

**«Once upon a wartime...», a pedagogical lesson of Angelo Patri
(1876-1965)**

**«C'era una volta la guerra...», una lezione pedagogica di Angelo Patri
(1876-1965)**

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Abstract

As a means to inform contemporary discourse on education in emergency contexts, it can be useful to consider the experiences of the past in times of crisis. Angelo Patri (1876-1965), an Italian-American teacher and school principal, was able to converge his pedagogical thinking and experience in the formulation of concrete answers to the families affected by World War II. *Your Children in Wartime* (1943) is a skillful work on the necessary roles of the school, family, community, and even the children themselves, in the growth path during times of conflict and confusion. As such, it still provides an excellent manual for teachers of our current days, as they attempt to cope with these extraordinary times in their own careers and in their public service. The current essay returns to the historical period of Patri's writing, elaborating on the basic principles expressed in his volume *Your Children in Wartime*.

Keywords: education in emergency context, manual for youth, parents and teachers, Angelo Patri, United States of America, WWII.

Sommario

Come mezzo per informare il discorso contemporaneo sull'educazione nei contesti di emergenza, può essere utile considerare le esperienze del passato in tempi di crisi. Angelo Patri (1876-1965), insegnante e preside italo-americano, seppe far convergere il suo pensiero pedagogico e la sua esperienza nella formulazione di risposte concrete alle famiglie colpite dalla seconda guerra mondiale. *Your Children in Wartime* (1943) è un'opera sapiente sui ruoli della scuola, della famiglia, della comunità e anche dei bambini stessi, nel percorso di crescita durante i periodi di conflitto e confusione. Al tempo stesso è un ottimo manuale per gli insegnanti dei nostri giorni che cercano di affrontare questi tempi straordinari nella loro carriera e nel loro servizio pubblico. Il presente saggio ritorna al periodo storico in cui Patri scriveva, elaborando i principi fondamentali espressi nel suo volume *Your Children in Wartime*.

Parole chiave: pedagogia in contesti di emergenza, manuale per giovani, genitori e insegnanti, Angelo Patri, Stati Uniti d'America, seconda guerra mondiale.

1. Pedagogy and 20th-century war

Through the twentieth century, the progress of human achievements and discoveries was repeatedly interrupted by wars, with their all too familiar abominations of irrational physical and social destruction. As World War II drew to a close, however, interests in education rebounded, with the recognition of pedagogy as a main instrument of social progress, a potential foundation of new and better scenarios. By 1955, Harold Dent, wartime editor of the *Times Education Supplement*, could look back and note that the war had brought the death of the *old world*, yet still caution: «only time and ourselves will decide whether our wills or circumstances will prevail» (Dent, 1955, p. VIII). For Dent, the date of 1 September 1939 was symbolic, not only for the onset of war, but also as the opening of a period of educational transformation, further composed in what identified as the four progressive moments of disintegration, recovery, adaptation, ferment:

Although there were only slight changes in the structure of pedagogy during the course of the war – yet more significant than most think – the educational order of 1939 had peremptorily come to an end. It died on September 1 of that year, the first day of evacuating the children, and can no longer be brought back to life (Dent, 1955, p. VIII).

Meanwhile overseas, Angelo Patri, intellectual, pedagogue and first American principal of Italian heritage, who had also witnessed the years of the Great War, faced the appeals of parents for help in daily communication and family management with their children. Following on the unprecedented events of the 1930s, this second war was altering relationships, changing educational and social spaces, and promised still more uncertainty to come. Parents were concerned about the possible negative effects on their children. «War, war, war everywhere, and there is nothing to do but help move on», Patri observed (1943, p. 6). Rather than responding with empty clichés or speeches of patriotism, Angelo Patri addressed the extraordinariness of emergency in simple language, sometimes metaphorical, illustrating paths of stability and recovery in terms of a familiar and everyday pedagogy. Above all, his *cure* was to maintain a peaceful state of mind in school and family contexts, in resistance to the violence that modern warfare brought to the home, at all hours, through the contemporary news media. Patri recognized the issues of patriotism and protection of democracy, but intertwined these with suggestions of daily commitments composing a practical and useful path for the community, which in the face of global violence, would especially draw on the resilience of the youngest themselves. This current article studies the main messages of the 1943 edition of *Your Children in Wartime*, Patri's pedagogical guide for adults on dealing with the critical events in managing the day-to-day activities of children and in accompanying their growth. Through this inquiry we can broaden our perspectives on the history of American educational processes and of Italian-American communities in particular, glimpse a mid-20th-century cross-section of pedagogic themes seen as crucial in emergency contexts, and discover the vital pertinence of these themes in our own contemporary contexts.

War is a tremendous, a terrible experience that penetrates into every fiber of life, affecting everything that people feel and think and do. We are now, despite all efforts to keep the peace, in the midst of the most shocking war this world has ever seen. We are engaged in a struggle for our national life, for all that is fine, all that is lovely in our way of living (Patri, 1943, p. 3).

In particular, Patri's view of conflict as a transitory context, but one necessitating adaptation, and his historic recommendations on the planning of educational routines that extend to both formal and informal spaces, remain valuable in our current pedagogical reflection. The sections that follow briefly examine the key events in the pedagogic career of Angelo Patri, and in particular the main themes and key passages of his 1943 publication, with the aim also of returning attention within Italian research circles to this accomplished pedagogue and prolific author in the field, unfortunately still lacking due recognition.

2. A career of progressive ideas

During the life of Angelo Patri, and even more so following his death in 1965, Italian scholarship had largely ignored this pioneer of democratically progressive schooling in

the USA, where he had been among the first to implement the theories of John Dewey, with his operational and pragmatic reworking of the traditional educational experience. Patri published extensively at the academic level, but even more so in the popular media, always emphasizing the close connections between educational and democratic principles, and their role in enabling individual and social freedoms. *A Schoolmaster in the Great City* (1917) remains the key volume for the study of the Patri's progressive pedagogical line and for historical-educational research in general on the development of inclusive experiences, methods and approaches in the multicultural environment of the American school. Following publication of that work, however, it would be more than a decade before his thought would receive particular notice in Italy, thanks to the visit of the American author to some Roman schools and his meeting with Giuseppe Lombardo Radice in 1927, and the note published subsequently by the Italian philosopher-pedagogue (1928). Following this, there would then be the long gap of some seven decades prior to the issue of the biographical monograph of James Wallace (2006), foremost expert on Patri's work, and the circulation of this important publication in the Italian academic context. In the meantime, the absence of any systemic attention to the research of the Italo-American in his home country was hampered by the limited circulation of his writings in this country. In fact his sole publication in Italian language came in 1954, promoted by Radice. Mention should also be made, however, of the efforts by Ambrogio Ietto to instill the memory of Angelo Patri in the Italian context, culminating in a dedicated congress of the Association of Italian Catholic Teachers (A.I.M.C.) in 2006 and the publication of the resulting acts as *Angelo Patri: da emigrante a schoolmaster*. Although these conference papers, and in particular the efforts of Ietto, represent a laudable work, they do not yet do justice to the examination of Patri's systemic pedagogic theory, embedded in the English-language publication of his extensive scholarly and narrative writing.

In 1881, Angelo Patri, born in Piaggine, Salerno in 1876, departed for New York City with his mother, following the family father, already emigrated in search of work. The contrast between the American way of life and the simple village life of early childhood memories is vividly recounted in his fictionalized autobiography for children, *Biondino l'emigrante* (1950). The clash of New World opportunity versus the limitations of the American school system immediately became apparent. Angelo's schoolboy experience began on 5 March 1887, when he took his place in a classroom with some 60 classmates. The pedagogical approach of the American school of the 1890s was founded on discipline, to the extent of exemplary and violent punishment, intended to firmly imprint order in the comportment of the child and future adult. In the context of family and neighborhood life conducted largely in Italian language, and the difficulties of the more broadly-shared immigrant experience, young Angelo succeeded well in school and would emerge as one of the first Italian-American graduates of City College of New York. Beginning in 1898 he would serve as a teacher in his adopted city. Soon, in this role, his innovative and progressive didactic applications received notice from his supervisors in the New York Board of Education. In 1907 he was appointed principal of Public School 4, and five years later as principal of Junior High School 45, where he would remain until retirement in 1944. Although already embarked on a progressive approach, in 1909 he had the formative experience of participating in a course on logic applied to education, taught by John Dewey himself.

The two schools presided by Patri, both in the Bronx, were attended by children of immigrant families: Italian, Irish, German, Jewish and others. For the rest of the city and American society in general, the Bronx represented a marginal part of New York, economically functional but socially difficult, and the Italians themselves were the object

of negative public comment and active prejudice. Within the isolation of the borough, Patri proposed real advancement through change in the teaching paradigm. What he advocated and aimed for was the creation of a place where children could grow up in patterns of familiar rhythms and interests, supported by networks of mutual aid among the diverse families and the creation of a sense of trust. This approach within the school, in fact, gained support from the parents, who found there a locus of communication between their families and the great metropolis, a place of safety and serenity, bounded off from petty and organized criminality, gangs, violence and the other risks of street life, and offering a more optimistic future than the otherwise dead-end view of the work in the lowest ranks of labor, and even that without certainty. PS 45, in fact, was an institution of child-centered progressive experimentalism, in which Patri exalted the individual qualities of the pupil through a new, anti-dogmatic education, yet always attentive to external expectations, demands and futures. Within this broader pedagogic and institutional context, Patri devoted specific personal attention to cases of children from exceptionally difficult socio-familial contexts, even following these outside school hours, by going to the homes of the families:

Gradually the children began to feel that the school was with them and for them, and began to assume responsibility for it. They economized school time by arranging and distributing material for the day's work. They began to take care of themselves in the halls, relieving the teachers of that duty. They ceased marking the walls and picked up the scattered papers without being told to do so. [...] Whenever a problem arose that concerned the school as a whole, I put the problem at the school assembly, and whenever a child responded to the school need I spoke of him as one who was serving the school. Gradually this thought of being "square" with one's classmates was carried out of the classroom till it became the thought of being "square" with the school. [...] The rod idea was [previously] at work. Books, benches, crowded rooms, sitting still, listening; talking only when called upon to recite, teaching where the teacher did the thinking; these conditions have meant and always will mean an imposed discipline. [...] To replace discipline of teacher-responsibility by the discipline of child-responsibility is a long, slow process. "My school" had only begun (Patri, 1917, pp. 39-41).

The success of this progressive approach, and the spoken and written eloquence of Angelo Patri in regard, led to his emergence as the voice of American pedagogy in popular media, in particular through the column *Our Children*, published Monday through Saturday in some 100 newspapers, reaching a total circulation of nearly seven million through the United States, but also in Canada, Australia and some countries of Latin America (Ietto, 2006, p. 28). Patri's voice continued popular and highly respected through the years of the Great Depression, thanks in part to his practice of responding directly to parents' requests for pedagogical advice. With American entry into World War II, however, the anxieties and requests for advice expressed both through letters and Patri's personal network increased to such extent that he recognized the need for specific reflection.

3. *Historic pedagogy vs. contemporary emergencies*

In the pedagogical debate, the issues of emergencies, when these appear, generally concern definable groups of vulnerable subjects with specific contingencies. These *states of exception* are composed of critical issues of direct trauma, risk and uncertainty,

multiplying among themselves into situations requiring a logic of educational *thinking and acting*, capable of inserting in the midst of the historic reality, and rooting responses above all in the availabilities of inherent resilience and resistance. In such contexts, the pedagogical preparation and response must still deal with subcategories of theory and practice related to childhood, adolescence, gender and special needs, as always, but now with greater vigor, in consideration of the more severe and concrete difficulties emerging from the emergency context.

For those dealing with emergency contexts in the current global scenario, it can be useful to refer to historic contexts, since over time, it is fundamentally the same aspects that re-emerge and reweave themselves in the current moment and place, and therefore still with similarities in pedagogical context and values. *Your Children in Wartime*, published in long-ago 1943, therefore remains a useful compendium of observations and pedagogical recommendations for the adult tasks of designing pathways to resilience, wellness and the eventual renewal of pre-crisis routines. Patri divides his *guidebook* into three sections: for parents, for teachers, and for children. Although not without rhetoric aimed at emotional effects, the arguments and advice of each section are primarily constructed around practical examples and situational stories, and with expression in simple metaphors. As such, it adheres to the practical and pragmatic approach of all pedagogic research by Angelo Patri, who concretizes the overall formative effort as the combined results of parents, teachers, and children themselves.

The following sections summarize the key themes.

Child, family, community and modern media

Both instinctively and rationally, Patri recognized the communicative power of the media and worked closely with them over his entire career. For this reason, approaching age 70, the dedicated of his wartime volume cites the newspapers of the United States:

for [their] help to reach the homes, the fathers and mothers of the children whose welfare had become my chief interest, my life's task. To those newspapers I owe a great debt, for they have made it possible for me to teach, to interpret, to plead for the intelligent upbringing of our children (Patri, 1943, p. VII).

By 1943, the socio-economic disruption brought about by war, the detailed communication of astonishing, wide-spread and long-lasting violence (soon to be amplified to the levels of nuclear holocaust), had beleaguered and distressed the American *home front* to the point of exhaustion, «Our families are scattered; the young people's careers are broken before they have begun; nothing is as we would have it. We have been forced out of our comfortable ways into new and strangely inconvenient ones and we are distressed» (Patri, 1943, p. 5). In addressing this context, however, Patri avoided the communicative attitudes of the authoritative or accomplished theorist, or even as the repository of any kind of absolute truth. Instead the discussion of the wartime volume is one that brings him to stand alongside adults, teachers, and children, to address with them their personally contingent issues, helping them to address and reverse the ever-increasing trend of anxieties. His starting point was an unshakeable trust in the child and their inherent gifts in overcoming difficulties.

Children have great powers of endurance, great resiliency of spirit. [...] With a little help from us and a great deal of affection, they will come through ready for the day when peace reigns once more in this world and the United States stands like a bulwark

preserving the freedom of mankind. For that day we are training our children, we fathers, mothers and teachers, and I hope this book can help even a little (Patri, 1943, p. VIII).

Whatever the circumstances, Patri urges parents to keep their spirits high, to maintain open dialogue and sincerity in their communication on situations, to remain involved with family not only in difficult moments but also in celebration of happier news and events. Through these parental approaches, the family can avoid descent into emotional confusion, mutual misunderstandings and tends to towards dystopic miasmas. Taking to heart his own advice, and although Patri commands a vast personal knowledge of pedagogical science and theory, his discussion tends almost to the paternal. He remains concrete and close to the people, intending to serve as a stable reference for all. He is among the first to recognize the negative effects from over-production and over-consumption of content. Translated to 21st-century terminology, what he is saying is that by avoiding the temptations of the infodemic, with attention to our own thinking, we can maintain our freedom as individuals.

Children feel what we think long before they can hear and understand what we say. Words used to cover true feelings do not deceive them for any length of time. [...] Don't distress yourself more than you can . [...] Don't read every word of the war news, day by day. This war is too big to take at one bite. A battle lost, a battle won today does not end the matter. [...] It is our duty to keep still, do our work, comfort and sustain our children while we aid our government in every possible way. That still leaves us room for freedom (Patri, 1943, pp. 6-7).

The author recognizes that the most vulnerable are adolescents, attracted by the reporting of events in the media and so subject to fears, which is why they should be kept occupied in *manual tasks* that might distract them from world affairs. «Boys and girls from eighteen to the early twenties – these are our children too. Their world has been more upset than that of the younger children. You must give them help than even before [those ages]» (Patri, 1943, p. 27). Instead of attempting to isolate them, however, Patri advises channeling their energies and enthusiasms in constructive directions, in support of the family itself. He recounts episodes of parents astonished at the results, concluding: «Give these children their full participation in the life of today. It is their right, and it is the parent's privilege to have the support of their children [...]» (Patri, 1943, p. 9).

Parenthood and home time

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, on 7 December 1941, brought about the definitive end of US isolationism, and entry into war. At this point, observed Patri, «living as usual is out of the question because the 'usual' has vanished» (Patri, 1943, p. 5). The essence of his advice to parents, in this context, is threefold: recognize the extraordinariness of the events; protect the vulnerable; design pathways of everyday life. Those not directly engaged in war, instead left at home to read and listen to the daily bulletins, must retain a sense of calm and reason, continue their daily routines to keep their minds from gloomy thoughts. The departure of men to the armed forces, the new roles of women, will bring changes to the worlds of early childhood and adolescence, and could affect behaviors. Each member of the home family must be ensured of habitual, sustained tasks, distracting them from any sensationalistic reporting and strategically shifting away from potential anxieties:

People upon whom we depended are missing from their posts. The doctor has gone to the base hospital; the teacher has gone to the munitions works; the cook to the factory. The butcher boy is flying a plane in China and the grocery boy is driving an army truck somewhere across the world. [...] We older ones can get along somehow, but the children have to be helped to live through the war in such a fashion as to lessen its evil effects as far as possible. Our attitude will affect them and decide their attitudes. If we can be calm and assured, if we can face whatever comes courageously and confidently, they will be courageous and strong in their turn (Patri, 1943, p. 5).

Patri illustrates how the security and calm of daily home routines can instill an equal sense of security in the family as a whole and, pursuing this view, he promotes home-economic management of scarce resources and wise use of available means. The effects of hoarding of essential resources, of panic buying, rather than affording sustenance or protection, are counterproductive and anti-educational, moreover unpatriotic, promoting selfishness and gratuitous conceptions of security. What is necessary is instead to train young people in thrift, to call on them to participate in caring for things and combating waste:

We have had cars for only a short span of our history. We have used radio and electrical appliances for a few short years. We can lay them aside for a while and start out on a new-old way of life, and feel like pioneers again. It is not possible for us to hide the adjustment we have to make from the children. [...] Tell the whole story to those old enough to understand. The taxes will take money that used to be spent for other things – education, vacations, trips, clothes, special lessons, clubs, services of many sorts – and it is best to be frank about the whole business and let the older children share in adjustment. Don't call them sacrifices. [...] Let the children know that happiness, strength, and life itself do not depend alone upon the food we eat nor the things we use and wear, but that the way we feel about them has a great deal to do with health and strength and long life (Patri 1943, pp. 15-16).

In the emergency context, the structuring, duration and companionship of leisure time also changes, now coinciding more with family time than externally in the community. Patri calls on parents to rediscover the home and the activities that keep the family busy together, filling the lives of the children with useful experiences: reading, creative games, music and dancing, sewing, drawing, DIY, small carpentry projects. Active engagement prohibits the entry of the potentially chaotic clutter of negative thoughts, and forms experienced and responsible young people who will be able to revive the original order.

Teachers and school time

Patri addresses the second part of his work to the teachers engaged in service on the home front, tasked with assisting youth through the current difficulties and training them for a still uncertain future. In the meantime the entire context of the school has changed. With the passing weeks the teacher encounters pupils *on the move*, leaving and arriving with reformulated families, sometimes departing for smaller centers considered further from risk. The teacher cannot rely on the traditional subjects nor even hours of classes:

She has to rearrange programs, extend her teaching hours, and call upon her free time and her scant store of reserve energy for these tasks. But she does it. She does it

cheerfully, for the sake of the child who is caught in this weird situation between two worlds. She does it bravely, because she is the source of courage for this group of children and, incidentally, their parents. She does it devotedly, for this is her service to her country in its time of need. We teachers have to remember that we are part of the war service though we do not wear uniforms and live in camps. We are part of sustaining forces of the nation (Patri, 1943, pp. 53-54).

Teachers are called to agility in both thought and action, accepting daily tasks below their normal role, carrying out activities calmly, ensuring the well-being of the classroom and efficient and quality service in the public good. Patri, a pedagogue highly attentive to the psychological well-being of the teacher, advocates moments of leisure, so as to slow any potential accumulation of worries:

Let the old way go and try to enjoy doing the unusual and the task will not bear down as hard. [...] This is wartime and the unexpected is the usual thing. Be calm about it. If everybody knew what were coming he would be ready for it and nobody would be upset, but as nobody knows what tomorrow will bring we just have to wiggle along as best we may. [...] Given time out for recreation of whatever sort suits him best, he will be able to work longer, endure more, and keep his sanity. [...] The demands on the teachers' services are without limit but there is a very definite limit to the teachers' strength, reserve force, and time. The wise teacher will stay well within those limits, saving their reserves for emergencies that have to do with the children, for it is the children with whom are mainly concerned (Patri, 1943, pp. 56-60).

Patri praises teachers directly, considering them as trained and disciplined personnel at the disposal of the nation: guides *without parties and without churches*, who look to the general interest and never to the particular; women and men of action who continue the education of new generations without suppressing reality, indeed bringing the multitudes of wartime issues into the classroom. Like the home, the school is a subdivision of community life, and is nourished by the general and personal events of those who live it:

There are people who object to having the daily news discussed in schools, but I am not among them. School is only an extension of the life of the community. When that life is checked at the school door it dies, and the school becomes a lifeless routine that smothers the minds of the children and the teachers. Let life flow through the school and let the teachers help the children interpret it as best they may. [...] Children scent dishonesty though it be covered deep by authority and policy and expediency (Patri, 1943, p. 73).

Among the teacher's functions, in turn, is their role as psychological counselor for parents. These may bring their difficulties, unexpected events or hurtful news, and the teacher is then the figure who can relieve some of the burdens of their individual existence. The pedagogue must listen, be patient with any fears, particularly of death, and convey attention to the present life. They may suggest planning of daily activities, looking for the mental and physical balancing in the home and school environments that will serve in raising children.

Children in war times

The last part of the book is for the children themselves. Although childhood is at the center of pedagogical reflection, Angelo Patri is the unique scholar who takes up the idea of addressing children directly. In the wartime crisis, he calls on all members of the community, including the very youngest, who he considers as most impacted by the contextual disorientation and hardships. Patri addresses youth directly, issuing unmediated calls for responsibility. He refers to them metaphorically as *citizen soldiers*, exemplifying their attitudes and tasks in the home, family, school and the larger community as akin to military in nature. Discussing practicalities, he spurs the younger ones to sacrifice and duty, above all to make themselves useful in the current extraordinary circumstances, «As citizen soldiers you each have a duty to perform. You make yourself useful in whatever situation you find yourself. You do what you can do best to help when help is needed» (Patri, 1943, pp. 91-92). Point by point, Patri lists the activities that compose the healthy daily routine of home, school, and leisure times. In speaking to the youngest, he uses storytelling to communicate the importance of organising the day, stimulating them to make themselves useful, just as do others in the community. The lives of both the military and civilian are shown to require compliance with simple tasks, just as important as greater missions:

In such days every chore, however uninteresting it may be, counts. Do you think the men at the front are posing for their picture uniforms? They are doing the same chores you are doing and fighting into the bargain. They peel potatoes, cook meals, wash dishes and clothes, scrub, scour, and clean dirty messes, and shoulder guns when the bugle blows. Just as you answer the school signals and the home calls. Shoulder the job that is yours, where you are, and be sure you count your full weight in the day's work (Patri, 1943, p. 99).

As Patri writes, in 1943, the war is at the height of its destructive power both abroad and in the local community. But Patri is an optimist, he encourages others to be the same, he calls on all to already think of the coming return of the veterans, and the future needs of care for each of their families. Recognizing that crises involve weakening of the national and local economies, dissipating the funds and other resources of the entire community, he encourages children to practice savings and reduce waste:

Wouldn't you feel awful if you did anything to hurt those men? Wouldn't you feel ashamed to look yourself in the eye if you wasted one cent that you could save to give them the food, the medicine, the nurses, the guns, the planes, the tanks, and the ships they need for their job – and yours (Patri, 1943, p. 102)?

The very last chapter is devoted to adolescents and older youth, immersed in development to the adult stage, in profound changes of body, sense of identity, social relationships and expectations, including in regards to the opposite sex. Patri asks this age group for extra efforts, above all to avoid disrespectful attitudes that would sabotage the civic mission and ultimately risk self-harm. Adolescents should see themselves as the adults of the future, «the men and women of the postwar days» (Patri, 1943, p. 110).

As with the rest of his writing, in addressing the children Angelo Patri intertwines the roles of pedagogical theorist, educator and paternal advisor. The result is simple, direct writing, for example in addressing adolescent girls: these should not give away their time, engage too easily with the boys they meet, not *melt* at the sight of a uniform. Boys and young men, on the other hand, must find the strength to leave their families, embrace the cause and if enrolled, hope each day to survive. These youths, *green* in feelings and

experiences, will make sacrifices to defend the country's freedom and Western democratic principles from the totalitarian pretensions of the Nazis. Patri's belief in youth is clearly total. The aim of *Children in Wartime* is not simply to cope with the current emergency, rather to prepare the young generation to manage their lives and the society built by those who came before them. In this closing chapter, Patri directly addresses the «vanguard of the new generation» (Patri, 1943, p. 115), urging them to prepare for the world to come, inventing the motivational slogans «Be worthy, Be wise» (*ibidem*). The pedagogue returns to the theme of all the youth, not only those serving in uniform, dedicating his writing to all the young citizen-soldiers who, living through extraordinary times, are now fighting to win the war, to restore the peace attacked by Nazi violence, to protect the democratic freedoms already enacted, through their own healthy and proper lifestyles, through perfect behavior at home and at school. Working in and for one's community, making oneself useful and facing one's tasks every day are acts of courage just as important as those of the overseas military. «Get ready. You to whom I speak are no longer simply children. You are the vanguard of the new generation. You need strength of body. Get it. You must have spiritual power. Grow it. You must have knowledge and understanding and skill. Work for them now» (Patri, 1943, p. 115).

Speaking in general, Patri looks back on his experience accumulated over his 35-year career in the educational system, and on this basis speaks in tones of patient waiting, restraint and above all, trust in the new generations. The war, any other emergencies, will not halt the journey of democratic community, which relies on the commitment of adults, children and youth, each engaged in their personal and collective journeys of formation and excellence.

Conclusions

Looking back, we can see that the uncertainties of our contemporary times, with the Triple Crisis, could be similar to those of World War II, following on the Great Depression and the general uncertainties of the European inter-war years. By reviewing and reinterpreting the present through the lens of the past we may find insights for pedagogical theory and effective educational practice. Currently, our pedagogical aims are blurred: we are living in states of suspension of reality, in the midst of destabilizing sensations, suffering inability to comprehend the current events and to predict our likely futures. *Your Children in Wartime* deals with highly similar contexts. Pursuing Patri's view, the response could be to construct a genuinely democratic and communitarian pedagogy, expressed through projects that involve all subjects, from the earliest years, in different levels of co-responsibility for the process of cultural, social and political change.

To understand this thought more fully we would need to refer not only to this wartime volume, published not long before the end of his working life, but also to some earlier works, in particular the 1917 volume *A Schoolmaster in the Great City*, a personal and professional autobiography which came out in the very year of American entry into the Great War. Even in that earlier wartime context, decades earlier, the human and pedagogical approach of progressivism in urban education offered a context of hope: «Patri's confidence in the integrating role of the school provided some optimism to those experiencing the negative emotions generated by the war» (Wallace, 2006, p. 29). Although recognizing the pre-existing educational and economic limitations of the immigrants, Patri argues that the full realization of the child is possible in any social context, as long as they have a sufficient support network of family, school and community. Urban education is about progressively bringing the younger generation into participation in the vast human heritage, ensuring that within this context, they receive

listening, and assistance in finding their place. The child is the radiant center of Patri's activity, functioning simultaneously in a series of roles:

an end, since all activities are designed for him and for the attainment of his nature; a means, because every activity passes through the child; a resource, because the school has its reason for being precisely in and because of the presence of the younger generation; and a conduit to the outside world, because the child is the link between the school and the family (Bellatalla, 2003, p. 41).

Any degeneration of behavior among the youngest descends from the contextual setting created by adults, and their emulation. Throughout his career as a teacher, school principal and popular author, Angelo Patri engaged with adults encouraging them to set a serene and serious example for their own children. In this vision, war becomes a background event, losing the sensationalist narratives constructed by mass media and leaving the current times as those still to be centered on the growth of the child. The pedagogical strategies relegate war to the margins, filtering it out of family environments, through the application of different practical solutions by parents and teachers. These are called to practice a positive reality, the best method for a peaceful preparation, responsive to the child's needs. The growth path is personalized and individual, but always adhering to democratic principles and practices of good citizenship. Adults are called to constantly dialogue with the little ones, building build close and continuous relationships, because only in this way can they get to know childhood and its needs.

In this new context of uncertainty, the restoration of Angelo Patri's human and educational history restores an Italian-American and pedagogical view, almost unknown in Italy, that encompasses a complete operational manual for teachers, parents and children on the elaboration of strategies and working practices to cultivate family peace and raise responsible citizens, as guardians of peace and democracy.

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