



Book reviews

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*Educando a través de la literatura: despertando la imaginación moral
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Bellamy, F.-X. (2020).

Permanecer: para escapar del tiempo del movimiento perpetuo [Remain: to escape the time of perpetual motion]. Encuentro. 205 pp.

When one has before them the latest book by the French thinker and politician, François-Xavier Bellamy, the first thing that stands out is its cover. The photograph of a gargoyle of the Nôtre Dame cathedral, still, motionless, in an observant, waiting position, dominates the front of the manuscript. This image is a perfect allegory of what the reader will find on the following pages.

Bellamy invites us to reflect and turn our eyes towards what surrounds us. In a time where time itself does not exist, where change, speed and innovation are the general tonics of daily life and of collective thinking, is it worth stopping and remaining? Is it worth it not to subordinate ourselves to the speed that the world invites us to go? Is it necessary to go along with today's frenetic pace of

life and thinking? Questions that seek answers through a deep and critical overview of collective thinking in the 21st century.

“One of the characteristic features of this moment in human history is the affirmation of change as a fundamental norm” (p. 46). Everything is in constant movement, we do not allow ourselves to stop, which, according to the author, involves an absolute loss of fixed ultimate objectives and, therefore, of direction. Whereas before progress sought to achieve an end state of greater perfection, innovation has now turned change into an end in itself: “What moves us is the passion for movement and nothing else, since we do not need to know where it is leading us. [...] We do not run to chase after goals, rather we run for the sake of running” (p. 57). This is how things are. Everything has become a fad, and what is trendy has become the moral principle of an entire society that seeks the constant indulgence of its desires.

A good example of this could be justice as a means for the progress of society. It has undergone a metamorphosis, seeking to *adapt to society* and its desires before the intangible ideal of building a better society, which leads to legislating to satisfy rather than to progress. However, justice is in itself external to time, unrelated to movement, eternal. One can desire changes that lead to a more just and better society, but in order for real progress to be possible, it is necessary to accept “that fixed point towards which we are heading, even if we do not know it perfectly well” (p. 123). If there is no collectively accepted end point that supports the change we have accepted, there can be no real justice and, therefore, we will not be able to improve, as every desire ends up expiring or being satisfied and transforming into another.

In reality, what we seek today is the total rupture with that which apparently coerces our freedom to do and undo as we please. Modern history teaches us how humans are inclined towards the perfection and development of technology only to undo the natural restrictions that affect the freedom of the person and stand between desires and satisfaction. A very clear example is the conquest: of the moon: “why do we want to go to the moon, other than the fact that we can’t stand that something is far away?” (p. 146); or the obsession for immediacy that leads us to want to break the limits imposed by space and time, “it is not only a matter of allowing ourselves to go anywhere, but of reducing to a minimum the time required for the journey. It is

not a matter of delivering the object we want to consume but of delivering it immediately” (p. 147). No resistance can come between us and the object of desire.

This obsession with change and the breaking of limits is not only realised in that which is external to us, but the very attempt to break through the obstacles of life itself and the condition of being human are also subject to this current. Transhumanism and posthumanism have this desire implicit in their philosophy. If we are free, for example, nothing can prevent me from having a child with certain features or from conceiving a child without the need to get together with another person of the opposite sex, if the desire to have a child exists, it must be able to be satisfied. Nevertheless, these supposed walls that we want to tear down and which represent a defect in life, are in reality that which defines it in the strongest sense. To want to put an end to death itself, the greatest limit imposed on human beings, is not, as transhumanists and posthumanists claim, *the death of death*, but the death of life itself. The person must have a goal to aim for. Life has a direction, it is not infinite, and it is this movement, this insurmountable limit, this ultimate goal, which gives it meaning: “if we become absolutely mobile, we will be absolutely dead” (p. 152).

Returning to the idea of progress, this has also become very distorted in recent times, “progressivism has destroyed the idea of progress by describing change as necessary as a matter of principle” (p. 126).

Progress implies something greater than a simple change, it implies a real improvement geared towards a specific purpose, “there can only be real progress if there is something permanent to approach” (p. 122). There really are many innovations today, great advances in fields such as science or technology, but this does not mean progress. In many cases, innovation improves technology, but does not eliminate conflicts, it only displaces them. Never in history have we been able to move so much and so fast, and never in history have we spent so much time moving around either. Great innovations have not always led to our progress, many have only displaced the problem.

An example of this false idea of progress is politics, which has given ground to such, inserting the word *transformation* in all discourse as a banner. Everyone who comes to power gives in to a supposed transformation of society, a change, supposed progress for the sake of evolution; something very wrong in reality. Due to this quest for change, there is a very high risk of putting an end to this order that has been formed and slowly matured, “which is irreplaceable in its complexity, its flexibility and its richness” (p. 101). The speed we have reached is so frenetic that there is no possibility of transmitting that which we have inherited and which is immobile. We are exclusively looking ahead to the future, on a circular horizon that has no end and that prevents us from looking at the past. Progressivism has forgotten that the essential goods are those that require the most time, and that not

everything can be subject to the desire for immediacy. Thus, Bellamy urges us to recover the very meaning of progress and politics, the objective of which should be to recognise and transmit that which is worthwhile instead of blindly transforming everything, to make real progress instead of change for the sake of change.

Nevertheless, the author does not deny the need for movement; on the contrary, the idea of remaining completely immobile is as absurd as that of moving altogether. What should not take place is movement for the sake of movement, one should accept the immobile, permanent part that gives meaning to life and makes us move in a particular direction. Movement should not be seen as bad, provided that it makes sense, but running for the sake of running makes us lose our mind, the very essence of a person. We have completely discarded the intrinsic aspects that we cannot quantify or control, forgetting that “our work, like our lives, reaches fulfilment in the form of gratitude [...], what is most essential to our lives is and will always be that which cannot be counted” (p. 177), that is to say, that which must not be moved from us. If we completely lose sight of the meaning of our lives, if we forget the immobile part that sets the direction, we will lose life itself.

In short, perhaps Bellamy is right and we have to remain. What is perhaps not so clear is how to do it, what decisions or measures we should take politically and collectively to put the brakes on this movement and channel it towards a goal. Or

how we can transfer this approach to the field of education, to which it is intrinsically related, where the development of such would also involve going, in many cases, against the current.

It is clear that we cannot live or educate in perpetual movement, we must learn to wait, evaluate, think, remain and look back at the past in order to recognise what will make us better in the future. Perhaps we should be, in part, like that gargoyle of Nôtre Dame, which is still, patient, observant, fulfils its purpose and remains without changing its essence, because it knows that there is no point in changing if it does not lead to progress and thus better performance of its function.

Enrique Alonso-Sainz ■

Camps Bansell, J. (2021).

Corazón educador. Un ensayo sobre la vocación a la enseñanza [A heart for educating. An essay on the call to teach]. Aula Magna/McGraw-Hill. 163 pp.

The recognition of the existence of a *call* to teach is shared by many. The book that concerns us intends to further examine the vocation of teaching, as well as to highlight other aspects, such as pedagogical love and intuition in order to place us in relation to the vocational aspect. At the same time, the author recognises his interest in addressing these aspects, which are largely intangible, as opposed to a certain educational technicality that only considers what is scientifically proven to be relevant.

The book chose to use footnotes, which enables it to be read at two levels depending on the degree of depth with which you wish to read. There is, undoubtedly, a notable effort to provide both bibliographical justification for the statements that are made and sources to expand on the aspects that appear.

According to the author, some educators felt the *call* early on and others unexpectedly over the years. Many people refer to and define it as “*their place in the world*”, their sense of identity, personal fulfilment, a form of service to others. In short, the materialisation of their *raison d’être*. It is this, in principle, intangible aspect —the call to teach— that equips the person and enables them to respond to a new dimension. This inner disposition allows them to reach the core of their students, to take charge of their reality and needs; to ensure their optimum personal development. All of which is done intuitively, allowing them to respond immediately and aptly.

In this context, a kind of *affection* appears, sometimes neglected: pedagogical love. The author metaphorically likens pedagogical love to the “driving force” and intuition to the “movement”. This driving force leads them to *take charge* of reality and respond appropriately in each educational situation.

We have before us an essay, a book for reflection that explores the immaterial aspects of interest in relation to the call to teach. The author’s analysis attempts to provide unity and logic to very diverse

subjects, interweaving his own personal point of view. Within the framework of a humanistic and qualitative view of teaching, the book will be useful for novice teachers, students of education or those interested in reflecting and finding specific literature.

The study is in line with Max Van Manen's pedagogical view, which is oriented towards the description and interpretation of the essential structures of the experience in education, leading us to the core of the relationship between people (teacher-student). His approach brings us closer to the study of the immaterial dimensions inherent to the everyday pedagogical experience. As is correctly explained, this is difficult to achieve using the usual research approaches.

The book is organised into six chapters: after a brief introduction, the author provides an extensive justification of his work. The second chapter links the call to teach with pedagogical love and educational intuition. The third chapter speaks about the call to teach followed by a section in which the previous concepts are related. The fifth chapter deals with education from a personalistic perspective and the sixth chapter describes the school climate that can flourish in a vocational school environment. The book ends with a brief concluding chapter.

As far as literature is concerned, the knowledge of authors, many of them current, who have theorised and researched is analysed and the origin of texts and ideas carefully referenced. It also distin-

guishes the thoughts, reflections and experiences of the author himself and works with texts obtained from the reflections of teachers that are used to further examine the meaning that awaits behind the diversity of educational situations.

This book does not have a specific methodology, since it is not research. Rather, its aim is to further examine a topic of interest and convey an argued and concise view. It is not definitive either, as it is intended as a basis for thought and study, as well as the discovery of specific literature to further analyse certain aspects. Inductively, the aim is to gain a better understanding of the essential aspects by listening to those who are on the front line: the teachers.

The book concludes that the aspects developed, together with teaching skills, will lead to upstanding professionals in one of the most complex and crucial professions.

These intangibles will help create a warm, pleasant, safe, trusting atmosphere, which, through a friendly demand, will give way to profound mutual knowledge. For example, the manifestations of pedagogical love are presented based on the teacher's loving responsibility.

A heart for educating; transport and gateway to knowledge and relationships. Pedagogical love; human and effective teaching that harmonises the excessive technicality, thus penetrating the student's core in a respectful and delicate way.

Those who choose to base education only on scientific evidence will most likely not be able to understand many human situations in the classroom; perhaps leaving some specific needs of students unattended. Given their love for their students, the vocational teacher will find it easier to make the right decisions. They will have a greater capacity for reflection and intuition that will enable them to help their students.

Call to teach, pedagogical love and educational intuition; elements that *spiritualise* (humanise) school, also giving a *poetic aspect* to the teaching profession and life.

Jordi Claret Terradas ■

De Marzio, D. M. (Ed.) (2021).

David Hansen and The Call to Teach. Renewing the Work that Teachers do. Teachers College Press. 148 pp.

It is 25 years since David T. Hansen published *The Call to Teach*, a book that has had an enormous impact on the training and professional development of many teachers—particularly at secondary level—both in the United States and the rest of the world.

Darryl M. De Marzio, Professor of Foundations of Education at the University of Scranton, is the editor of the volume discussed, which brings together eleven essays by renowned university professors from eight different countries. They discuss the theory and educational

practices inspired by the thinking of D. T. Hansen: in particular, the aforementioned *The Call to Teach* (1995) and a more recent book *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching: Toward a Teacher's Creed* (2001). The volume closes with a brief but substantial afterword by David T. Hansen himself.

De Marzio first read *The Call to Teach* while working on his doctoral thesis under the guidance of D. T. Hansen at Columbia University, and the two have maintained a fluid academic partnership ever since. The rest of the authors who sign the chapters in this volume have had personal dealings with Hansen—as students, colleagues or at international conferences—and they all express their appreciation for Hansen's work in the field of education, both in the field of Philosophy of Education and in the development of innovative educational practices. In some cases, they even go as far as to publicly express their gratitude for having enjoyed his friendship and benefited from the discreet and kind influence that Hansen has had on their lives, both professionally and personally. Ultimately, the book can be seen as a continuation of the dialogue Hansen initiated with teachers in *The Call to Teach*. It is a polyphonic reflection on the meaning of teaching when viewed from the perspective of the “vocation” of the teacher.

Some chapters of the book are of a more philosophical nature, such as those by Shelley Sherman, Emerita of Lake Forest College, and Hansjörg Hohr of the University of Oslo-Trondheim, who devel-

ops and comments on Hansen's thought. Other authors contrast and relate his works to those of renowned philosophers and educators. Thus, Ruth Heilbronn, from the Institute of Education at UCL, points out Hansen's convergence with J. Dewey's *Philosophy of Education* through the notions of habit, growth, situation, moral knowledge and democracy understood as a shared way of life; Anna Pagès, from the Ramon Llull University of Barcelona, explicitly mentions a *Philosophy of Voice*, latent in Hansen's work, in relation to the hermeneutics of Gadamer and Agamben. Pádraig Hogan, Emeritus of the University of Maynooth (Ireland) and Indrani Bhattacharjee, of Azim Premji University (India), analyse the connections of Hansen's approaches with Gadamer and MacIntyre's formulation of the concept of "tradition", and the thinking of Rabindranath Tagore, respectively.

Other works, of a more existential tone, describe personal episodes, snippets of shared academic life, friendship and human and professional transformation experienced alongside Hansen, which are narrated with the originality and closeness of those who experienced them first-hand. Thus, Caroline Heller of Lesly University describes how she encouraged the "encounter" between Hansen and W. G. Sebald and the importance that this discovery had for his subsequent work; and Cati Bell shares a beautiful account of Hansen's beneficial influence on her professional and personal life, as a result of her involvement in "*The Moral Life of Schools*" project.

In the first chapter of the volume, "The Language of Vocation and the Prospect for Teacher Renewal: An Introductory Essay", De Marzio clearly and concisely outlines the core of the theories Hansen presents in *The Call to Teach*, along with the opportunity to look at them again in this volume. Our time can be described as a period in which mercantilist and performative language has flooded educational institutions, intending to liken them to companies whose only objectives are to optimise "results" in terms of employability and economic benefits. On the contrary, Hansen invites teachers to experience his work from the perspective of vocation, which is why Hansen's thinking and the present volume are timelier than ever.

With Hansen's invitation—and De Marzio in agreement with him—to consider the teaching profession in terms of a vocation, they encourage teachers, and those who are training to become teachers in the future, to share a particular way of understanding their work: working as a teacher means devoting oneself to a profession that has a *high social value* and provides those working as such with a *satisfying experience of personal fulfilment*. "Vocational" teachers do what they like doing—what they were born and trained to do—and, in doing so, they are happy and provide an indispensable and irreplaceable service to society. Hansen does not merely *invite* teachers to join him in this way of looking at teaching, he presents and offers the intellectual and moral tools in order for those who would like to carry

out their teaching work in this way to be able to do so.

Therefore, reading this volume of works edited by De Marzio is also an invitation to reread—or read for the first time, if it is the case—Hansen's works¹. A highly recommended and rewarding read both for those who are already working as teachers and for those who are training to do so; and, without a doubt, for the university lecturers and professors who are entrusted with their academic and professional training.

Note

¹ A Spanish translation is available: Hansen, D. T. (2001). *Llamados a enseñar*. Idea Books; Hansen, D. T. (2002). *Explorando el corazón moral de la enseñanza*. Idea Books.

María G. Amilburu ■

Bohlin, K. (2020).

Educando a través de la literatura: despertando la imaginación moral en las aulas de secundaria [Teaching Character Education through Literature. Awakening the Moral Imagination in Secondary Classrooms]. Editorial Didaskalos. 286 pp.

This book, mainly geared towards secondary school and further education (*bachillerato*) teachers, takes us inside the field of character education, using literature as a means to help us in this task. Its value mainly lies in helping us to lay foundations on which to develop a teaching approach for using stories in

the classroom. In the book, the author establishes two clearly differentiated parts that help said teaching. We have, on the one hand, a theoretical part in which the importance of and need for character education is explained and, on the other, a more practical part in which she discusses her experience in the field through four stories in English that she uses in class.

In the first part, the author, with agile and descriptive language, reveals step by step how we can awaken desire and develop moral imagination in youths through literature and the greatest stories with which said literature provides us, and how these stories become a tool that can help us to see how we can lead a truly fulfilling life. This part comprises three chapters. In the first, Bohlin explains what character education is and how it is understood, describing it as teaching mainly desire and imagination. As such, she seeks to cover topics that are currently being revived in the education field, such as education on character and virtues, suffering, the importance of relationships and reflection, all of which are elements that help to educate the desire and means that equip people with the power to lead a moral life. In the second chapter, the author goes to the core of the stories, showing how they can help to teach, above all, moral imagination. This is where the literature acquires a special role within the educational field, as imagination helps to shape desire. Bohlin illustrates that the narratives are kinds of moral experiments that we conduct within ourselves, given that, throu-

gh them, we can identify with the characters. It is in this identification where we can desire something or reject something, choose it or not. On this point, the author stresses that youths can be helped to grow in moral education, given that the stories help us to choose, with the characters, so as to later implement such aspects in our own lives. Lastly, in the third chapter, another important part of the stories is discussed. These normally entail a story with a complete plot, which allows us to identify with greater clarity what she calls moral 'inflections'. These become the choices that lead to the characters changing their moral objectives and paths. Furthermore, within the stories, a few challenges arise that are moments in time in which the characters experience a crisis in their life project or way of life, and have to change or further adjust their moral life in view of the goal chosen.

The second part comprises an analysis of the four different literary works through which the author seeks to awaken the moral imagination of students, guiding them towards an ethical reflection on the motivations, aspirations and choices of their protagonists. These protagonists are none other than, firstly, Elizabeth Bennet, the main character in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, who discovers throughout the story how deluded she has been and the path she has to follow to start leading a real life. Secondly, we have Janie Crawford, the female protagonist of

Zora Neale Hurston's novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. This novel is not as well known, but it has great fineness in depicting the life of the protagonist who gradually, through many difficulties, discovers the role that love has in her life. Thirdly, we have Sydney Carton, the redeemed man in Charles Dickens' novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, with whom we discover the keys to overcoming vices and mediocrity. Lastly, as a counterbalance, we have Jay Gatsby, the hero in Francis Scott Fitzgerald's novel, *The Great Gatsby*, who demonstrates the road to ruin, blinded by dreams that are not grounded to reality. The latter case, a character presented to us as a counterexample, is also of great help, as it demonstrates where the choices and decisions we make can take us.

The approach used by the author may be applied to other literary works that are included in curriculums.

As such, Karen Bohlin shares with us her experience in the educational field, to which she has dedicated a large part of her life, teaching secondary school students through literature, and she shows us how the approach she uses can be applied to other literary works within curriculums. It is, therefore, a book that gives teachers new light in which to work with literature in class and helps to put students on the path to further discover the joys of reading.

Verónica Fernández Espinosa ■



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