

## COMPARATIVISM IN SECONDARY TEACHING

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It is not right that Comparative Education or, rather, theory of education which gives a privileged place to comparison in setting and solving educational problems and reforms, should limit itself to serving education and particularly politicians and administrators. It ought, besides and perhaps first of all to make use of education to infuse and spread the comparative spirit.

The historian can find frequent examples of peoples who professed only one religion or only one view of the world and rejected or remained ignorant of all others : this happened for instance in Israel where Christ was admonished for talking to Gentiles and even preaching to Samaritans. But he may also find peoples of imperialistic temper who were willing to accept a variety of religions provided that political stability was not endangered. Thus, a little before the birth of Christ, Agrippa raised in Rome the pantheon which housed, at the same time, the gods of all the subject peoples of the Empire.

In human geography we find fewer peoples identified with one religion or its philosophical equivalent. In civilized nations the tendency is for the State not to favour any single religion above others, allowing those — atheism included — which do not contravene the basic norms of human dignity and social conduct. A comparative educationist should clearly prefer such a neutral and pluralistic attitude.

In religion and also in secular culture, in economics and politics our age is progressing, with sporadic set-backs, towards a pluralistic society which brings about unity guaranteed by respect for human beings as individuals and as members of society, with various beliefs, systems and processes. Those comparative educationists whose aim, whatever their personal convictions, is to spread the establishment of a world of a pluralistic order, have within their reach a very effective method of injecting pluralism and the comparative principle upon which it is based into the curricula of secondary education.

What has Secondary Education tried to do since the Renaissance? It has doubtless tried to serve as a base for higher studies, but at the same time and as a fundamental aim, it has tried to free the adolescent from his "idola loci", from his ingenuous and exaggerated love for his own limited locality.

If primary education aimed at freeing the small child from his egocentricity, giving him the skills and ideas necessary for him to begin his relationships with his neighbours and with things, and if higher education tried to free the young man from superficiality and instability, secondary education freed the adolescent from the exclusive nature of the culture which has surrounded and nourished him from childhood. To do this it tried to introduce him to classical culture which because of its high humanistic value and because it was a "dead culture" and consequently unchanging, seemed destined to act as a standard.

Did it succeed? Not in any satisfactory way. The cultural influence was never impartial, it was affected — I remember perfectly well — by nationalistic and literary classical prejudice, and — why not admit it? — religious prejudice. Besides, Demosthenes or Cicero lived far from my own time. Despite the efforts of my teachers to make me familiar with their texts and environment, I found it impossible to become absorbed in their real environment to find out what people were talking about in the street, what was being said by the slaves who worked the fields, what was being planned in the guard-rooms while they were making speeches. And finally it seemed flagrantly arbitrary to compare my modern culture exclusively with classical cultures.

My love of exploration, the fascination which the life of the jungle exercised over me, led me to think vaguely about the usefulness of comparing our culture with that of those early and primitive peoples who fought bravely against the harshness of nature.

It is a fact that Ramón Lull, for example, overcame to a remarkable extent the shy cultural pluralism of the Renaissance and of Secondary Education in the centuries following it, when in his *Doctrina Pueril* he urged the boy to compare his religion, culture and social class with other religions, cultures and social conditions.

But Ramón Lull was a precursor more admired than followed. With all the limitations and weaknesses which I have pointed out it is undeniable that the study of the classics in secondary education, sometimes carried out with genuine enthusiasm and sometimes reduced to an unpleasant and oppressive formality, contributed decisively to making a small opening in the preponderantly monolithic mentality of the times and introduced pluralistic thinking through this opening. It would be unjust not to recognize all its merits in this respect. This does not make any less utopian the belief that the restoration of such studies would help effectively to establish and secure a pluralistic society. But there are other ways. Refusing to seek and find them, would amount to something worse than historical injustice or a belief in utopia. In any comparative educationist it would amount to betraying our cause. Collaborating to improve secondary curricula should therefore not be enough to calm our consciences. If such educational achievement does not bring us closer to a pluralistic world, tolerant of everything that promotes human dignity, solidarity, social justice and human relationships, and only intolerant of what attacks them, the curriculum will suffer from a most deplorable weakness.

What are these methods, and can they be discovered? The answer is obvious to any reasonably well-informed teacher. For a long time, worthy institutions have been pursuing pluralistic objectives, precisely in the field of secondary studies. Such aims, and methods to achieve these aims, have marked the work of the Ecole des Roches and many other centres belonging to the International New Schools movement.

European schools linked to the Common Market, although recently established — the oldest in Luxembourg has had secondary education since 1954 — and few in number, show remarkable efficiency and original initiative. Four types of pluralism are practised in them : theories of cultural harmonization in which problems and methods that are apparently irreconcilable are considered ; social life which creates familiarity between students of different nationalities, races and sexes ; literary and linguistic skills realized by the dual paths of academic study and personal relations ; and the religious elements which pay regard to the wishes of each pupil's parents according to their religious or non-religious background.

The system is maintained, encouraged and improved by conferences of chosen inspectors belonging to the countries of the Common Market and even States which have not joined it, as well as by the preparation and publication of objective and impartial texts which in History, for instance, overcome nationalistic bias, and by the training of suitable teachers.

If we could inject this fourfold pluralism into the curriculum, the teachers and the spirit of secondary education throughout the world we would be rendering an immeasurable service to truth and peace. Today's young people educated through comparative methodology would in the near future build a world wide pluralistic society without abandoning their own respective beliefs, certainties and opinions.

#### LE COMPARATIVISME DANS L'ENSEIGNEMENT SECONDAIRE

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Il est anormal que la théorie sur laquelle se fonde l'enseignement comparé soit simplement utilisée à poser et à résoudre les réformes et les problèmes de l'enseignement. L'esprit de cette théorie devrait être transmis et répandu. Que ce soit en religion, en culture classique, en économie ou en politique, notre époque se déplace vers une société pluralistique. Les tenants de l'enseignement comparé à qui ce processus est flatteur ont à leur portée une méthode très efficace d'injecter le pluralisme et les principes comparés sur lesquels il est basé dans les programmes de l'enseignement secondaire.

L'enseignement n'a point changé depuis la Renaissance. L'enseignement primaire a visé à libérer le jeune enfant de son égocentrisme ; l'enseignement supérieur a tenté de libérer l'homme jeune de superficialisme et de l'instabilité. L'enseignement secondaire a essayé de libérer l'adolescent de son amour ingénu et exagéré de son propre environnement limité. Bien que l'enseignement classique ait ses limites et ses faiblesses, il a contribué d'une façon décisive à pratiquer une petite ouverture dans une mentalité fortement monolithique et à introduire la pensée pluralistique.

De nouvelles approches sont maintenant nécessaires. Dans les écoles de la Communauté Européenne le pluralisme culturel, social, linguistique et religieux est pratiqué. S'il nous était possible d'injecter ce pluralisme quadruple dans les programmes, chez les professeurs et dans l'esprit de l'enseignement secondaire dans le monde entier, nous pourrions rendre un service inestimable à la vérité et à la paix.