon, that implies a wider change in everyday habits. Here I limit my analysis just to a couple of titles, while I already developed it in other more more specific essay (Dessardo, 2022; Dessardo, 2024), in which I described every single work (Capua, 2020; Cattaneo, 2020; Cavallo, 2021; Nerini, Longo, 2020; Pellai, Tamborini, 2021; Sbattella, 2020; Vascotto, 2020a, 2020b).

Instead of – as I naively expected - helping the youngsters in overcoming the lock-down shock, the discouraging isolation and the loneliness of a long period during which they were not allowed to meet either their mates and their relatives, particularly their grand-parents, the great majority of these books just limited themselves to recommend the strict respect of some rules like wearing the surgical mask, washing hands and avoiding personal contacts. These books were often nothing more than “good manners manuals”, without caring much about children’s psychological well-being. Grown up in a Western democratic country, I had never seen before a more extreme case of political compliance in culture and among intellectuals, who just in very few cases dared to claim against the almost total denial of some obvious rights like meet, freely gather, go to work and even go on strike. Some doctors had been disbarred from their professional register and prevented to exercise, just because reluctant in accepting ministerial instructions. In any other circumstances, also feebler measures would be harshly criticised as dangerous attacks to democracy.

Children would never forget these two years and so we adults will do too, of course, with different degrees of awareness. But we must admit that we cannot foresee how children will elaborate this experience as grown up, in their future political and social decisions, and how they will judge the way the pandemic was managed. I fear a radicalisation of our youth in the next decades, as a consequence of the impoverishing of democratic debate in these two years and as a reaction to the

actual injustice with which their childhood has been treated. I think that the damages caused to economy, but above all to democratic life and even to our psychological health, will be largely worse than the benefits achieved in fighting the contagion, if any. According to Giorgio Agamben (2021), one among the very few intellectuals that have raised their voices against the rules implemented by the Italian authorities, I believe that health, *per se*, is just a relative worth, for which we should not sacrifice our fundamental freedoms, on which we built our societies. Agamben, during the pandemic emergency, wrote: “The first thing that the panic wave which has paralysed the country clearly shows, is that our society does not believe any more in anything but in bare life (in Italian: “nuda vita”, literally “naked life”). It is obvious that Italians are ready to sacrifice almost all, ordinary life conditions, social relationships, job, even their friendships, the loved ones and religious and political beliefs for the danger to get sick” (*ibi*, p. 17). And moreover, pointing out the real risk, more dangerous than the simple provisional sanitary restrictions: “A society living in a perpetual emergency cannot be a free society. [...] What that worries is not at most and not only the present, but the further. As wars left as legacy to peace a variety of ominous technologies, from barbed wire to nuclear power stations, it is very likely that they will try to continue some experiments that governments did not reach to achieve also after the sanitary emergency” (Agamben, 2021, p. 18).

During these months there were almost no contrast among political parties, that supported, on the left and on the right, the government almost unanimously, no more parliamentary debate, very few critical positions in media and press, that use to comment the government measures, the most extreme too, sometime even with enthusiasm, like it is sadly done in totalitarian countries. When the distance from the events, in some years, will permit to consider with more serenity the experiences, in which we are now plunged, analysing media and the cultural production of these days, historians in the future would (hopefully) notice the anomaly of the uniformity in communication, that, instead to educate citizens to critical thinking, aimed to melt the individuals into the mass and to involve them in a greater project (Canetti, 1960) that in that specific situation was the fight against Sars-Cov-2, but that could easily change in the next years, just identifying and defining new political goals. Probably the climate change and the defence of the environment will represent the emergencies in the next future, like the so-called United Nations’ Agenda 2030 suggests.

At the moment, we can be surprised that, although the great success of Foucault’s theories (1975) on control society and biopolitics, long-lastingly worldwide discussed in universities, almost nobody, either in academic milieu and among progressive intellectuals, seems to be worried by the drastic reduction of freedom spaces and by some authoritarian impulses.

It may be useful to read again Roberto Esposito’s *Immunitas* (2002) (and also its precedent work *Communitas*, 1998):

When politics takes on life as object of direct intervention, it ends to reduce it to a state of absolute immediacy. [...] That is like if politics, in order to face life, would need to deprive it of any qualitative dimension, to make it “just life”, “plain life”, “naked life” (Esposito, 2002, pp. 17–18).

This paradigm could have decisive implications in pedagogy and education: “The relationship between me and the other – between the immune one and the common – is represented in terms of a destruction, that in the end tends to involve the both into the conflict” (Esposito, 2002, p. 21).

Starting from their Latin etymology, Esposito explains how the two terms *immunitas* and *communitas* are in opposition: a suggestion that may be important to have present in our thought. The main educational paradigm, that the pandemic may have produced, seems to be more concentrated on hygiene and health safety, rather than on social bonds or, we could also say, more focused on “immunity” rather than on “community”. And it is maybe an axiological paradigm that concerns not only the emergency months of Sars-Cov-2, but the next future decades.

### **Girls’ power!**

In the most ideological specimen I saw, *Il dottor Li e il virus con in testa una corona* (“*Doctor Li and the virus with a crown on its head*”) by Francesca Cavallo (2021), the same author of the worldwide feminist best-seller for young girls *Storie della buonanotte per bambine ribelli* (“*Bed-time tales for rebel girls*”) (Cavallo, 2020), the faith in science and the obedience to it were not just limited to the pandemic, but they were openly connected to the engagement for a fairer and more equal society. Therefore, who had some doubts about the actions against Covid-19 contagion, seemed to suggest the author, in some way could be an obstacle also along the way for the general scientific progress, for the safeguard of natural environment, the fight against racism and prejudices, for a more equal economic system and so on.

All the protagonists of the books published in Italy during the pandemic, in order to reason about it, were girls. Maybe that just for a sort of compensation after decades during which feminine characters were in clear minority and often misrepresented, but maybe also responding to the stereotype of girls as more responsive, diligent and obedient than boys. Thus, while boys embodied, also in several literary works, the vanguards of 20<sup>th</sup> century ideologies – fascism and other authoritarianisms – girls seem now to be the forerunners of our 21<sup>st</sup> century hyper-modern times. Greta Thunberg herself could be considered the ideal leader of this crowd of “rebel girls”. After her famous school strikes for climate, she has again and again demonstrated for other humanitarian causes: the migrants in the Mediterranean, the right of Palestine to independence (and the condemn to Israel politics, quite often marked by anti-Semitism) and of women to safe abortion, Ukrainian freedom against Russian aggression and so on.

Girls are more and more often the protagonists of numerous novels and films written and produced in the last years. The main reason, probably, could be that this is a sort of compensation for the absolute traditional male predominance in the past decades, but maybe this happens also because girls are stereotypically perceived as more trustworthy and more compliant in accepting new rules, and are considered more naturally social than boys: so they can be presented as smart civic models. This idea can be true even if very often female characters are shown as rebels or nonconformists, odd and eccentric, usually refusing the traditional roles that the society set for them. Nowadays heroines are no more princesses or fairies, who accept passively to be rescued by knights and to marry the charming prince, but they act directly in order to realise their dreams and to achieve their own goals. But precisely in this refuse of tradition and in the subversion of the old rules lays the new educative paradigm, which is arranging a new normality, a new obedience, a new need for compliance. So, if boys were the vanguard of 20<sup>th</sup>-century ideologies, sometime tragically, girls are the pacers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and Greta Thunberg seems to be just the most known character of this new epic.

But it can be seen that this message seems to be possible in all the publications I read, through the pledge of a sacrifice, through the proof of personal surrender, in order to achieve a higher collective well-being in the future. Conceptually, there is no difference between such a discourse and, for instance, the call to enlist in the army to fight the enemy in the trenches, as our forefathers did a hundred years ago, and how children's books actually told about it in the 1920s (see e.g. Gotta, 1926). The individual life can be sacrificed for the higher collective benefit: nowadays no more for the nation, of course, but for humankind.

In the last decades, we have educated children to think critically, to deconstruct stereotypes and social constructs – such as family, sex and gender, religion, nation. Today, I think, we are facing the *pars construens*: a new worship is growing over the ruins of our civilisation and it requires compliance and obedience.

I can confirm my hypothesis, reading, among others, *Il dottor Li e il virus con in testa una corona* (Cavallo, 2021), written by Francesca Cavallo and illustrated by Claudia Flandoli in a vague manga style. The text was originally freely available on Cavallo's personal web-site and then published, by the well-known progressive publishing house Feltrinelli, after a crowd-funding action.

Francesca Cavallo had already achieved international fame thanks to *Storie della buonanotte per bambine ribelli* (Cavallo, Favilli, 2018), which sold hundreds of thousands copies worldwide. She wrote it together with Elena Favilli, drafting a kind of feminist encyclopaedia, which collects a hundred short biographies (per volume) of different women (the third book [2020] is specially dedicated to migrant women, the fourth to "Italian extraordinary women", 2023). The selection is really wide and various, including, at the same time, Serena Williams and Rita Levi Montalcini,



Malala Yousafzai and Frida Kahlo, Margherita Hack and Michelle Obama, all proposed as different models to emulate. Some of mottoes with which the books have been advertised were: “Once upon a time there was a young girl who dreamt of... marrying a charming prince? No, of going to Mars!” and “To the rebel girls of the world: the story you cannot find out in the book, is the one you are already writing”. Elena Favilli (2021) has recently published also *Guida per bambine ribelli. Alla scoperta del corpo che cambia (A Guide for Rebel Girls at the Discovery of Their Altering Body)*, a progressive handbook about puberty and growth. “Rebel girls” hence became a rich brand to exploit, with a great deal of audience understanding, and were the sign of a profound change in common sense.

Coming back to *Il dottor Li e il virus con in testa una corona*, this book clearly points at trust in science as the only way to go through the emergency. This book is addressed to an older audience (aged 8-12 years), so the attention is not focused just on prevention and rules, but also on some civic values to enforce. Dr. Li Wenliang, the Chinese scientist from Wuhan, who was the first to denounce the virus spreading, is frankly presented as a martyr of the scientific new worship, almost a secular saint for our days and similarly other scientists (*scienziate*, “women scientist”, mum says) at work in order to find out the origin of the virus, a vaccine and a therapy.

### ***Ce n'est qu'un début***

The author insists also on the possibility of an active role for children, apart from the pandemic, desiring a “fairer world”. It is properly a call to action, where the pandemic seems to be just a pretext, an excuse to do active politics. Dr. Wenliang and Greta Thunberg have very few in common, but in this vision they fight on the same side, for science and against obscurantism, prejudice, economic liberalism and the exploitation of the planet resources. Therefore, doubting the measures adopted against Covid-19, becomes fatally next to questioning scientific progress itself, but also environmental concerns and even social justice, peace and international cooperation and security. In this way, a new system of values is arising. And values, by definition, are not questioned, values demand faithful adherence and obedient compliance.

With some exceptions, we must acknowledge that the great majority of these books are concerned at best with preventive measures, especially the importance of the correct way to wear the surgical mask, on maintaining the hands clean and keeping social distance, justifying and confirming the restrictions that have prevented the young readers to go to school, to meet their friends and to see their grandparents. We can say that a number of these works look more like handbooks containing pieces of advice, and in some case like good manners pamphlets, rather than like imaginative tales written to comfort the youngest readers in difficult times.

These books are usually filled with subtle optimism and overall with the fundamental confidence in the power of science. A recurrent issue is, in fact, the “scientific” basis, that tries to explain what coronavirus is, its origins, how it spreads and, of course, how it can be defeated and how

children can play their part in this big historical challenge. Optimism, indeed, persuades that the pandemic could be treated as a historical challenge to accept and not as a catastrophe to cope with. A challenge to win all together.

### **Future is backwards**

I quoted books about the pandemic, but we can find out other features of hyper-modern styles in other literary works. Raffaele Donnarumma, professor at the University of Pisa, employed the category of hyper-modern to review the recent Italian and international literature, marking the recurring use of tales in the first singular person point of view, even when the story is clearly fictional, but pretending to offer an authentic testimony. And that because, according to Donnarumma, after the post-modernist dissolution of traditions and ideologies, with the loss of social relevance by parties and churches, only the individual seems to be reliable: in a broken up society only the individual subject, with his or her weaknesses, in his or her loneliness, seems to be authentic and trustworthy.

Among other common traits of hyper-modernist literature there is the re-discovering of realism and recurring references to the past, often object of nostalgic representations, as if the lost meaning could be found only in history (or just in memories), while the present appears void and insignificant. Actually many novels written for the youngsters in the last twenty years – at least the Italian books I read – are set in the past, particularly during fascism and World War II, inspiring children to fight against present time injustice and discriminations and invoking a sort of new resistance. But many books also describe in realistic narrative, through their protagonists' eyes, our present days with their problems, directly calling the young readers to act for improving them. Call to actions, as we saw in pandemic books, are other traits of hyper-modern and they often have clear pedagogical goals. In this perspective, literature does not constitute just an aesthetic experience, but it has very often declared social aims, in such a way as to reading means to become more aware and engaged.

Quite the opposite, we could object referring to the great achievement of the fantasy genre, emerged exactly at the end of the last century with the beginning of *Harry Potter's* saga, followed by a large crowd of imitations in the first decade of the third millennium. But, according to Darko Suvin's explanation (1979), science-fiction, fantasy, utopia and dystopia are all artistic representations of the detected tensions between the unsatisfying reality and its possible alternatives. Fantasy, a genre established by two Catholic writers like J.K.K. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, reflects, according to Fredric Jameson (1975), to whom we owe the most influential essay about post-modern (Jameson, 1984), an archaic and confused nostalgia for the agricultural and pre-capitalistic societies. In fantasy novels heroes desperately, and sometime unsuccessfully, fight against obscure forces that pervertedly control their universes, with the aim to re-establish and

restore an ancient and mythic order of justice. Fantasy novels are in depth allegories of the disorder and troubles of our present days.

### **A quiet hopeless conclusion**

I hope I have persuasively presented some urgent issues about which we Catholic pedagogues and educationists would have to face and deal with. After the first phase of de-structuration of traditional values during the so-called post-modernism, that we can consider the *pars destruens* of a long historical process, now we are probably dealing with an embryo of *pars construens*, where the vacuum of values is being filled with something new.

Honestly I does not believe that Catholic culture would be able to validly intervene in the debate: other actors are leading the present phase and are setting the rules, completely ignoring the Catholic point of view. But it could be useful at least to be aware. Children would be probably called to act for the defence of the environment, abolishing any ontological difference between humans and animals, with an emphasis that will be similar to that used by authoritarian regimes a century ago. Or they would be rallied for the homosexual people's rights. In the disintegration of our societies, perhaps the only thing that deserves salvation is in health, in our biological lives (*nuda vita*, as Agamben and Esposito say), and in nature, for which science is to be the only remaining source of meaning and therefore an object of the new universal worship.

A relevant aspect that can be observed, and that is particularly evident in books written for the children, was the frequent - explicit or implicit - recourse to the concept of sacrifice: the personal surrender in our freedoms during the pandemic would be surely rewarded in the future by a greater collective gain, following the same logic of religion or, more properly, of totalitarian ideologies: and this option, I mean, risks to cut off the most genuine religious pedagogical thought, replacing it with a false form of sacrifice.

While in the past decades children in Occident were raised in a sound scepticism, now compliance seems to be openly encouraged. But science replaced religion in the need for faith. Almost all the books I read presented the scientific research as the only solution, the real source of human salvation. The new order maybe would not be violent nor cruel, but not less exigent in asking for compliance. Moreover, its battles would often seem to be right and fair, deserving to be fought also by Christians, in order to achieve a more equal society, ruled by humanist principles.

I think that we would not miss the opportunity to collaborate with all the people of good will, still these common battles would not reveal their anti-Christian nature or, better saying, their indifference to religion. Our alliance with humanity, even when it seems to be faraway from God's grace, is a distinctive character of our faith, the faith in the incarnated God. And perhaps stays here the inner kernel of trust.

## Bibliography

- Agamben, G. (2021). *A che punto siamo? L'epidemia come politica [At what point are we? The epidemic as politics]*. Macerata: Quodlibet.
- Ascher, F. (2005). *La société hypermoderne [The hyper-modern society]*. La Tour d'Aigues: Éditions de L'Aube.
- Aubert, N. (2004). *L'individu hypermoderne [The hyper-modern individual]*. Toulouse: Erès.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Canetti, E. (1960). *Masse und Macht [Mass and power]*. Berlin: Claassen.
- Capua, I. (2020). *Ti conosco mascherina [I know you little mask]*. Milano: La Coccinella.
- Cavallo, F. (2021). *Il dottor Li e il virus con in testa una corona [Doctor Li and the virus with a crown on its head]*. Milano: Feltrinelli.
- Cavallo, F., Favilli, E. (2018, 2020). *Storie della buonanotte per bambine ribelli [Bed-time tales for rebel girls]*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Dessardo, A. (2022). The pandemic in children's books: toward a hyper-modern society? The Italian case, *Lubelski rocznik pedagogiczny*, XLI, n. 2, 87-100.
- Dessardo, A. (2024). La pandemia da Covid-19, frontiera del postmoderno? Qualche ipotesi a partire da alcuni recenti libri per bambini [The Covid-19 pandemic, frontier of post-modernity. Hypotheses from some recent books for children], in De Giorgi, F., De Salvo, D., Lepri, C., Salvarani, L., Scandurra, S., Sindoni, C. (eds.), *Passaggi di frontiera. La storia dell'educazione: confini, identità, esplorazioni*. Messina: Messina University Press, pp. 193-202.
- Donnarumma, R. (2014). *Ipermodernità. Dove va la narrativa contemporanea [Hyper-modernity. Where is going the contemporary fiction]*. Bologna: Il Mulino.
- Eco, U. (2012). *Cari filosofi, è l'ora del realismo negativo [Dear philosophers, it is the time of the negative realism]*, *La Repubblica*, March 11<sup>th</sup> 2012.
- Esposito, R. (1998). *Communitas. Origine e destino della comunità [Communitas. Community origin and destiny]*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Esposito, R. (2002). *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita [Immunitas. Life protection and denial]*. Torino: Einaudi.
- Favilli, E. (2020). *Storie della buonanotte per bambine ribelli. 100 donne migranti che hanno cambiato il mondo [Bed-time tales for rebels girls. A hundred migrant women who changed the world]*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Favilli, E. (2021). *Guida per bambine ribelli. Alla scoperta del corpo che cambia [A guide for rebel girls. Discovering the altering body]*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Favilli, E. (2023). *Storie della buonanotte per bambine ribelli. 100 donne italiane straordinarie [Bed-time tales for rebel girls. A hundred extraordinary Italian women]*. Milano: Mondadori.
- Foucault, M. (1975). *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison [Discipline and punish. The birth of the prison]*. Paris: Gallimard.
- Franciscus (2015). *Il nuovo umanesimo in Cristo Gesù. [New humanism in Jesus Christ]*, speech at the Italian Church 5<sup>th</sup> National Convention, Florence, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2015, [https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco\\_20151110\\_firenze-convegno-chiesa-italiana.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2015/november/documents/papa-francesco_20151110_firenze-convegno-chiesa-italiana.html)
- Fukuyama, F. (1992). *The end of history and the last man*. New York: Free Press.
- Gotta, S. (1926). *Piccolo alpino [Little mountain trooper]*. Milano: Mondadori.

- Jameson, F. (1975). Magical narratives. Romance as genre, Critical challenges: The Bellagio Symposium, vol. 7, 135-163.
- Jameson, F. (1984). *Postmodernism, or the cultural logic of late capitalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Lipovetsky, G., Charles, S. (2004). *Des temps hypermodernes [Of hyper-modern times]*. Paris: Grasset.
- Liotard, J.F. (1979). *La condition postmoderne. Rapport sur le savoir [The post-modern condition. A report on knowledge]*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit.
- Luperini, R. (2005). *La fine del postmoderno [The end of post-modern]*. Napoli: Guida.
- Pellai, A., Tambori, B. (2021). *Noemi nella tempesta [Noemi in the storm]*. Milano: DeA Planet.
- Sbattella, F. (2020). *Nano Gianni e i granelli rossi [Dwarf Gianni and the red grains]*. Firenze: Giunti.
- Suin, D. (1979). *Metamorphoses of science-fiction. On the poetics and history of a literary genre*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Vascotto, N. (2020a). *Laila e il coronavirus [Laila and the corona-virus]*. Trieste: Scienza Express.
- Vascotto, Nicole (2020b). *Laila, il coronavirus e la mascherina. Torniamo a scuola! [Laila, the corona-virus and the mask. Back to school!]*. Trieste: Scienza Express.