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THE REASONS OF UTOPIA

The necessary epistemological complexity of pedagogy, the continuous tension between autonomy and the need for looks that help to better understand the meaning and possibilities of educational action guaranteed contamination of theories and models (in some cases elaborated in other disciplinary fields). These are the reasons that have made pedagogy an autonomous science, but open and plural, on the other, available to deal with other knowledge. As F. Pinto Minerva points out, "in the search for a definition of one's field of reflexivity and effectiveness, pedagogy has, therefore, come to think and experience the border, not as a line of closure and separation but as a place where the adventure of trespassing takes place"[1].

Among the themes inherent to the pedagogical discourse (on education) there is undoubtedly the one of change and its possibility. The idea of educability, in fact, is closely related to the idea of the possibility of change.

Also with respect to this matter, the methodology proposed here is a research methodology (of a critical type) which, starting from the categorical analysis of the pedagogical discourse, helps to rediscover the axiological sense to investigate the baggage of meaning and meaning that they carry with them and to which they refer.

It is an attempt to put together logical and hermeneutical looks in order not to risk losing sight of the complex and plural character of the object of study and research and to be able to "challenge and question the dogmatic positions, prejudices and problems, especially those whose evidence risks assuming a logical form conceived in indisputable and unalterable terms"[2].

1 F. Pinto Minerva, *La pedagogia scienza dialogica e in movimento*, in I. Loiodice (ed.) *Sapere pedagogico*, Progedit, Bari 2013, p.4.

2 M. Muzi, (notes for a conference) "*La pedagogia da sapere empirico a esercizio critico*", 28 giugno 2002.

The question of Utopia addressed here starts from the reflections proposed in this regard by Giovanni Maria Bertin[3]. This scholar is responsible for the elaboration of a complex model of pedagogy, the pedagogical problematicism, which, although it does not belong to the wide panorama of critical pedagogy (also for chronological reasons) can be considered a model of research and educational practice critical for many reasons. First of all the interpretative hermeneutic tension that distinguishes Bertin's pedagogy and the idea of reason understood not as an abstract entity but as a rationalizing requirement of the problematic nature of existence, a need that is always present and never concluded the way transcendental tension is made.

The rationalizing need proposed by Bertin becomes a real possibility because it based on the certainty that it is in the possibilities of man to respond to the existing and try to direct it in the direction of reason. In the Bertinian perspective, this means that every educational choice (and not) must be made in such a way as to widen the possibilities of realization of each one and not be directed towards choices that could be "obligatory".

If it is true that change is a theme inherent to the tradition of pedagogical reflection and since we belong to a society that defines itself as a society of change, we need to re-propose a reflection around this theme to explore its heuristic possibilities and training potential, but also the "de-formative" pitfalls.

Since it is a given fact to understand change as an objective strictly connected to the pedagogical, what we feel the need to reflect on again are the limits and possibilities of this change in relation to the freedom of the subject in training and, aspect not less important, to the formative and de-formative potential of change and the processes put in place to carry it out.

In particular, what interests us is the direction that we can give towards the change in the sense of deviation and detachment concerning the already given. As educators and educators we need to ask ourselves even more clearly how far we can imagine pushing ourselves with our educa-

3 G. M. Bertin, Among his works: *Introduzione al problematicismo pedagogico*, Marzorati, Milano 1951; *Educazione alla ragione. Lezioni di pedagogia generale*, Armando, Roma 1968; *Crisi educativa e coscienza pedagogica*, Armando, Roma 1971; *Nietzche. L'inattuale, idea pedagogica*, La Nuova Italia, Firenze 1977.

tional projects, towards what goals we can imagine arriving, what limits if there are limits, we must put to our pedagogical hopes?
In our opinion, the answer to these questions is clear: no limit when we make the notion of *Bildung* ours, which "transcends the mere cultivation of pre-existing provisions [...]"[4].
This idea of *Bildung* as a possibility for the subject in training to transcend the already given seems to combine well with the utopian dimension of pedagogical problematicism as proposed by Giovanni Maria Bertin. In his theoretical model developed over about fifty years, a model attentive to grasp the changing needs of his present (but also of ours), Bertin understood the principle of reason as a methodological principle closely linked to the moment of experience. In this relationship between reason and experience, the timeliness of this model, which offers tools to read humanity at all times and to elaborate, paraphrasing Bertin himself, constructions of existence in which the subject in formation can recognize oneself and above all to see the rationalization of one's experience realized. Objective, the latter one, which cannot be renounced in the Bertinian perspective, for any explicitly or implicitly formative life project.
Bertinian reason, defined in synthesis, is not the abstract and dogmatic reason, sufficient to itself, but it is a reason that resolves (or attempts to resolve) the problematic nature of existence.
It assumes this resolution as its indispensable task, a problematic nature of existence and experience that manifests itself in the impossibility of identifying univocal meanings to things, to events, to the world.
In other words, Bertin reminds us that in the relationship between subject and object (where from time to time each of the two poles can be the subject itself, the other facing him, an object of study) an absolute and total understanding between the two poles of the relationship. Their integration is the transcendental goal (in the sense of never-ending) towards which to strive. The same is true in the educational relationship. The utopian tension, in this sense, is the tension towards the prefiguration of a possible world in which this (yet transcendental) integration can find its maximum expression.
All that applies to experience in general is also valid for the educational

4 H.G. Gadamer, *Verità e metodo*, Bompiani, Milano 1983, p. 34.

experience whose intent is the process of personality formation within the antinomic dimension characterized by egocentric instances and heterocentric instances. Their widest possible integration would give rise to a rational personality capable of confronting the antinomicity of different instances without denying them. The formation of such a possibility is not a certainty, but there is a certainty that such formation is possible. In life, everyone starts from given, unchangeable conditions, starting from his or her own genetic heritage, from the plot of relationships, from his or her own belonging, but tends towards imaginable, prefigurable and achievable conditions thanks to a gradual and transcendental work of rationalization of the present problematic. This prefiguration is sustained by a look at the future that becomes utopian tension: without any guarantee of success, but with the certainty of the possibility of its realization.

The problematicism is to configure as a model of education to the reason in which rationality itself constitutes a choice. The principle of rationalizing the problematic of existence "saves" man from the destiny implicit in his starting condition and frees him from being condemned to a someway predestined life. The liberating force of reason opens up future scenarios and makes it possible to transform the utopian dream into an existential project. Even if reason does not guarantee the achievement of the result, it opens the possibility of change. It is the certainty in the possible change that gives strength and the necessary push to those in the educational field who work in the material and human peripheries of our cities. No one can count on a guarantee of success, but at the same time, no one can be considered or considered to be doomed to failure.

In this perspective also the educational contact with the lives characterized by high levels of problematic aims to give shape to a future with less gloomy colors because it allows us to prefigure possible horizons not predetermined. Certainty in the possibility of change for oneself and others expands worlds and horizons of possibility.

The utopian becomes the space in which to prefigure alternative selves and to evaluate the possibilities of success and failure in a perspective that we could almost define as experimental, as a laboratory, with less risk.

Existential planning makes it clear (and is still a current indication) that

"the need to overcome the crisis with a solid and massive reorganization of forces aimed at recovering the ethical potential of reason, carried out through a clear and rigorous individual and collective design, anchored to the present, but looking to the future"[5].

Bertin pushes this utopian tension to the maximum by drawing on the Nietzschean idea of overcoming, of "sunset" of the present man and of the construction of a subject characterized by reason, but provided above all by a protean reason nourished by demonicity, capable of confronting dimensions of the tragic, of the comic, of violence and of eros. It is a design that makes the difference to a value brand. Difference compared to the others, compared to what is expected of us, to the standardizing requests of the groups in which we are inserted, but above all difference concerning the hour, to the already given. Difference that, in order to become concrete, must be able to look to the future with the certainty of being able to somehow inhabit it. In this sense, the not-yet represents not a yearning, but the prefiguration of what, with commitment and rationality, is possible to realize.

The interpretation proposed by Bertin of the existential perspectives outlined in the Nietzschean writings, characterized by utopianism and inactivity, considers these elements as anything but negative. Of the utopian we have already highlighted the function of anticipating long-term goals for a future that can sometimes appear to have no outlets. Concerning the current, Bertin gives an interesting interpretation in that he maintains that "the pedagogical idea, as such, must be outdated since otherwise, it would be a tendency, a mere ideological superstructure, a cover for the dominant praxis and that to it adverse"[6].

For Bertin, therefore, it currently means the task of identifying and highlighting inconsistencies, bias, and dystonias; he must solicit the will to trace unpublished, alternative, unrecognized solutions; it must reveal mystified or deformed instances of current events.

In the Bertinian reading of the German philosopher, the very idea of superman assumes a different meaning: with it "a new species, conceivable in a model [ideal ...]. It would rather allude to new existential attitudes

5 G.M. Bertin, M.G. Contini, *Costruire l'esistenza*, Armando, Roma 1983, p. 89.
6 G.M. Bertin, *Nietzsche e l'idea di educazione*, Il Segnalibro, Torino 1995, p. 25.

[...], to new visions of life and to new types of consequent value, to be hypothesized and experimented, which serve as a breaking line and opposition perspectives [...]"[7].

Of course, also rationality becomes different, the bearer of an energy capable of clashing with the present and its evidence, supported by a strong element of demonicity and lightness that pushes us to look far and towards the elsewhere and not yet.

Among the many and diverse learning environments in which pedagogy is called upon to intervene and evaluate one's "possibilities," there is one that for its own characteristics, for the people who live there, seems to be particularly complex: the community for minors.

The birth of these communities in Italy is to be placed at the end of the seventies. They are structures, alternatives to institutions, which have undergone a long and complex transformation that has passed through numerous legislative interventions. There are different types. Within them diversified methodologies are used, united by a strong pedagogical matrix and one of the characterizing elements is the size of the educator. Pedagogical intentionality takes shape in the search for the "meaning of educating in the community [which] must be made explicit, made visible [...]"[8].

Many questions and issues must be addressed by those who work in this area, but what we intend to focus on here is the right of children welcomed in communities to imagine a future: to believe in a utopia.

To make this utopia a formative possibility, it is necessary to elaborate for each child a framework project that is configured as "the horizon of meaning and at the same time the container, the frame of all the interventions that [concern] it to guarantee a new orientation to the future"[9].

Because the future outlined for children welcomed in the community can have a value for themselves, each educational intervention must be a design and conduct according to a logic of personalization of educa-

7 Ivi, p. 50 - 51.

8 P. Milani, *Bambini e ragazzi in comunità. Dimensioni dell'educare e formazione degli educatori*, p. 147-185, in *Le comunità per minori. Modelli di formazione supervisione clinica*, edited by P. Bastianoni, A. Taurino, Carocci Faber, Roma 2009. p. 150.

9 Ivi, p. 153.

tion. This personalization can take place if the actual act of education becomes an act of care not of the individual child, but of his world of relationships (functional or dysfunctional) of his references (positive or negative), of his personal history (which is done of past and future). When a child is entrusted to a community "it is not only the child who is accepted, nor his identity, but his story and the intertwining of his relationships which, through memory and new experiences, the process of care promotes and takes on new meanings"[10].

A lot of research has been carried out mainly in the international sphere, even if this evaluative attention to the outcomes of family and residential foster care programs is beginning to spread out in Italy.

They focus their attention on the fact that among the elements that distinguish a "good" community there is no doubt the attention to include the bond with the home, with the environment and the relationships of origin.

If it is true, as we have argued from the first lines, that the dimension to the dimension of the future is an unavoidable part of any pedagogical construction, it is good to keep in mind that the push towards the future looks like an indispensable temporal dimension of doing and thinking about education. It is for this reason that an educational project cannot free itself from a characterization of the utopian that accentuates the dimensions of yearning, of dreaming, of desiring. We can say that the specific mandate of the social service to the community to which the children are entrusted is precisely this: a desirable and possible future for each child.

Utopia, its desire for the future, combined with the dimensions of problematic rationality leads us to seek solutions that do not limit the possibilities for the subject but broaden them. If the future is an escape from the past, it would be a forced future, a path to follow. Directing educational planning in the direction of reason forces us to evaluate many possibilities and to multiply points of view: the past cannot be excluded from the planning of the future. In this logic, the right of ev-

10 L. Strumendo, V. Belotti (eds), *Linee Guida per i servizi sociali e sociosanitari, La cura e la segnalazione. Le responsabilità nella protezione e nella tutela dell'infanzia e dell'adolescenza in Veneto*, Public Prosecutor's Office, Regione Veneto, Romano d'Ezzelino (VI) 2008, p. 43.

ery child to "have access to a sensible and unitary narrative of his or her own history [...]"[11] must be protected.
In the past and future of the Bertinian model, there are new possibilities of relationship within the designed utopia ("existential" in Bertin's language). Its intentionality is aimed at developing value criteria and objectives of action on the level of everyday lived towards the future.
In conclusion, utopia does not coincide with the evasive or the surreal; on the contrary, it represents "the manifestation of the most clear and decisive dissatisfaction of humanity for itself, rejection of its own limit and as a requirement to go beyond[12]" this limit.
In one of the most recent writings, "*La lievità, paradosso pedagogic nietzscheano*", Bertin argues that the lightness has a function to "anticipate in a socio-cultural context in crisis or without outlets, in the sphere of the possible, long term objectives and goals, and thus making more persuasive, tenacious and farsighted in a perspective [...] launched on the future and about this"[13].
We all, as educators, as educators and even before, as men and women, should take utopia as a regulative idea[14] to overcome the crisis and disorder of the existing and to find new solutions, imaginable with imagination and imagination, whose realization requires courage and intelligence in identifying the most suitable tools for their realization.

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11 P. Milani, *Bambini e ragazzi in comunità*, cit., p. 173.
12 G.M. Bertin, *Crisi educativa e coscienza pedagogica*, Armando, Roma 1971, p. 43.
13 G.M. Bertin, *La lievità, paradosso nietzscheano*, Cluet, Trieste 1980, p. 63.
14 See E. Romano, *Formazione e libertà di scelta. Il modello di G.M. Bertin*, Anicia, Roma 2005.

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