

The Educational Philosophy of St. John Bosco (“A Claim about a Moral Ideal and an Articulation of Faith”) and the Twentieth Century’s Conversation about Education



John Morrison (Author)
and
Lanfranco M. Fedrigotti S.D.B. (Editor)

Editor’s Preface

May I begin my editorial preface with two quotations, one each from two contemporary philosophers of education, one from the West (Israel Scheffler) and one from the East (Tu Wei-ming).

“We have been living through a period that has seen a remarkable burst of technological energy which has already transformed – and will continue to transform – a wide variety of human activities, including education, in ways that can hardly be foreseen. [...] And while the sciences and the global technical culture they have

made possible base themselves on appeal to stringent empirical tests, open theoretical debate, and objective criteria of evidence, large segments of our public have increasingly rejected the very notions of objective inquiry and the pursuit of truth, replacing them with the idea that subjectivism rules and (almost) anything goes. Clearly, there is work for philosophy to do in responding to our new intellectual and cultural situation” (Israel Scheffler)¹.

“The overriding concern of the Confucian tradition is education. The primary purpose of Confucian education is character-building, and the starting point and source of inspiration for character-building is self-cultivation. The *Great Learning*, one of the four cardinal texts in Confucian moral education, asserts that ‘from the emperor to the commoner every person must, without exception, regard self-cultivation as the root’. This is a claim about a moral ideal and an articulation of faith” (Tu Wei-ming)².

The above two quotations give expression to a basic philosophical-educational attitude (Israel Scheffler) and a Confucian concern (Tu Wei-ming) that is at odds with the contemporary widespread presupposition that “relativism rules and (almost)

1 Israel Scheffler, “Some Contributions of Philosophy to Education,” in *The Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*, vol. 3: *Philosophy of Education*, edited by David M. Steiner, and Bowling Green. (OH: Bowling Green State University Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999), pp. 193-200, quotation from page 193.

2 Tu Wei-ming, “Self-Cultivation as Education Embodying Humanity,” in *The Proceedings of the Twentieth World Congress of Philosophy*, vol. 3: *Philosophy of Education*, edited by David M. Steiner, and Bowling Green (OH: Bowling Green State University Philosophy Documentation Center, 1999), pp. 27-39, quotation from page 27.

anything goes”. For me it was a surprise to realize how the last sentence of Tu Wei-ming in the second quotation above (“This is a claim about a moral ideal and an articulation of faith”) is a perfect description not only of the Confucian educational ideal, but also of St. John Bosco’s educational system, a description that could hardly be improved upon. That is why I included it in the title of my article.

In line with the orientation of the above two thinkers, my article would like to present to the readers of *Theology Annual* a chapter in the remarkable work of John Morrison entitled *The Educational Philosophy of St. John Bosco*.³ In this chapter John Morrison uses the educational intuitions and pedagogical praxis of Don Bosco (as St. John Bosco [1815-1888] is often simply called) to shift through, both empathically and critically, the thought of 20th-century philosophers and educationists. In this way, John Morrison, on the one hand, presents in a faithful and lively way, Don Bosco’s educational philosophy and experience; on the other hand, he points to educational insights and practices of more than temporary value, which 21st century educators may well take into consideration. My presentation of John Morrison’s chapter will take the form of a reducing and reworking of his text, without adding anything substantial. Beginning with the next section, this article has, therefore, both an Author and an Editor. The Author is Mr. John Morrison himself, a recently deceased Australian teacher



3 John Morrison, *The Educational Philosophy of St. John Bosco* (Hong Kong: Tang King Po School, 1976; New Rochelle: Don Bosco Publications, 1979; New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1997).

and educationist. The Editor is myself, a Salesian of Don Bosco, working at Salesian House of Studies, Shaukeiwan, Hong Kong and at Holy Spirit Seminary College, Aberdeen, Hong Kong.

Mr. John Morrison (1904-1998) was for many years active in Australia's State schools both as a teacher and as a school manager. In Sydney he began to learn about St. John Bosco and his method of education, both by getting in touch with Australian Salesians and their work and by reading Don Bosco's voluminous *Biographical Memoirs*⁴ and other Salesian literature. He thus became an admirer, practitioner, and ardent promoter of Don Bosco's educational ideals and practices. His research work on Don Bosco earned him the degree of Master of Education with Honours and resulted in the publication of his *The Educational Philosophy of St. John Bosco*.

What I did as Editor of John Morrison's work is this: I took Chapter 8 Part II of John Morrison's book,⁵ reduced it, and adapted it to our local Chinese situation. Additions and major modifications of John Morrison's text by me as Editor are all indicated in the notes, as they occur. The title, the subtitles, this Preface, and the Postface are formulated by me as Editor. The original title given by John Morrison to Chapter 8 Part II of his book was: "Don Bosco's Pedagogy in Relation to Twentieth Century Educational Thought". I am grateful to the original publisher for the permission to reproduce

4 Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, Angelo Amadei, and Eugenio Ceria, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, I-XIX, English translation from the original Italian, edited by Diego Borgatello (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-2003).

5 John Morrison, *The Educational Philosophy of St. John Bosco* (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1997), pp. 212-240.

and modify the original text of John Morrison.⁶

School teachers and educational workers who have heard about Don Bosco and his Preventive System of Education sometimes may ask themselves: "What is the place of Don Bosco in the history of education?" While studying in their Universities or Teachers' Colleges, they heard the names of many famous educationists. Becoming acquainted with St. John Bosco, they may wonder why his name was seldom mentioned, if at all, during their years of training. My editing of John Morrison's text is in response to such questioning by our teachers. My hope is that, besides offering a reflection on educational theory and practice, this text will also provide an at least partial answer to the question of Don Bosco's relationship to other famous names in the history of contemporary education.



After a short Introduction, the Author reviews Don Bosco's fundamental educational principles, comparing them with those of well-known 20th century philosophers of education, such as John Dewey, Alfred North Whitehead, Martin Buber, Jacques Maritain, and others. Next, while keeping up the dialogue with important educational writers, he concentrates his attention on

6 The original publisher is the Australia Salesian Province of Mary Help of Christians, Province Centre, 3, Middle Street, Ascot Vale Vic 3032. A shorter version of the present article appeared in Chinese in the following publication: Lin Zhong Wei, and Zhang Kuan Rong, eds., *Ciyouhui Jiaoyude Zhihui. Jiaoshi Shouce* (Hong Kong: Vox Amica Press, 2007), pp. 29-40. I am also grateful to God for the fact that the East-Asia-Oceania Region of the Salesians of Don Bosco, of which the China Province and the Australia Province are members, is becoming a community in more ways than one.

some crucial aspects of education: the problem of freedom and control, the essential importance of love and joy, the need to clarify the goal of education, the thorny problem of punishments, and the indispensability of play. After the Author's short conclusion, the Editor's Postface will form an 'inclusion' with the Editor's Preface and its two initial quotations, giving a closer look at the local Salesian situation in China and at the future of education in the "global village".

Three years ago the Salesian Family of St. John Bosco celebrated the Centenary Jubilee of its life in China (1906-2006). One year ago (2008), the World Youth Day was celebrated for the first time in Australia, more precisely in Sydney (the home of our Author, Mr. John Morrison), with the participation of many young people from Mainland China, Taiwan, Macau, and Hong Kong. This year (2009) is the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the foundation of the Salesian Society at the hands of St. John Bosco and eighteen young pupils of his in Turin, Italy (18 December 1859). This article intends to be a tribute of gratitude to God for the educational and pastoral fruitfulness of St. John Bosco's Preventive System of Education in China, in Australia, and the world over.

Introduction

The only account written specifically on education by Don Bosco (1815-1888) was his treatise of half-a-dozen pages entitled: *The Preventive System in the Education of the Young*⁷. Some

⁷ It can be found in Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, IV (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1967), pp. 380-

other writings of Don Bosco are basic for an understanding of his education, but they are all factual recordings of personal experience. The most important writings belonging to this category are: *Regulations for the Festive Oratory*⁸; *Regulations for the Hospice Attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales*⁹; *Circular Letter on the Use of Punishments in Salesian Houses*¹⁰; *Letter from Rome of 10 May 1884*.¹¹ Even if qualitatively very dense, quantitatively this is not very much.¹²



385; or in *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales* (Roma: Editrice S.D.B., 1984), pp. 246-253; or in Paul P. Avallone, *Keys to the Hearts of Youth. Reason, Religion, Kindness, St. John Bosco's Pastoral and Educational Mission. A Spirituality and Methodology* (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1999), pp. 109-116. The original bibliographical note has been updated and supplemented by the Editor. The four bibliographical indications that follow with their respective notes are also from the Editor.

- ⁸ Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, III (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-2003), pp. 441-459. (Editor's note)
- ⁹ Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, IV (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-2003), pp. 542-559. (Editor's note)
- ¹⁰ Eugenio Ceria, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, XVI (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1995), pp. 368-376; also Paul P. Avallone, *Keys to the Hearts of Youth. Reason, Religion, Kindness, St. John Bosco's Pastoral and Educational Mission. A Spirituality and Methodology* (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1999), pp. 117-129. (Editor's note)
- ¹¹ Paul P. Avallone, *Keys to the Hearts of Youth. Reason, Religion, Kindness, St. John Bosco's Pastoral and Educational Mission. A Spirituality and Methodology* (New Rochelle: Salesian Publishers, 1999), pp. 130-140. (Editor's note)
- ¹² For a rather complete collection of Don Bosco's pedagogical writings, see Pietro Braido, ed., *S. Giovanni Bosco: Scritti sul sistema preventivo nell'educazione della gioventù*, Introduzione, presentazione e indici alfabetico e sistematico (Brescia: Editrice La Scuola, 1965), pp. i-vii, 1-668; Idem, ed., *Don Bosco educatore. Scritti e testimonianze*, Istituto Storico Salesiano Fonti, 7 (Roma: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1992), pp. 1-474. (Editor's note)

Compared with a prolific writer and educationist who bridged the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as John Dewey, or with more recent educational thinkers such as J. Brubacher, J.M. Rich, or P. Nash, who wrote works on various aspects of educational philosophy, Don Bosco was not an educational theorist. He was essentially a practical educator, a ‘doer’, one of those sensible men who, as Max Black says, “soon abandon ‘saying’ in favor of ‘showing’”¹³. In other words, Don Bosco was an educator, before being an educationist.¹⁴

The nineteen volumes of St. John Bosco’s *Biographical Memoirs* are studded with examples of his pedagogy in action. They are more akin to case-histories of educational practice than to pure research on educational theory. From an analysis of what Don Bosco’s biographers recorded in the life of the priest-educator, in relation to his work among youth in his Oratories and elsewhere, some general principles of Bosconian educational thought can be inferred.¹⁵

Fundamental Educational Principles

These pedagogical principles grouped under broad headings, when examined and compared with pedagogical criteria of other

13 Max Black, “Rules and Routines,” from *The Concept of Education*, edited by R.S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 102.

14 This last sentence is an addition by the Editor. (Editor’s note)

15 Don Bosco does not fall foul of the well-known gibe aimed at theoreticians deprived of practical experience: “Those who know how to do. Those who do not know how to do, teach others how to do. Those who do not know how to teach others how to do, teach others how to teach others how to do”. (Editor’s note)

educational writers of more recent times, show a foreshadowing of many twentieth century educational ideals.

Don Bosco’s educational concepts were based on ‘reason’, ‘religion’ and ‘kindness’. All these three areas were interrelated and part of his Preventive System of Education. They were largely concerned with educational processes which involved: training, instruction and learning by example and experience; teaching and learning principles; training and encouragement in problem-solving; training in the art of conversation through sodalities, clubs and ‘assistance’.

These educational processes were aimed at, in R.S. Peters’ phrase, the “whole man”¹⁶, who learned what was “worth-while”¹⁷ for his material, intellectual, and spiritual benefit. In 1972 in the U.S.A., Margaret Mead, at the sixty-second annual convention of the National Council of Teachers of English, suggested that each child’s learning “what is to be completely human” was what was worthwhile in education. While for Don Bosco being ‘completely human’ involved the religious experience, his students’ collaboration “with the teacher in the educative process” achieved the educational goal described by Margaret Mead as relating “to what has happened, what is happening and what will happen” in the context of their times.¹⁸



16 R.S. Peters, “What is an Educational Process?” from *The Concept of Education* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 21.

17 Ibid, p. 4.

18 Margaret Mead’s words are quoted from W.J. Crocker, “Learning to be Completely Human” from *English in Australia* (n. 25, November, 1973), p. 14.

What was educationally ‘worth-while’ lay, on the one hand, in the development of a useful citizen, one who could take his place in an efficient and competent manner at his employment. On the other hand, it also lay in forming a person who could be responsible to, and for, others in socially useful work. However, what was ‘worth-while’ was also to be found in the practicing of one’s Catholic faith: ‘knowing, loving and serving God’; and developing from this, his relationships with his/her fellows, these being based upon the Bosconian ideals of reasonableness, charity, and kindness.

Don Bosco’s aims, then, were realistic enough: effective citizenship, useful work through education; a faith to live and die by. Bosconian values, too, were in agreement with his aims: a largely vocational education to meet the needs of people confronted with industrial urbanization; together with a Catholic philosophy of life; a preparation for living and for ‘the life to come’.

John Dewey (1859-1952), as the pioneer of ‘pragmatic instrumentalism’, argued that the hypothesis that worked was the true one; that the scientific method is the only worthwhile method, just as democracy is the only worthwhile political system; that science shows the purely subjective character of value.¹⁹ John Dewey admitted of only naturalistic values, whereas Don Bosco admitted of both naturalistic and supernaturalistic values. Both Dewey and Don Bosco were concerned with social efficiency, with education by participation, with play as a means to learning, with

the efficacy of psychological and sociological educational bases, and with what Dewey defined as the ‘reconstruction of experience’. Both of them regarded these as worthwhile educational aims. Still, Don Bosco would have regarded education, not as an end in itself, as Dewey did, but only as a means to an ultimate end: man’s eternal salvation. While Dewey regarded education as a process of living, Don Bosco saw it as a preparation for future eternal living as well.

Don Bosco’s educational aims prefigured in some respects those of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), the English educationist. Whitehead described the educated person as one who was appreciative of culture, but who had, in addition, expert knowledge in some special direction. He also suggested that ideas presented to educands were to be as few and as important as possible.²⁰ Both points strike typical Bosconian notes.



R.S. Peters, another English educationist, writing in 1963, in “Must an Educator Have an Aim?” warned against a grave educational pitfall. He argued that some educational systems followed a method in which experiential means were adopted to premeditated ends, resulting in a means-end model which was false.²¹ For Peters, values were principles involved in ‘proceeding’ or ‘producing’ rather than ‘goals’ and ‘end-products’. Don Bosco’s pedagogy is in agreement with Peters’ in that the manner of education is important. But Don Bosco would not have agreed with an educational rationale that

¹⁹ See, for example, John Dewey, “Education and Our Present Social Problems,” *School in Society* (15 April 1933).

²⁰ A.N. Whitehead, *The Aims of Education*, 1st ed. (London: Benn, 1916, 1950).

²¹ R.S. Peters, “Must an Educator Have an Aim?” from *Authority, Responsibility and Education* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1963).

abstracted from a premeditated end. For how would one ‘proceed’ or ‘produce’ without direction? And where would these ‘procedures’ end? Educational principles, for Don Bosco, were in agreement with a process which was: that through diligent and purposeful work, and the practicing of Catholic religion, inclusive of its sacramental and Marian aspect, all ‘proceeding’ and ‘producing’ would arrive, by the grace of God, at a definite premeditated end, namely, man’s salvation, understood as being “happy on earth [... and] eternally blissful in Heaven”²².

Regarding the ends of education, Don Bosco would have agreed with Jacques Maritain (1882-1973) who held that the end of education is the ‘shaping’ of ‘dignified’ Man, the fulfillment of his personality and individuality. Don Bosco would also agree with Maritain’s view of education as a ‘human awakening’, a liberation of man through knowledge, wisdom, goodwill and love.²³ Both Don Bosco and Maritain, as Catholic educators, would have regarded any pedagogical rationale based exclusively in science as spurious. They would have seen in educational pragmatism, as Dewey understood it, a form of scholarly skepticism, a cult of means which would end in a psychological worship of the ego. Don Bosco’s views anticipated Maritain’s concept of education as a process of constant creative renewal, demanding spontaneity in, and a widening of, the

pupil’s experience, and calling for the adoption of methods suited to the times. Don Bosco would seem to have presaged Maritain’s criterion that wisdom could not be learned as merely an object of analytical reasoning, but that wisdom included both intuition and love. In his turn, Maritain offered a philosophical basis for the humanistic psychologies of Abraham H. Maslow (1900-1970), Gordon W. Allport (1897-1967), and Carl Rogers (1902-1987), to which contemporary educational theory and practice owe so much and which are in deep consonance with many of Don Bosco’s pedagogical intuitions.²⁴

Even though it denied Christocentricity, the Jewish transcendental existentialism of Martin Buber (1878-1965)²⁵, with its social conception of knowledge based on mutual relationships, was not unlike Don Bosco’s Catholic spirituality as seen in his Sodalities. Here Don Bosco encouraged dialogical relationships between pupils and teachers. In the Salesian sodalities, the ‘inclusiveness’ on the part of the educator assumed a ‘disinterestedness’ that would not destroy the relationship through ‘familiarity’, as in the case of Buber’s ‘I-Thou’ relationship.²⁶ Man’s solitariness, according to Buber, is checked by communicative encounters between man and man, man and nature, man and God. In a similar vein, Don Bosco had evolved communicative techniques



22 For this definition of man’s salvation by Don Bosco see Pietro Braido, *Don Bosco’s Pedagogical Experience* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1989), p. 125 with note 20. (Sacramental and Marian aspect, mention of God’s grace, definition of education, and note have all been added by Editor)

23 Jacques Maritain, *Education at the Crossroads* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1943).

24 This last sentence is an addition by the Editor. (Editor’s note)

25 Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Collins Fontana Library, 1961).

26 The terms between inverted commas are used in a specialized sense, for which see Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Collins Fontana Library, 1961), pp. 109-131. (Editor’s note)

in dealing with personal isolation and loneliness in his inclusive Salesian ‘assistance’. Teachers as ‘loving fathers’, whose continued ‘presence’ foresaw problems before they arose, were already behaving in the manner of Buber’s conception of an educator as a ‘teacher-artist’; in fact, the effective implementation of Bosconian preventive pedagogy required teaching to be an art. The needs of children were being met with consistently applied methods centred in reasonableness and kindness, in a communion of love. No wonder Don Bosco conceives education itself as an art: “Education is the great art of forming human beings”²⁷.

Unlike Martin Buber, an empiricist such as Herbert Feigl (1902-1988)²⁸, having no time for absolute values, would not find affinity with Bosconian pedagogy’s being based on beliefs. Like Dewey, Feigl did not admit of revelation or supernaturalism, as Don Bosco did. On the other hand, Bosconian educational ideas differed little from Feigl’s hypothesis that the educator should clearly guide people towards conduct which would yield a large measure of self-approval. Still, the danger of egotistical subjectivism developing from this, which would be contrary to the ideals of Christian charity and humility, was acknowledged by Don Bosco, and was to be balanced reasonably against the need for the learner’s self-esteem.

27 This is Don Bosco’s definition of education. See Pietro Ricaldone, *Don Bosco educatore*, I (Colle Don Bosco: Libreria Dottrina Cristiana, 1953), p. 97; Chinese translation: Li Jiatang, *Sheng Ruowang Bao Sigaode Jiaoyufa*, I-II, translated by Hu Ande (Taipei: Ciyou Chuban She, 1982), I, p. 87. (Editor’s addition, English translation, and note)

28 Herbert Feigl, “Ends and Means of Education,” from *National Society for the Study of Education*, 54th Yearbook, Part I (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1955).

G.H. Bantock, in his work, *Freedom and Authority in Education*²⁹, disagreed with thinkers of the empiricist school in relation to educational aims, arguing that Dewey’s analogy between school and society was tenuous. According to Bantock, school was concerned with learning in a way society was not; moreover, the role of the teacher as ‘Big Friend’ or ‘Cheer Leader’ was not true to life outside of the school situation. Bantock concluded that ultimate questions could not be avoided, that educational aims, concepts of value and authority were bound up with the nature of man and his relation to the universe. Such conclusions could allow for the unequivocally Christian interpretation that Don Bosco made. His pedagogy assumed adequate ends, without which, according to Bantock, educational practice was directionless, pointless. To the Christian educator such goal-less education would be like building an educational system without a plan, a beginning with no end, a causeless causality. Naturally, an education with clear ends raises the question of education and freedom.³⁰

Before dealing with this problem, let us summarize our findings so far. We have found that Don Bosco’s educational practice anticipates not only the fundamental tenets of Christian thinkers like Maritain and Bantock, or of religious thinkers like Buber, but also the sound methodological intuitions of non-religious thinkers like Dewey, Whitehead, and Feigl. In this way, Don Bosco bears witness to the fact that there is no contradiction between sound

29 G.H. Bantock, *Freedom and Authority in Education* (London: Faber and Faber, 1965).

30 The last sentence is added by the Editor. (Editor’s note)

ultimate ends and sound methodological means. On the contrary, the harmony between ends and means ensures the solidity and the fruitfulness of the educational endeavour.³¹ Is this sufficient to give Don Bosco a place among the educationists? Guy Avanzini says that “he can stand among the greatest”³².

Freedom and Control

Don Bosco’s Preventive System, as such, was free from pressures and disciplinary measures extrinsic to it; guidance, correcting, counseling forces being intrinsic, it could therefore allow for a significant freedom on the part of educator and educand. In effect, Don Bosco’s Preventive System aimed at being free from outside enforcement and allowed for more educational freedom from within. As in the case of a working democracy, however, speed of decision-making was slower. Bosconian solutions to educational problems took time. They were sought in a family type environment where teachers, because of their continued presence were accepted as fathers or brothers who were ‘on hand to lend a hand’ at the logical and psychological moment. They also assumed a Christian concept of the validity and worth of the family. In this manner, Don Bosco’s children, being secure in the knowledge of continuing help

in a communion with others, were not “isolated” or “anxious” in the sense that Eric Fromm suggested was the situation for many people in the modern age.³³

As constituted members of a pedagogical family, children in Don Bosco’s institutions enjoyed something called for by Eric Fromm, namely: that “full realization of positive freedom which is based on the uniqueness and individuality of man”³⁴. This need of children had already been acknowledged by Don Bosco, together with the security that his pedagogical family provided. Freedom was, however, to be understood in the sense meant by St. Paul in his Second Letter to the Corinthians: “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2Cor 3:17). While “it is not appropriate to say that we choose to be happy”, since “choice is not the same as wishing”³⁵, the moral doctrine of St. Thomas Aquinas, as Don Bosco understood it,³⁶ did “not aim at the niggardly ordering of the individual’s conduct in blind obedience to a code”³⁷, but did channel human freedom within the God-given indications of the natural moral law and the precepts of the Church.

Thus, on the one hand, Don Bosco’s Oratories allowed for wide freedom within the framework of the Christian, family-type



31 This holistic feature of Don Bosco’s education is expressed in terms of “a synthesis of tradition and novelty” in Pietro Braido, *Don Bosco’s Pedagogical Experience* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1989), pp. 120-123. (Editor’s note)

32 Guy Avanzini, “Don Bosco’s Pedagogy in the Context of the 19th Century,” in Patrick Egan, and Mario Midali, *Don Bosco’s Place in History* (Roma: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1993), p. 305. This paragraph with its two notes is added by the Editor. (Editor’s note)

33 Eric Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Holt, 1941).

34 *Ibid.*, p. viii.

35 Thomas Aquinas, quoted in *The Pocket Aquinas, Selections from the Writings*, edited by Vernon J. Bourke (New York: Washington Square Press, 1960), p. 189.

36 J.A. AYERS, *A Salesian Education*, Unpublished Treatise (Sydney: Boys’ Town, 1974), 23a.

37 Gerald Vann, *Morals and Man* (London: Collins, 1960), p. 119.

environment; moreover, Don Bosco often spoke on free will in his talks to the boys. On the other hand, as far as the social conditions of the Oratory were concerned, Don Bosco's boys were only partially free, in K. Mannheim's sense,³⁸ to influence them from within. Such a limitation of freedom was due to the simple taking into account the fact that human beings, while necessarily wishing to be happy, do not always *choose* to be happy.³⁹ Don Bosco's boys were acting voluntarily to the extent that they were making freely the choices they had to make. They were assisted in this by Salesian 'assistance', which influenced their development through subtle and kindly pressures. This, however, did not amount to their accepting indoctrination.

There is, in fact, the "danger that a pupil who identifies himself with a teacher who is himself a believer will be indoctrinated"⁴⁰. Still, as R.S. Peters has pointed out, what is worthwhile can be "transmitted in a morally unobjectionable manner"⁴¹. True, "motivation is the key to any modern education policy"⁴², but it is now being admitted that "the stimulus of ambition"⁴³ is not sufficiently strong. It is also

38 K. Mannheim, *Man and Society in an Age of Reconstruction. Studies in Modern School Structure* (London: Routledge, 1940). Mannheim postulated that whether society be planned or otherwise, a man feels free if he thinks he has initiative and free will to influence social conditions.

39 This sentence is added by the Editor. (Editor's note)

40 J.P. White, "Indoctrination," in *The Concept of Education*, edited by R.S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 189.

41 R.S. Peters, "What is an Educational Process?" in *The Concept of Education*, edited by R.S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 5.

42 Edgar Faure, "Education and the destiny of man," in *The Unesco Courier* (November 1972, 0.9).

43 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

admitted that at least as strong motivating elements are "curiosity, the desire to understand, to know or to discover"⁴⁴. Don Bosco's insistence on the latter stimuli could, then, be applied to religious as well as secular experience, so that religious belief could be transmitted in an "unobjectionable manner" through "a teacher who is a believer".

"Belief" or "faith" is an inescapable element of one's fundamental view of life. This is true even of those who deny the value of "belief" or "faith". Their denial is itself an instance of "belief", of "faith". The challenge, therefore, is not whether we should believe or not. The challenge is, rather, what is worth believing and what is not. Catholics, Christians, and non-Christians will face this challenge in a variety of ways. There will be discontinuity among these different ways, but also continuity. That is why we chose to insert in the main title of our article the words of the expert in Confucian education quoted in the Editor's Preface: "A claim about a moral ideal and an articulation of faith". A Christian can make his own these words because he or she recognizes in them the expression of a basic value, the value of "ideals", the value of "faith", to be transmitted "in a morally unobjectionable manner"⁴⁵.



Rule-Giver and Rules

Moreover, because Don Bosco's few regulations were "seen to be rational" and since his students had confidence in him as a rule giver, his system, free in the sense explained by St. Paul,

44 *Ibid.*, p. 9.

45 The whole of this paragraph is from the Editor. (Editor's note)

worked. J.M. Rich, an American educationist, pointed out that any successful organization, such as a school, would largely depend on the harmonious relationship within it between two functions: control and innovation.⁴⁶ If those in authority had few relations with teaching personnel who, in turn, had little communication with their students, then teachers and students would think that a ‘faceless’ authority was determining their future. This would breed feelings of alienation resulting in inefficient teaching. Such problems would be prevented, Rich concluded, if individuals had meaningful social contacts and interaction with their peers. Further, alienation would be diminished by involving teachers and pupils in forms of decision-making.

Don Bosco, from 1847, had been involving the students in decision-making in their clubs and sodalities, while the ‘presence’ of the Salesian teachers during ‘assistance’ was encouraging ‘social contacts’ and ‘interaction’ among educators and educands; Don Bosco was meeting his staff weekly to discuss current pedagogical problems in connection with their and the students’ work, and sought solutions on a harmonious and friendly basis. Don Bosco was already anticipating organizational methods of control which are, at times, still talking points among educationists. Further, Rich was of the opinion that one solution to the problem of organization lay in teachers identifying their own goals with the school, and, in most cases, the personality of the administrator had a direct bearing on this procedure.

46 J.M. Rich, *Education and Human Values* (Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley, 1968).

There is little doubt that Don Bosco’s dynamic personality enabled him to direct those teachers under his care along lines which were consonant with his educational policy, mainly due to the personal nature of his relationships with them. Each one knew that he cared for them. He was a father to them, interested in their welfare. Pupils regarded their teachers in the same light. Hence, school organization and control were on family lines in which independent interests and goals were enjoined to further the progress of the whole organism. Still today, incoming Salesians “have been advised to steep themselves in the Salesian way of life, until such a simple life-style becomes part and parcel of their religious thinking and educational make-up”⁴⁷.



Nevertheless, complex educational establishments had to be managed and administered. The same spirit prevailed in this. Don Bosco made a point of explaining school rules, for instance, to the whole school, staff and students, at least once a term, giving the justification for each rule. In addition, the prospective duties of both teachers and pupils were read out and the reasons for such duties given. The aims of this procedure were: to ensure that all members of the school family were aware of their responsibilities, duties, and freedoms; that the community would be aware, through the public airing and substantiation of regulations, of what they were choosing to abide by; and that these rules were meant to be effected in a ‘fair’ and ‘impartial’ manner. Again, the importance of the rule-giver as well as of the bases of the rules themselves, was evident. Let it be

47 J.A. Ayers, *A Salesian Education*, p. 21.

noted that Salesian emphasis on what has been accepted or rejected traditionally, refers only to the ‘spirit’ of Bosconian pedagogy, not to a series or set of rules.⁴⁸

Don Bosco’s Oratories approximated to, in Israel Scheffler’s terminology, the “rule model”⁴⁹. In accordance with this model, the school abided by rules or principles which were reasonable; issues arising out of school business were assessed in the light of general principles; concepts of ‘principles’, ‘reasons’, and ‘consistency’ went hand in hand in cognitive and moral spheres; rationality was measured in terms of consistency, impartiality, universalizability of principles, and human dignity; and, the “job of education” was “to develop character in the broadest sense”, a “principled thought and action” in which “the dignity of man” was manifested.⁵⁰

Bosconian Oratories, which anticipated many of these principles, had distinct advantages: knowledge was received, assimilated, used,

after having been assessed and justified by the pupils by recourse to principles; there were possibilities for innovation and room for autonomy of judgement at least in the secular studies, through principled assessment; dialogue between educator and educand was possible using the common ground of an appeal to principles; this ‘rule-model’ allowed for independent thinking, freedom to accept or reject what was taught in the light of an objectivity and rationality in teaching procedure.

On the other hand, this was possible within the acknowledged and accepted limits of a Catholic philosophy of life, where, if rejection of basic moral principles was freely made, no place could be found for that student within the society of that school or Oratory. Don Bosco always attempted, of course, to ensure the future elsewhere of such people. All the same, however, his system would offer little possibility for acceptance of that undefined freedom which has been associated with a sort of ‘pluralistic society’ within the school.⁵¹



48 Still, Don Bosco’s *Regulations for Pupils of Salesian Houses*, an offshoot of his *Regulations for the Hospice Attached to the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales*, were treasured as enshrining his precious experience. The first Salesians in China did not delay producing a Chinese translation in print entitled: *Sheng Fangjige Salajue Hui Ge Xuexiao Zongguize* (Aomen: Wuyuanzui Gongyi Xuexiao, 1925). These Rules in Chinese not only were read in public before the school’s general assembly at the beginning of the school year, but a copy of them was given to each student. A modernized edition of these rules was published by the China Province around 1966, in English: *Rules for Boys in Salesian Schools* (Hong Kong: Tang King Po School, and in Chinese: *Ciyou Xuexiao Guize* (Hong Kong: Tang King Po School). (Editor’s note)

49 Israel Scheffler, “Philosophical Models in Teaching,” from *The Concept of Education*, edited by R.S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), pp. 129-132.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 130.

The greatest advantage of the ‘rule-model’ type school was that other methods which were more impressionistic or intuitive

51 For a reflection on the challenges posed to Don Bosco’s Preventive System by inter-religious contexts, see Jose Kuttianimattathil, *The Educational System of Don Bosco in the Non-Christian Context* (Bangalore: Don Bosco Youth Animation, 1983); also Rosario Krishnaraj, “The Preventive System in the Non-Christian Context,” in *Educating the Don Bosco Way. All India Seminar on the Preventive System*, Kristu Jyoti College Bangalore May 7-15, 1978 (Madras: Salesian Publications, 1978), pp. 98-105. For a reflection on this from a more general Catholic viewpoint, see Terence H. McLaughlin, Joseph S.J. O’Keefe, and Bernadette O’Keefe, eds., *The Contemporary Catholic School. Context, Identity and Diversity* (London, Washington, D.C.: The Falmer Press, 1996). (Editor’s note)

could still be included. In fact, the rational judgement process of the ‘rule-model’ could apply accumulated ideas or insights to principled assessment. What could become questionable was that ‘rule-model’ establishments, similar to those of Don Bosco’s, could become formalized or rigid. This would easily happen, if principles were not continually under review and reasons for them were not forthcoming. Don Bosco attempted to overcome formalism in his Oratories by emphasizing the ‘reasonableness’ of what was being done there. Moreover, he encouraged group relationships with accents on informal, relaxed, and joyous ongoing experiences in his classrooms and during the recreations.

Christian Love and Joy

Bosconian charity produced an atmosphere of joyousness in Bosconian Oratories and schools. Bosconian rapport was characterized by a continuing personal communion. Its effectiveness consisted in what Martin Buber later was to describe as the ‘dialogic relationship’ between teacher and taught, both personalized and individualized, carried into every facet of the Preventive System. This ‘dialogic relationship’ underlined pedagogical policy in relation to: correction; provision for the felt needs of the young; giving a sense of belonging and security to the student; promoting a sense of confidence between educator and educand as among the students themselves. Dialogical rapport was the basis of the Salesian ‘assistance’ in which educators communicated with and counseled students in class, at play, in games, clubs, dramatics, choirs, and in the Sodality system itself. It was the presence of the Salesian educator which could make “a dull day suddenly hum with

excitement; and re-create Don Bosco for us in a way that made our young hearts leap with joyful enthusiasm”⁵². Don Bosco established this rapport by using means centred in Christian charity, and which were eminently effective in winning confidence.

First, “he made himself available always. He took a keen interest in the studies of his boys, their sports, their hobbies, dramatics, debates, and Sodalities. He kept himself posted on their home and school activities”⁵³. Don Bosco explained: “The boys must not only be loved, but they must know that they are loved”⁵⁴.

Second, the educator gained the confidence and respect of the pupil through love, not fear. This was achieved through “warm and expansive kindness, persevering and never-ending patience by avoiding harshness and sarcasm, which hurt the young and weaken their self-respect”⁵⁵. Paradoxically, too, Don Bosco had written: “An educator should seek to win the love of his pupils, if he wishes to inspire fear in them”⁵⁶.

Third, a friendly, kind approach was used in counseling or correcting. “The pupil realizes that a friend is at hand. His heart will



52 Thus Fr. Joseph Ciantar, SDB as quoted in J.A. Ayers, *A Salesian Education*, p. 23.

53 Paul Avallone, *Reason, Religion, Kindness. The Educational Method of St. John Bosco* (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965), p. 47.

54 Eugenio Ceria, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, XVII (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 2002), p. 88.

55 Paul Avallone, *Reason, Religion, Kindness, The Educational Method of St. John Bosco* (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965), p. 48.

56 *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales* (Rome: Editrice S.D.B., 1984), p. 252.

open and unfold anxieties and needs”⁵⁷. Don Bosco had advised his Salesians that, on every occasion advice had to be given or a suggestion made, it was to be done in such a way that the student felt happier for it.⁵⁸

Fourth, a boy’s confidence was to be won by overcoming ‘generation gaps’ or age barriers. “This is accomplished by a certain familiarity. Outside the classroom, mingle freely with the pupils. Enjoy their laughs and jokes. Such occasions give the students opportunity to see us not as teachers, but as interested friends”⁵⁹. Here Don Bosco would seem to differ from Martin Buber’s apparent contention that an educator cannot be at the same time teacher and friend of his or her pupils.⁶⁰

Lastly, and encompassing all the methods or suggestions offered, with Don Bosco it was through love in the Christian sense, in a charitable disposition towards his students, that the gap between educator and pupil would be bridged. When asked for the secret of his success in education, he replied: ‘Love’.⁶¹ The rapport so engendered, contributed towards the pupil’s growth in personality and confidence and in happiness. The concept of happiness so

57 Paul Avallone, *Reason, Religion, Kindness, The Educational Method of St. John Bosco* (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965), p. 48.

58 Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco, IV* (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-2003), p. 395.

59 Paul Avallone, *Reason, Religion, Kindness, The Educational Method of St. John Bosco* (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965), p. 48.

60 See Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man* (London: Collins Fontana Library, 1961), pp. 125-128. (Editor’s note)

61 Paul Avallone, *Reason, Religion, Kindness, The Educational Method of St. John Bosco* (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965), p. 48.

often referred to by the biographers, however, was an extension of Christian charity based both on ‘kindness’ and the Apostle St. Paul’s interpretation of joy: “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand” (Phil 4:4-5). The ‘happiness’ or ‘joy’ resulting was a fulfillment of the Christian interpretation of man classically expressed by the Doctor Angelicus, St. Thomas Aquinas. That is, the satisfaction of human beings’ “natural inner desire for happiness” lay in the “possession of God”⁶². E.B. Phelan, writing in 1963, stated that Don Bosco ‘considered it the primary duty of the teacher to bring Christ to the boys’ and that “books have been devoted to Don Bosco and his educational system. But to him teaching was only an expression of his love of Christ in the person of neglected boys...”⁶³



Frauke Chambers wrote an article entitled: “Education through Ecstasy?”⁶⁴ This article is a review and commentary on George Leonard’s *Education and Ecstasy*⁶⁵. Frauke Chambers writes: “Leonard states that the main purpose and goal of education is ‘the achievement of moments of ecstasy’ and that ‘education, at best, is ecstatic’... The all important and most pervasive consideration in all attempts to reform our educational environments should be

62 F.C. Copleston, *Aquinas* (Harmondsworth: Penguin 1955), pp. 197-198.

63 E.B. Phelan, *Don Bosco. A Spiritual Portrait* (New York: Doubleday 1963), pp. 119, 249. This last sentence has been transposed here from page 144 (Editor’s note).

64 Frauke Chambers, “Education through Ecstasy?” in *Education News* (June 1974, Volume 14, Number 9), pp. 18-21.

65 George Leonard, *Education and Ecstasy* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968). At that time, of course, the first meaning of ‘ecstasy’ was not yet a drug’s name. (This sentence is added by the Editor to the original note)

the association of learning with pleasure and joy, since that is the best motivation for further learning, which we recognize more and more as a lifelong process or, in Leonard's words, 'life's ultimate purpose'"⁶⁶.

One hundred and twenty three years before Leonard wrote his 'incredible' book, Don Bosco had established schools in which pupils were experiencing 'pleasure and joy'. They did so through a Salesian pedagogy which, though based on another interpretation of 'life's ultimate purpose', still produced a sort of 'ecstasy'. "Hundreds of young students fulfilled their duties with ardour and exactness... there flourished... innocence, simplicity and Christian joy. One might be tempted to label this as legendary, but it is sober historical truth"⁶⁷.

On the other hand, "such liberal accommodating attitude in education... joy, freedom and magnanimity", never developed into what Salesians would see as "permissiveness"⁶⁸. Salesian students were never, in the George Leonard sense, 'free learners' who "whilst on the school grounds – are absolutely free to go and do anything they wish that does not hurt someone else"⁶⁹. Rather, what happened in Don Bosco's Oratories was what took place in Albert

66 Frauke Chambers, "Education through Ecstasy?" in *Education News* (June 1974, Volume 14, Number 9), p. 18.

67 Terence O'Brien, *Dominic Savio. Teenage Apostle - Saint* (London: Guild Publications, 1969), p. 90.

68 J.A. Ayers, *A Salesian Education*, p. 18.

69 George Leonard, *Education and Ecstasy* (New York: Delacorte Press, 1968), p. 18.

Schweitzer⁷⁰ with regard to his opportunity to fulfill his ambition to become a jungle doctor. Making use of Schweitzer's account of his own experience, we could say that both students and teachers, seeing their opportunities to learn and to become part of the Salesian family, felt "so favoured as to be able to embark on a course of free personal activity" that made them "accept this good fortune in a spirit of humility", for "happy those who in the end are able to give themselves really and completely!"

Here we find also the ultimate solution to the limitations of personal freedom mentioned above.⁷¹ To early Salesians, "the will for the ideal which exists in mankind" was "manifested in action". For both educator and educand personal idealism embraced, rather than passively accepted, limitations on their freedom. This active acceptance, at least for the adult members of the Salesian community, approximated what Martin Buber called a 'Teshuba', a 'turning', the free decision par excellence.



The Good Life as the Goal of Education

Since, then, according to biographers, the priest-educator's educational institutions were, in a Christian context, happy and joyful places, it could be assumed that students and teachers within his Oratories enjoyed, to a large extent, 'the good life'. Modern

70 The full reference is missing in the original that gives only Albert Schweitzer, loc. cit., p. 87. For similar thoughts see Albert Schweitzer, *Pilgrimage to Humanity* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1961), pp. 86-87. (Editor's note)

71 See the previous section entitled "Freedom and Control". This note and the sentence to which it is appended are Editor's additions.

educational philosophers, examining this concept, have considered the grounds upon which an estimate of the 'good' life can be made. American educationist, Harry S. Broudy⁷², for example, after considering various historical levels of subjective and objective viewpoints on educational aims in relation to the 'good' life, came to this conclusion: although there was little agreement among teachers about 'aims' there was considerable agreement as to what constituted the 'good' life. According to Broudy, the 'good' life did not include excessive pain, fear, insecurity, unfulfilment, and lack of interest; it did include, instead, physical well-being, love, security, self-realization, power in accomplishment, goals, and interest.

Don Bosco, in 1841, had no doubt as to what constituted the 'good life'. It was a life consonant with the Christian ideal: 'to know, love, and serve God', and it included the attainment of an object: "the civic, moral, and intellectual education of his pupils"⁷³. Theodore Brameld in the 1950's estimated that the purpose of Catholic education was preparation for 'the afterlife'.⁷⁴ However important this purpose may have been for Don Bosco,⁷⁵ it is not true, at least as far as Don Bosco's schools are regarded, that this purpose tended to override all other purposes. That "justifiable

72 Harry S. Broudy, *Building a Philosophy of Education* (New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1954).

73 *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales* (Rome: Editrice S.D.B., 1984), p. 251.

74 Theo Brameld, "A Cultural Evaluation of Progressivism," *Philosophies of Education in Cultural Perspectives* (New York: Dryden Press, 1956).

75 On this see Pietro Braido, *Don Bosco's Pedagogical Experience* (Rome: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1989), pp. 132-133. (Editor's note)

optimism", which Brameld felt for progressive education in the 1960's, was not unlike the optimism, since justified by experience and time, of early Salesians. Though they tended to use "the quaint, ingenuous style of...fioretti"⁷⁶, they expressed a similar confidence in their educational decisions. Pope Paul VI in a 1971 address claimed that for modern Catholics, too, the challenge of Salesian education continues.⁷⁷ Though modern Salesians cannot accept the pragmatist's view of man, they can, as Paul Hirst says, accept similar educational principles,⁷⁸ while still holding that "there is no true happiness without interior peace"⁷⁹ based on the Christian life.



Proactive Punishment

Influencing the concept of what constituted 'the good life' within Bosconian schools and Oratories, was the Preventive System's corrective prescriptions and the view of punishments which was held by its followers. Primarily, "if possible", Don Bosco wrote, "never make use of punishments"⁸⁰. He envisaged, instead, a method whereby the prevention of wrongdoing, through Salesian 'presence' and 'assistance' would preclude the need for punitive measures. Realistically, however, in order that punishments be at

76 J.A. Ayers, *A Salesian Education*, p. 4.

77 "Holy Father to Salesians: Relevance of Don Bosco's Teaching, Example," *L'Osservatore Romano*, Weekly Edition in English, No. 52 (30 December 1971), p. 9.

78 Paul Hirst, "Philosophy and Educational Theory," *British Journal of Education Studies* (vol. XII, no. 1, November 1963).

79 Terence O'Brien, *Dominic Savio*, p. 73.

80 Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco, IV* (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-2003), p. 384.

least reduced to a minimum, he devised certain measures⁸¹ which, today, are still pedagogical features in Salesian schools.

In 1966, P. Nash, writing on punishment, in *Authority and Freedom in Education*⁸², stated that punishment involved a sense of reverence for the child; that manipulative methods were better than coercive ones; that disciplinary measures were to be orderly, directed, and restrained for the good of the child. In addition, Nash indicated some general rules to be observed in relation to punishment: be genuine and honest with the child; be sure that the good flowing from the punishment be judged to be greater than the suffering experienced by the one punished; and, do not think that the practice of punishing the whole group can be morally defended. Education's life task, Nash believed, was based on a rigorous process of self-discipline achieved through the child's 'overcoming' himself. Moreover, according to Nash, effective discipline, a product of freedom, is both relevant and realistic; and the granting of unrestricted choice to the immature cuts them off from the possibilities of future freedom.

Earlier, in 1883, in a circular sent out to Salesian schools, Don Bosco set down suggestions about punishing which were as follows:⁸³

1. Before punishing ascertain the facts.
2. Be sure that the guilty one knows why he is being punished.
3. Never turn a pupil out of the classroom. In more serious cases have the lad accompanied to the principal.
4. Justice must always be used when punishing.
5. Never make use of general punishments.
6. Never make use of corporal punishments.
7. Punishments must be few and never prolonged.
8. Written punishments are generally to be discouraged.
9. Never make use of the reflection room, where the pupil remains in idleness.
10. Always inspire the hope of pardon.



Don Bosco, writing some eighty-three years before Nash on the subject of punishment had presaged much of what modern educationists have to say on the subject.⁸⁴

Psychologist B.Z. Friedlander had "second thoughts"⁸⁵ on the complexity of the teaching and learning process, in which such a delicate balance between freedom and discipline is involved. His "second thoughts" reflect Bosconian emphasis on the role of the teacher: "it is to the teacher's credit for serving as a worthy model of

81 These measures were described by Don Bosco in Giovanni Battista Lemoyne, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, IV (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-2003), pp. 384-385 and Eugenio Ceria, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, XVI (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1995), pp. 368-376.

82 P. Nash, *Authority and Freedom in Education* (New York: Wiley, 1966).

83 See Paul Avallone, *Reason, Religion, Kindness*, p. 71.

84 The first Salesians in China tried hard to put into practice Don Bosco's directives regarding punishments, as can be seen in the manuscript kept in the Provincial archives: Ignaz Canazei, *Memoriale del Consigliere* (Macau: Orfanato da Imaculada Conceição, 1919). (Editor's note)

85 B.Z. Friedlander, "A Psychologist's Second Thoughts on concepts, curiosity and discovery in teaching and learning," *Harvard Educational Review*, n. 35 (1965).

rational intelligence, effectively and judiciously in action”⁸⁶. Still, Salesians are convinced that the Bosconian approach, essentially Christian, has the advantage of a transcendent “Exemplar” in Jesus Christ, supremely capable of inspiring both teachers and taught in matters pertaining to ‘discipline’.

No wonder Don Bosco concluded his 1883 letter, dealing with the theme of punishment, in these words: “Remember that education is a matter of the heart, of which God alone is the master, and that we can achieve nothing unless God teaches us the art and hands us the key. Hence let us use all means, including our entire and humble dependence upon Him, to become masters of that fortress which locks itself off from all severity and harshness. Let us strive to make ourselves loved, to instill a sense of duty and of holy fear of God, and we will see hearts open to us with surprising ease; they will join us in singing the praises and blessing of Him who chose to make himself our model, our way, our example in all things, especially in the education of the young”⁸⁷.

The Indispensability of Play

An essential feature of Don Bosco’s pedagogy was the emphasis he placed upon play: free games, unrestricted and uninhibited, as well as games with rules, which balanced theoretical and practical work. Games served as an outlet for students, whose opportunity to learn and work demanded similar zest and enthusiasm in the

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 38.

⁸⁷ Eugenio Ceria, *The Biographical Memoirs of Saint John Bosco*, XVI (New Rochelle: Salesiana Publishers, 1965-2003), p. 376.

classroom. It was during games that the teachers who joined in did much purposeful counseling in an informal atmosphere.

According to R.F. Deardon⁸⁸, children’s play has had a profound significance with educators. The German pedagogist Frederic Froebel (1782-1852), for instance, placed a metaphysical significance on his kindergarten: a child’s essential nature “unfolded”, like the petals of a flower. For Jean-Jacques Rousseau, “the non-metaphysician”, instead, twelve-year-old Emile could be described as “just a rough, vulgar little boy”. Don Bosco’s conception allowed for the ‘unfolding’ aspect of Froebel’s kindergarten, but saw the essential nature of the child, rather than as being ‘vulgar’ in Rousseau’s sense, as being not only innocent but also open to “temptations” to commit sin, in the Catholic sense.⁸⁹ This explains Don Bosco’s insistence on the company of dedicated teachers during recreation. Play was, nevertheless, also in Don Bosco’s mind, for relaxation, engaged in “just for the satisfaction involved in it”⁹⁰, while at the same time it was seen by Don Bosco as allowing teacher and student to communicate informally. Don Bosco had made his own the attitude of St. Philip Neri (1515-1595): “Let the boys have full liberty to jump, run and make as much noise as they please...*Do anything you like*, the great friend of youth, St.



⁸⁸ R.F. Deardon, “The Concept of Play,” in *The Concept of Education*, p. 75.

⁸⁹ See Fr. John Bosco, *The Life of Dominic Savio, Pupil of the Oratory of St. Francis de Sales*, Preface, in Paul Aronica, ed., *The Life of Saint Dominic Savio by Saint John Bosco*, First American Edition Complete and Unabridged, Translated from the Fifth Italian Edition with Introduction and Notes (Paterson: Salesiana Publishers, 1955), pp. xxvii-xxviii.

⁹⁰ R.F. Deardon, “The Concept of Play,” in *The Concept of Education*, p. 84.

Philip, used to say, *as long as you do not sin*"⁹¹.

Conclusion

Don Bosco's pedagogy is not so much a system to be analyzed as a way of life to be observed. Through recorded experiences, both oral and written, the Salesian Society has maintained and developed Don Bosco's rationale. This rationale involves educator and educand in a commitment to a Faith, both in God and in humanity, which is practice rather than theory; expressed in terms of personal encounters; whose criteria are 'reason' and 'kindness'; whose object is the attainment of the 'the physical, aesthetic, intellectual, civic, moral, and religious education' of youth.

Don Bosco's educational techniques were developed directly from his metaphysics, that is, from his Faith in the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is encouraging to realize that he anticipated many of the principles developed later by educationists with different philosophical standpoints. A pedagogy offering the young a sense of contentment, joy, and fulfillment, the basis of Salesian schools throughout the world, is not unlike many modern views of education. This means that the spirit of the Gospel of Jesus Christ has become rooted beyond the limits of the community of those who recognize themselves as His disciples.⁹²

91 *Constitutions and Regulations of the Society of St. Francis de Sales* (Rome: Editrice S.D.B., 1984), p. 249.

92 This paragraph was largely modified by the Editor. The following Postface and its notes are all by the Editor. (Editor's note)

Editor's Postface

In the above excursus, together with John Morrison we have tried to situate Don Bosco and his pedagogical experience within the wider conversation of 20th Century educationists. A future task should be that of locating Don Bosco the educationist within the newer tendencies of education in today's "complex society" (as indicated, for example, by Israel Scheffler)⁹³ as well as in the educational reflection carried on in Chinese society (as exemplified by Tu Wei-ming).⁹⁴ A first step in the implementation of such a future task has been taken this year by my confrere Salesian Father Thomas Kemmler with his Master in Education dissertation at Zhejiang University (China), entitled: "The Concept and Realization of John Bosco's Preventive System"⁹⁵.



Some of the newer tendencies in today's complex society are: ongoing education throughout the whole life of the human person, alternation of study and work, autonomy of the school community, and equal opportunities. The last-mentioned tendency calls for the personalization of education, for equal educational opportunities for both sexes, for intercultural education, for the integration of disabled persons in ordinary educational institutions.⁹⁶ All these

93 Israel Scheffler, "Some Contributions of Philosophy to Education," pp. 193-200.

94 Tu Wei-ming, "Self-Cultivation as Education Embodying Humanity," pp. 27-39.

95 Geng Ruiguang (Thomas Kemmler), *Baosigaode Yufang Jiaoyu Linian yu Shijian*, unpublished M.Ed. Thesis (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Daxue, 2009).

96 For this enumeration, see J.M. Prelezo, and R. Lanfranchi, *Educazione e pedagogia nei solchi della storia, III: Dalla rivoluzione industriale all'era informatica* (Torino: Società Editrice Internazionale, 1997), pp. 390-417.

concerns touch cords close to the heart of Don Bosco.

Following Confucius, the great teacher of China, Chinese culture has for millennia been deeply concerned with the problem of education. One hundred years ago an interesting encounter began to take place between this old educational culture and the young charism of Don Bosco the educator.⁹⁷ “China’s little Don Bosco”, Fr. Carlo Braga, writing from Shiu Chow (today’s Shaoguan) in 1926, quotes the first Salesian of Don Bosco to set foot in China, St. Luigi Versiglia, as saying:

We are extremely poor, deprived of everything. We have to live day by day. But in reality we are richer than our neighbours of the English, German, and American schools. We are rich of an inexhaustible treasure. We draw water from the source of the Church. We are rich with Don Bosco’s educative system. The Chinese are serene and practical judges. They will know how to distinguish real from merely apparent value.⁹⁸

97 For a preliminary history of this encounter see Carlo Socol, “«Una istituzione che si occupa della classe operaia»: la Escola de Artes e Ofícios de Macao nel suo primo ventennio (1906-1926),” in Francesco Motto, ed., *L’Opera Salesiana dal 1880 al 1922. Significatività e portata sociale*, I-III, Atti del 3° Convegno Internazionale di Storia dell’Opera Salesiana, Roma, 31 ottobre-5 novembre 2000, Istituto Storico Salesiano Studi 16-18 (Roma: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano 2001), II, pp. 413-438; also Carlo Socol, “The History of Salesian Education in China” in Xu Xiaozhou, and Roberto Giannatelli, eds., *Educational Innovation: Perspectives of Internationalization* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2006), pp. 26-35. Several articles contained in this Chinese-English volume record a first high-level dialogue between the Salesian and the Chinese educational traditions.

98 *Inter nos*, Anno VI, N. 12, 15 Luglio 1926. Editor’s translation from the Italian original.

The same Fr. Carlo Braga, writing in 1922 about the new boarding school in Shiu Chow (Shaoguan), offers us what is perhaps the first recorded example of an effort at inculturating Don Bosco’s educational charism in China. He writes:

When giving the ‘good night’ to the boys, since new boarders were continually arriving, I had to repeat always the same things and make use of the same loving reproaches. Because of this, I could see the eyes of many fill with tears and could hear some boys sobbing. These boys were in pain because they did not yet hear me saying the ardently desired: ‘I am happy with you!’ I have noticed that rough reproaches, whether to all gathered together or to single ones in particular, may have an immediate disciplinary effect, but do not produce lasting educative and formative fruits. Often Chinese young people do not know that they are making mistakes. They are not aware that they are behaving in ways that are repugnant to the delicate feelings of us people of old Europe. I often ask myself: ‘Are we not acting like maniacs in our attempts to Europeanize the irreducible depths of the Chinese psyche? Are not these depths indifferent with regard to the salvation of their souls? Are we not in reality scattering our best energies and undermining our own work? A little acceptance of Chinese ways would not do harm to anybody and certainly will not decrease in the least our glory in heaven. ‘Gentile with the Gentiles, and Chinese with the Chinese!’ For me, in my little and limited experience, a maxim that is useful and practical is the motto: *festina lente!* (Hurry slowly!) Let us affirm ourselves patiently! I have been patient for a long time and now I am grateful to God that the college is on the right track: Everything for love! Up to now



we have not used any punishment. Up to now there is no sign of that under-the-table playing in spite of the superiors. The most attractive characteristic is the joviality with which the boys welcome the Salesian confreres who come to visit us. When a missionary arrives, what expansive greetings! what heartfelt joy! They feel children of the Salesian family. They feel free in their observance of the Regulations.⁹⁹

Don Bosco was daring enough to hope that his pedagogical experience and method would eventually become a worldwide concern¹⁰⁰ in favour of the education of the young, especially the most deprived ones. On a microscopic scale, Don Bosco's dream is being realized by the Salesian Society, by its institutions, and by its coworkers. On the macroscopic scale, Don Bosco's dream is being realized in the national and international organizations devoted to the promotion of education. At the highest level since 1946 we have the UNESCO - The United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization.¹⁰¹ Within this organization, since 1993 an

International Commission on Education for the XXI Century has been at work to draw up strategies for an education that promotes the basic values of the United Nations. These UN values are: the struggle for freedom, for human rights, and for development, as well as the struggle against inequality and indigence. Another international agency promoting education is the UNICEF - The United Nations Children's Fund. In line with the International Convention on Children's Rights, this agency targets especially the formation of teachers of subjects relevant to the preparation of children for life and the professional training and formation of personnel for promotion centres in the neediest countries. We may suppose that St. John Bosco, witnessing from heaven these international developments, is rejoicing and interceding for us before God.



99 *Inter nos*, N. 23, 18 Giugno 1922, p. 69. Editor's translation from the Italian original. The Editor is grateful to Fr. Carlo Socol SDB for indicating the above two quotations and retrieving them from the Archives of the China Province of the Salesians of St. John Bosco.

100 See Pietro Braido, *Il progetto operativo di Don Bosco e l'utopia della società cristiana*, Quaderni di Salesianum, 6 (Roma: Libreria Ateneo Salesiano, 1982), pp. 33-34.

101 I choose the United Nations as a point of reference insofar as, hopefully, its policies cross the divide between West and East and are not simply the expression of a globalization hegemonically driven by the West. For a critical approach to globalized education policies see, again, the Chinese-English volume edited by Xu Xiaozhou, and Roberto Giannatelli, *Duo Guo Shiyexiade Jiaoyu Gexin / Educational Innovation: Perspectives of Internationalization* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2006).