

EXORDIUM

BUILDING PEACE IN WAR TIME. ANGELO PATRI'S  
SUGGESTIONS AND EDUCATIONAL PATHS

COSTRUIRE LA PACE IN TEMPO DI GUERRA.  
SUGGERIMENTI E PERCORSI PEDAGOGICI  
DI ANGELO PATRI

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The contribution delves into the theme of peace through the 20th century and focuses on Italian-American educator Angelo Patri (1876-1965), relevant mind in the United States and a point of reference in the difficult years of the Second World War. *Your Children in Wartime* (1943) is a thought-provoking text that lightens the educational paths to be taken at school and at home in wartime to train the inner peace.

Il contributo approfondisce il tema della pace attraverso il Novecento e si sofferma sul pedagogista italoamericano Angelo Patri (1876-1965), figura rilevante negli Stati Uniti e punto di riferimento negli anni difficili della Seconda Guerra mondiale. *Your Children in Wartime* (1943) è un testo stimolante sui percorsi pedagogici da affrontare a scuola e in casa in tempo di guerra per continuare ad allenare la pace interiore.

*1. Form Theory to Science for Peace at the time of War Conflicts*

Opposed to the violence of conflict, the state of peace has been debated throughout the ages without ever finding a definitive solution for its maintenance. For millennia, it has been an individual

or collective problem, a religious, political and moral issue that politicians, leading religious, and secular thinkers have dealt with in order to obtain adequate theoretical knowledge to preserve the world from war. Nowadays, peace theories have acquired a scientific guise and are at the heart of contemporary history and the worldwide aspirations of peacekeepers striving for its realization.

In the modern age, Immanuel Kant's project on "perpetual peace" (1785/1928) is the most interesting and at the same time least known example of the philosopher expressing Europeans' weariness in the face of Franco-Prussian conflict and providing a «recipe» (Lemmonier, 1928, p. 8): the republican form of government as the right choice within a federal and European dimension of free peoples who can aspire to peace. Kant's enlightened project of a peaceful supranational state was hindered by the social and internal issues of individual countries, by the ideologies that arose and grew stronger in the following century, by the nationalist and still monarchical drives of countries like Italy. In the 19th century the federal project gave way to political strategies that saw European states vie for national and colonial superiority on the global stage. The peace debate gains vigor and strength in the 20th century: world conflicts reset moral resistance and boundaries on human violence. The motivations and demonstrations of the pacifist and anti-militarist movements laid the groundwork for constructive reflection on a violence-free, dialogical and welfare-oriented society for free individuals, but they went unheeded. The role of the Catholic Church in the Western world was also emblematic according to historians: Benedict XV (1914) appealed to all rulers in his first encyclical *Ad Beatissimi Apostolorum principis* to avoid a "useless slaughter". One week after the German invasion of Poland, on 24 August 1939, Pius XII addressed the whole world in his radio message «Nothing is lost by peace; everything may be lost by war. Let men return to understanding. Let them return to negotiation». The Second World War experienced the destructive and inhuman dangers of the nuclear bomb. On 10 December 1945, only a few months after the atomic bombs exploded on Hiroshima and Na-

gasaki, Albert Einstein claimed that physicists were in the same situation as Alfred Nobel when, following the invention of the most powerful explosive ever made, a sense of responsibility and guilt prevailed and he instituted the prizes for winning and promoting peace. Significantly, during those years, the Nobel Peace Prize Committee – which had been in operation since 1901 – did not award the prize to anyone and it was not until 1945 that it was handed over to the International Committee of the Red Cross (Procacci, 1989). According to Norberto Bobbio (1984), between the start of the Just War of 1914 and the atomic war, the path of terror had been affirmed: a path that had soothed the consciences of men, especially eminent men of culture, on the justice and necessity of war, giving «confidence to terror» (p. 51). Certainly the nuclear bomb with its total destructive power awakened dormant consciences and reinforced anti-militarist and non-violent ideas, yet it was not enough to sanction the end of all wars as hoped but served to exacerbate the conflict. The greatest of evils, the weapon of mass destruction, was supposed to guarantee peace and it is precisely this oxymoronic condition that makes Bobbio's theory of terror sadly anticipatory of these times «Today the balance of terror makes it extremely topical, if not yet fully realized: it would be fully realized the day when the increase in power and the dissemination of atomic weapons had reached such a degree as to enable every state to destroy its adversary» (Bobbio, 1984, p. 52). The Cold War was the worrying harbinger that placed the theme of peace at the center of debate in the studies and events of the history of the second half of the 20th century. During the Ecumenical Council, John XXIII's speeches were connected to the great changes in the world and, among these, international tension and the danger of nuclear conflict emerged. The combination of peace/justice became strategic in redefining the position of the church in the modern world. The doctrinal approach to the problem of war and modern weapons was superseded by his 1963 encyclical *Pacem in Terris*, in which he emphasized that

all men of good will have an immense task: the task of recomposing the relationships of coexistence in truth, justice, love and freedom: the relationships of coexistence between individual human beings; between citizens and their political communities; between political communities themselves; between individuals, families, intermediate bodies and political communities on the one hand and the world community on the other (n. 87).

The successive conflicts that closed the 20th century and dramatically opened the new millennium have calibrated the secular discourse on even broader strategies and horizons that have transformed peace into a path of complex and interdisciplinary research and studies that investigate strategies for its maintenance on a local and global level. The historical evolution of the concept of peace has been enriched by progressive definitions of its meaning and increasingly advanced methodologies for its implementation as well as pioneers who worked on early theories. The researcher Johan Galtung in 1960s argued that to understand peace, it was necessary to have an in-depth understanding of violence, which can be direct (or personal) and indirect (or structural). Direct violence is related to negative peace, defined by the absence of war and violence, while indirect violence to positive peace, which is more enduring because it is built on sustainable investments in economic development and institutions, as well as positive social attitudes. Negative and positive peace is also the basis for the concept of peacebuilding that he first introduced in 1967. According to Galtung, peace should be built after the problems caused by structural violence have been eliminated, so one should aim for positive and not negative peace (Galtung, 1967, pp. 297-298).

Kenneth Boulding's concept of stable peace (Boulding, 1978, pp. 93-128) showed how to break the cycle of threat, counter-threat and war through a carefully planned long-range policy, whereby the probability of war is so low that it does not enter into the calculations of any of the people involved because one works on good social-economic practices for the enhancement of individual well-being. Finally, Gene Sharp studied Ghandi's non-violent movement and embraced a campaign strategy of non-armed action arguing that people resort to violence because they see no

other options to resolve intractable conflicts. By educating people in nonviolent conflict strategy, effective alternatives are created so he researched and catalogued 198 methods and provided a rich selection of historical examples (Sharp, 1973).

Peace Studies seeks to understand the negation of violence through conflict transformation, cooperation and harmony, drawing from many disciplines, including psychology, education, sociology, and history. Peace Studies makes use of theoretical and practical investigations into anti-war, reduction of hostility and conflict, disarmament, peace movements, building peaceful communities, reuse and valorization of disused war sites, reconstruction of places destroyed by wars, combating hate speech, mediation, economics and the right to peace. At the same time a parallel discussion is ongoing about education in emergency contexts (Unicef, 2000; Vaccarelli, 2017) working on individual and collective paths within an urgent and imminently difficult context such as wars and catastrophes. The innovation of these studies lies in the conviction that peace is sustainable and that it is achieved through peacebuilding processes with a view to knowledge, understanding, prevention and education that originates from the human being and his willingness and ability to understand and comprehend the other.

## *2. Peacemakers in the 20th century. Children and education*

In 1895, American Peace Society published an article that identified the school as the center of the spread of a society of free individuals who abolish war and experiment with alternative ways such as social and international dialogue to settle every issue. The European example had shown that its “slavery” to standing armies limited any possibility of achieving lasting peace. The excessive weight and honors surrounding the military art are unequal to the educational value and influence that teachers have on young people and growing society. American Peace Society (1895) produced eight articles to motivate teachers and eradicate the false myths

about war and the honors of life and death on the battlefield, inherited from a barbaric and uncultivated past (APS, 1895, pp. 252-253). Despite the good intentions, the wars that were to follow with their consequences took on more destructive dimensions and also negatively affected the civilian population, hence the children. Borrowing from the beautiful image of “peace yards” (De Giorgi, 2018), the main educational figures who illuminated this part of the century are proposed.

In the course of the 20th century, totalitarian regimes developed an education for war but, on the other side, democratic-liberal regimes has not been able to produce an equally valid “education for peace”, in part because they, abhorring a centralized direction of education, end up privileging means over ends, and education “for something” is a typical pedagogical project that needs, in order to be implementable, a minimum of political direction. War, however, even before peace, finds space in the activities of the youngest. Before, in preparation for, and during conflicts, the military propaganda system takes root in schools and invades the spaces and free time of children who are trained in obedience, love of country, courage, and self-denial (Gecchele, 2017, p. 212).

The tendency to militarize the lives of the youngest children also established itself in 1907 in the largest independent, apolitical and volunteer-based education movement in the world. Robert Baden-Powell’s educational insights are an implementation of active education in non-formal settings that spread after the publication of a pamphlet in 1899 on the art of military scouts. Baden Powell’s goal was to educate children and young people to become “scouts of peace”, happy, useful and active men and women, helping to build peace by creating a feeling of brotherhood and understanding that transcends national barriers, through a peaceful way of life and by integrating a series of practices into the Scout method that encourage conflict resolution actions and behavior. In his last message to Scouters and Guides in 1941, the founder emphasized the peaceful purpose of the movement:

[Scouting's] aim is to produce healthy, happy, helpful citizens, of both sexes, to eradicate the prevailing narrow self-interest; personal, political, sectarian and national, and to substitute for it a broader spirit of self-sacrifice and service in the cause of humanity; and thus to develop mutual goodwill and cooperation not only within our own country but abroad, between all countries. Experience shows that this consummation is no idle or fantastic dream, but is a practicable possibility - if we work for it; and it means, when attained, peace, prosperity and happiness for all. The 'encouraging promise' lies in the fact that the hundreds of thousands of thousands of boys and girls who are learning our ideals today will be the fathers and mothers of millions in the near future, in whom they will in turn inculcate the same ideals - provided that these are really and unmistakably impressed upon them by the leaders of today. (Baden-Powell, 1941, cit. in Courtney, 1990, p. 50).

These were years of intense theoretical and practical work for educators working on the construction of a new society. Maria Montessori proposed a new theme in the history of educational thought, considered not only fundamental but constitutive of educational action itself. Four years after the end of the Second World War, in 1949, Maria Montessori collected a series of lectures on the subject of peace. In her speeches, Montessori emphasized that peace cannot be considered from a negative point of view in order to avoid war but should be valued as a positive feature of a constructive social reform. The aspiration for a society based on the principles of justice and love is too far off, so we need to work on the present and prepare children to be exemplary citizens. The child is the unity of the educational work and the goal of a reconstruction of human society on scientifically determined foundations that make it possible to proceed towards a new dimension, «a new world for a new man» (Montessori, 1949, p. 24) by freeing childhood from the behavioral and prescriptive rigidity of the past.

The experiences mentioned so far show how education for peace is above all a critique and deconstruction of the ideological and prescriptive discourse of all black education because it is violent, oppressive and adult-centered: education for peace as mis-

ucation to war and as a response to the concrete situations of direct, structural and cultural violence in the context. Education, in the sense of acquiring mental and practical customs that are able to respond to principles in which everyone can mirror themselves and become a shared norm for rationality and goodness, justice and truth, is a constant in the history of pedagogical thought and its concretization in both school and extra-school teaching (Chistolini, 2002, p. 165). The 1950s and 1960s were the years of reconstruction and a new social awareness that anticipated the great mass protest movements that followed. On the centenary of his birth, it is mandatory a mention of Don Lorenzo Milani who was put on trial for having written an open letter in February 1965 to some military chaplains on leave who had insulted conscientious objectors. The prior of Barbiana defended the latter and denounced the horrors of war:

Tell us exactly what you taught the soldiers. Obedience at any cost? And if the order was the bombing of civilians, a reprisal action on a defenceless village, the summary execution of partisans, the use of atomic, bacteriological, chemical weapons, torture, the execution of hostages, summary trials for mere suspicions, decimations (choosing by lot some soldier of the Fatherland and shooting him to instill terror in other soldiers of the Fatherland), a war of overt aggression, the order of an officer rebelling against the sovereign people, the repression of popular demonstrations? (Milani, 1965, cit. in Di Giacomo, 2001, p. 353).

In 1965, he defend himself against the accusations by a letter to the judges later published in a book entitled *L'obbedienza non è più una virtù* (Milani, 1965), a provocative anti-militarist manifesto that dissuades his students from accepting the state of things if there is no justice. Along with Don Lorenzo Milani, the most representative militant anti-fascist, peace educator in Italy was Aldo Capitini, a man who declared himself “persuaded” in the meaning of being close to a commitment that is more practical than contemplative. He rejected all forms of aggression in the name of truth and love for all living beings (Catarci, 2013; Pironi, 1991). Within



his “open education”, Capitini was also the spreader and interpreter of an original point of view with respect to the new education inspired by the child-centrism of the 20th century. On 24 September 1961, he organized the *Peace March for the brotherhood of peoples Perugia-Assisi* to advocate an ethical-political commitment according to a bottom-up social model. He dreamed of an open, non-violent and non-religious society, whose fundamental character was an integration of the centers of democratic power from below.

At the end of 20th century Danilo Dolci worked to promote the forgotten childhoods and families of Sicily. Through the valorization of capital and social care using the maieutic method, reciprocal exchange and the active participation of the subject, he experienced a small social revolution that once again started from below and was characterized by being non-violent and peaceful.

### *3. Children in times of war. Angelo Patri's educational response*

The entry of the United States into World War II occurs after the Japanese air attack on the Pacific naval base at Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941. Direct participation in the war and not just supporting the Allies changed the perspective of American families, fathers and mothers, who had already witnessed the First World War, now more aware of the trauma and problems associated with the conflict. The general disorientation, the violence amplified by nuclear technology, and the gory and well-detailed reports in the media had disrupted the standard of living and mood of the people, who were increasingly distressed and harassed «Pleasant ways of life were wiped out in a gun flash at Pearl Harbor [...] “Living as usual” is out of the question because the “usual” has vanished» (Patri, 1943, p. 5). Parents were calling on Angelo Patri to help them with their daily family management and communication with their children.

Half-unknown in Italy unless for the profile left by Giuseppe Lombardo Radice (1928), Angelo Patri was a famous early 20th century educator in the United States: an Italian immigrant during

his childhood, he became a prolific author of many pedagogical books and children's literature, a radio speaker, a columnist of educational articles in newspapers (Jetto, 2006; Wallace, 2006) and the first headmaster of Italian-American origin in a Junior High School in the Bronx. He dedicated himself to education and projects for the inclusion of children of Italian origin, but managed to gain national and international attention thanks to the variety of themes, explained in simple language, based on the free and creative education of children that must follow the rhythms and natural inclinations of the student, «avoid the verbalism of grammatical exercises, develop a taste for poetry, so that it would become “a permanent element of the child's life and that the child would transplant at home the poetry he had fallen in love with at school, to the immense benefit of his own, and especially of his younger brothers and sisters”» (Lombardo Radice, 1928, p. 23).

His progressive educational line had made his school an innovative institution, just as his sharp observations on the crowded classrooms of American public schools being so successful to receive attention from the media and general opinion. The optimism in the 1920s around the progressive school centered on the interests of the child who naturally approaches subjects according to will and time of acquisition came to a halt when faced with the dark times of the 1929 New Deal and the Second World War:

Next to physical freedom comes mental freedom [...] the Progressive Educator spends much time and attention in analyzing the child's wants, and follows out the idea that “the best way to get the child to learn a thing is to make it want to learn that thing” [...] There are three stages to every movement. First people say, “There is nothing to it” second, “It cannot succeed” third, when it is finally successfully established they say, “I always believed it”. The movement has passed the first stage. Now they are saying it could never succeed in the Public Schools for the reason that we have too large classes. This difficulty the Progressives recognize but is the fault theirs, or is it with the system that puts so many children in a classroom with one teacher? Again it would be too expensive. The Progressive Educator says that is just the point. The public must be educated to the point where they see that they are now having quantity

education, and that it is much more worthwhile to pay more, and get quality, or real education for their children. This would mean classes of fifteen as advocated by Angelo Patri (Cloues, 1921, pp. 658-659).

The educator recognized that in the face of the world's violence, war was changing spaces, distorting relationships and had become an interlude between an unrepeatably past and an uncertain future. *Your Children in Wartime* was published in 1943 as urgent reply to the need to address the discourse on parenting and the raising of children in a context that was not new, but within a profoundly different society, more modern and closer to technology, more reliant on mass consumption and the availability of raw materials, at a time in history when people were beginning to talk about the atomic bomb and means of mass destruction. Angelo Patri has to move away from his usual field of research and deal with democratic issues, patriotism and everyday commitments in a practical and useful way for the American community. He did not assume the role of a theorist of experience, nor did he believe he was a repository of absolute truths, but by standing beside adults and the issues at hand, he hoped to relieve them of the anxieties that were growing stronger by the week.

Angelo Patri's starting point was an irrepressible faith in children and their ability to overcome difficulties «Don't try to sterilize life for any child. It cannot be done, and he is sure to find that out and discredit your efforts thereafter [...] Let the children grow up. This is a good time for them to begin and for you to stand back and give them room and free play» (Patri, 1943, pp. 41-42).

The cornerstones of Patri's discourse to adults are condensed around the recognition of the extraordinariness of the event, the protection of the vulnerable and the design of pathways for everyday life. Patri's goal is to guide those left behind to face the daily bulletins with reason and without losing sight of the daily tasks that keep their minds from dark thoughts. The absence of the men engaged in the conflict, the new commitment of the women translates into the social vacuum around the world of childhood and adolescence that could affect their behavior.

The text does not feed on empty speeches, nor on clichés about war, but conceives, in simple and metaphorical language, paths and recoveries of a familiar and everyday education in the extraordinariness of the emergency. Patri's writing is sprinkled with a few rhetorical flourishes aimed at producing emotional effects, but it is above all rich in practical examples, situational stories, simple metaphors: it adheres perfectly to the spirit of the Italian-American who concretizes the formative effort of the child as the combined result and joint task of parents and teachers. His "cure" is to maintain a peaceful state of mind in the school and family context to withstand the violence and news that modern warfare brought into the home, at all hours. The book helps to deal with the criticality of the event in the management of routine activities and in the process of accompanying children's growth, providing a glimpse of 20th century emergency education «War is a tremendous experience, penetrating every fibre of life, affecting everything people feel, think and do [...] We are fighting with all we have and all we hoped to pass on to our children in a determined effort to save for them the good we have enjoyed» (Patri, 1943, p. 3).

Although childhood is at the center of his reflection, Angelo Patri addresses children and adolescents directly in this volume, making appeals for responsibility without mediation. He refers to them metaphorically as "citizen soldiers", exemplifying their attitudes and tasks at home, in the family, at school and in the wider community as similar to those of the military. Speaking on practical aspects, he urges the youngest to sacrifice and duty, especially to make yourselves useful in today's extraordinary circumstances «As citizen soldiers, each of you has a duty to fulfil. Make yourselves useful in whatever situation you find yourselves. Do what you can do best to help when help is needed» (Patri, 1943, pp. 91-92).

Extraordinary times determine extraordinary roles. The handbook is a watershed in Patri's educational dimension that abandons the serenity of previous thinking and optimism cautiously gives way to practical and paternal observations that respond to an unusual reality: children leaving cities and reaching relatives in small

villages; parents and young people enlisting; classes suddenly welcoming or saying goodbye to pupils; single-parent families; inflation and price rises; lack of means in a consumer society. The child in wartime, as well as the young person, needs to be guided towards a space, a dimension in which to find himself and find his everyday life. The image of the militarization of childhood does not follow the propagandist logic of the time but delivers a routine of behavior and activities that can reorient the youngest, as well as the lost adults. The search for peace can be found in the daily routine of life at home and at school, in the community to which one belongs, and in the civic act of being responsibly focused on one's own and the community's development every day.

Patri's trust in young people is total. The objective of *Your Children in Wartime* is not simply to cope with the emergency of the moment, but rather to prepare the younger generation to manage their lives and the society built by those who came before them. The educator addresses the "vanguard of the new generation", exhorting them to prepare for the world to come by the motivational slogans "Be worthy".

The youngsters on the front line are working for a future free from Nazis oppression and menace meanwhile to the "civil" youngsters strengthen the democratic foot ground through their own healthy and correct lifestyles, through perfect behavior at home and at school.

#### 4. *Why is Angelo Patri worth reading?*

Education is the science that best interprets the principles-values of trespassing and hybridization, that casts a glance at the world to promote continuous reorganizations marked by mimesis and métissage (Pinto Minerva, 2002), it is the only one of the human sciences able to have a generative capacity to go beyond silences and emergencies (Annacontini, 2015) to seek a space for meeting, listening and confronting situations and subjects on the margin

(Ulivieri, 1999). The exceptionality of Patri's book is an indispensable starting point in the current panorama where the call for peace finds religious and secular admirers all over the world. A hybrid text halfway between a pedagogical manual, a historical portrait of the school and family in the 1940s, and a motivational text, it has collected and frozen the voices and feelings of a society, a photographic fragment that is hard to imagine. At a delicate moment of transition where the hopes of that Kantian project of perpetual peace are fading, Patri's book immerses us in a unique experiential dimension because it is far removed from both the sterility of the historical document and narrative fantasy. His practical project of working with and on the child and adolescent in a different context is as contemporary as ever with the trends that education in emergency contexts has activated over the years and offers the rare perspective of a book focused on the needs of Western child and family in wartime.

Angelo Patri's child breaks the chain of terror and regains confidence in a world and society profoundly different from how he knew them, dispensing with the spaces, places and often relationships he had grown up with. Patri does not hide the ugliness of the war, its uncomfotableness in the eyes of young people, but prepares them to face the challenges of an uncertain and worrying time, recalibrating their days at school, at home and in the community because he recognizes in the child the end, the means and the resource of the man and woman of the future (Patri, 1943, p. 115).

The child is the radiating center of Angelo Patri's entire activity (Bellatalla, 2003, p. 43): Patri's education is a synthetic approach between Rousseau's natural child and John Dewey's progressive child as visible in his decidedly incredible production, but *Your Children in Wartime* stands apart from it because it stems from an external demand and exceptional circumstances that make the volume unique in its own production. Far removed from the trappings and theories, metaphors and exemplary "crutches", Patri lays bare the other side of war that is devoid of sensationalism, bulletins or military strategy but is the far ground in which peace is prepared. It is an invaluable document for reconstructing the history of the

wartime family, the actual schooling difficulties of the teachers and the daily lives of children and adolescents who, supported by teachers and parents, grow up looking for new milestones to rebuild the inner tranquility and harmony necessary for future planning, beyond the dark times.

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