

The Significance of Emmanuel Mounier's Communitarian Personalism in Promoting Just and Equal Education

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Abstract: This article explores the relevance of Emmanuel Mounier's communitarian personalism for advancing a vision of education that is both just and equal. Mounier's personalism places the human person at the center of social and cultural life, affirming dignity, freedom, and responsibility while rejecting individualism and collectivism alike. By situating personal development within the context of community, Mounier emphasizes that education must nurture not only intellectual abilities but also the relational and ethical dimensions of personhood. Through qualitative method, this paper underlines Mounier's ideas by criticizing how such a modern framework of education is shaped primarily by competition, technocracy, and utilitarian values, which often reproduce social inequalities. Instead, communitarian personalism calls for pedagogical approaches that cultivate solidarity, participation, and mutual recognition, ensuring that education serves the flourishing of all rather than the privileges of a few. This article argues that Mounier's vision provides valuable resources for addressing contemporary debates on inclusion, equity, and justice in education. By integrating personal dignity with communal responsibility, his thought fosters a model of education that promotes human development in its fullness, encourages democratic engagement, and resists structures of exclusion. In conclusion, Mounier's communitarian personalism offers a philosophical foundation for reimagining education as a transformative practice of justice, equality, and shared human growth.

Keywords: Communitarian Personalism, Education, Emmanuel Mounier, Equality, Justice.

Introduction

Communitarianism is a social and political philosophy that emphasizes the importance of community in shaping individual identity and values. It argues that people are not isolated beings but are formed through relationships, traditions, and shared responsibilities. This idea is a response to excessive individualism in modern society. Communitarianism stresses that personal freedom should be balanced with the common good (Fadiyah et al., 2023; Gendreau, 1992; Susanto et al., 2023). It values social harmony, moral responsibility, and active participation in community life. According to this view, a healthy society depends on strong communities that teach care, respect, and cooperation. In education, politics, and ethics, communitarianism promotes dialogue and collective decision-making rather

than self-interest. It reminds people that their choices affect others and that real freedom comes with responsibility. Indeed, it seeks to build a more caring, cooperative, and morally grounded society rooted in mutual respect and shared values.

Communitarianism and Emmanuel Mounier's idea of communitarian personalism are deeply connected because both focus on the relationship between the person and the community. Mounier believed that every person is valuable, but that human beings can only grow and find meaning through relationships with others (Fadiyah et al., 2023; Gendreau, 1992; Susanto et al., 2023). For him, a person is not meant to live in isolation but to share life with others in love, respect, and cooperation. This idea fits well with communitarianism, which also teaches that personal freedom and community life must go hand in hand. Both views challenge the modern

tendency toward selfishness and individualism. They remind everyone that human beings are shaped by the communities they belong to, including families, educational institutions, neighborhoods, and societies. These communities help form values, guide decisions, and give a sense of belonging as greater sense of togetherness in advance.

Furthermore, Mounier's personalism adds a spiritual and moral dimension, emphasizing compassion, dialogue, and responsibility for others. In this way, communitarianism and personalism come together to promote a balanced and caring way of life where personal growth and social responsibility support each other. They encourage people to build communities rooted in dignity, justice, and shared humanity, where everyone's well-being is seen as part of the common good. By living out these values, individuals learn to see others as partners in growth rather than competitors (Fadiyah et al., 2023; Gendreau, 1992; Susanto et al., 2023). This outlook strengthens the bonds that hold communities together and nurtures peace and understanding. In that good sense, Mounier's integration of personalism and communitarianism offers a vision of life where love and justice guide both personal and social transformation.

The idea above is also such a reason why Mounier's understanding is crucial in education. It is not only because education is about speaking in the sense of being personal and communitarian, but also since living is about seeking for meaning in which it can only be learned through a never-ending process. Mounier's communitarian personalism understands education by emphasizing the formation of both the person and the community (Deweir, 2013; Lee, 2017; Pasopati et al., 2024). Education, in this view, is not only about gaining knowledge but also about nurturing moral values, empathy, and social responsibility. It encourages students to see themselves as part of a larger community where cooperation, respect, and service matter rooted in care and dialogue. By integrating personal growth with concern for others, this approach helps education build responsible, compassionate citizens who contribute to the common good of society.

Method

By using qualitative methods, certain concepts and written data are analyzed to answer the question in this paper. Written through description in explorative approach, online and offline scripts are used to explain correlations between Emmanuel Mounier's communitarian personalism and just and equal education in the sense of cultural studies. Online and offline scripts are derived from books and journals to understand shown matters. The data analysis includes attaining sources, reading sources carefully, comparing with other issues, quoting into paper, and writing down in references lists. The research data comes from Mounier's communitarian personalism and just and equal education discourses. Each of them is read then broken down into its every particular element. More elaborations related to deepened analysis are also provided in addition furthermore.

Results And Discussion

Mounier's Ideas on Communitarian Personalism

Personalists, like Emmanuel Mounier, regard personhood, or individuality, as the central key to understanding reality. They hold that the substantial idea of being a person gives meaning to existence and represents the highest form of value. Personhood, in their view, carries an inherent dignity that must always be respected and never violated. Although personalism does contain a philosophical theory about what it means to be a person, it has generally emphasized moral and practical dimensions rather than purely abstract speculation (Deweir, 2013; Lee, 2017; Pasopati et al., 2024). Its understanding of the person naturally supports a focus on ethical life and moral responsibility. At the same time, moral experience plays a vital role in shaping and deepening the theoretical concept of the person.

According to personalist thought, a person unites both subjectivity and objectivity, being capable of action yet open to influence, unique yet relational, self-identical yet creative. It is also what Mounier states with communitarian personalism. It works through social life by being individual in

his/her personal stance (Deweert, 2013; Lee, 2017; Pasopati et al., 2024). Being communitarian will always regard personal matters since that is how universal meanings work. It goes through inside people's minds into interactions with other human beings. It is understanding of self towards life itself in a complex, contextual, and appreciated process.

Mounier's personalism then is not individualism nor solipsism. It is an enhanced understanding of phenomenology in which subject matters through objectivity. For Mounier, if the first condition of individualism is the centralization of the individual in himself, the first condition of personalism is his decentralization, in order to set him in the open perspectives of personal life. Where individualism hopes to find personal realization in self-interest in anything, personalism asserts the need for relational openness to others, even as a condition for one's own realization (Gilmore, 2023; Rigby, 1989; Wijaya et al., 2024). Through this sense, individuality is true in personalism as part of communitarian sense, but not thorough its ideology in individualism.

Communitarian personalism shapes such a balanced vision that highlights the moral nature of human existence. It underscores a person as both the subject and the object of free action. Because of this, personalism tends to concentrate on ethical questions and the pursuit of moral good. It presents the individual not as an isolated being but as one whose meaning emerges through relationship, responsibility, and mutual respect. By stating in ethical sense, Mounier's personalism is ontologically and epistemologically stated (Gilmore, 2023; Rigby, 1989; Wijaya et al., 2024). Ontologically, Mounier shapes foundation of human beings of both being individual and social. Epistemologically, decentralization of individualism is a necessary gateway towards upheaving personalism.

Moreover, Mounier's personalism emphasizes that moral action reveals the essence of personhood more clearly than theoretical reflection alone. Every genuine act of love, justice, or creativity expresses the dignity that defines a person. In this view, society itself is measured by the respect it shows toward personal dignity. Institutions and social systems are seen as just only when they

promote human growth and recognize the intrinsic worth of each person (Gilmore, 2023; Rigby, 1989; Wijaya et al., 2024). Personalists often argue that technological or economic progress loses its value when detached from moral concern. The philosophy therefore invites continual reflection on the harmony between freedom and responsibility. It affirms that individuality and community are not opposites but complementary aspects of the same human reality. Through this perspective, personalism offers a framework for ethics, politics, and education that places the human person at the center of meaning and value.

The Challenges of Just and Equal Education

Just and equal education is about fairness, opportunity, and empowerment. It gives every person the chance to develop their potential, improve their lives, and contribute meaningfully to society, making it one of the strongest foundations for social justice and sustainable development. It means that every person, regardless of their background, has the same right to access quality learning opportunities (Burgos, 2025; Dobre & Pavón, 2021; Jones, 2021; Mounier, 1939). It is based on fairness and inclusion by ensuring that no one is left behind because of gender, disability, poverty, ethnicity, or where they live. In a just and equal education system, all learners are treated with dignity and given the support they need to succeed, even if their starting points are different.

Equality in education means that everyone has the same access to educational institutions, teachers, and learning materials. Justice, however, goes a step further as it recognizes that some learners face greater challenges and therefore need extra resources or attention to achieve the same outcomes as others. For example, children from low-income families may need financial aid, rural students may need transportation or digital access, and learners with disabilities may need specialized teaching tools (Jayadi et al., 2022; Napoletano, 2024; Riza et al., 2025). True fairness in education is achieved not when everyone gets the same thing, but when everyone gets what they need to learn and develop.

Then, such a just and equal education also values diversity. It respects different cultures,

languages, and experiences, creating a learning environment where every student feels included and capable. This kind of education encourages empathy, cooperation, and mutual respect, helping build more peaceful and understanding societies. It also indeed ensures that the quality of education is consistent across all communities. It is the main perspective in how education should be transformative especially since its focal point is to empower people (Jayadi et al., 2022; Napoletano, 2024; Riza et al., 2025). Any kind of access to education is useless if that education is redundant in life and never regenerates nothing. Therefore, any opportunity shaped through fairness should always be enhanced by empowerment to make people find various necessary meanings behind any kind of great difficulties in life.

Such just and equal education is the answer to any kind of empowerment. Yet, it also contains various challenges to be realized. The main reason behind it is not about inequality, but any kind of decision to make people get more involved in society. People still think that education is still the number two needs in everyday life. People think that being individual in reaching goals in life is the ultimate purpose. Meanwhile, education actually is so social after all. Getting involved in education does not enhance individuality on a side, but it is enhanced through communitarian issues of education (Jayadi et al., 2022; Napoletano, 2024; Riza et al., 2025).

By going to educational institutions, people know themselves like they understand other people. Education equips individuals with the intellectual, moral, and social capacities necessary to engage meaningfully in their communities and to contribute to the collective advancement of society. Yet, realizing such a vision remains fraught with challenges. The barriers to educational equality are not limited to disparities in access or resources. It is since they are also rooted in broader societal attitudes and priorities (Jayadi et al., 2022; Napoletano, 2024; Riza et al., 2025). This perception reflects a deeper misunderstanding of the role education plays in shaping both individuals and societies.

In contemporary culture, success is often defined in individualistic terms: personal

achievement, financial independence, and self-fulfillment. Consequently, education is frequently viewed merely as a tool for individual advancement, a means of securing employment or attaining social mobility. While these outcomes are undeniably valuable, they do not capture the full meaning or purpose of education (Cope & Kalantzis, 2023; Levinson et al., 2022; Molla et al., 2024). At its core, education is not an isolated or purely personal endeavor. It is inherently social. It is through educational experiences that individuals learn to understand themselves in relation to others, to participate in dialogue, and to recognize the interdependence that defines human life.

Education, therefore, should not only cultivate intellect but also nurture empathy, cooperation, and civic consciousness. Classrooms function as microcosms of society, where individuals encounter diversity, difference, and shared humanity. In these spaces, students learn not only academic content but also the skills of listening, negotiating meaning, and coexisting respectfully with others (Cope & Kalantzis, 2023; Levinson et al., 2022; Molla et al., 2024). Through such interactions, education becomes a process of mutual recognition: people come to understand who they are precisely by understanding others. Individuality, then, is not diminished through education. It is more refined and expanded through engagement with the community.

Unfortunately, many educational systems today still emphasize competition, standardization, and measurable outcomes over collaboration, creativity, and ethical awareness. This narrow conception of education risks alienating learners from one another and from the broader social purposes of learning. To move toward a more equitable and human-centered model, education must be reimaged as a public good rather than a private commodity. It must be valued not simply for its economic benefits, but for its capacity to strengthen human connection, promote social justice, and cultivate shared responsibility (Cope & Kalantzis, 2023; Jones, 2021; Levinson et al., 2022; Molla et al., 2024). Education should always enable individuals to realize their potential while fostering a sense of belonging and moral duty to others. When education is grounded in justice, equality,

and compassion, it becomes the truest form of empowerment that uplifts not only the individual learner but also the entire community and even humanity.

Mounier's Personalism to Promote Better Education

Mounier's communitarian personalism is interesting in its essence. It works both ways from individual and societal sides. From singular aspect, Mounier takes points against ideology of individualism by giving in proofs that humans are actually social from its beginning. It is even in line with latter psychoanalysis like Lacan's or de Certeau's that comprehend ideas of humans in its social senses (Burgos, 2025; Dobre & Pavón, 2021; Jones, 2021; Mounier, 1939). Moreover, Mounier also underlines communitarianism as his foundation of individuals. He shapes that societal aspects of human beings are what make them getting involved in empowerment and meaningful as well.

Mounier's understanding can also be applied into education. As a part of human dignity, education should be in line with ideas of everyday life. Education must never alienate human beings from their roots. Therefore, such research and/or community service should always hold humanity from the beginning. By stating so, living academically is in line with understanding usual everyday life. Then, Mounier's ideas may affect education in some aspects; person-centered education, community and solidarity, justice through active participation, and educational concern for the marginalized. By following Mounier's ideas, education nurtures not just intellectual ability but also empathy and moral awareness. It reminds learners that knowledge should serve people, not distance them from others (Burgos, 2025; Dobre & Pavón, 2021; Jones, 2021; Mounier, 1939). Through person-centered learning, solidarity, participation, and care for the marginalized, education becomes a true path toward human and social transformation.

First, Mounier's communitarian personalism underlines person-centered education by indicating that every person has deep worth and should never be treated as a tool for success or

progress. A person is not just an individual who thinks or works but someone who grows through relationships, reflection, and freedom. In education, this means that the educational institutions should first serve the person, not the economy, not the state, and not even academic rankings (Miano, 2024; Street, 2025; Wright, 2021). When education focuses on the person, it values each learner's dignity and unique potential. Every student, regardless of ability or background, deserves respect and encouragement. The goal is not only to fill minds with facts but to help young people develop character, creativity, and conscience. Teachers, in this vision, are not simply instructors but companions who help students discover meaning and purpose in their learning.

By stating so, a person-centered approach challenges systems that treat education as a competition or as preparation only for employment. Instead, it calls for classrooms that build confidence, compassion, and curiosity. Such an environment allows every learner to be seen and supported as a whole person. In this way, Mounier's idea helps create a more just and equal education system (Miano, 2024; Street, 2025; Wright, 2021). When each student is treated with the same care and dignity, education becomes a space of fairness and growth. It will always help people to become thoughtful, responsible, and kind members of society. By fostering these values, educational institutions can become places where students feel truly connected and motivated to learn. It encourages collaboration rather than competition, making learning a shared journey. Over time, this mindset can shape a more understanding and humane world beyond the classroom.

Second, Mounier's understanding is nothing but such a big enhancement for community and solidarity. He believed that a person becomes truly human only through living in community. No one can grow alone because people discover who they are by learning to live with others through love, respect, and shared experience. This belief gives education a new meaning that educational institutions should not be places of isolation or rivalry and not even bullying, but places where students learn to work together and care for one

another (Miano, 2024; Street, 2025; Wright, 2021). When students learn to value community, they also learn to value themselves and others more deeply. This creates a culture of kindness and belonging that extends beyond the classroom walls. Ultimately, Mounier's vision inspires educational institutions to nurture both the mind and the heart, shaping individuals who contribute positively to society.

Therefore, a community-based education encourages cooperation instead of competition. It teaches that knowledge is something to be shared, not hoarded. Students learn that their growth is connected to the growth of others, and that helping others succeed is as valuable as personal achievement. In that case, Mounier's communitarian vision helps fight exclusion and loneliness in educational institutions (Miano, 2024; Street, 2025; Wright, 2021). When education is guided by solidarity, no one is left behind. Learning becomes an act of mutual support and a way of building relationships and social unity. It also helps students develop empathy, understanding, and a sense of responsibility toward their communities. A just and equal education should build and also maintain closed solidarity among learners and helps them see that life is richer when shared with others.

Third, Mounier's perspective is also attracting discussion in justice, especially in how it exists through active participation. Every person should have a voice in the decisions that shape their lives. In education, this means that educational institutions should not be run only from the top down, but should invite the participation of students, teachers, and families. When everyone is included in discussions about learning and educational institutions' life, education becomes fairer and more democratic (Holland, 2024; Mounier, 1939; Zhafirah et al., 2025). Students can express their needs and ideas; teachers can share their experiences and concerns; parents can take part in shaping a supportive environment. This kind of participation builds a sense of ownership and responsibility. People are more willing to care for something when they have helped create it.

Participation also helps correct unfair systems. When diverse voices are heard, inequalities are

more likely to be noticed and addressed. In this way, Mounier's idea supports not just personal dignity but also social justice. Such poor facilities, lack of resources, or unfair treatment will never be obstacles to move forward since the main idea is to appreciate personal being in his/her communitarian sense of civic values such as respect, cooperation, and dialogue. They learn to listen to others, make thoughtful decisions, and take responsibility for their community. In other words, participation turns education into a practice of justice (Holland, 2024; Mounier, 1939; Zhafirah et al., 2025). By involving students in decision-making, educational institutions cultivate a sense of ownership and empowerment. This prepares them to become active citizens who care about equality and the common good. In the long run, Mounier's vision of participation helps shape communities where justice is not only taught but truly lived.

Fourth, by turning into justice, Mounier's idea also puts more concern for the marginalized ones, especially those who are poor, weak, or forgotten. A community is only truly human when it protects and uplifts its most vulnerable members. Applied to education, this means that a fair system must give special attention to those who are left behind, whether because of poverty, disability, gender, or other barriers (Holland, 2024; Mounier, 1939; Zhafirah et al., 2025). A just and equal education cannot be achieved by treating everyone in exactly the same way. Instead, it must recognize that some students face more challenges than others. Giving extra help and opportunities to those in need is not favoritism; it is a way of restoring balance and dignity. This could mean providing scholarships, extra tutoring, or safe spaces for learning, and even showing genuine care and respect.

Mounier's idea invites educational institutions to go beyond simple fairness toward true compassion. Teachers are called to see each learner not as a problem but as a person with potential. Education, in this sense, becomes an act of love and social healing. It teaches young people to be aware of injustice and to stand in solidarity with those who suffer. By giving priority to the marginalized, education becomes a force for transformation (Gilmore, 2023; Rigby, 1989; Wijaya et al., 2024). It

reminds society that equality begins with inclusion and empathy. In Mounier's vision, the real measure of education is not how well the privileged perform, but how deeply the system lifts up the least advantaged. Such an approach builds a culture of empathy and shared responsibility within educational institutions and communities. It challenges future generations to use their knowledge for the common good rather than various egotistical personal gains. Through Mounier's lens, education becomes a lifelong journey toward creating a more humane and compassionate world.

Conclusion

Emmanuel Mounier's communitarian personalism presents education as a deeply human and shared experience. It sees the person not as an isolated individual but as someone who grows and finds meaning within a community. From this view, education becomes a process of forming persons who are aware of their connection to others and who act with care, justice, and respect. In Mounier's personalism, education is understood as both personal and social. Justice and equality in education arise when educational institutions become communities of cooperation, where every learner feels included and valued. Then, Mounier's ideas may affect education in some aspects; person-centered education, community and solidarity, justice through active participation, and educational concern for the marginalized. Mounier's philosophy also challenges systems that promote competition and isolation. It calls on educators to create spaces where relationships, empathy, and shared responsibility are at the center of learning. Mounier underlines that education is not only knowledge but also humanity of emerging equality, compassion, and mutual respect.

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