

Forward

In remembrance of Gelpi

Yasushi Maehira

In 2002 when the cherry blossoms were about to bloom, Ettore Gelpi passed away. He lived until the age of 69 years. One month before this tragedy, he was scheduled to receive the first time ever "lifelong learning award", given by Kameoka city, Kyoto prefecture for those who contributed globally to the theories and practices in this field. For this award, Gelpi spoke to me "My doctor suggested that I should limit my overseas trips for the sake of my prostate cancer. I would like you to attend on my behalf". When Gelpi spoke to me with the request, I did not imagine the serious condition of his illness. Within three months, his condition worsened and he passed away quietly in the presence of his wife and family.

I learned about the news of his death when I returned from my fieldwork from Bhutan. His funeral was held several days after at Pere Lachaise graveyard in Paris. Gelpi had great understandings towards different religions and cultures although he remained religious free in his Gelpish way. It has been said that his ashes and remains were brought back to his hometown and poured into the endless seawater near Milano.

Who is Ettore Gelpi? He stood along with Paul Lengrand who has been globally recognized for his contributions toward lifelong learning and its idea. From 1980s until 1990s, he had carried out his research from the view point of oppressed groups and had received tremendous support from many people around the world. Ivan Illich and Paulo Freire also passed away. In other words, we have lost three of the most important people in the world of adult education and in the second half of twentieth century.

Gelpi's posthumous manuscript was given to me by his partner, Brunella Eruli. I would like to use the opportunity to thank her great kindness. It is my greatest honor to be able to insert his paper into this Lifelong Education and Libraries journal. As well, because this journal includes Gelpi's lifelong work and publications, for a generation where Gelpi's theories will be greatly emphasized, it is no doubt the most precious source of information. This is a gift from Gelpi to me from our 20 years of friendship.

On the same time, Gelpi's acquaintances' paper and messages flowed in continuously. Some of those messages were read out as a part of the speech in the farewell ceremony.

It is not my purpose to discuss Gelpi's ideology in details here. Rather, it is more than enough if everyone would have their different ways of reading this book. Recounting from

my memories of Gelpi, this journal may not appeal very interesting for some readers.

Gelpi was Italian, yet he was sophisticated with a rich source of European cultures that he was in no doubt an internationalized person. Not merely Europe, he also traveled freely between different continents such as Asia, Africa and America. For Gelpi, the border between countries did not exist. Coming from this point, he was in truth an "globalized" person. From when he was young, he held great interest toward the differences and problems between urban and rural areas of Italy as well as the diverse economical developments between the North and South. Many years after that, I had the opportunity to speak to him from our mutual interest toward these problems. Furthermore, he sympathized and identified himself with the struggles of the African immigrant workers in Paris. His sense of solidarity toward these workers was not initiated by simple moral issues; rather, it was from his study of cultures and literacy that were robbed away from these people. That was when his thought and activities toward lifelong learning instigated.

I had unsubstantial understanding toward Gelpi's Paris based European orientated activities. However, he utilized his extensive range of language abilities and taught students from different universities and research centers in countries such as France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, and so on. As well, he organized seminars and analyzed recent trends, tirelessly expressed his ideologies and listened to criticisms with great modesty. His activities attracted students from different age groups. From a simple glance at his bibliography, one would be surprised with his extensive range of different languages. He had overstepped the essence of research; he held interest toward the struggles of all laborers and stood up to his criticisms without fright. He was a real friend of our planet, and his work continues even after his death.

On the same time, he did not shift his focus away from the Asian battle ground. From his extensive researches with politics, economics, cultures, languages and religions in Europe, he realized Asia has also been placed in the same awkward situation where many voices of oppressed groups reminded unheard. Japan has been described as the leading country of the recent Western-European civilization and has many aspects that are different from the Western cultures. For example, children's upbringing and its strong reliance on informal education. Gelpi had debated this issue and he suggested that Italian children are similar to Japanese children in many different ways. It was in doubt that Gelpi held same opinion toward European children.

Globalization, this sensational culture has been made into a fixed term. In his later years, Gelpi has concentrated his research on this sensation. Yet, one's lifelong education does not vanish on the day when he or she passes away. Rather, it should be carried on to the next generation and the knowledge and essence should be shared eternally. On the first anniversary

of Gelpi's death, I received contact from Brunella Eruli, where a new association was formed to success the deceased's unfulfilled wish. People are waiting for this new association to make new trends in the field of lifelong education with great anticipation.

In this publication of the "Lifelong Education and Libraries" journal, Gelpi's posthumous manuscript and those written by his acquaintance have been included.

Good bye, our Gelpi. However, his ideas and creations will remain with us forever. I am sure it is Gelpi's deepest desire.