

The school as a place for a ‘social clinic’ (PolisAnalysis)

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ABSTRACT. – The school has remained the only incubator of semiotic capital - resources of meaning - and regenerator of social capital. Therefore, the task of the teacher-educator is primarily to ‘teach how to live’, *i.e.* to allow each individual to develop knowledge of himself and the link with others - others within himself and others outside himself - to prepare them to face the multiple uncertainties and difficulties of existence, coping with the sense of radical impotence and indefinability of the Self experienced by the ‘sovereign child’ who has now grown up. Central to this, will be a re-education as regards limits, mentalisation, caring for the common living space. To this end, even the learning-teaching process should be interpreted as something concerning above all the emotional-affective dynamics, largely unconscious, that configure the group network of relationships between all the actors on the school’s stage: transference, counter-transference, collusions, the class-group as a single mind, the institution, the specific culture of each school. The teacher will be able to find in his own mind his main working tool, provided he has space and time to conscientise and metabolise what is acting in himself at an unconscious level, through appropriate group methodologies - Balint and Psychodrama. The student, on the other hand, will be helped to transition from a culture of fulfilment to feeling like a ‘client’ who experiences school as a time to cultivate himself and implement Relational Assets, such as reciprocity, cooperation and trust. It is about operating a real act as a ‘social clinic’.

Key words: Emotional-affective dynamics; collusion; school setting; social clinic; relational assets.

Introduction

Our contribution aims to focus on that karstic river of unconscious messages exchanged between pupils, teachers, class groups, school and territory.

In particular, in the daily analytical listening to preadolescents and adolescents, we have noticed some problematic aspects that condition both

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the effectiveness of the teaching-learning process and the task of ‘teaching how to live’, which should be primary in this educational agency. In particular: i) insufficient attention paid to the unconscious emotional-affective aspects, which leads to an inability on the part of pupils and teachers to understand their own and others’ internal mental states, as well as the impossibility of experiencing conflicts and ambivalence in a developmental way, with the risk of making an enemy of the other, amplifying paranoia and violence; ii) the collapse of the mind over management skills and a sense of radical impotence and indefinability of the self; hence, symptoms of unspecified anxiety, claustrophobia, suicidal tendencies, confusion over sexuality; iii) the lack of full consideration of the micro-, meso- and macro-social contexts which actually penetrate and intimately condition the individual personality of pupils and teachers, the educational community as a whole and the culture of a specific educational institution in its entirety.

The school should intervene through educational action as a ‘social clinic’, since it is the only incubator of ‘semiotic capital’, *i.e.* of meaning resources (Salvatore, 2012); the only place where adolescents and adult learners can be educated (Ammaniti, 2015) to the importance of limits and to the redesigning of new rules for the common house, in order to implement social capital, those Relational Assets (Donati, 2019) such as reciprocity, cooperation and trust, the only ones that multiply by distribution, generating virtuous communities.

Thinking thoughts

Transference and counter-transference

For teaching-learning processes to be valid and effective, it is necessary to go beyond the mere intellectual dimension: learning is emotional before it is cognitive. ‘Emotions are the guides, architects and internal organisers of our minds’ (Brazelton & Greenspan, 2000). That is why it is necessary to allow all the players in the school setting to acquire emotional skills, training them to experience emotional contact with themselves, reflecting on their own relational vicissitudes; the aim will be to allow them to acquire tools and functions to represent themselves and resolve the unknowns arising from the experience of meeting the other from oneself - understood as both the person and the group-class and the matter-food to be assimilated.

In every situation, in the ‘here and now’, each of the actors brings into the school arena the unresolved, conflicting, ambivalent or simply unexpressed ‘there and then’, still in the shadows and not fully elaborated, which could also affect the teaching-learning and evaluation process. We are referring to the processes of transference and counter-transference, which

are often not explored, perceived and experienced as a disturbing element in the educational relationship.

The process of transference has increasingly taken on a positive value and necessity in the process of care, the Socratic *epimèlia*, of which the educational act is also a part, emerging ever more clearly as the main tool in the exploration of the modalities of relationships and in the differentiation between the objects of past relationships and those of current relationships (Freud, 1914).

The teacher's countertransference should be understood as an unconscious reaction and as its set of characteristics in the educational act, bringing together every aspect of the relationship, including ambivalence and authenticity (Winnicott, 1947). In our case, in line with Mitchell's (1988) relational perspective, it could imply an emotional process on the part of the teacher in response to the pupil's psychic processes. In this case, both the teacher and the pupil experience emotional states that are not at all free from defensive attitudes, integrating into these emotions parts of the other and reacting to the emotional states, whether unconscious or not, that the other expresses and projects. Pupils, just like patients for analysts, resonate with the hidden world of the teacher, activating in him repressed and not necessarily processed conflicts, so that one is not only an observer of the other, but also a participant in his experience.

As examples of unprocessed countertransference we could consider the times when the teacher searches for aspects of her own self in the pupil, through 'narcissistic projection'; consequently, the pupil may be experienced, more or less unconsciously: i) as a white paper on which the teacher projects and writes his own self-reflection, searching first of all for his own image, *i.e.* what he himself has already been; ii) secondly, the teacher might see in the pupil the positive aspect, the ideal Self, what he or she would like to be; iii) finally, the pupil might be experienced as the negative aspect of one's self, or what one should not be.

For example, the more the teacher dislikes himself and is dissatisfied with himself, the more he can expect the pupil to play a role in resolving situations, therefore, to be a model pupil; or, on the contrary, that of a scapegoat on whom to focus his feelings of guilt in order to get rid of them. In addition, beneath the purpose of a good education, there may also be aspects of envy that the teacher may feel because of the presence of creative and vital elements missing in his psychic universe. The teacher must resist the impulse to try to build the pupil he would like to have - like a modern Pygmalion - helping him, instead, to develop fully, in accordance with his rhythms and his potentialities, to become what he wants to be, in harmony with his talents and as a result of his very personal history, thus attaining the seed of life 'that one is', being therefore an 'anti-Pygmalion' (Ancona *et al.*, 2003).

On his part, the pupil develops a transference towards the teacher: in his

relationship with the teacher he re-proposes modes of relationships, conflicts, anxieties and desires as a repetition of what he experienced with his parents; just as the same mode of learning and assimilation of the 'food-matter' will be a repetition of those modes and of what he emotionally experienced in childhood, in particular during breast-feeding, 'the first curriculum for each of us' (Ekstein, 1970). (Ekstein, 1970).

Evolutionary collusions

One of the teacher's tasks will be to help the student to have a more realistic concept of the adult, allowing him to see in the latter a person who can help him to think his thoughts, especially those that are repressed, or repressed because they are disorientating, ambivalent, conflictual, full of destructiveness or anguish; instead, there is often collusion between student and teacher in maintaining and reinforcing reciprocal repressed aspects. The need to remove 'perturbing' internal aspects, reactivated by the confrontation 'in the here and now', can be exasperated to the point of a real 'attack on thinking', paralysing it: both because of the anger at not feeling seen and recognised, and because of the fear of seeing something that one would prefer to keep hidden.

We could say that the pupil and the class-group as a whole represent and express in their relationship the sum of the conscious and unconscious coexistence, therefore the teacher's collusion, in a mutually valid divergent symmetry: as if the understanding between the two presented a predominantly defensive and reactive character to unresolved situations rooted in the past, rather than being the result of a free game in the *hic et nunc*. Therefore, evolutionary collusions can occur, that is to say 'shared areas' where the teacher and the pupil can find a transformative meaning; but also pathological collusions, that is to say situations in which both express the Self that the other expects and that embodies his own ideal.

As an example of a type of evolutionary collusion we can consider the case of M., a high school girl with problems of anorexia, depressive crises and frequent use of soft drugs, caught up in a group of other drug-addicted peers. M. has a conflictual relationship with her mother. Although M. is a bright and intelligent girl, she often does poorly at school and sees every issue as an attack on herself. M. wants to drop out of school before the end of the school year, also because of her repeated failure in confronting her classmates, which re-creates the unresolved rivalry with her older brothers, compared to whom she has always felt a loser. In the school environment M. finds a teacher who is particularly attentive to her, who treats her in a privileged way, ignoring her superficiality in studying and appreciating her abilities: an attitude that M. finds irritating. During therapy it emerges that the teacher's attitude is similar to that of the mother, who wants to protect her because she has no faith in her. M. therefore repeatedly provokes the

teacher, embarrassing her and criticising her; the teacher reacts by trying to isolate her from the class-group, not feeling acknowledged as a 'protective mother'. The climax of this situation came when the girl openly told the teacher, in front of all her classmates, that she would be better off looking after her own daughter, who was also a drug addict, rather than thinking about the problems of others, causing the teacher to leave the class.

In the interviews with M., an attempt is made to elaborate the meaning of the attack against the teacher, trying to clarify to what extent her experiences have been influenced by confusion and overlapping with the situation with her mother, leading the girl to a painful awareness accompanied by desperate crying. Subsequently the same awareness will lead M. to apologise to the teacher, explaining the reasons for her behaviour, a gesture which helps the teacher to explicate her own expectations and fears.

This case clearly indicates the steps that are required to proceed towards distinction and mutual recognition, differentiating the split aspects projected on the other because they are not tolerated or recognised. For M., feeling seen for what she really is, in her complexity, seems to reinforce and enrich her fragile Ego. With the passing of time she discovers her own resources, acquiring more and more self-confidence, rediscovering the ability to tolerate anxieties and frustrations. In the end M. decides not to leave school and to sit her final exams, gaining the esteem and support of the teachers, encouraged also by her mother who seems to have acquired new faith in her.

The teacher's mind as a working tool

Once analysed, the teacher's countertransference allows the educator's mind to work as a 'parable', able to receive and decode the so-called 'electromagnetic waves' coming from the pupil that, out of metaphor, are affections, emotions and thoughts which cannot be represented or expressed or seen or heard. The teacher himself, taking them in and with himself, translates them into narratives in which the pupil reflects himself and regains possession of the decoded parts, carrying out what Bion (1963) called the alpha function. Another metaphor: the inedible grains of the pupil's wheat/thoughts and emotions are brought to the educator's mind-mill so that he can grind them, make flour out of them and thus good bread, allowing the reintegration of disturbing mental contents.

It is fundamental to promote the understanding of the fact that the mind of each of us is a mosaic of personalities, similar to an 'internal condominium' (Napolitani, 1987), which the adolescent in particular is required to know. The aim is to allow dialogue between all the members of the inner group, integrating the 'shadow' aspects, those unconscious fragments of the Ego that are not accepted or realised, and projected (Jung, 1939), the 'dark brother', the other in himself. So that perhaps, no longer

divided, the pupil will be able to experience the other, outside of himself, as integrate-able, without the need to make enemies of him (Pergola, 2020). This is possible above all through literature, class discussions on specific topics, reflections on possible arguments, conflicts and problematic situations that occur in class life, as opportunities for self-knowledge and for progress in relationships within the system.

The teacher-educator should allow two questions to emerge in each of his students: 'What question do I ask the other through my story' and 'What question does the other ask me through his story'. Obviously, in order to succeed in this educational task, the teacher, in the relationship with the pupils, needs to be aware that s/he has to deal with two 'students': the one s/he has to educate and the one removed within her/himself, without forgetting that s/he will have to deal with the parental function, often as an alter-ego of the pupil's actual parent.

Experiential groups for teachers

'Balint Groups' are extremely useful as a place of confrontation and experiential training for the teacher as they work on the analysis of the manifest countertransference. In addition, it will be useful to focus on the fantasies of the concrete actuality of the relationship, where one is required to come to terms with the conflictual nature of one's expectations, projections and the frustration relating to the collapse of illusions. The Balint groups in schools assume that the teaching conveyed is the teacher himself, although the way in which it is conveyed is apparently unknown. These groups are a way to train the teacher's mind to the emotional-affective dimension, to make it the main working tool, without any interference, but only useful resources to transmit a way of learning and thinking. The group represents the small society in which one lives, where the dynamics that manifest themselves in everyday life are realised. It is within the group that it is possible to channel the experiences, the affective and emotional responses that occur within the relationship between teacher and pupil.

The person who presents a case in a Balint Group does not bring just any complicated situation, but one that touches on his or her unresolved and often unconscious conflicts. In short, the narrator brings his own story that needs to be re-imagined and reclaimed. The case, through the new description, becomes a new construction in which the narrator describes himself while describing the problematic relationship. It represents the missing link in the narrator's own chain of story meanings. In the end, having repopulated the shadow zones, that which seemed to have no meaning now makes sense, and *insight* is developed to resolve *impasses* with a pupil or colleague. At the end of the cycle of sessions one does not change because one understands, but one understands because, even if only slightly, one has changed.

These analytical working groups, addressed to teachers and devoted to care and sharing, are a precious space in the work of discernment, within the relationship with the pupil, between what is proper and what is not. Take the case of a support teacher who, during one of the planned meetings, shares the problems of a 13-year-old girl, C., with medium learning difficulties, who often talks about vampires and her desire to be kidnapped and transformed, to live a different life. As happens in this type of group, it is mostly the other members who ask questions, and one of the requests for further investigation concerns the role of the school in accepting the specific needs of the girl; the teacher responds that C. does not willingly talk about these weaknesses, and then tells the others that the young girl had lost her father two years previously in an accident: she was alone when she received the news of the tragic event from the police, who went to the family home to report the accident, as she was the only person present at home at that time.

With the help of the group leader the teacher agrees on the possibility that the figure of the vampire may represent, for C., the idealization of the figure of the father, able to lead her into a world different from the real one, an idealized world. The girl's hope also emerges regarding the possibility that her deceased parent might one day knock on her door, just like a 'living dead'. The sharing of the case leads the teacher to confess her own emotional difficulties in relating to C., which are difficult to explain simply by the interactions that have taken place and the type of relationship established with the girl. The other members of the group, who are listening, ask questions, thus slowly allowing the teacher's worries about her parents to emerge; in fact, she, too, is afraid of one day having to open 'the door' to the unpleasant news of the loss of one of her loved ones, without the possibility of saying a last goodbye to them, just as happened to C..

The precious work of the group, as we have seen, is enclosed in the possibility of bringing out the latent unexpressed feeling, thanks also to all that is said and shared within that group, including the exchanges which, to a naive eye, may seem 'useless'. The co-vision and co-listening of a group-mind allow a re-transcription of the narrated story, which from being *anxiogenic* becomes *reclaimed*, allowing to find within it a new collocation, thus reducing the discomfort and contacting the emotionality of that moment and reach a more structured and complete understanding of the events, finally shareable with the free and flexible use of words.

Another very effective method is Analytical Psychodrama. It is a method that allows us to open up to dialogue our inner groupness, the condominium mentioned above. In this sense, dialogue is necessary, since our identity is not represented by a single self, but by a plurality of selves. From this derives our functioning, which is inextricably linked to the other. Psychodrama is a useful tool for reading psychic events, through 'drama' to enact the dynamics, related transformations and verbal interpretations. In this way, an

environment is created in which it is possible to express needs, emotions and feelings, but above all to experience new ways of being and inhabiting the world or a setting. In any case, with the help of other eyes, other ears, other feelings, other words, it is possible to see and feel the situation in a completely new way, creating constructive relationships between the parties. The story, which one was afraid to tell because it was unpleasant, becomes on the contrary a story full of varied aspects. The aim is to allow the teacher to enhance his ability to use himself, his person, to acknowledge his own blind spots involved in the relationship and apply his own mind as a tool.

In short, as we do in analysis, from a possible process of interference, countertransference becomes one of the main tools of understanding for an intentional development - defined as 'desiring power' - to design the educational action in the most effective way. Although the introduction of methodologies with a purely psychoanalytical approach may not be easy to implement in the school setting, with appropriate modifications and perceptiveness it becomes possible to implement these techniques in schools. One of the essential steps for the success of such interventions is to establish a good collaboration with the teaching staff and pupils right from the start, and then together to identify shared objectives, in order to establish a good alliance. Only in this way can we aim to create a fertile ground on which and through which to intervene, allowing the talent, functional interactions, awareness of one's own emotions, and more fulfilling relationships to blossom.

The absence of limits and algophobia

The parents of today's adolescents have had the socio-anthropological mandate to raise their children divested of any kind of frustration, never allowing them to become tired of anything, avoiding any pain and the slightest extension of desire, rewarding them for pursuing their own aims regardless of rules or prohibitions, and becoming independent early on and proficient, without the guidance of a significant adult. Free adolescents, provided they adhere to the ideal of perfection and performativity as dictated by the wider social context, never free to have short breaks and intermissions in order to 'be idle'.

The sovereign child

In our age the parental mandate from society is that children should not suffer for anything, should not feel any need or lack, should be spared all frustrations and/or fatigue; they should be overprotected and their needs fulfilled without having to wait, they are justified in everything. They are

thus raised as embryos to be propped up by 'I-substitutes' and not as beings in formation. This is an excess of maternal code that leads to maternalization; an excessive maternal register that, far from Winnicott's 'optimal frustrations', gives rise to the syndrome of the little emperor or of the sovereign child (Marcelli, 2004), a slave to the unregulated totalitarianism of desire, the child will become 'his majesty the child' (Freud, 1914), the child who will never have to renounce enjoyment and will always be at the centre of all creation. Worshipped as a 'sacred icon', such a child develops a sense of omnipotence, and often obsessions of perfectionism and a hypertrophic Ego, developing an assertive instance instead of the superegoic one (Marcelli, 2004). In a healthy development, the super-Ego leads to a depressive sense of guilt, which in the face of a loss leads to an error, to frustration and then to reparation, to the creation of something new 'in place of', with a view to progress. Assertiveness, together with an ego ideal of perfection, leads to shame, to an insane depression that crushes and immobilises. The parent, on the other hand, should hesitate to provide immediate satisfaction and accept momentary pain and the expectation of something else.

What happens is that as the child grows up with schooling, and therefore entry into social coexistence outside the family walls, the child raised as a 'little emperor', unable to digest any kind of limitation, experiences every 'no' as an amputation of himself. It would be different if the parental figure, instead of constantly looking for solutions in the hope of calming the child unnecessarily, were able to create a space for waiting. The father, as well as the mother, should accept the momentary absence of love from the child in order to allow him to experience the presence of a limit. A limit that represents the space between desire and its fulfilment, a space in which to think of a possible solution necessary for development.

Forced to continue living in a world that does not allow immediate gratification, the individual turns to separation as the prevailing protective mechanism. Rejection no longer refers to an internalised third party, to a law, to a social bond; rejection refers to the wickedness of the world or to the inadequacy of assertive desire, from which uncontrolled anger or sadness develop. In addition to anger, the adolescent may regress to forms of addiction, which restore the illusion of immediate desire fulfilment, as occurs in eating disorders or other forms in which a sense of illusory competence can be experienced. Think of extreme trial games such as Blue Whale, or 'zapping' with one's sexuality, just as people do zapping with TV programmes. Many adolescents, lacking mental representations of basic management actions, engage in a search for independent activities in which their decision will decide the outcome. For instance, the fact that there are almost thirty names for one's sexuality has little to do with sexual orientation or gender identity; rather, it expresses a sort of *totipotence* that can be

experienced in the only sphere perceived as undisputed 'property', one's sexuality: it becomes the terrain in which to express the sense of 'indefinability of the self' and the search for pseudo-competence. If the body is not used also as a basic dimension of 'business' and procedural competences of existence, it becomes almost a metaphysical entity, a place of confused pseudo-enjoyment. The fact that one is able to name one's sexuality, which varies from day to day, thus becomes the last link in an illusory power that is actually a symptom of the dispersion of identity and the indefinability of the feeling of self.

It has become increasingly evident in clinical practice that the real traumas suffered by young patients are due to the absence of tasks within the family-business, and not to the affection contents exchanged within the home. When today's adolescents show signs of depression, it is a narcissistic type of depression, characterized by an impression of emptiness, an emptiness that has to be filled through the consumption of products. The paradox is that this position makes the subject much more dependent on what the world can offer or refuse: one has to fill up in order to end the impression of abysmal inner emptiness. This is the paradoxical experience that weighs negatively on the subject who wants to avoid all relational dependence on the other: to fall back into dependence on objects or behaviour, so much so that today's dependence has become a central psychopathological axis. The need for others is an obstacle that one must get rid of in order to exorcise the sense of impotence and shame: thus, the other becomes a threat to the individual's inner psychic space. The pathologies of dependency have their origin in this: the persistent need for a social link causes too much anxiety for the individual.

Algophobia

The adulescents (Ammaniti, 2015) have developed such 'algo-phobia' - in a society that has removed pain and abhors all fragility - that they do not tolerate even the feeble attempt on the part of their children to feel normal sadness, physiological depression, legitimate rebellion, and resort to any 'magical' means to eliminate such mental pain, instead of allowing it as a form of training for the hard work of existence, to shape up the psychic muscles, even if belatedly. Thus we resort to medicalisation with psychotropic drugs, to psychodiagnoses, most of which only conceal an educational vacuum and a fear on the part of the adults to deal with mental pain. Today's boys and girls are no longer confronted with conflicting emotions because the social world and its adults cannot cope with them. Suffice it to consider the proliferation of DSA (specific learning difficulty) and BES (special learning needs), which, as with other learning difficulties, come up against the prevalence of negative perceptions that reinforce aspects of defence and closure towards new approaches, experienced as unknown

and threatening. Even in the case of failure to assimilate food-matter, the problem is lack of training to deal with frustration, anxiety and pain. Introducing the new and the unknown into the mind, as a subject to be learnt, forces a deconstruction that normally brings with it a dose of anxiety. Many children and adolescents today, however, lack the appropriate 'digestive enzymes', emotions and affections, and develop food intolerances similarly to the learning process.

In the school, on the other hand, one can experience the beauty of being subjected to Limits, which should, just like in ancient Rome, become deities once again. *Limes* in the construction of the *castrum*, to find a new city after the conquest of a new territory: first of all, the perimeter of the external fortifications, but also the internal roads which divided up the camp - the first urban nucleus of the future new city. Therefore, internalising the limits means internally structuring a fortification of the roads to be travelled. The teacher/educator and the school institution can also acknowledge the skills and competences by exercising another aspect of the paternal code: negotiation and exchange. 'If you want to achieve something, you have to earn it... because you are able to'. The family, as well as being a source of affection, should also be experienced as a small business in which psychological development also passes through a fair distribution of tasks, according to clear and distinct rules. Today's parents are unable to accept their children when they are sulking, angry, crying or depressed because they struggle to govern a practical task or to delay a desire. Materialisation has become all the rage and initially leads to the child's and adolescent's life being propped up, and then to the 'I-substitutes' taking over: the parents themselves who do everything to ensure that their children remain immobile, do not get tired, are kept far from any source of possible trauma, such as forbidding the viewing of television series, reading or playing certain games, to the point of doing nothing at all at home.

Today's teenagers are 'locked away' in their homes, and only their psychological aspects are assessed, not realising that their mental development is largely and negatively affected, not to mention their emotional development, which is totally neglected. As a matter of fact, the parents cannot act differently because of a social imperative, sanctioned by feeling bad and inappropriate, or even censured by social groups. I am thinking of the case of a widowed father who no longer wanted to support his 28-year-old daughter, for her own good and with the intention of encouraging her to become independent, since she was in perfect health and was not studying or working. Well, the Regional Administrative Court ruled against the father, obliging him to continue supporting his daughter. This is why I believe that today the real patient is the social configuration that penetrates and conditions the affections, visions, thoughts and actions of individuals, in a more pathological way than ever before.

Within the school, if teachers could avoid the excessive interference of certain parents, they would be of help to these 'undeveloped embryos' whose parents and/or-substitute Egos seize them in the uterine dimension and do not allow them to move from being 'identical to' - in Latin 'idem'- to being separate and distinct as themselves - in Latin 'ipse'- and experience a healthy channelled transgressiveness. The school could train students to bear the mental exhaustion of procedural tasks as an antidote to the collapse of awareness in basic skills whereby 'without my parents I cannot live', liberating the adolescent from excessive idealizations and manias of perfectionism rooted in a social environment in which nothing is considered impossible and everything is possible. The latter is also an attempt to illusorily cope with the sense of radical impotence resulting from the overwhelming omnipotence of childhood.

The human mind is waiting for the father

The school can teach one how to live within the limits of cohabitation, as well as within one's own limits; it can train one to live within conflicts, within one's own anxieties and fragilities, to live there for the length of time required to metabolise certain experiences, emotions, affections, until they become thinkable and communicable by putting them into words, naming them, thereby treating the adolescent as a man, as a work in progress, being trained. This can happen if one allows oneself to exercise that paternal function which calls for one to stand upright, ready for action, on one's own legs, like a boxer in the ring on his toes to charge himself with kinetic energy: this is the etymological meaning of the term 'existence'. A paternal function that acknowledges the son as capable and able to do something, and in addition to understanding, proposes a kind of meritocracy. A father who knows how to dole out the right frustrations without giving in; who provides clear, distinct rules, like high-speed tracks, allowing the adolescent healthy transgressiveness without the need to derail, and the possibility to reach his goal. This, then, is another fundamental psychological and pedagogical process: the striving towards a goal, through the activation of a question of existential meaning. In fact, the father figure is a fundamental element in ensuring that the child opens up to the outside world, to the stranger, in such a way as to let go of the exclusive relationship with the mother, thereby avoiding a pathological symbiosis. In this case, the process of individualisation and subjectification will be favoured (Cahn, 2000).

The paternal function mentioned above refers to Fornari's theory of affective codes (1981). According to the author, the unconscious is a sort of affective programme which each individual carries within her/himself and which acts as an aid in choosing what is best for oneself. In this sense, the unconscious works according to specific codes: the paternal code represents

the norm and encourages autonomy, while the maternal code enhances belonging and identification, favouring the pleasure principle and creating the illusion of omnipotence. In the school context, too, each teacher or educator is called upon to perform one of the functions corresponding to these affective codes, switching from the maternal to the paternal function depending on the situation and letting himself be guided by his own countertransference resonance. The integration of these codes is necessary for an effective educational relationship which knows how to move from the need for affection to collaboration, from acknowledging the other to autonomy, from understanding to negotiation and exchange.

Indeed, I believe that one of the main objectives of pedagogy as a clinical act, is encouraging the student to observe, in the overall structure of human existence, his own 'being in the world', to understand, possibly, exactly when he lost his bearings, to find new meanings in order to take his own position in the multi-personal field and in the social fabric to which he belongs. 'What is my own rightful place in order to contribute to the good and progress of myself and those around me?'. This is the question that a teacher-educator should trigger in the pupils. From despair, open up to hope, the root of which, in Sanskrit, indicates exactly 'striving towards a goal'.

From a culture of performance to Relational Assets

In order to have a complete picture of the processes that characterise being in the classroom, we need to consider the set of meanings and psychological dynamics that arise from the specificity of the context in which the teacher finds himself. From a psychological point of view, we can consider the context as the set of stories, languages and myths shared within it, which give rise to a specific local culture.

The declination of these requests within a specific context implies the need to consider in depth the relationship between the school and the people who are part of it, a relationship regulated not only by structural or strictly personal factors, but also by shared meanings at a symbolic-affective level (Carli & Paniccia, 2003).

In this context, collaboration between the fundamental educational agencies in the lives of young learners is essential: family and school. The alliance between the two is achieved through the establishment of a meaningful relationship between teachers and parents. In fact, both systems share the goal of educating the student-child and prepare him/her to face the world. This will only be possible if the family system and the school system are committed to negotiating an educational project with shared goals.

The development of skills and emotionality is inextricably linked to the contexts in which one lives. It is therefore important that different systems

dialogue with each other, sharing rules, behaviour, aims and scope for action, so as to offer the child the opportunity to contribute actively to their formation; in this way, he will perceive himself as an integral part of the educational pact. On the other hand, it often happens that the messages coming from teachers, as well as from the parents themselves, go in the direction of a 'double-bind' communication (cf. Palo Alto); they appear multiple and contradictory, as well as manipulative. This inevitably causes relational disorders in children, with negative consequences in the development of their ability to adapt to and understand the social environment.

The pupil-client

If we consider the classroom as a stage, through his or her way of being in the classroom the teacher will on the one hand enact his/her personal vicissitudes, which depend to a large extent on his/her previous history, and on the other play out a script that speaks more about the context, *i.e.* the local culture of the school or class in which s/he works. From this point of view, we can consider emotions as a way of symbolising the context in which one finds oneself, as a way of making sense of the reality one encounters on a daily basis. Think of the differing emotions we feel when talking to a brilliant and engaged student rather than a hostile and listless one. Even before the adjectives we attribute to them, it is the emotions we experience that guide us in our relations with these pupils: given their overpowering and undefined nature, emotions find their expression in the school through rituals specific to the school context, organised in cultural repertoires. Thus, in a critical situation, such as a student's reluctance to follow the lesson, the teacher might express his frustration by trying to increase his control over the student, by threatening punishment or reprimanding the student's indiscipline. This type of behaviour, which is typical of and characterizes the coexistence and representation of roles in the school, can be traced back to cultural repertoires, widely and unconsciously shared by the actors operating within the school. These cultural repertoires give rise to a whole series of expectations concerning behaviour, shared at an unconscious level, which lead to the structuring of specific ways of relating to the 'Other' within the school. On the one hand, these mutual expectations can be of a general nature, such as good manners; on the other hand, they can be very specific, less oriented by universal values and more related to the history and circumstances of a class or the relationship with a student.

One should be aware of the role these expectations play in guiding the teacher's behaviour: some of these 'rules of the game' may be aimed exclusively at reaffirming the power of one over the other in the context of

the classroom; others may be aimed at the realisation of a shared product, negotiated within the relationship with the pupil. In order to encourage the establishment of more advanced rules of the game, which allow the active involvement of the pupil in the learning process, it may be useful for the teacher to adopt an attitude that emphasises the pupil's role as a client of the service offered, whose real needs cannot be anticipated.

What can be observed in classrooms is that students are rarely considered clients of the school-service, in other words, as individuals who put their desires and motivation into play to obtain a desired product from the teacher. What is more frequently observed is the dissemination of a culture of accomplishment, where what counts is not the development of a competence, but the uncritical submission to rules or their provocative transgression. Such a culture often gives rise to a perceived lack of meaning for both students and teachers with regard to their time spent at school, leading to an emotional detachment from the learning relationship and the adoption of compensatory behaviour. The lack of shared objectives and rules of the game, which organise and give meaning to the relationships between the actors involved, ends up determining a vicious circle, characterised almost exclusively by power games.

From this point of view, in order to reconstruct the meaning of being together in the classroom, what should interest us is not so much optimising the student's adaptation to the rules imposed on him but proposing shared rules of play appropriate to the specific teaching. It is therefore necessary to promote the participation of the student in the creation of new rules of the game, in the redefinition of the particular problem to be solved, which should be demolished and rebuilt according to a shared and negotiated objective. It should be possible to find time, during the typical teaching activities of the lesson, to propose to the students to talk about their experience of being students: expectations about their role, their dreams, beliefs, projections about the future. One can do this without trying to find solutions to the critical issues reported, but rather trying to understand the meanings and emotions on which they are based: this will help the teacher to build up a shared sense of belonging within the class.

Relational Assets at school

Semiotic capital, like the battery of a car, is required for the circulation of social capital, which in turn regenerates semiotic capital, *i.e.* the resources of meaning that enable people to perceive the collective dimension of life as a lived and subjective fact (Salvatore *et al.*, 2012).

By eliminating the deepest emotions and ambivalences that are the very substance of the psyche, reason has produced the uniqueness of scientific

objectivity and the related decision-making processes. A quantitative accumulation and the expulsion of doubt lead to a sick civilisation (Zoja, 2009). Schools should have the task of moving away from a binary dichotomous type of thinking towards the acceptance of a co-presence, of an irreducible complexity (Morin, 2014). The contents shared by teachers should provide a mental antidote to the raging ‘infernality of the same’, to annex the healthy negativity of the different (Han, 2017).

In an attempt to reorganise new rules of coexistence, the Class Group should also be perceived and treated as a ‘group mind’. For instance, when there is a pupil with dysfunctional behaviour - hyperactive or bullying, bored or listless - this should be read as a symptom of the whole organism: the ‘rotten apple’ expresses, in its way of being, the rottenness present in the entire basket of apples, the pupil expresses something on behalf of the whole group, including the teacher himself who, as its conductor, is part of this group mind.

To this end, experiential interventions in classrooms through psychodynamic games such as: *The Prisoner's Dilemma* from Nash's game theory, according to which a solution can be found in conflict situations by involving all the parties, who emerge as winners, otherwise all the parties will be losers; but also *The Tower Game* shows that only together can we achieve the construction of a stable, beautiful, safe, functional architecture. Games are a very useful tool for knowledge and learning, already experimented by Winnicott (1960). Individual and group dynamics can emerge in the group mind as they adapt to the new context created by playing. Even in the most conflictual situations pupils experience that the amount of violence is proportional to the narrowness of one's own point of view. These games focus on the group mind that is created when the class acts simultaneously. The matrix represents a set of relationships and communications that are carried out through resonance and mirroring.

This work is also aimed at reducing ‘civil pathologies’ - xenophobia, fundamentalism, vandalism, bullying, sexism - consisting primarily in reducing paranoia and, at the same time, developing the ability to represent the future as a viable project by sharing gifts and resources and not by erecting walls.

Faced with the disorientation and unpredictability of the future, many young people today are inclined to reduce their view of the world to the ‘pure-impure’ scheme. Pursuing purity and an idealised view of the other, members of a group allow individual differences to fade in a process of narcissistic identification with each other, where difference and otherness become the impure element. In this sense a bipolar splitting versus the external occurs. This is possible thanks to the absolutization of the present categories, in which, in addition to the narcissistic identification, a peculiar form of identity is produced, of a paranoid type, in which belonging to purity

is driven by the threat of what is impure rather than by one's shared values. That explains why today an ever-growing number of relational situations are signified according to the constructs of 'strength-weakness' or 'victory-defeat' (Hillman, 1978), 'friend-enemy'.

By transforming certain situations into a game, on a psychodramatic level or through role-playing, students are able to expand their worldviews (Salvatore *et al.*, 2018) to overcome processes of splitting, paranoid projection and projective identification, to acknowledge and integrate parts of themselves and thus experience diversity as a harmonising enrichment. These are paths in which one begins to integrate the Shadow, *i.e.* those characteristics of the family and society that are stigmatised as immoral, unbecoming, unsuitable, sinful; the aspects that are never expressed and realised in oneself.

Thus the student will be able to experience the other not as an obstacle to his own immoderate omnipotent desire, but as an enrichment. Without denying the place of the other, useful as an enemy and object of paranoid projection, to attain the death of his neighbour (Zoja, 2009), he can allow himself to be provoked by the face of the other to form a society, sharing gifts and resources for the construction of a project, as citizens of a unique Earth-Homeland (Morin, 1993). In the construction of his own identity, the adolescent will be able to take as his own motto: *partecipo ergo sum*.

Conclusions

'Affectivity is the foundation of one's personality: thought and action are, in short, like a symptom of affectivity' (Jung, 1928). The school's main task is to educate through affectivity, in order to create 'well-made minds' and not 'overflowing minds' (Morin, 2014); it is a matter of encouraging the processes of mentalisation, helping to think one's own and others' thoughts; and this concerns all the actors in the school arena, not only the pupils but also the teachers, the parents, all the school staff and administrators, in order to create virtuous circuits of shared narratives. To this end, teachers need to be trained to listen to the promptings of their own unconscious, to increase their ability to observe the dynamics that take place in the school context.

By eliminating the deepest emotions and ambivalences, the very substance of the psyche, reason has produced the uniqueness of scientific objectivity and the related decision-making processes; a quantitative accumulation and the expulsion of doubt, leading to a sick civilisation (Zoja, 2009). Schools should have the task of moving away from a binary dichotomous type of thinking and take us closer to the acceptance of a co-presence, of an irreducible complexity (Morin, 2014). The contents shared by teachers should provide a mental antidote to the raging 'infernal positivity

of the same', to annex the healthy negativity of the different (Han, 2017). By educating to integrate every part of us, especially the dark, shadowy sides, one is educated to come to terms with internal enemies, so that one does not need to project them onto external enemies. The school will thus be configured as a place and time for sharing gifts and resources, that is, for creating a community, through an educational policy of desire and hope.

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