

ANNA MARIA PASSASEO
Editor

CURRENT ISSUES
IN MORAL MATTERS

A Call for Education



MESSINA
UNIVERSITY
PRESS

ANNA MARIA PASSASEO

Editor

**CURRENT ISSUES
IN MORAL MATTERS**

A Call for Education

The present work is released under Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 - CC-BY-NC-ND, the full text of which is available at the URL: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>



ISBN 979-12-80899-14-9

DOI 10.13129/979-12-80899-14-9

© The Authors for the text 2024

© Messina University Press for this edition

Published by:

Messina University Press

Piazza Pugliatti, 1 - 98121 Messina

Web site: <https://messinaup.unime.it>

First edition: October 2024

This volume has been submitted to an external refereeing process under the responsibility of the Editorial Board and the Board of Editors-in-Chief of Messina University Press. The works published are approved by the Board of Editors-in-Chief after the Editorial Board assessment and must comply with the Code of Ethics of the publishing house.

The online digital editions are published with Open Access at:

<https://messinaup-pubblicazioni.unime.it/index.php/mup>

CONTENTS

Presentation ANNA MARIA PASSASEO	p. 5
PART I <i>Phenomenologies of Moral Apathy</i>	p. 11
The Empathic Erosion: the Loss of Values ALESSANDRO VERSACE	p. 13
Ethics of Success and Praise of Waste: Paradoxes or Trends in Today's Search for Meaning? ROSA GRAZIA ROMANO	p. 27
New Adolescent Behaviors in the School. Process Analysis and Useful Suggestions GIOMBATTISTA AMENTA	p. 37
Suspended Adolescents. New Fragility and Fragmentation of the Self CATERINA BENELLI	p. 51
Navigators Without a Compass. Adolescents between Disorientation and Self-Care KARIN BAGNATO	p. 61
Bullying as a Moral Issue ANNA MARIA PASSASEO	p. 73
Adolescents and Online Risk Behaviors CLARA LOMBARDO, CARMELA MENTO, MARIA CATENA SILVESTRI, FRANCESCA GODFREY, CHIARA LA BARBIERA	p. 91
A Call for Action: Contrasting Cyberbullying and Protecting Minors' Rights at EU Level FRANCESCA POLLICINO	p. 101
Migrants at Sea, Rescue and Management of EU External Borders: an Issue of Accountability CINZIA INGRATOCI SCORCIAPINO	p. 115
Teenagers and the Truth of the Fake: Living with Fake News on the Web FRANCESCO PIRA	p.135

Artificial Womb as New “Birth” Possibility: New Frontiers for Education	p. 145
NATALE EMANUELE DI NUZZO	
PART II	p. 153
<i>Education Proposals</i>	
Moral Education and Moral Growth as Elements of Creating a Culture of Inclusion in Education	p. 155
DOROTA CHIMICZ	
Teacher Identity: Being a Good EFL Teacher According to Pre-Service Teachers	p. 171
M. GARCÍA-SAMPEDRO, M.A. GONZÁLEZ-RUA, A. TORRALBA-BURRIAL	
Practical Wisdom as an Exercise of Moral Responsibility at School	p. 189
DOMENICA MAVIGLIA	
What Kind of Moral Education at School? An Empirical Research in Messina	p. 201
VALENTINA FRASCÀ	
Mediation with the Participation of Youth in the Context of Moral Education	p. 221
AGNIESZKA LEWICKA-ZELENT, AGNIESZKA MARKIEWICZ-GOSPODAREK, ANNA MARIA PASSASEO	
“Liberi di Scegliere”: the Moral Alternative for Children of 'Ndragheta Families	p. 235
ENRICO INTERDONATO, NATALE EMANUELE DI NUZZO	
Disgust and Morality in Contemporary Art: an Aesthetic Education Perspective	p. 249
ALICJA LISIECKA	
Theatre and Education, between Theories and Practices	p. 265
KATIA TRIFIRÒ	
Dilemma. An empirical Investigation into the Moral Development of Adolescents and Young People through Role Play	p. 281
UMBERTO SPATICCHIA	
Bibliography	p. 301
Authors	p. 320

PRESENTATION

What is morality? What qualifies us as moral subjects? It is difficult to answer these questions at a time in history when, unlike in the not so distant past, we feel the absence of strong and stable guidelines for personal and social living, and when value and cultural pluralism inhabits our western societies: at a time in history, in other words, when particularistic interests seem to prevail over consideration of the consequences of our choices and actions on others, meant, *latu sensu*, as ‘everyone else’ and not as belonging to our ‘circle of interest’.¹

Yet, moral sensitivity is something that all of us, as human beings, manifest very early on, we can say from the first time we use the expression “It’s not fair!”. And we start doing this as children. Because it is precisely from the perception of a wrong, an outrage suffered, a humiliation that we begin to process and develop our moral sense.

It happens that once an individual reflects on the experience of moral outrage, that experience becomes almost a point of no return: its negative traits are brought into focus, so that these can be identified and recognised in other similar experiences, one’s own or those of others, and one can behave accordingly. In other words, that experience becomes the occasion for the construction of the subjective category of “injustice”. It is a psychological process that seems to be common to all human beings and, quite simply, leads to affirmation: “No more!” (No more will I allow a person to treat me this way, no more will I allow a weak person to suffer this, no more will I allow someone to be humiliated, and so on).

This process involves, at the same time, the construction of a complementary category of “justice”, within which we include those forms of behavior that we judge to be “not unjust”. Indeed, it is the idea of what is evil that provides the starting point and the impulse to formulate normative theses about how it is possible to reduce or

¹ Cfr. F. ALBERONI, S. VECA, *L'altruismo e la morale*, Milano, Garzanti, 1992.

eliminate the suffering of individuals and, consequently, also about how it is right that everyone should be treated.²

In short, it happens that from the experience of a feeling of injustice we derive the foundation of our ethos: it is the feeling that establishes the order of priority of our values or the 'order of the heart' of each individual, as Roberta De Monticelli would say.³

Here then, to return to the initial questions, namely “what is morality?” and “who is the moral subject?”, we can answer that morality, in a ‘minimal’ definition, is the *affirmation of the dignity of the person*, which is realized in the protection of the person from offense and humiliation. And, in this way, the person is recognised as a ‘subject of value’, so that any experience aimed at ensuring respect both towards oneself and towards others, as ‘subjects of value’, is ‘moral’.

As a 'subject of value', each of us is both a moral patient, i.e. a subject to be protected and valued, and a moral agent, i.e. a subject free to act, following his or her own order of values or order of the heart.

Today, however, we are witnessing a kind of “moral apathy”: that sensitivity that should lead us to protect and safeguard ourselves, as subjects of value, has died out. And we are witnessing, especially in adolescents and young people, behavior of self-hatred.

But that sensitivity to others, whose fate no longer touches our heartstrings, has also died out.

All this is for us a cause for concern and, at the same time, an incentive to plan for change.

² The 'sense of justice' could be equated with an inner drive to envisage societies without great evils, as Stuart Hampshire well describes: «There is nothing mysterious or "subjective" or culture bound in the great evils of human experience, re-affirmed in every age and in every written history and in every tragedy and fiction: murder and the destruction of life, imprisonment, enslavement, starvation, poverty, physical pain and torture, homelessness, friendlessness. That these great evils are to be averted is the constant presupposition of moral arguments at all times and in all places, and particularly when the costs involved in pursuing different conceptions of the good are being coimted.» (S. HAMPSHIRE, *Innocence and experience*, Cambridge, Mass, Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 90).

³ Cfr. R. DE MONTICELLI, *L'ordine del cuore. Etica e teoria del sentire*, Milano, Garzanti, 2012, p. IX.

To get to the heart of these what we might call ‘*apathetic phenomenologies*’ in reference to morality, to understand them from within, we need more sensitive glasses to sharpen our gaze: the glasses of philosophy, of psychology – in all its declinations –, of sociology, of law. In order to intervene appropriately, we need the spectacles of pedagogy, of the arts, of the sphere of justice: all perspectives present here, which, I hope, can dialogue constructively to prompt informed reflection.

Thus, the first part of the volume means to delve into the many forms through which moral apathy manifests itself today, probing its modes of expression and educational implications.

Alessandro Versace gets to the heart of the moral problem, focusing on the widespread phenomenon of the erosion of empathy, namely that human characteristic that enables relationship and recognition of the other.

From the same perspective of the observation of young people's inability to build authentic interpersonal relationships, Rosa Grazia Romano observes how it is the value of success and its obsessive pursuit that causes young people to develop in a way that only serves to sustain a consumerist and materialistic society and causes ethical poverty.

There follows a specific focus on the world of adolescence: Giombattista Amenta investigates new adolescent behavior, especially at school, where provocations and insults towards peers or teachers are increasingly frequent and where the risk for educators to deal with them inappropriately is high; Caterina Benelli investigates the widespread behaviors of isolation, social withdrawal and hyper-connection, which photograph today's youth fragility and cause a disruption of psycho-social development together with an increase in the fragmentation of the self; Karin Bagnato sees disorientation as the condition that best describes adolescents, who, deprived of strong guiding values and authoritative parental figures, appear 'without a compass' and are therefore exposed to multiple forms of unease and malaise.

Special attention is then reserved for the pervasive phenomenon of bullying: Anna Maria Passaseo frames it as a moral problem due to the dynamics of ‘*moral disengagement*’ that it activates and, from this perspective, suggests the most

appropriate approach to combat and reduce it; Clara Lombardo, Chiara La Barbiera, Maria Catena Silvestri, Francesca Godfrey and Carmela Mento deeply investigate the psychological aspects that underlie cyberbullying behavior and, in general, all behavior of online aggression and violence; Francesca Pollicino offers an interpretation of the phenomenon of cyberbullying from the perspective of international law, identifying the limits of current European Union policy and the possibilities of a European regulatory framework capable of setting minimum rules common to the member states to guarantee the protection of cyberbullying victims and greater harmonization in the sanctioning and educational approach.

Other contemporary moral issues are also of extreme importance, which cause disorientation in the consciences of individuals as well as in public opinion and require, in order to be understood, an informed approach oriented towards complex thinking rather than exclusively emotional and simplifying thinking. Thus, with reference to the topic of illegal migratory flows, Cinzia Ingratoci Scorciapino accompanies us to understand the nature and scope of the rights of migrants crossing the sea, the relative rescue obligations of state and private vessels, and the responsibilities in the management of a phenomenon that involves EU interests and apparatuses.

With reference to the issue of information and data manipulation on the web, Francesco Pira shows how in the liquid-modern era deception has become central to processes of understanding reality and the distinction between true and false is no longer perceived. His call, therefore, is for careful reflection on the future of learning processes, at risk of instrumentalization by *tech companies*.

Natale Emanuele Di Nuzzo, on the other hand, invites us to reflect on the moral implications of technological research, using, as an example, the export of the human gestational function inside an artificial womb. Bioethical questions, which inevitably arise to challenge the possibility of post-human development, require to be addressed in full respect of the complexity of the problem.

The second part of the volume offers an opening to feasible educational proposals and good practices in moral education already implemented.

In this direction, Dorota Chimitz introduces the 'manifest' value of the moral approach in the educational field: inclusion. The need to create a culture of inclusion appears as a moral imperative: to be open to differences, to remove barriers, to respond negatively in public to the language of aggression, xenophobia and the labeling of otherness, to reduce prejudice and discrimination and to increase students' skills, knowledge and motivation to interact with different others.

The privileged place for promoting an inclusive culture is school. In this regard, Marta Garcia-Sampedro, María Amparo González-Rua and Antonio Torralba-Burrial place emphasis on the figure of the teacher and on the construction of his identity as a 'good' teacher: what it is characterized by and how it can be achieved constitute the objects of their research.

Also for Domenica Maviglia, school is the ideal educational context to propose "Practical Wisdom", as an exercise of moral responsibility. Based on the idea that knowledge is not just a set of theoretical concepts, but that it is also an ability to act effectively in concrete situations, "Practical Wisdom" asks teachers to combine theoretical skills and educational skills in the field to improve knowledge and the cultural horizons of students, pushing them towards greater social and democratic responsibility.

Valentina Frascà's research is of a reconnaissance nature, aimed at investigating the ways in which pre-adolescents today receive a moral education in public secondary schools, in a city like Messina, which due to its characteristics: being a city of South; of belonging to a region that has always had a moral sense contrasting with the national one; to be a port open to migratory landings; to have activated multicultural reception and inclusion policies; to register the presence of numerous subcultures in its social composition, needs to strengthen the moral sense of adolescents.

Another important educational place for the moral sphere is that of justice. The proposals successfully tested by Agnieszka Lewicka-Zelent, with Agnieszka Markiewicz-Gospodarek and Anna Maria Passaseo, and by Enrico Interdonato, with Natale Emanuele Di Nuzzo, move in this context.

The first proposal concerns the practice of mediation in Poland, introduced in 1995, with the creation of a project aimed at minors. Mediation takes on three dimensions: criminal, juvenile and scholastic. Regardless of its type, it provides an excellent lesson in constructive communication with others, in empathy, in the formation of an adequate hierarchy of values (e.g., justice, responsibility), and in the development of adequate moral feelings.

The second proposal concerns the “Liberi di scegliere” (Free to Choose) project activated by the Juvenile Court of Reggio Calabria since 2012 and created to remove minors belonging to Calabrian underworld families ('ndrangheta') and entrust them to the Juvenile Social Service, but outside Calabria. In this way it is possible to provide minors with adequate protection for regular psycho-physical growth and offer them the human stimuli necessary to be able to choose their own destiny in a free and conscious manner.

Art as an opportunity for moral education is the proposal of the next three contributions.

Alicja Lisiecka, following the classic bond that has existed between art and morality since the times of ancient Greece, as a result of the formative influence that beauty has on the human soul, proposes to use the same influence but adapting it to contemporary aesthetic canons. Modern and contemporary art has introduced new qualities into the artistic language, often divergent from classical beauty. One of these qualities is disgust, which can offer various stimuli for moral education, since many theories highlight the profound link between disgust and morality.

Caterina Trifirò interprets the relationship between theater and moral education in the context of social and community theater practices, which intertwine performance and daily life with the aim of improving the authentically human quality of relationships.

Finally, Umberto Spaticchia proposes role-playing as a useful tool for evaluating moral development in adolescents and young people, by encouraging them to reflect on ethical dilemmas, in line with Lawrence Kohlberg's stage theory.

ANNA MARIA PASSASEO