

Caring for Intersubjective Relationships. A Phenomenological-Existential Approach in Heterogeneous School Contexts

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Abstract. The contribution proposes some reflections on the design of an educational experience aimed at upper secondary schools and concerned with the care of intersubjective relationships. Starting with some observations on the current condition of youth, and illustrating the theoretical foundations that shaped the classroom practice, the essay offers a description of the activity, focusing in particular on the ethical-political value of the experience.

Keywords. Intersubjectivity - Care - Youth Inclusion - Self-formation.

1. An «ill presence»?

In 1955, the Italian pedagogue Francesco De Bartolomeis directly correlated the democratic physiognomy of a country with the conditions in which youth find themselves, stating that «we can test the democratic level of a society from different points of view; one of the most important is certainly that concerning the role played by adolescence»¹. Whether the adolescent concretely participates in the cultural and social life of the community or feels that he or she is a mere spectator called upon to passively attend/adapt to it, sometimes to the point of voluntarily renouncing this participation, is an issue concerning the politics of the educational relationship. As it is well known, the latter, far from being confined to a ‘transitory’ phase of life, is reflected in the life of society as a whole and in its capacity to transform and regenerate itself to cope with new problems. From this point of view, as Bertolini stated, «education is bound to affect the way politics is understood and then realised»² and, following De Bartolomeis, the youth condition expressed there is already a first significant clue in this sense.

Since the design of an educational pathway that can turn out to be meaningful requires, first of all, a shrewd interpretation of the cultural environment that shapes the perceptions and experiences of the protagonists of education, the interdisciplinary project *Plurilingualism and Youth Education. Marginality, sustainability, inclusion* started from some considerations on the forms of marginality that can inhabit the world of youth today, in order to elaborate possible experiences of redemption and social inclu-

¹ F. De Bartolomeis, *La psicologia dell'adolescente e l'educazione*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 19704, p. 97 (my trans.).

² P. Bertolini, *Educazione e politica*, Milano, Cortina, 2003, p. 35 (my trans.).

sion. From this point of view, as Erbetta stated, attending the «places of crisis» is a necessary move to rediscover the sense of «historical responsibility» implicit in the act of forming and being formed³. The data concerning the condition of young people today paint a rather gloomy picture that seems dominated by experiences of powerlessness, renunciation and resignation. As Giachery has noted, we are witnessing today a general increase in adolescent deviant behaviour, and disciplines such as neuropsychiatry, psychology and pedagogy are focusing mainly on two areas of investigation: changes in the psychic spectrum (resulting from the increased abuse of alcohol, soft drugs and sedative medications) and character development (increase in harmful behaviour towards oneself or others) on the horizon of a loss of the authority of the law⁴. This scenario also includes the crisis of relations between generations and, in particular, the crisis of the role model of the adults, which has started, according to Postman, with the spectacularization of life and the advent of the «childified adult» and the «adultified child»⁵, and is culminating today, according to Stiegler, in the «attention-destroying processes» by the new technologies of the culture industry⁶. In addition to this, it must be considered that, for decades now, in the neo-liberal world, we have been witnessing a process of general loss of meaning of human relationships, which is also reflected in the way education itself is understood. In this regard, as Madrussan stated,

«in the excitement of reality opportunistically represented chaotic, where educational practices are required as emergency, prompt, efficient and economical performances, we lose sight of that very possibility of the quest for sense, together with the idea of problematic and reflexive education. More seriously: meaning coincides sic et simpliciter with the bare performance of action»⁷.

Consequently, the school system as a whole is affected by this impoverishment: starting with educational relations, where the teacher is mainly required to support and optimise learning processes that are functional to the needs of the globalised labour market. Yet, as Mariani observed, the teacher-student educational relationship goes far beyond the process of acquiring skills, insofar as «it is a dynamic that arises from the subject's interactions with the environment and the other subjects, from the relationship with reality and more globally with the world»⁸.

What cultural conditions, then, circumscribe the work of the teacher? Scholars such as Bauman and Gallino have pointed out how the exasperated individualism geared towards economic competition has weakened the bonds of social solidarity, while emotional and affective life risks becoming irrelevant in the domain of the efficient productivity⁹. As Papi commented, this situation has consolidated «an individualism

³ A. Erbetta, *Luoghi di crisi. Sulla pedagogia come critica della pedagogia*, Torino, Il Segnalibro, 1994.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 23.

⁵ N. Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (1982), New York, Vintage Book, 1994².

⁶ B. Stiegler, *Taking care of Youth and the Generations*, 2008, En. Trans., Stanford, Stanford University Press, 2010.

⁷ E. Madrussan, *Educational Disquiet among Drifts, Shipwrecks, Horizons*, in "Paideutika. Quaderni di formazione e cultura", 23, 2016, p. 36.

⁸ A. Mariani, *Introduzione. La relazione educativa tra scienze umane e società democratica avanzata*, in Mariani A. (Ed.), *La relazione educativa. Prospettive contemporanee*, Roma, Carocci, 2021, p. 25 (my trans).

⁹ L. Gallino, *Globalizzazione e disuguaglianze*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2000; Z. Bauman, *Modernità e*

that appears to be the only possible mode of our being-in-the-world»¹⁰. In this scenario, with regard to the world of young people, there is a growing tendency to react by thinking of one's self in terms of narcissistic self-assertion at the expense of the others (with the flattening on the instantaneousness of the present, or the lack of awareness of the consequences of one's actions) or a tendency to escape and isolation, to desperate withdrawal into oneself¹¹. As Giachery has commented, «it seems that the supposed adolescent dynamism has remained screwed around the repetitiveness of acting without a precise purpose», leading, on the one hand, to an «appropriative bulimia of objects and, above all, images» and, on the other, to the «renunciation of any form of real need or desire»¹². From a phenomenological-existential perspective, it would therefore be a true crisis of existential projectuality, that seems to arise from a sense of impotence and distrust in which the subject perceives himself as incapable of going beyond the given situation and, therefore, of forming himself and imagining a fruitful future. Probably, with reference to the world of youth, it is possible to evoke what Ernesto De Martino called the «crisis of presence», which in the loss of being-there-in-the-world and in the impossibility of transcending the given situation sees its most radical risk: that of an existence torn from its historicity¹³. Today, the Italian anthropologist's reflections on the concept of «presence» can offer valuable insights into the interpretation of complexity of nowadays crises¹⁴, especially in relation to younger people and the need of care for intersubjective relationships.

In fact, according to De Martino, in the history of human civilisation, «presence» is something that is strenuously conquered again and again, especially in the face of the radical threat of a catastrophe that threatens to nullify existence, a catastrophe where it is not just the self but the entire world that ends. Caught in a dramatic struggle between illness and healing, «presence» draws its lifeblood from the «ethos of transcendence of life», which is only possible through «the intersubjective valorization of life»¹⁵. As Altamura commented, in *The End of the World*, human presence becomes explicitly inseparable from the sphere of intersubjective values¹⁶. «Projectable intersubjectivity» is thus central: it is constitutive of human civilisation by virtue of its transcending the condition of nature into forms of cultural objectivity, and it is also the engine of history, in that it is fundamental to the elaboration of cultural solutions capable of facing the «end» and overcoming the risk. In this framework, «human existence lies precisely in the

globalizzazione, Roma, Edizioni dell'asino, 2009.

¹⁰ F. Papi, *L'educazione imperfetta. Considerazioni filosofiche sul presente pedagogico* (Ed. by E. Madrussan), Como-Pavia, Ibis, 2016, p. 48 (my trans.).

¹¹ On this subject, see M. A. Galanti, *Attraversare il disadattamento, la devianza, la marginalità* and M. G. Riva, *Nell'inquietudine dell'adolescenza. Una riflessione sulla condizione problematica dell'adolescenza e sulla relazione educativa*, in Mariani A. (Ed.), *La relazione educativa. Prospettive contemporanee*, Roma, Carocci, 2001.

¹² G. Giachery, *Adolescenze interrotte*, cit. p. 22.

¹³ E. De Martino, *The End of the World. Cultural Apocalypse and Transcendence*, 1977, En. Trans., Chicago and London, Chicago University Press, 2023, *passim*.

¹⁴ For a Lacanian interpretation of the apocalyptic crisis, see M. Pesare, *Soggettivazione e apocalissi culturali. Filosofia dell'educazione di orientamento laciano nel tempo della crisi*, Pisa, ETS, 2023.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, *passim*.

¹⁶ R. Altamura, *Introduzione. La difficile coerenza*, in De Martino E., *Scritti minori su religione, marxismo e psicoanalisi* (Ed. by Id. and P. Ferretti), Roma, Nuove Edizioni Romane, pp. 29-31.

movement toward intersubjective and communicable values»¹⁷, while human cultures are «evidence of this struggle against the temptation of nothingness»¹⁸. The quality of participation in the intersubjective life defines the being of presence in its vital momentum or in the decline of illness. In this regard, as the Italian anthropologist stated, «the distinction between health and illness, the struggle of health against illness, events of falling ill and recovering [...] concerns humankind in general: indeed it is inherent in human culture as such and affects all of its historical creations»¹⁹. When does presence become ill? When it experiences a radical risk:

It is the risk of not-being-in-the-world, not passing with the situation instead of transcending in value, repeating it instead of deciding it, not regaining the past, remaining exposed to its incoherent return in the cipher of closed symptoms, returning to the beginning, losing a prospect for the future by retreating aghast before the possible, refusing to become a field of the projectable and acting like a projecting power. It is the risk of remaining without leeway in the face of nature to be humanly controlled and of progressively isolating oneself from society, history and culture, reversing the movement from the private to the public to an indefinite privatization that cuts all ties with life in society²⁰.

Reread in the light of our current global context, De Martino's words resonate with particular significance. As Papi observed in the wake of recent social transformations, we are probably facing an «ethical catastrophe» that affects the universality of values «which necessarily founds everyone's rights on an idea of equality»²¹. Could this be a situation that leads to the «loss in an isolation that becomes increasingly total and incommunicable»²²? In this framework, promoting the care for intersubjective relations could correspond, today, to a precise formative commitment: to heal or prevent the disintegrated and increasingly widespread forms of an «ill presence that loses both itself and the world» in order to foster a «healthy presence that opens itself up to the works and days of human culture»²³.

As Cambi has stated, today's cultural consciousness has the fundamental task of elaborating a thought and a praxis that rethink «the *anthropos* that we are in the light of yesterday's and today's thought and that we must and want to be», i.e. «an active and critical self-conscious planetary *anthropos*, alive and present in everyone's consciousness»²⁴. Placing intersubjective life at the centre, promoting its constitutive value, can be a small step towards the formation of the global citizen, increasingly called upon to experience encounters with different cultures whose outcome is far from certain. It is sufficient to think of the spread of dehumanising narratives of the «foreigner» or the «formative fatigue» of adolescents, children of immigrants with sometimes non-Italian-speaking families, enga-

¹⁷ E. De Martino, *The End of the World*, cit., p. 317.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 320.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 88-89.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 316.

²¹ F. Papi, *L'educazione imperfetta*, cit. p. 46 (my trans.).

²² E. De Martino, *The End of the World*, cit. p. 91.

²³ E. De Martino, *Crisis of Presence and Religious Reintegration*, En. Trans. in "HAU. Journal of Ethnographic Theory", 2(2), 2012, p. 439.

²⁴ F. Cambi, *Riflettendo sui silenzi della pedagogia, oggi*, in "Paideutika. Quaderni di formazione e cultura", 37, 2023, p. 35.

ged in structuring their selves amidst profoundly different, if not conflicting, socio-cultural and linguistic contexts, ending up not recognising themselves in either of the reference cultures, which are perceived as an obstacle to self-development²⁵. In the light of this scenario, as Tarozzi emphasised, thinking of cultural difference as a resource rather than a gap to be filled requires overcoming the assimilationist educational approach, in order to attempt that of «cultural mediation», oriented towards «negotiation between points of view, assumptions, values, beliefs, symbolic apparatuses and culturally defined languages»²⁶. Once again, then, it is a question of rethinking the weft of relationships that constitutes the lived experience of subjects and that constantly constructs our belongings. Fostering this kind of sensitivity in contemporary society requires the educator to embrace a complex perspective within which to conceive “difference”, no longer ascribable to the only factor of migration background but to «a plurality of communities of reference in the territories, as well as a heterogeneity of ‘cultures’», understood as «networks of meanings with which to orient oneself in everyday life»²⁷. In heterogeneous contexts, life stories intertwine, cultures intersect, giving rise to crossbreeding and hybridisation. It is perhaps from these knots and common experiences that it is possible to cultivate and nurture the «presence», taking into account that

Language, intersubjective communication, the expression and publicizing of the private; continuous listening and interiorization of the public, valorizing choice that always transcends situations: all this does not add to presence but grounds and supports and develops it [...] ²⁸.

Today, De Martino’s observations resonate profoundly with the present day: not only could the state of profound psychic suffering of a large proportion of adolescents be considered the sign of an «ill presence», but more generally, in heterogeneous contexts, as Zoletto has observed

what, with De Martino, we could call a ‘crisis’ in the functioning of cultures as forms of ‘community design’ would seem to constitute today [...] an element that would seem to be ‘shared’ by migrants, post-migrants and natives²⁹.

Therefore, even from the perspective of a democracy conceived as something to be conquered again and again, caring for intersubjective relations takes on precise political connotations, if by politics we mean, with Mortari, «pronouncing those words and undertaking those actions that establish relations and thus build new realities»³⁰, towards an authentically participatory citizenship.

²⁵ In this topic, see M. Fiorucci, *Giovani in transizione. I nuovi italiani tra doppia appartenenza e doppia assenza*, in Madrussan E. (Ed.), *Crisi della cultura e coscienza pedagogica. Per Antonio Erbetta*, Como-Pavia, Ibis, 2019, pp. 75-85 and P. Dusi, *Appartenenza, appartenenze*, in Fiorucci M., Pinto Minerva F., Portera A. (Eds.), *Gli alfabeti dell’interculturalità*, Pisa, ETS, pp. 55-76.

²⁶ M. Tarozzi, *Dall’interculturalità alla giustizia sociale. Per un progetto pedagogico e politico di cittadinanza globale*, Milano, Franco Angeli, 2015, p. 35.

²⁷ D. Zoletto (Ed.), *Migrazioni, complessità, territori. Prospettive per l’azione educativa*, Roma, Carocci, p. 55 (my trans.).

²⁸ E. De Martino, *The End of the World*, cit. p. 318.

²⁹ D. Zoletto, *Costruire insieme culture nei contesti eterogenei. Ipotesi di ricerca pedagogica a partire da Ernesto De Martino*, in “Civitas Educationis. Education, Politics and Culture”, 2, 2015, p. 109 (my trans.).

³⁰ L. Mortari, *Agire con le parole*, in Id. (Ed.), *Educare alla cittadinanza partecipata*, Milano, Mondadori, 2008, p. 45 (my trans.).

2. Projecting and conducting practices of educative care at school

Taking care of intersubjective relations today could be a starting point for a cultural response to the radical risk of a being dispossessed of the historicity of happening. The task of education, then, would be to address an ethical appeal to man, in the direction of what Bertolini called a «return to subjectivity», where «regaining one's own subjectivity means (re)becoming aware of one's own responsible involvement in the very constitution of personal and social history»³¹. The ways in which this history is constituted lead to the heart of the caring practices that underpin associated life and set its direction. In fact, as Cambi has stated, both self-care and care for the other – two inseparable aspects – imply a knowledge – or rather, a wisdom – that always returns to the cultivation of the potential of *anthropos*, understood in a singular and universal sense³². Promoting practices of caring for intersubjective relations in schools characterised by heterogeneous contexts would mean, today, educating in the direction of what Mariani has called a «renewed humanism», a humanism that is

capable of implying and stimulating - between communication and formation - a reciprocal and constant listening, which develop into dialogue when it becomes dialectical exchange, bridge between civilisations, authentic interaction with the 'other than oneself', comparison within shared communicative rules: guiding values for a democratically oriented formation of subjects/groups/cultures³³.

Thus, at the core of the practice of educative care is the way in which subjects participate in relationships and associated life. From this perspective, it would not be so much a matter of “explaining” the relationship, but of seeking it again and again in order to renew our awareness of it. Therein lies what is at stake in caring for relationships and, in this regard, as Conte has stated

Relationships are certainly not taught directly; however, it is possible to learn to recognise them when they are in place, to recognise the factors that prevent them from occurring, to evaluate the presence or absence of human fundamentals that condition their occurrence³⁴.

On the basis of these reflections, the construction of the educational path of the project *Plurilingualism and Youth Education. Marginality, sustainability, inclusion* adopted a phenomenological-existential approach that, first of all, involved a meditation on adolescence itself, too often the object of easy indignations, prey to stereotypes and/or sensationalist media representations³⁵. Underlying the project is the idea of adolescen-

³¹ P. Bertolini, *Pedagogia fenomenologica. Genesi, sviluppo, orizzonti*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, p. 94 (my trans.).

³² F. Cambi, *La cura di sé come processo formativo. Tra adultità e scuola*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 2010.

³³ A. Mariani, *Nell'intercultura*, in Anichini A., Boffo V., Cambi F., Mariani A., Toschi L., *Comunicazione formativa. Percorsi riflessivi e ambiti di ricerca*, Santarcangelo di Romagna, Maggioli, 2021, p. 137 (my trans.).

³⁴ M. Conte, *Ad altra cura. Condizioni e destinazioni dell'educare*, Pensamultimedia, Lecce, 2006, p. 19 (my trans.).

³⁵ With reference to the topic of social and media representations of youth, allow me to refer to my study I. Papa, *Bad boys e allievi contesi. Realtà educative e rappresentazione cinematografica nel ventennio postbellico, in Gran Bretagna e in Italia*, Como-Pavia, Ibis, 2022.

ce as «the time of possibility»³⁶, the time of a serious search for meaning in the world, together with others, permeated with ethical sensitivity³⁷. Adolescence is often mistakenly perceived as the age of carefreeness par excellence, but its search for meaning is sometimes painful one: the discovery of the possible and the impossible can also be the discovery of irremediable contradictions to be reckoned with in the exercise of one's responsibility³⁸. Moreover, as Madrussan has emphasised, adolescence is often conceived of starting from what it is one wants to become, but this would mean betraying the time of adolescence in its here and now, betraying the question of meaning. The aim of the project is, instead, to offer spaces to try to *stay* in this search, in an act of political recognition of adolescence that is, first and foremost, to recognise and give space to the existential projectuality of adolescents. The purpose is to encourage the reflection around a theme perceived as essential by the adolescents themselves: the relationships that are most important, those that inevitably contribute to shaping the self. The proposal is to encourage a space in which to meditate together on the subjective presence in the relationship and consequently reflect on its own form, try to find words to express it. This meant inviting teenagers to take time to reflect on what is generally taken for granted and to take it as an issue, making it the subject of critical discussion. The activity has been carried out trying to keep the constitutive horizon of the reciprocity of the I-other and I-world relationship firmly in place³⁹, in such a way as to induce the students to think of their own selves as already-always relational beings and to nurture the awareness of the reciprocity that inhabits the interpersonal relationships by asking the question of *how*, in which ways we experience this reciprocity.

To that end, students were asked to think of a specific person with whom they felt they had an important, meaningful relationship: a friend, a relative, a parental figure, a teacher; it was not important that they reveal their identity, but that the person in question was kept in mind by the students.

Subsequently, the researcher asked the students to think of a characteristic of their personality (such as an inclination or an emotional condition) that is most influential in that relationship and to express it with a word by accessing a word-cloud completely anonymously. Trivial in appearance, the question encourages an initial phase of self-reflection: it is neither simple nor immediate to assess what one actually “brings” to an important relationship. That is why the students were given a few minutes to think, sometimes at their explicit request. Once the words became publicly visible, a classroom conversation was initiated, keeping the anchorage to the lived experience firmly in place. «What do you notice?» the presenter asked. Recurring words, similar or opposite words, words of joy and love or rage and bitterness: this is how a deconstructive practice was initiated from the students' first observations.

³⁶ P. Barone, *Pedagogia dell'adolescenza*, Guerini, Milano, 2009.

³⁷ E. Madrussan, *Educazione e inquietudine. La manœuvre formativa*, Como-Pavia, Ibis, 2017, pp. 131-152.

³⁸ A. Erbetta, *Il tempo della giovinezza. Situazione pedagogica e autenticità esistenziale*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 2001.

³⁹ P. Bertolini, *L'esistere pedagogico. Ragioni e limiti di una pedagogia come scienza fenomenologicamente fondata*, 1988, Milano, Guerini, 2021.

3. Formative deconstruction and the “commonplace” underpinning care

Deconstructing means letting “emerge” what, in common everyday experience, risks remaining – or in fact remains – in formless anonymity, in the indistinct and unthought-of. After all, among the spoken words there is always an operating unsaid. Whether through inertia of habit or well-disciplined thinking, in our experience much is taken-for-granted and stays in the background as an unquestioned assumption. To allow this background to become a “figure” subject to possible discussion is to encourage its emergence and, at the same time, a possible conscious mastery. Redefined and practised also in pedagogy and education from different perspectives⁴⁰, the deconstruction promoted in the classroom concerned «the objects of language and their experience», according to the idea of formative deconstruction elaborated by Erbetta⁴¹. The work is placed precisely at this point: between lived experience and the words to “say” it, a possible space for the re-appropriation of the subjective and intersubjective form. Deconstruction, in this way, becomes “formative” and takes place in the sphere of classroom *communication* and, more precisely, in the form of *conversation*, a true ‘place’ of ‘frequentation’ of the relationship, in which one can educate to care for oneself and for others. In the first place, in fact, as Ronchi pointed out, *conversatio* derives from *converto* (*vertere cum*) and, before the 16th century, meant

the word conversation simply meant being together, frequenting a common place. Conversation originally has an ethical valence, if one restores to the word *ethos* its sense of dwelling, of habitual sphere of human existence. To converse is to inhabit a common place⁴².

Precisely because it is the original place of intersubjective convergence, it is also the space for confirmation and superficial – perhaps unreflective – reproduction of stereotypes and prejudices. In this framework, as Jedlowski has highlighted, «conversation is the main instrument of the continuous reconstruction of common sense, that is, of the preservation of a certain way of interpreting reality that is taken for granted»⁴³. The space par excellence of the inauthentic Heideggerian chatter, deconstruction starts from this commonplace in order to reshape it in the direction of appropriation, knowing that «conversation does not only serve to reproduce certain taken-for-granted assumptions. Sometimes it serves to make them explicit and redefine them»⁴⁴. It is, therefore, at this level that formative action lies. In what way? Not only by inviting the students to express

⁴⁰ On this subject, see F. Cambi, *I silenzi della teoria: il nascosto e l'impensato*, in Id. and Ulivieri S. (Eds.), *I silenzi dell'educazione. Studi storico-pedagogici*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, pp. 3-30; A. Mariani, *La decostruzione e il discorso pedagogico. Saggio su Derrida*, Pisa, ETS, 2000; R. Massa, *Le tecniche e i corpi. Verso una scienza dell'educazione*, 1986, Milano, Unicopli, 2004², and A. Erbetta (Ed.), *Decostruire formando. Concetti, pratiche, orizzonti*, Como-Pavia, Ibis, 2010.

⁴¹ A. Erbetta, *Decostruire. Che cosa e perché?*, in Id. (Ed.), *Decostruire formando*, cit. p. 19. For a more wide-ranging analysis of pedagogical deconstructionism, in its Derridean derivation, see at least A. Mariani, *La decostruzione in pedagogia. Una frontiera teorico-educativa della postmodernità*, Roma, Armando, 2008.

⁴² R. Ronchi, *Teoria critica della comunicazione*, Milano, Mondadori, 2003, p. 151 (my trans.).

⁴³ P. Jedlowski, *Il mondo dato per scontato. Conversazioni quotidiane e costruzione sociale della realtà*, in Besoli S. and Caronia L. (Eds.), *Il senso della realtà. L'orizzonte della fenomenologia nello studio del mondo sociale*, Macerata, Quodlibet, 2018, p. 125 (my trans.).

⁴⁴ *Ivi*.

themselves always adhering to the reciprocity implicit in the lived experience, starting from the conceptualisation and description of the self, impossible without otherness, but also by urging them to explore their personal constructions of meaning within social relations. Such is the principle that guides the work of the conductor and the drafting of the cartography⁴⁵. Starting from what emerged in the word-cloud, the conductor solicits reflections, asks questions, tries to encourage the participation of all, who are invited to express themselves on several words, and not only on those they have personally indicated. At this point, the experiences become the object of reflection among peers, while the conductor tries to be as unobtrusive as possible, so as to let the narration of others' experiences emerge spontaneously. In this context, as Madrussan put it, «the conductor has the difficult task of 'taking in' the other's word without altering it, of translating it through a keyword or a short, effective expression and relating it to the others»⁴⁶. The relationships between keywords – expressed by means of arrows and/or other signs aimed at specifying contrasts and/or proximity between words – are shown in the cartography, posters on which reflections are collected as the conversation takes place.

In deconstructive practice, the role of mapping is not simply to bear witness to what has been said in the classroom, but to show everyone how different senses, pertaining to different experiences and/or alternative ways of experiencing and looking at a given phenomenon, can arise from the same word. The cartography, therefore, bears the trace of the conversation, while the latter, in fact, «implies a renegotiation of the thought in light of the narratives of others»⁴⁷. Several opportunities for renegotiation emerged during the discussion. This was the case when the topic of jealousy was discussed. According to some participants, jealousy, identified as the fear of losing someone, would, after all, be «a demonstration that a partner 'cares'». However, the idea that jealousy is a direct manifestation of the affection felt for someone was directly challenged by peers, who pointed out that jealousy, after all, can also be a negative experience stemming from the presumption of possession of the other, and that there are various alternative ways of showing that one 'cares', such as «listening» to a person and, possibly, advising him/her in the best possible way. Other topics of discussion included *respect*, *patience*, *trust*, *insecurity*, *extroversion*, *freedom*, *explosiveness* and, of course, *love*.

4. A possible way towards youth inclusion?

The practice of formative deconstruction feeds on the trans-formative power of communication, if by this latter term we mean, with Ronchi, a true creative act, a «doing something together that was not there before»⁴⁸.

Conversation in action can become a fertile place for the emergence of the unprecedented, the unthought-of and the alternative and/or the multiplicity of meaning, the latter understood as direction. It becomes a real space for re-instituting intersubjectivity

⁴⁵ G. Giachery, *Diario di bordo. Un percorso di decostruzione formativa*, in Erbetta A., *Decostruire formando*, cit. *passim*.

⁴⁶ E. Madrussan, *La procedura decostruttiva. Mappe, segmenti, chiavi di volta*, in Erbetta A. (Ed.), *Decostruire formando*, cit. p. 71 (my trans.).

⁴⁷ Ivi.

⁴⁸ R. Ronchi, *Teoria critica della comunicazione*, cit. *passim*.

again and again. Beginning with self-awareness and awareness of one's own form as the goal of care. In this regard, in fact, as Mortari stated

Care is actualized in actions made of words and gestures; the difficult part is to find the right words and gestures at the opportune moment for that specific person; words and gestures that the other can benefit from⁴⁹.

Reflecting and discussing one's experiences together is a way of consciously transforming our being-there, a way of returning to one's experiences to guide our actions. Moreover, classroom conversation about one's own experiences can also be an experience of collective attention and listening, and can be a way of fostering receptiveness, both in the teacher and in the peer group – a way of allowing space for the other and encouraging sensitive attention to the ways of being-there⁵⁰. For the teacher, it may be an opportunity to listen directly their students, to turn an existential gaze onto them. In this way, the teacher will be able to grasp different sensitivities and vulnerabilities and, subsequently, rethink and reshape her own responsive presence in educational practices. In this regard, as one of the three teachers who collaborated on the project stated, the activity proved to be a meaningful experience in which it was possible to get to know the students better, beyond the “institutional role” of students with which the teachers usually see them. For the students, it is an occasion to compare other points of view - perhaps detecting unexpected commonalities - and to rethink their own ways of being with each other. This is especially significant when very different students agree on some fundamental issues.

In general, the topic of intersubjective relations has been received with attention and keen interest, and it has aroused a high degree of involvement and participation in the conversation. Even the students whom the teacher considered most “conflicting” ones have been happy to express themselves. The more shy ones, reluctant to intervene, have shown a keen interest in listening to what others had to say. The engagement was quite good even though, in the course of the conversation, guided by the researcher, many students openly expressed difficulty in finding the right words to express what they were meaning. Despite these difficulties, they did not give up.

We have seen above how young people seem to be experiencing a serious crisis of projectuality, which can often manifest itself in maladaptive or deviant behaviour. In the current context, giving the word to young people and listening to them is undoubtedly an act of fundamental importance: it means recognising that, even before the crisis of projectuality, and depending on the contexts of life, there may in fact be a desire to project oneself that often does not or cannot find the right conditions to be cultivated and to nurture that «intersubjective valorisation of life» that, according to De Martino, is the basis of a «healthy presence».

⁴⁹ L. Mortari, *The Philosophy of Care*, Wiesbaden, Springer, 2022, p. 77.

⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, *passim*.

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