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Pedagogist: His Profession, His Practice and His Toolbox

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Abstract

Pedagogy, as a human and social science and as a profession, has a history that has its roots in classical Greece. It has had a particularly significant evolution as *Sozialpädagogik* in the eighteenth-century *Mitteleuropa*, as was the case for other social or psychological sciences and related professions. Today, it presents itself as an autonomous science, which is also a field of transposition and integration of inputs from other sciences and other forms of knowledge, to turn everything into specifically educational purposes. The profession, in turn, takes place at the level of the intermediate applicability between theory and practice and is highly compatible with other social and health professions and open to dialogue and teamwork. With these assumptions, it is able to respond positively to the specific and new educational problems that contemporary complexity urgently poses by calling this profession into question. The chapter offers an essential, rigorous, and organic presentation of one of the new branches of General Pedagogy: Professional Pedagogy. The pedagogist carries out a higher intellectual profession whose focus is education in all social domains, and in all ages of life. A solid theoretical and methodological basis allows the pedagogist to treat individual cases using lexicon, techniques, procedures, and conceptual and operational tools of a strictly specific nature.

Keywords: pedagogist, *Sozialpädagogik*, pedagogy and its branches, professional practice, methodology, professional toolbox

1. Introduction

The profession of pedagogist has a history of about 2500 years, and its origins are therefore contemporary to the medical and surgical professions and to the legal professions. The need for professional figures with a specifically pedagogical training and culture has reemerged with the worsening of problems in education in all social contexts and at all levels, starting from the nineteenth century as a doctrine and from the twentieth century as a professional practice. In retracing this fascinating history, we find most of the conceptual and operational tools and methods of practice.

Consistent with the character of this science, which manages to keep together in an organic relationship theory and practice, and to overcome the relative dualism to tend toward an intermediate dimension, in this chapter, we will analyze not only the theoretical evolution of the profession of the pedagogist but also its application side. Precisely for this reason, cases of clinical practice will be treated, that is, general cases, as they present themselves to the professional practice of the pedagogist.

The profession has only recently obtained legal recognition in Italy (Law 205 of 27 December 2017, Article 1 Subsections 594–601) and is having a significant impact on the curricular structure of university courses which are directly affected. But the teaching has already been introduced for sometime in academic courses of beginning training for an increasingly wide range of social, health, psychological, intellectual, and helping professions.

2. From the classical origins of the pedagogist, a social professional...

The history of the professional figure of the pedagogist begins about 2500 years ago in classical Greece, a fertile geographical and cultural context in which, as well as rational Western thought (*logos*), sciences including Medicine, Surgery, and Mathematics had their origins while other disciplines like Astronomy had a significant development. Also in Dewey's works, we can find confirmation of the ancient origin of the pedagogical profession, in particular in the passage in which he defines the sophists as "the first body of professional educators in Europe" [1]. We should point out that in the times of Dewey, the term "Pedagogy" and its derivatives were uncommon. A brief reference to these remote origins is necessary not only to highlight the prestigious and millenary historical evolution of Pedagogy both as a science and as a profession but also because many important operative instruments which make up the "toolbox" of today's pedagogist have their roots in the context of classical Greece.

According to some scholars, the term "Pedagogy" derives from the Greek terms *παῖς* – *παιδός* meaning the young, the child, and the son, and *άγω*, that is the verb to lead, to conduct. In reality, there is no direct derivation from the classical Greek compound, even though there was already the Greek term *παιδαγωγία*, which indicated the activity of the *παιδαγωγός*. This figure was a professional educator to whom the family, or better the father, entrusted the young or at age in which they were no longer under maternal control so that he could be introduced in the main social and cultural contexts of the *πόλις* to be educated to the best. Classical education, at the origins of Western culture, was therefore a fully social education. In the second century B.C., after the conquest of Greece (*Graecia capta*), the Romans inherited this practice and, at least initially, chose the *paedagogus* among the Greek slaves. They were slaves of particular respect because an affective relationship could be formed with them, as with the nanny.

However, the Latin term "*paedagogia*" appeared only very later, in 1495, a year that can be considered of caesura between the Middle Ages and the Modern Age, that is, the phase after the loss of the linguistic competence of classical Greek in the West, which was recovered during the period of the Humanism by teachers from Byzantium. In that Latin term emerged the etymological-linguistic detail linked to the verb *άγω* "to lead." In Latin, in fact, it is necessary to distinguish the verb *dūco*, which indicates a typology of directive command, characterized by orders, rules, and norms, from the verb *άγω*, which indicates an approach in which the educator or pedagogist guides, supports, and accompanies the learner or the subject to be educated. The Latin compound gives us a meaning which is not present in classical Greek that allows us to clarify that the pedagogical professional practice, which we will deal with in the following paragraphs, does not follow a strong and directive normative approach, but, on the contrary, bases its practice on dialogue, or rather on a relational modality that is irrevocably characterized, among other things, by openness, reciprocity, and willingness to listen.

In this brief introduction about the ancient history of the pedagogical profession, it would be a serious mistake to ignore the essential contribution of classical

and imperial Latinity; in particular it is important to remember Cato “the Censor,” proponent of the *mos maiorum* and contrary to Hellenization. Another notable figure of the Latin classic context is Quintilianus, whose education concentrated on the art of oratory, as the sophists had done in a completely different time and context; this fact does not appear to be a trivial coincidence. We could continue with *unicuique suum* of Ulpianus or with *homines dum docent discunt* of Seneca.

In addition, in our opinion it would be an even more serious mistake not to integrate these contributions of the Greek and Roman culture with the development of the sciences among the Greeks and technique among the Romans as components of modern and contemporary Pedagogy.

In short, historians of Pedagogy have many contributions to give us for the various pedagogical facts of the Middle Ages. An example of this are the countless figures (tutors, educators, teachers, etc.) or educational structures (childcare institutions, structures that have welcomed children in need, or others structures that educated important figures such as medieval knights or catholic priests after the Council of Trent) that have dealt with education during these historical phases of the Middle or Modern Age. Furthermore, another educational very important structure which was founded in the West in the Middle Ages was the university. Finally, we can draw on several further and in-depth analyses of the history of Pedagogy even though they go beyond the specific aims of this work.

As regards the Pedagogy of modern times, the figure of Komensky stands out. And the focus of interest shifts to the school and didactics even though the period is full of other reasons of interest, for example, the development of the university and the multiplication and differentiation of educational structures, both for those who have particular needs and for reasons of study and education.

The historical transition to the end of the Modern Age has been characterized by the Industrial Revolution, the bourgeois revolutions and their new social arrangements, and the Enlightenment first of all. The greatest exponents of this period are all in the manuals of the history of Pedagogy, even though they were often philosophers of education and so most of them were deprived of that organic contact with the experience of the object of study and application which is a necessary condition in Pedagogy.

3. ...to the nineteenth-century human sciences in the Mitteleuropa and the intellectual professions correspondent of the twentieth century

Among the figures in Pedagogy that marked the end of the Enlightenment in Pedagogy, and therefore the beginning of a new age to which we will return later, were Enrico Pestalozzi and his first students, Johann Herbart and Friedrich Fröbel. Besides being great thinkers, they were at the same time committed to the experience of education with orphans, schools, and *kindergarten*, and they also had important relationships with the newly forming Scientific Psychology.

Referring to these scholars/researchers, we can already begin to outline a precise historical, geographical, linguistic, and cultural context, which will host the evolution of Pedagogy (together with that of other sciences and professions) toward a new manifestation of social profession and, first, of a new branch of the General Pedagogy suitable for the purpose.

The context to which we refer is the nineteenth-century *Mitteleuropa*, that is, to the cultural world of the Central German-speaking Europe, in which (or in whose immediate vicinity) several human sciences flourished in a few decades, laying the foundations for the development of a variety of higher intellectual professions. These emerged and played a great social importance from the century immediately

following, both in the psychological and psychoanalytic sector and in the social sciences and related fields in response to substantially new social needs.

This context saw the birth of Scientific Psychology, initiated by Wilhelm Max Wundt, Hermann von Helmholtz, and Ernst Mach among others, and Psychoanalysis, founded by Sigmund Freud. As regards the development of Sociology, a clarification is necessary, since Durkheim (as emerges from his name of German origin), cofounder of this discipline, was born in Alsace-Lorraine, which in 1871 was a region accomplishing the German II Reich. Therefore, even though Durkheim worked throughout his life in France, he also received and reworked the influences of the *Mitteleuropa* of his time. Thus, we can affirm that the *Mittel-european* nineteenth-century context, also defined as “one of the world’s richest sources of creative talent” [2], left a fundamental legacy for the development of some intellectual and social professions, including that of the pedagogue, thanks to the enormous cultural elaboration of the scholars/researchers who they worked there.

To understand the development of Professional Pedagogy, which is a branch of General Pedagogy/*Allgemeine Pädagogik* on which we will deal, we also have to analyze its close relationship (link) with the *Sozialpädagogik*, a discipline in which the profession of the pedagogue finds a solid and recent scientific foundation. Among the scholars who gave impulse to the development of this branch of the pedagogical science, the most important are Karl Mager, who was the first to use the locution *Sozialpädagogik* in 1844 (in the “*Pädagogische Revue*” of which he was director from 1840 to 1848); Friedrich A.W. Diesterweg, who was involved in teacher training and in integrating theory with practice; and Paul Natorp, author of the essay *Sozialpädagogik*, through which the compound term is fixed in the scientific and technical-professional language. Indicating the branch of Pedagogy that has as its object the educational process in the context of the parts of society that are not established to educate but are educational as they are social: not the school, the infantry school, or the university of the third age but the territory, the family, the couple, the world of education that is not formal, the digital universe, and so on.

At this point it is of fundamental importance to refer to the figure of the pedagogue Durkheim, who defined Pedagogy as a “reflexion appliquée aussi méthodiquement que possible aux choses de l’éducation” [3]. However, with an extremely fruitful intuition, he stated that “la pédagogie est une théorie pratique” [4], comme la médecine ou la politique. La pédagogie est à la fois une théorie et une pratique: une théorie ayant pour objet de réfléchir sur les systèmes et sur les procédés d’éducation en vue d’en apprécier la valeur et, par là, d’éclairer et de diriger l’action des éducateurs. la pédagogie est. une théorie pratique”.

The following argument of Durkheim is, evidently, of great interest for the purposes of our speech: “Mais entre l’art ainsi défini et la science proprement dite, il y a place pour une attitude mentale intermédiaire. Au lieu d’agir sur les choses ou sur les êtres suivant des modes déterminés, on réfléchit sur les procédés d’action qui sont ainsi employés, en vue non de les connaître et de les expliquer, mais d’apprécier ce qu’ils valent, s’ils sont ce qu’ils doivent être, s’il n’est pas utile de les modifier et de quelle manière, voire même de les remplacer totalement par des procédés nouveaux. Ces réflexions prennent la forme de théories; ce sont des combinaisons d’idées, non des combinaisons d’actes, et, par là, elles se rapprochent de la science. Mais les idées qui sont ainsi combinées ont pour objet, non d’exprimer la nature des choses données, mais de diriger l’action. Elles ne sont pas des mouvements, mais sont toutes proches du mouvement, quelles ont pour fonction d’orienter. Si ce ne sont pas des actions, ce sont, du moins, des programmes d’action, et, par là, elles se rapprochent de l’art. Telles sont les théories médicales, politiques, stratégiques, etc. Pour exprimer le caractère mixte de ces sortes de spéculations, nous proposons de les

appeler des théories pratiques. La pédagogie est. une théorie pratique de ce genre. Elle n'étudie pas scientifiquement les systèmes d'éducation, mais elle y réfléchit en vue de fournir à l'activité de l'éducateur des idées qui le dirigent" [5].

Also, it is important to remember that Durkheim was called to the university first as a pedagogist and only years later as a sociologist. His works, widely available on the web, should not be considered as ones of minor importance, at least not by us and specialists in Pedagogy [6]. Furthermore, we must point out that he is still a man of the nineteenth century, who remained within the closed dualism theory-praxis, a dualism that Dewey would have excluded from the pedagogical domain, as Pragmatism which Dewey's Instrumentalism draws on. The Deweyan vision constituted, in fact, an exclusive alternative to the dualism of positivism-idealism, even though some philosophers like to seek, in this or that pragmatist, positivist or idealistic characters.

The rich and fertile eighteenth-nineteenth-century cultural elaboration, which we have briefly described, contributed in an essential way to the establishment of Pedagogy as a social science based on the assumptions of the "classical" Pragmatism (we refer to the ideas of Peirce, James, Mead, Dewey and his followers) and of the twentieth-century epistemology, which we find primarily in the work of Popper.

Even Pedagogy, like any other discipline that wants to define itself as scientific, establishes the continuous and unavoidable comparison with experience as an inalienable criterion, activating a *modus operandi* that constantly challenges a system, in order to verify its falsifiability.

For these epistemological reasons, and first of all for its well-focused nature in its suffix "*agogy*," unique together with its branches "*geragogy*" and "*andragogy*" that not everyone and not all languages employ, Pedagogy is not a purely theoretical science or even theoric. In fact, the work of Pedagogy is not reduced to pure reflexivity but is essentially a problematization of education through the development of the professional dimension that allows the integration of theory and practice, or pedagogical reflection and educational operation, in an application practice plan that is neither theory nor practice but an operating on an intermediate plan, the plan of pedagogical mediation (in German *empirie* alternates with *Theorie und Praxis*, or *anwendungsmöglichkeit*: in Italian *applicatività*).

It is a profession of care, in the sense of taking care of someone.

It is neither a "*logy*," i.e., *λόγος*, nor can it be reduced to it, and Oskar Chrisman's unsuccessful attempt to do so (*Paädologie. Entwurf zu einer Wissenschaft des Kindes*, 1894, always-nineteenth century *Mitteleuropa*...) should not be forgotten. Philosophy of Education is a branch of Pedagogy not necessarily experiential in this particular sense: it plays a role comparable to Physics or Theoretical Chemistry, essential branches for these sciences, but which takes nothing away from, and gives much to, the inalienably experimental nature of these basic disciplines.

4. The essential characteristics of the educational paradigm change of our times (why pedagogical work is urgent today)

As we have seen in the previous paragraph, the scientific and technical-applicative professional development produced by scholars belonging to the nineteenth-century *Mitteleuropean* culture has led to the development and affirmation of intellectual professions belonging to the psychological, sociological, and pedagogical areas which then became established in the twentieth century. The cultural context in which these professional figures have emerged and evolved, including that of the pedagogist, coincides with a very important historical caesura, which is the end of the Modern Age (around sixteenth to eighteenth

centuries and some decades in advance, as well as with the obvious differences from society to society), characterized by a significant social, political, cultural, and economic change.

The progressive establishment of the bourgeois spirit (*Bürgergeist*), the profound social and economic changes, and the industrial revolution have brought out the need for an educational commitment aimed at transmitting rigid rules of behavior and artificial schemes of socialization. This context required an educational practice based on the replication of preestablished and incontestable models and behaviors that aimed, in particular, at the construction of genres in a polarized sense to the extreme (the male engaged outside the nuclear family and the female inside). In this context, the need for a strong and demanding educational investment clearly emerged, but this educational task was aspecific, because it did not require that the educator had a particular pedagogical training, nor even a culture, but simply the preliminary and uncritical adherence to the models and principles established. Hence, the greatest concern of educators was that of replicating these models and principles as faithfully as possible in students unidirectionally from one generation to the next, from parents to children, from teacher to student, etc.

Therefore, although in the historical phase which we have just described the urgent need for an educational commitment was felt, it is only in current times, that is, in the new age that Lyotard [7] defined as “*postmodern*,” that the “need for Pedagogy” has emerged clearly, declining as a need for professional figures with specifically pedagogical training. Today, we are living in a historical period of transition that has continued for decades, characterized by profound evolutions in the world of work, frenetic rhythms imposed by the digital revolution, important transformations in the field of information, and many other rapid changes that also and above all affect the pedagogical dimension. If in the previous era education took place through a process of transmitting predefined models and behaviors, in current times a new pedagogical paradigm is establishing that education must be understood in an evolutionary sense, pluralistic and bi- (or multi-) directional, as it is a process that takes place in different institutions and contexts (formal, non-formal, and informal) and affects all age groups (lifelong learning/education).

The substantial revision of the concept of “education” and, consequently, of the tasks and competences of professionals who deal directly or indirectly with education has led to the development of Pedagogy as an empirical science, a technique, and a profession [8]. The evolution of the pedagogical professional practice, ready to respond to the needs of current times, proceeds at the level of pedagogical mediation, operating a synthesis between theory and practice, or a continuous position of problems and a formulation of hypotheses submitted to the rules and laws of logic and the continuous control of experience, the “future experience” of Pragmatism.

The “need for Pedagogy” of the present times is not only felt in the institutionally educational social centers (the school system, university, social educational institutions) but also in domains and social contexts that are not established for educational reasons (the family, the couple, digital areas, etc.). The awareness of the need to recover and develop the educational dimension, in different social and relational environments, opens up new evolutionary scenarios for Professional Pedagogy, which, with its set of principles, techniques, and methods, represents a precious and fruitful instrument not only for professionals who work in institutionalized educational contexts but also for professionals who work in contexts that do not have explicit educational goals (work, sports, community centers, associations, host communities, etc.).

5. Professional Pedagogy: professional scope and prevailing operating centers

As anticipated, Professional Pedagogy is a specific branch of General Pedagogy and focuses on the study of education, that is to say, “*Qualunque forma di comunicazione tra persone, che concorra all’evoluzione culturale, intesa come prerogativa umana*” (any form of interpersonal communication which contributes, or is likely to contribute to, the perpetuation of history and cultural evolution as essentially human prerogatives) [9]. As a specific research program of a particular community of professionals, it is based on principles, methods, techniques, procedures, conceptual and operational tools, specific vocabulary, and the related organic arrangement. It is, in fact, the method and not the object that outlines the scientific nature of a speech and an intervention by a professional pedagogist and Professional Pedagogy in general. As Popper taught us, in fact: “Diese Überlegung legt den Gedanken nahe, als Abgrenzungskriterium nicht die Verifizierbarkeit, sondern die Falsifizierbarkeit des Systems vorzuschlagen; with and so Worten: Wir fordern zwar nicht, daß das System auf empirisch-methodischem Wege endgültig positiv ausgezeichnet werden kann, aber wir fordern, daß es die logische Form des Systems ermöglicht, dieses auf dem als Abgrenzungskriterium Wege der methodischen—wissenschaftliches System muß an der Erfahrung scheitern können” [10].

Professional Pedagogy, therefore, is to be understood as an empirical science capable, as previously seen, of overcoming the infertile and stagnant theory-practice dualism. Fully endorsing what has been taught by the twentieth-century epistemology and also the teaching on Pragmatism of Peirce [11], James [12], and Dewey [13], the basic methodological approach of the *Sozialpädagogik* is at the basis of the pedagogical professional operation. On the other hand, it must be emphasized that social Pedagogy itself finds applicability and professional and casuistic activity in Professional Pedagogy which, as we shall see later, expresses itself as a constant commitment to problem-posing and problem-solving in a perspective of constant dialogue and synergy.

The professional pedagogist cannot, therefore, do without a constant confrontation with “the present and future experience,” from which she/he draws the necessary feedback to corroborate any speech, proposal, and idea, intended as a product of human creativity. It starts, therefore, from the idea of scientific groundlessness of every a priori, of every absolute truth and the principle of verifiability, and from the assumption that the research proceeds through provisional conjectures, subject to strict controls in an endless process. A hypothesis is then corroborated until the intersubjective controls deny it, according to a principle of *fälschungsmöglichkeit*.

This scientific attitude also guarantees the intersubjective transferability of each proposal in a perspective of openness and respect for the uniqueness of each person, his experiences and his possibilities of a continuous and unpredictable cultural evolution without aims and without end, in an ateleological perspective. This scientific posture guarantees respect for differences and openness to all possible outcomes of every human choice and action, beyond any determinism and reductionism. Please note that in this regard the effective statement by Antiseri who underlines the value of the lived experience: “*la vita si capisce con la vita. La vita passata si comprende attraverso la vita presente: è l’esperienza’ presente a rendere attuali le esperienze del passato, a dare sangue alle ombre, a farle rivivere*” (“life can be understood by living it. Past life can be understood through present life: it is the present ‘experience’ to make the experiences of the past current, to give blood to the shadows, to revive them”) [14]. Once clarified these fundamental conceptual assumptions, we are now going to specify the prevailing operation centers and the scopes of the professional

pedagogue. He carries out an apical intellectual profession, whose object is education in a perspective of lifelong learning/education.

He therefore turns to the person for whom education is a primary, inalienable, and unavoidable need: a right that should not only be respected but guaranteed in a perspective of fairness and universality.

As in all top professions, the pedagogue can practice as a freelancer, (free professional individual) or within multidisciplinary teams, or even similarly with managerial, coordination, training, and supervision functions.

According to the recent Italian legislation, the main operating centers for Professional Pedagogy are to be found, therefore, “nei servizi e nei presidi socio-educativi e socio-assistenziali, nei confronti di persone di ogni età, prioritariamente nei seguenti ambiti: educativo e formativo; scolastico; socio-assistenziale, limitatamente agli aspetti socio-educativi; della genitorialità e della famiglia; culturale; giudiziario; ambientale; sportivo e motorio; dell’ integrazione e della cooperazione internazionale” (“in the services and in the socio-educational and healthcare facilities, for people of all ages, primarily in the following areas: educational and training, school, healthcare—limited to the socio-educational aspects—of the parenting and of the family, cultural, judicial, environmental, sports and motor, of the integration and the international cooperation”; l. n. 205 of 27/12/17, Subsect. 594).

In other words, the professional domain of the educator consists of all the social and relational sites, both *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* [15], whether they were born with expressly educational institutional purposes, such as school, or oriented to other purposes, for example, the couple or the family or the aggregation centers or the virtual networks or the associations or the world of sport, to name just a few. Please note that, as we have already seen, education has an intrinsic social function and that all the social centers are in themselves educational, although they can be in an intentional, formal, and non-formal way or in an unintended and informal way.

More schematically, we can identify as follows the operating centers of the professional pedagogue [16]:

- The couple, in relation to their daily life dynamics, the underlying representations, and any problematic partnership issues
- The family, as a complex system of relationships that relate to the area of parenting and other relationships of proximity
- The territory, seen as a physical, cultural, and political place with a specific governance and specific personal services
- The world of education as παιδεία, that is, all the contexts of intentional, planned, professional, reflective education are well structured
- The digital universe, to be understood both from a technical point of view in relation to the instruments and as a space for communication and relationship

Here, for completeness of information, let us mention only the intermediate professional figures of a pedagogical culture, postponing a more exhaustive analysis to another occasion. These figures, just to give a few examples, are to be identified in those who work in nurseries, in family homes, in reception centers, in therapeutic communities, etc. These take on the status of educator, alongside adjectives specifying the functions and the operating contexts and whose supervision and training is in any case the responsibility of the top pedagogical figures.

We consider it important, having reached this point in our discussion, to focus on some case studies (i.e., general cases) that are exemplary exercise for Pedagogy as a profession. It should in fact be emphasized that, although Professional Pedagogy deals with single “cases” and that, therefore, the recipient of the intervention is always the single person, there cannot exist a higher intellectual professional who does not have methodological, cultural, and content competences on the general cases, or “casuistries.” In fact, being able to pass from particular cases to general ones through a logical abductive procedure should be a specific professional competence of the educator. The abduction, or retroduction, differs from the deductive and inductive procedure as follows: in the first the conclusion, after knowing the rule and the case, has the character of automaticity, while in the second it is postulated that a regularity observed and verified in a phenomenon will continue to manifest itself in an always identical way. Both logical reasoning are therefore based on the logic of certainty.

For the professional pedagogist, on the other hand, the reasoning will always be abductive as it is the only one to be open and evolutionary, the only one allowing to construct hypotheses and probability forecasts that are not of an absolutist nature, contemplating in itself the risk of error, of the fallibility that is an essential characteristic of every human action, as of every science and every profession referring to one or several sciences. An abductive reasoning will therefore be confirmed empirically, and its confirmation will never be absolute, but will be reasonable and open to forms of intersubjective assessment. The fallibility of the pedagogist’s conclusion leaves room for personal evolution, the intervention of the other, and respect and acceptance of the unpredictability of every relationship between people.

6. Some exemplary case studies

Without any pretense of completeness, we are going to illustrate below some exemplary cases in which one of the authors, Blezza, has already had the opportunity to have fruitful professional experiences [17–20]. General cases that, although here are treated in an extremely schematic manner, immediately and clearly reveal the distance, already expressed by Dewey [21], from a groundless and reductionist vision that borders Pedagogy in the theoretical dimension, and education in the practical dimension, such as pedagogical reflexivity and educational operations, ideas, and facts, thought and action were antithetical plans.

Let us start by presenting a first category of cases related to *the transformation of the family paradigm* or rather to the crisis still partially underway by the nuclear and puero- and conjugal-centric paradigm, typical of the eighteenth, nineteenth, and in part twenty centuries, that is functional to the rise and the affirmation of the bourgeois culture or *Bürgergeist*. The nuclear family model, formed about three centuries ago and for the last decades in an increasingly serious crisis as immutable in its characteristics and in its rigid role division, is now turning into a plurality of forms, characterized by sociocultural aspects that deviate from the traditional (and nontraditional) concept of family and its deinstitutionalization, due to increasingly unconventional conduct. Today, therefore, there are new family models that coexist alongside the “traditional” (so-called) bourgeois family model.

The latter was born above all following the dissolution of the patriarchal family (and the lady and gentleman one), due to the new processes of modern industrialization. This dissolution would have led to a loosening of parental bonds and to the creation of the nuclear family, typical of the bourgeois model, based on sharing an ethical orientation and a family lifestyle based on the rigid division of the male (instrumental) and feminine (care), on the importance of raising children, on housekeeping, on the distinction between public and private (see the new concepts

of privacy and domesticity), and on the importance of the family relationship. Today, in fact, this model is flanked, for example, by the multiple forms with which the symmetrical family model is expressed, in which, that is, the roles are no longer complementary, but interchangeable and, therefore, capable of greater flexibility and adaptability, for example:

- The single-parent family, composed of a single parent and children
- The extended family to other members besides the children and the parents
- The family rebuilt starting from the dissolution of previous unions
- The de facto family, based on a union not legally recognized because they lived outside marriage

The pedagogist can therefore support the person in the discussion, construction, and acceptance of an alternative family paradigm, capable of mediating between the personal reference systems and amalgamating the attitudes and personal choices in a functional manner to the well-being of those concerned, with a view to reciprocal respect.

Continuing to explore the casuistry, significant space is given to issues related to couples and partnerships. In this case too, we find the overcoming of the nineteenth-century model based on predetermined roles that consider the man engaged “outside,” in the workplace and in production, and the woman engaged “inside,” in tasks of care and assistance of the children and of her husband. Once again it is a bourgeois model of relationship, which is based on a heterosexual and patriarchal conception, no longer functional to the needs of a contemporary world that requires both men and women to learn to share, cooperate, dialogue, and mediate by enhancing the value of specific differences. The lack of a strong and unique model of couple relationship, as well as the lack of a clear definition of roles, based on gender, that is stable and socially accepted leads to a phase of redetermination of the functions of the spouses, a phase that, however, is still under construction and, therefore, equipped with an instability that contributes to increasing marital insecurity. In this context, pedagogical intervention is necessary where the expectations of the two spouses refer to different models, with relational and communicative implications that can be difficult to reconcile. The educationalist can foster a personal evolution that enables the interlocutor to be resilient and to accept the transformation underway, building a relationship based on new presuppositions of respect and symmetry of roles.

Another area is the case studies related to life orientation and, consequently, in studies. Too often, in fact, the two aspects, that of study and life project, are disjointed, and choices are made that divert the person from the possibility of carrying out his own expectations about the future. In fact, choices related to school and university careers are often based solely on assessments related to disciplinary preferences or, even worse, the parents’ ambitions. On the contrary, life projects should orient the study choices in a flexible and open way to progressive reformulations as a consequence of a sound awareness linked to the medium- and long-term attitudes and expectations of everyone that the pedagogist can try to facilitate and feed in every person.

A fourth type of cases concerns patient assistance (in the case of Professional Pedagogy we speak of “interlocutor,” instead of patient, as we will see in detail later in the chapter) and to the therapist. This area refers to any health education action, understood as awareness raising, information, and diagnostic investigation. Particularly interesting from a pedagogical point of view are the sectors of the

prevention of risk behaviors (e.g., the intake of drugs or other addictive substances, the unsecured promiscuous sex, the abuse of drugs or smoking substances, etc.), of patient and family support, and of informed consent. The pedagogist can conduct a dialogical intervention of an educational nature aimed at informing on the one hand and on the other at helping the person to decode the difficult situation she/he is going through and making conscious choices beyond the emotional implications.

Then, there is the case study that relates to the promotion and maintenance of “feeling good” in the most general meaning of this expression, a meaning that interprets health as a state of well-being in a holistic and global sense, as in the well-known definition of the WHO of 1978. It is, as in the previous series, a support offered to the therapist and the patient (in the role of interlocutor), but through an indirect action that has as its object the context of life, understood as the social environment of the person. The pedagogist, that is, by speaking with those who constitute the aforementioned social environment, involving all those who are available for dialogue.

The last case study that we are presenting here has the previous character of intervention on the context, with reference to the planning and direction of a public cultural intervention. This is the case of territorial personal services, such as those offered by libraries, museums, play centers, and community centers, or initiatives such as film festivals, seminars and conferences, cultural trips, and opportunities for meeting and exchange, also in the virtual environment. The pedagogist can act in an educational perspective in this non-formal and informal context, overcoming a transmissive and homologating vision of reproducing preestablished models, offering, also through examples, multiple relational and cultural opportunities and chances able to welcome and enhance the characteristics of each person in an evolutionary perspective.

To conclude this schematic presentation of the pedagogical case series, it seems to us more appropriate than ever to quote Dewey who claims: “We never educate directly, but indirectly by means of the environment” [22]. We agree, in fact, on the consideration that the educational work of the pedagogist, in addition to directly involving the person, also passes through indirect practices of transformation of the living environment.

7. Conceptual tools and methods of pedagogical professional practice: the toolbox

The Professional Pedagogy, as already anticipated, acts in the field of applicability, which is a space for non-spontaneous confrontation and functional interpenetration between the level of theory and the field of *praxis*, in some way transcending both; it is openness to application, capable of overcoming the dangers of dualistic reductionism in one direction or in the other on. It is, therefore, a science of dialogical and dialectical nature, capable of continuous, constant, and coherent openness to experimentation and experience to guarantee a methodologically rigorous and at the same time democratic vision. The pedagogist is, therefore, a professional of mediation, who in his professional practice acts on an intermediate level between theory and practice.

The pedagogical work, as a cognitive, applicative, and practical commitment in the educational field, uses specific conceptual tools and operating methods. A peculiar characteristic of professional pedagogy, however, is that it is not exclusive for the professional practice of the pedagogist; on the contrary, this tool can be used (and it is used actually) also in other professional and intellectual domains, for example, the psychological, health, and social domains, and so on.

Here, we have just the space to state a first review of the conceptual and operational tools that characterize the pedagogist's "toolbox," highlighting its purely pedagogical nature:

- γνωθι σεαυτόν
- ρητορεία
- διάλογος
- The pedagogical dialogue
- The life project
- Proceeding through problems
- The normed and standardized exercise of creativity
- Internal consistency and external consistency
- The *Einfuhlung*, a particular kind of empathy

The first three instruments mentioned have ancient origins, which date back to classic Greece, and they are only some examples. We are presenting them briefly so as to make explicit the deep roots of the discourse developed by Professional Pedagogy.

Let us start by defining the instrument of γνωθι σεαυτόν, an expression that literally invites us to "know yourself," to become aware of our own strengths and weaknesses, distancing ourselves from an attitude based on ύβρις, or on the arrogance of transcending what it is an essential human character, that is the limitation. The topicality of the γνωθι σεαυτόν, an instrument that allows us to focus on the limits and potential of everyone, is relevant in a society where men, especially due to current and evolving technological prostheses, often have an arrogant attitude and find difficult to accept functional boundaries to the definition of their self and their experiences.

With ρητορεία we refer to the "art of saying" particularly of sophistical tradition, that is, to the ability to construct discourses that arouse approval and consensus around one's ideas through captivating arguments, proposed in order to support one's thesis. "The art of saying," which is the basis and instrument of education, is ground on the principles of classical logic, of early Aristotelian elaboration, which incorporate in themselves characteristics of rationality and balance on the basis of three principles: that of identity, of noncontradiction, and of the excluded third party.

Another conceptual instrument of essential importance is the διάλογος, already present in the Greek tragedy and in the *erodotea* historiography and then widely used in the philosophical discourse by Socrates. The latter articulates it in two phases:

- That of the *ειρωνεία*, that is, of pretending not to know by putting the interlocutor in the position of having to justify his statements coming to make explicit the contradictions that contain so much as to put in crisis and bring down the mistaken convictions.
- The consequent one of the *μαιευτική τέχνη*, or rather of bringing out the correct ideas from the same pupil/interlocutor, who finds himself identifying the

answers to his own questions and problems, and revealing (or more strictly bringing to the light) the *ἀλήθεια*. Using dialogue as a technical tool implies a non-authoritarian attitude on the part of the pedagogist that accepts the requests of the other, with availability and without judgment.

Heir of the *διάλογος* is the tool of Pedagogical Interlocution, a particular form of activating the helping relation (which will be further examined in the next paragraph) between the pedagogist and the interlocutor that takes place in the cultural and relational dimension of the person without entering the area unconscious. Indeed, the Pedagogical Interlocution makes the moments of the *ειρωνεία* and *μαιευτική τέχνη* its own. It uses, in a systematic way, the refutation and the maieutics, so that the interlocutor can realize by himself the logical and practical fallacy of some of his convictions and be able to autonomously identify the path of a possible functional answer to his situation. In this regard, we are going to highlight a substantial difference between the Socratic *διάλογος* and the Pedagogical Interlocution: the first is based on the concept of the search of truth or *ἀλήθεια*, which it considers in absolute and universal terms, while the second one is based on the idea that the research process is open, continuous, and without end and aims, and therefore there is no truth to be achieved. The interlocutor will therefore be supported in the process that leads him to explain and question the principles underlying his own choices and actions, principles that he considered to be taken for granted and that were not made the subject of critical analysis and conscious and contextualized focusing, that is, dropped in the concrete life situation of the person. It is necessary to make it clear that the pedagogist is an internal part of the discussion, to which he offers points of critical confrontation with a view to systematic doubt and constructive openness, without ever claiming that his positions are valid in absolute terms and in the knowledge that, as an active member of the report, he himself is included in an educational, evolutive, and growth process. Interlocutor and pedagogist must therefore be available to question themselves, evolve, and change as a presupposition when the Pedagogical Interlocution is started.

A further significant tool is the life project, which is an explicit or implicit reference point for the choices and actions of each person. Pay attention to the fact that life cannot be planned and it should be taken into due consideration and that it is precisely for this reason that we are not talking about a “life plan,” but a project: the latter has characteristics of openness, flexibility, and willingness to change. Some difficulties can, in fact, arise precisely from a rigid attitude in front of the contingencies of life, an attitude that sees the person remaining fixed on crystallized positions that he is unable to question starting from what life proposes to him on an empirical level and which it may be in logical or factual contradiction with what the person himself had envisaged. It is as if the person remained a slave to his own projection on the present and the future, from which he cannot free himself at the cost of his unhappiness. It is also possible that the person himself is not able to bring out such contradictions on his own, not being used to questioning his own assumptions, which can become blind automatisms. Once again, the pedagogist has the role of a critical goad, who pushes to place at the center of the discussion automatisms, implicit convictions, and aspects considered implicit and that can lead to situations of internal confusion and incommunicability with others. The dynamic and personal nature of the life project is a condition for it to be explicitly and consciously shared with those with whom significant relationships are intertwined. It may happen, in fact, that the absence of confrontation leads to explode situations of great discomfort where there is a lack of convergence between life projects that remains undervalued and not questioned, in an attempt at a possible mediation based on a partial and reciprocal rescheduling of life projects involved.

Another fundamental method of pedagogical intervention is based on proceeding through problems. The person who turns to the educator is living, in fact, a problematic situation, that is, a situation of crisis and imbalance between herself/himself and her/his life context. The problematic situation refers to the context and not to the subject who must be helped to experience a transition from a passive position to an active one, that is, to move from the problematic situation to posing the problem. A problem is, in fact, a problematic situation that the person faces constructively, that is, the rationalization of the problematic situation; it therefore implies the assumption of the commitment to take charge, to decide to face and find a solution to one's suffering condition. The pedagogist will support the person to make the aforementioned transition, without proposing solutions, but giving, where necessary, indications of the method until the interlocutor himself builds his hypotheses of exit the problem that sometimes turns out to be also very far from the problematic situation initially proposed. These hypotheses must be contextualized and historicized since there is no universally valid and a priori solution. What we are presented are human creations and, as such, are fallible attempts to resolve.

With regard to the formulation of the aforementioned hypotheses, we will introduce the concept of normed and standardized practice of creativity, i.e., the conception of always new possible solutions. In fact, the idea of the nineteenth to twentieth century, a romantic idea, that creativity is only a characteristic of some individuals that are "brilliant and without rules" is overcome to introduce the idea that each person is a creative subject. Creativity is, therefore, a form of thought and always refers, therefore, to rules which are of a logical nature, therefore of internal coherence, or of empirical controllability, therefore of external coherence. And it is precisely this dimension of creativity that places the pedagogist in a position of constant research, which implies not having solutions to offer, but only indications of method to be suggested to ensure that everyone finds the road most suited to their own unique and creative mode of existence.

To conclude the treatment of the pedagogist's "toolbox," which is not the conclusion of the inventory of a much wider and more complex instrumentation, we are going to present the conceptual and operational tool of the *Einführung*. It refers to a particular form of empathy that originates from a deliberate act intentionally designed starting from precise techniques. The *Einführung* stems from an active and reciprocal attitude for which the pedagogist, aware of the risks and limitations that this entails, designs and experiments a form of contact that leads him to "take the situation within himself," renouncing clinical detachment.

8. The clinical practice of the pedagogist-methodologist

In the pedagogical professional exercise, the tool of pedagogical dialogue that we have briefly analyzed in the previous paragraph is particularly important, and, therefore, it seems appropriate to investigate further. The interlocution we have referred to takes place always and in any case within the conscious, cultural, and relational dimension of the person and aims at achieving a profound and integral state of well-being, of which the essential factors are the education, sociality, relationality, value choices, and the search for the sense and meaning of life or *Lebenssinn*. We can thus connect to the health dimension if we accept the broad definition given by the World Health Organization, as was anticipated, according to which "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

The pedagogist, for reasons essential to his culture, is not a therapist and, therefore, does not deal with fighting diseases. He does not attribute to himself the tasks attributable to the verb “to cure”; rather he considers his own task expressed by the verb “to care of.”

The pedagogical dialogue is conceived, born, and developed to have a following in other places and with other interlocutors. Before starting the helping report, the pedagogist is already aware that the dialogue he will try to establish will be completed and will have to be followed up in other locations. It is up to the pedagogist to redirect the interlocutor by choosing between the two possibilities available to him.

The first, which we will call “professional redirection,” refers to the established need to continue the discourse undertaken with another professional, be it a psychologist, a medical doctor, a social worker, a lawyer, or other. In this case the pedagogist will have to make sure that the redirection takes place without friction, trying to remove all the factors, including cultural ones, which may be hindering.

The second possibility offered to the pedagogist is that of favoring the continuation of the dialogic relationship in the context in which it originated and in which the problematic situations were found. It is the “canonical redirection,” that is, how this second possibility is named: it provides that the professional who acts pedagogically enables the interlocutor to reopen that dialogue lacking in the couple; in work; in the family, where he ran into the initial problem situation; and more generally in society, in a more productive way and with new openings [23]. If the pedagogist, as we have been able to emphasize, is never a therapist, it is possible instead to speak, in the professional exercise, of clinic and derivatives, including the adjective “clinical” which, at times, designates a particular figure of the professional pedagogist. To better understand the use of this adjective, and of the corresponding noun in the methodological and pedagogical context, we can refer to its etymology: in the classical Greek, which was also used by Hippocrates and by Galenus, *κλινικός* was an adjective referred to the intervention on the couch (*κλίβε*) where the patient was, an intervention properly in a situation, and an intervention in which the professional falls into context and bends toward the person to go and investigate his own field of interest (the illness for medicine, the educational process for the pedagogist). There was also the verb *κλίνω*, which meant to get close, to tilt, and therefore to contribute to the same meaning.

In the educational dialogue, there are evidently some elements of method that are present in the field of the medical clinic, for example, realism, attention to the recipient, positioning and operating in the situation of the interlocutor, the problematic nature, direct relationship, professionalism, the presence of the doctrine, the possibility of considering every form of individual variability, and the mutual exclusion of “medium” typifications. These are in fact used in operational statistics, which constitutes the opposite pole with respect to clinical casuistry and situational, in the methodology of human disciplines [18]. Whereas in the operational statistical method each element of the population is taken into consideration only in the aspects that can be traced to an operational treatment, in the clinical method, the attention shifts to the particular case, with its unique prerogatives and its unrepeatability, irreducibility, and individual variability. Riccardo Massa, the Italian pedagogist who has brought the concept of clinic to the center of pedagogical research, summarizes the cornerstones of clinical methodology in the field of research: “*la clinica della formazione privilegia lo studio approfondito di singole situazioni, di singoli soggetti e di singoli processi di formazione, utilizzando tecniche come quelle del colloquio in profondità, della ricostruzione di storie di vita o di accadimenti particolari, tentando di cogliere dall'interno il significato di determinate esperienze e di determinate testimonianze educative*” (The training clinic favors the in-depth study of individual situations, of single subjects, and of individual training processes, using

techniques such as those of in-depth interviewing, reconstruction of life stories or particular events, trying to grasp from within the meaning of certain experiences and certain educational testimonies) [24].

There is obviously also in the clinic a process that leads from the particular to the general, but this happens not through an induction or an empirical generalization but through the specific competence of the professional in operation with his culture, competence, and expertise. This is the logical procedure that was studied by Peirce under the name of *abduction* and which we have already analyzed previously.

“Clinical case study” method means, first of all, centrality of each individual case, toward which “to bend” without losing sight of its irreducibility, its unrepeatability, and even its inviolability which is the inviolability of the human person involved [25]. “Person” is a technical term of fundamental importance in Pedagogy and social sciences and is often contrasted with the term “individual,” which designates an element belonging to a domain on which global and statistical considerations can be made. The individual is undifferentiated, and the only peculiar characteristic that distinguishes him is his belonging to that domain. With the term person, on the other hand, we want to indicate the human subject as the bearer of our own system of values, of our own sense of life, a subject of social relations and relationships, a node of a network of communication with other people, in a very broad political subject. This consideration takes into account the individual characteristics that are not suppressible or negligible and which are considered in their non-repeatability.

Proceeding in the professional practice and in research with a clinical method means then putting yourself in a helping relationship to the person, even when the help is requested in a social and collective context (help to the family, to the school, to the company, to the sports club, to the couple, they are synecdoches, rhetorical figures which consist in speaking of the whole social reality instead of the part). In Professional Pedagogy, individuals or groups are helped, even when the help refers to their being within these or other human partnerships that are relevant from a pedagogical point of view.

9. Conclusions

We have retraced the ancient and modern history of the profession of pedagogue, that is, the apical profession in the field of education, relationality, sociality, and cultural evolution, from antiquity to recent times, and we have seen extensive exemplary repertoires of conceptual and operational tools, techniques and methods of practice, and treatment of concrete cases.

In this context, methodological questions of fundamental importance are posed, for which the pedagogue must also consider himself a methodologist with particular regard to the social science methodology.

The word now passes to the body of professionals in action, consistent with the applicative character of pedagogical science and profession, because only from all these applications and professional practice can be developed the necessary contribution for the future evolution of the subject.

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