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Person, Relationship and Love: The Contribution of a Personalist Pedagogical Anthropology for Promoting Educational and Helping Relationships

Osoba, relacja i miłość.

Znaczenie personalistycznej antropologii pedagogicznej
dla promocji wychowawczych i wspierających relacji

Abstract: By considering the perspective of dialogue between pedagogy and personalism (Vico, 2002; Mari, 2006; Musaio, 2009), the contribution presents a pedagogical anthropology for educational and helping professions that highlights the significance of the connection between person and relationship. When educators and professionals face challenges, discomfort, and wounded existences, they rely on various 'forms of life' (Zambrano, 1996) and employ a sensitive reason to uncover the implicit, unspoken, and profound dimensions of every person and their educational and helping relationships. By actively participating in a helping relationship, they contribute to delineating a 'loving educational action' as a fundamentally *essential* approach, as a way of experiencing the *encounter* assuming responsibility for a helping relationship with the other, assisting them in uncovering and creating an *order of the heart* (De Monticelli, 2012), despite the difficulties endured.

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Keywords: person; personalism; educational helping relationship; love; sensitive reason.

Abstrakt: Artykuł przedstawia antropologię pedagogiczną dla nauczycieli, pedagogów i osób trudniących się pomocą ludziom, która podkreśla znaczenie związku między osobą a relacją, biorąc pod uwagę perspektywę dialogu między pedagogiką a personalizmem (Vico, 2002; Mari, 2006; Musaio, 2009). Kiedy pedagodzy i profesjonaliści stają w obliczu wyzwań, dyskomfortu i zranionej egzystencji, polegają na „różnych formach życia” (Zambrano, 1991, 1996) i wykorzystują wrażliwy rozum, aby odkryć ukryte, niewypowiedziane i głębokie wymiary każdej osoby oraz ich relacji edukacyjnych i pomocowych. Aktywnie uczestnicząc w relacji pomocowej, przyczyniają się do określenia „kochającego działania edukacyjnego” jako zasadniczego podejścia, jako sposobu doświadczania spotkania, przyjmując odpowiedzialność za relację pomocową z drugą osobą, pomagając jej w odkrywaniu i tworzeniu porządku serca (De Monticelli, 2012) pomimo doświadczanych trudności.

Słowa kluczowe: osoba; personalizm; relacja edukacyjno-pomocowa; miłość; wrażliwy rozum.

1. Introduction

Approaching love as a profound dimension of interiority produces hesitation because of its multiple implications in the person's life. To begin with, it is necessary to delineate the boundaries of an investigation that perennially explores the human condition, encompassing desire, tension, aspiration, value (Brezzi, 2003), in both their worldly and spiritual manifestations (Bodei, 1991, pp. 7–11). We are confronted with an ongoing quest that presents itself in an ambivalent manner, influenced by social and cultural shifts (Galimberti, 2004).

Human beings seek love by questioning its significance, occasionally encountering it with a sense of estrangement and detachment (Pagliacci, 2019, pp. 139–171), ultimately surrendering to the so-called 'global chaos of affections' (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2012); at other times, it deeply impacts critical moments of their lives (Secco, 2006). But love can also be a challenging and unfulfilled journey that still remains essential and irreplaceable, despite the difficulties and disharmonies that arise, questioning whether it can succeed.

We are predominantly attracted to emotional and sensitive expressions. Understanding the relational implications, educational processes, and forms of help to the person can be more complex, especially when creating a community lifestyle (Ricoeur, 1994) that is inspired by a sense of alliance and sharing. Through the lens of the dialogue between pedagogy and personalism (Musaio, 2009; Mari, 2006; Vico, 2002), this contribution seeks to provide educators and professionals engaged in a helping relationship with several possible paths of reflection. These paths aim to enrich the relationship by incorporating not only rational components but also the diverse experiences of reality. Among the experiences that can be explored, one finds the concept of

that which 'is and is not' and its numerous ways of entering into contact with the human being; another experience regards that which is ineffable because voicing refers to being which, as Aristotle states, 'is said in many ways.' Reality goes beyond what our thoughts can comprehend, it encompasses the indefinable and imperceptible (Zambrano, 1996, p. XIV)

aspects that surround our consciousness and are intertwined with various forms of life. Additionally, according to Romano Guardini, the person remains a 'singular elusiveness' that cannot be fully defined in terms of content.

To the question 'What is your person?' I cannot answer: 'My body, my soul, my spirit.' All this is not yet a person, but rather the matter; the person is the fact that all this exists in the form of self-belonging (Guardini, 1987, p. 187)

because it implies that each person recognises themselves as one in themselves, and so is capable of openness with the other person.

2. Person and ethics of relationality for the helping professions

It seems that in today's society, finding ethical grounding for one's life has become increasingly challenging. The recognition of an absolute truth seems impossible and its influence on our experience and thought makes it chal-

lenging to establish a firm foundation for ethical actions. The ability to create a comprehensive understanding of reality and provide ethical justification for universal statements appears to have diminished. However, establishing a shared foundation for collective action is more important than ever. Each individual's role in this collective action is crucial, despite the challenges (Deiana, 2021).

Due to prevailing individualism, people are increasingly conscious of aspiring to be an 'autonomous, whole, undivided entity' (Ternynck, 2012, p. 33), elevating their subjectivity as a reference for good and evil. The prevailing belief is that the individual is the sole point of reference that is necessary to establish and support concepts and values related to communal living. These concepts range from the respect for each person's dignity to the provision of care for the weak and sick, all the way to the establishment of a society based on solidarity. However, when these values are solely based on subjective evaluation, there is a risk of suggesting conflicting notions regarding the pluralism of predominantly individualistic approaches used to address issues that affect us all. These issues include the importance of valuing each person, acknowledging vulnerability as an indicator of our finite nature, promoting self-realisation through education (Musaio, 2016), and the potential for acquiring personal well-being. As the accessibility of an ethical foundation disengaged from transcendence continues to grow, there is a simultaneous maturation of the centrality of the relationship category as a constitutive element of the human being. Both secular and Christian reflection foreshadow an ethics centred around relationality, acknowledging that in each individual's openness to others lies the anthropological foundation (Russo, 2021) for developing a pedagogical perspective that promotes human growth and fosters ethical experiences within helping relationships (Galanti, 2019, p. 9; Musaio, 2010).

A reflection that considers relationships is now more critical than ever for understanding professions that involve caring for others (Canevaro, 2015). When it comes to caring and helping, however, it is not enough to rely solely on knowledge and skills. Personal and interpersonal aspects are essential in relationships, especially when dealing with people facing difficulties. We experience moments where we share our humanity, such as in times of trauma, loss, discomfort, illness, suffering and the closeness and support given to the other. These experiences create a 'deep and intense feeling' (Màdera,

2022, p. 12) that transcends categorisation, allowing us to connect, adapt to unpredictable situations, support each other, and find awe in the midst of life's challenges.

The Italian philosopher and psychoanalyst Romano Màdera asserts that

it is specifically during the dark, problematic, and terrible moments that we are truly tested in terms of our hierarchies of values and the direction of our lives. When faced with illness, failure, and death, attempts to respond and regain direction arise: What is truly important, and indispensable? What can be postponed, reduced, or eliminated without being overwhelmed? Eventually, this unavoidable question will assert itself and become a prominent part of our daily lives. To put it briefly, the eternal questions, the deepest ones that have perplexed and troubled humanity for ages, seeking ways to answer: through the realms of labour, arts, religions, and sciences (Màdera, 2022, p. 13).

The term 'caring' goes beyond the objective practices of meeting someone's needs. It also encompasses inner motivations, aptitude, and reflections pertaining to a deeper personal level of 'self-care' (Mortari, 2019, pp. 39–59). The latter viewpoint suggests that self-understanding is achieved by attending to both our thoughts and feelings and forms the foundation for how people and services can effectively respond to the unique needs of individuals. The helping relationship involves the caregiver placing the person with their difficulties, history, suffering, desire to cope, and future perspective at the centre of their attention, both personally and professionally. The helping relationship aims to fully meet a person's needs, potential, and limitations, to heighten their autonomy and quality of life. This creates a connection between personal, temporal, social, ethical, aesthetic, and spiritual dimensions, bridging internal and external experiences. It draws on modes of relationship capable of full immersion into the other's world without preconceptions, enhancing the individual's potential and capabilities. Thus, it succeeds in surmounting the obstacles that negatively mark their history. The concept of caring is based on the belief that no one is irretrievable; it encourages individuals not to give in to long-term suffering. It supports them on their journey towards hope, recognising that every helping relationship generates personal growth and learning, regardless of whether the individual receiving help is the one being educated or the one in need of support. This applies to both educators and helping professionals.

In the context of a helping relationship, viewing each participant as an active subject with a unique history, needs, and potential is crucial, for they are not mere recipients of an intervention but rather co-protagonists in a process aimed at enhancing the quality of their lives.

Approaching a suffering individual necessitates deploying various skills, including technical-methodological but, more importantly, anthropological and pedagogical skills. These foster an approach to the person on the verge of change as a form of tension that influences all actions that go beyond specific objectives and established timeframes. This approach entails recognising the person for who they are and what they experience, including their symptoms, discomfort, existential vulnerability, disruption of personal and social balances, disharmony, or lack of love experienced.

The ethical and meaningful dimensions of help are realised by exercising that attention that can seize and promote opportunities for change even in people marked by complex histories restoring a renewed motivation to live to them. The ethical dimension of help as an expression of *love* for the person in their *vulnerability* (Dadà, 2022, pp. 52–64) lies in the potential qualitative leap that provides meaning to the pain endured and helps them cope with the existential void it may unfortunately create. The helping relationship is characterised by an ongoing sense of *tension toward the other* which is manifested through the *attentive gaze*, a form of *listening* that is enriched by moments of silence, and an approach to action that goes beyond mere acquisition and outcomes, but instead embraces the concept of gratuitousness. By immersing themselves in the closeness and vulnerability of others, the pedagogical and helping professional gains insight into their own weakness, fragility, and precariousness. These shared dimensions transform help in granting it a significant role in shaping ethical virtues such as gentleness, purity of heart, tenderness (Borgna, 2022), which are at the centre of loving educational action. When confronted with the narratives of persons who struggle with self-love, unable to grasp their own value or recognise their dignity and perspective of hope, and of those who bear deep wounds within, it becomes urgent to seek *intuitions of good and love*. These intuitions germinate from within the pain of living, the dysfunctions of the social context, and the distance and indifference that deny the uniqueness of each individual. In contrast to existences where the influence of unresolved issues that block desire and will, of unhealed scars burdened by the weight of the

past, is predominant, love possesses a ‘healing force’ (Bodei, 1991, p. 7) that propels toward the future. Love grants each individual the opportunity to reconcile with their past existence to prevent negative events from solidifying into feelings of hurt, resentment or isolation from others. For these reasons, a pedagogy of the helping relationship urges to uphold a pedagogical anthropology that encourages the exploration of the person’s most authentic dimensions that emerge through their openness to love. Thus Romano Guardini elaborates on love’s function of care and formation:

Love is decisive for a person’s health. It means perceiving the value in something apart from oneself, especially if it is of a personal nature; understanding its validity; feeling the essentiality of its existence and unfolding; being gripped by anxiety by such an acknowledgment as if it were one’s own. ... Anyone who knows anything about love knows this law: only in moving away from oneself does that sense of open vastness affirm itself where the self becomes real, and all things flourish. True work and pure action occur in this space (Guardini, 1987, p. 186).

3. Listening to the originality of the person

In today’s cultural crisis and social and ethical disorientation, education is being recognised as an inherent necessity for individuals. It is seen both as a necessary response and an essential prerequisite, albeit a complex and unresolved issue. This alternation of points of view suggests that the pedagogical imperative of placing the person at the centre is now established. However, there is a high risk of distorting its original meaning and subjugating the person to purposes other than themselves, turning it into a mere slogan.

Education is an action that requires a critical understanding and interpretation of our time, to comprehend the reality of those we encounter, those entrusted to our care. In a society where characterisations are often negative, such as ‘complex’ (Morin, 2021), ‘post-modern’ (Lyotard, 1985), or the ‘era of sad passions’ (Benasayag & Schmit, 2004), the call for love of the person as an ethical instance is rarely heard. Yet, it is love that can transform our society, reformulating the foundations of adult educational responsibility and the educational community as a whole.

Surveys on problematic issues are liable to overshadow attention on the person. The necessity to address problems results in neglecting a 'loving' educational thinking and acting that retrieves the prerogative of the ontological foundation of its action in the person. As Vittorio Possenti notes: 'When thought and praxis reach a crisis point and uncertainties darken, one should retreat to the sources and principles, anchoring oneself in the firm ground of existence to gain new momentum' (Possenti, 2006, p. 15). According to the author, during periods of uncertainty, the focus lies not on restoring specific values, but rather reinstating and enhancing what has been preserved and protected over a long time. This includes the concept of person, which is rooted in ontology rather than being modal and evaluative. The precise assessment of resolving an ethical and value crisis involves reaffirming the person as 'surplus and ulteriority that can never be completely captured,' possessing an innate 'originality,' a reality with an enduring presence in time, without achieving complete resolution. Individuals have been able to safeguard themselves throughout history by continuously shaping and improving themselves. Through this method, substance endures in time, escaping the relativism and nihilism inherent in perspectives that tend to absolutise processes. 'The attainment of personhood – Possenti points out – considered as the possession of one's radical ontological foundation is not a gradual process, but rather an instantaneous occurrence or deed through which one's essence as a person is permanently manifested' (Possenti, 2006, p. 15).

A tangible expression of the concept of the person as 'self-regulatory' and as a 'value' to be taken as a guide for educational praxis can be seen in individual and social experience, as well as in existential situations and meaningful relationships such as friendship, love, and responsible participation in community life. By invoking this concept, we acknowledge the value of pedagogical anthropology, which regards the person as an essential aspect in terms of ontology, ethics, and values. This understanding is necessary for upholding the core principles of education: *promoting uniqueness* and *integrality*. The first directs attention to personal identity and the uniqueness of each individual, while the second highlights an experience that encompasses the entirety of a person's perceptive, emotional, and affective complexity. Education involves unravelling the mysteries of others through intricate interpretations of each singularity as well as understanding and listening to others, requiring interpretation and attentive listening skills. In the field

of listening pedagogy, Mounier, Buber, and Levinas, have emphasised the mutual inclination of educators and students towards communication and dialogue. They argue that this inclination stems from the inherent dialogical dimension present in every individual, which is manifested through the contact, closeness, and mutual mirroring experienced by educators and students in their *personal being*. The possibility of mutual recognition of a being that 'hosts an individual in nature and a person in spirituality' can only be glimpsed within a relationship (Xodo, 2003, p. 175).

The person's importance in the pedagogical debate is an *essential* consideration (Agazzi, 1950, p. 175) that no educational theory can neglect (Vico, 2002), urging educators and help professionals to acknowledge the distinctiveness of each individual's personal perceptions based on their inner experiences. People can only truly understand their own inner experience, while they can only observe the inner lives of others from an external perspective. Each personal experience is uniquely felt with its own traits, intensity and peculiarities, and self-realisation aligned with one's originality thrives through openness and dialogue with others. In the words of Emmanuel Mounier, the person is a presence that is directed towards the world and the other, blending with them in a perspective of universality, without any defined boundaries. The presence of others does not impose limitations on the person, but rather enables their personal growth and development. The person's existence is only meaningful in relation to others; the person knows themselves only through the others, recognises themselves only in the others. The person's first experience is the experience of the second person, which is you, hence us precedes the 'I,' at the very least accompanies it. Through communication the person reveals themselves, and a deterioration or corruption of communication leads to a profound loss of self (Mounier, 2004, p. 60). Conversely, the domain of others is a multifaceted dimension that serves as an unceasing entreaty, implies adaptation, surmounting conflict, consistently poses the risk of encountering pain from which we strive to shield ourselves through detachment and distance, fostering a series of masks that progressively assimilate with the individual. Indeed, individualism can be defined as a comprehensive framework encompassing attitudes, sentiments, concepts, and institutions that promote personal inclinations towards isolation and self-defence (Mounier, 2004, p. 40), emphasising vulnerability, fragility, passiveness. On the other hand, relationships, as a distinct and 'inherent' attrib-

ute of human beings, initiate processes in which the person triumphs over challenges and setbacks, leading to an ongoing state of growth where accomplishments are never definitive and losses are never irrevocable. The ontological orientation of human beings is towards relationships, and all human experiences, including knowledge, the pursuit of beauty and goodness, truth, love, are characterised by their dialogical nature. Romano Guardini emphasises that interpersonal relationships 'allow one to extend oneself towards others, towards their essence, and discover one's true self. The encounter is the origin of this process of self-realisation' (Guardini, 1987, pp. 221–222). The ontological assumption of interpersonal relationships leads to rejecting an individualistic and self-reliant perspective, transcending the notion of the subject isolated within itself. Instead, it recognises human beings' dialogical nature, where the 'I' engages with the 'you.'

Education is fundamentally rooted in relationships, which manifest as the interpersonal connections between teachers and pupils, educators and students, professionals and patients. This relationship extends beyond being a mere modality, collection of methodologies or set of tools. Instead, it involves a constant interplay of self-knowledge, acquisitions, learning, skills, and emotional and affective exchanges with others and the external world, in order to foster the ongoing process of personal humanisation. The direct relationship between the quality of family relationships and the educational atmosphere is easily observed when working with adolescents. Parents can foster a close-knit educational climate by ensuring consistency between the proposed values, their attitudes and the tasks at hand. Furthermore, relationships characterised by trust and familial affection can cultivate self-esteem, openness, and interpersonal abilities during later life stages. Conversely, the absence of emotional and affective listening connections create a void in communication and family dynamics marked by detachment, intrusion of external influences, and struggles in pursuing existential purpose. In her brief essay on love titled *Dos fragmentos sobre el amor*, the philosopher Maria Zambrano asserts that

one of the sources of unease in our era is connected to love. It is not that it does not exist, but rather that its reality is not accepted or embraced either in the mind or in the soul of those who receive its visitation... Love encounters insurmountable obstacles and barriers in the indefinite space that the current

mind opens to any actuality, at first glance. Love must constantly justify and validate itself, and in the end endure being confused with the profusion of feelings or instincts ... considered a secret disease to be eradicated ... since man has come to believe that his being consists only in consciousness, love has lost its 'vital space' in which to breathe, like a bird asphyxiated in the void of a negative freedom (Zambrano, 2022, p. 219).

Maria Zambrano's observations reveal the necessity of delving deeper into the issue of lack of acceptance among individuals, which surpasses the prominence of love, particularly in an era where the human mind is increasingly open to various experiences, paradoxically, love encounters growing impediments and barriers. The current age fails to provide the essential conditions and opportunities, in terms of space and attention to timing, for love to mature, leading to its confusion with other experiences deemed similar such as instinct, desire, libido, emotions, feelings. When we focus on love as a relational dynamic in education and helping, we must take into account the person's existential reality, starting from the inherent importance of relationality (Russo, 2021, p. 12).

4. The implicit dimensions of loving educational action

The concept of the person as a relational being is reinforced by the complexity of their constituent components. Pedagogy goes beyond this focal point and also pursues dimensions that are not altogether decipherable or solely restricted to the logic of rational and linear thought and the organised and structured language. These dimensions encompass the unspoken, meaningful and symbolic elements that a *sensitive rationality* relies on, acknowledging the mysterious nature of each person. Pedagogical thinking in this direction combines reflexivity with elements of desire, personal creativity, and the pursuit of what the person anticipates as good and beautiful for themselves and their lives (Musaio, 2007). Acknowledging the unfathomable nature of existence requires primarily transcending our limitations through three attitudes: *listening*, *involvement*, and *sharing*. To begin with, refining our sensitivity and openness through the first aptitude (*listening*) enables us to better interpret the needs of others. The second element (*involvement*)

is intended as an empathetic disposition that should be calibrated according to the specificities of different help domains, settings and challenges. Most importantly, it embodies a personal commitment to promoting values and choices that can encourage more comprehensive meanings, surpassing the limitations imposed by practical fieldwork. The third component (*sharing*) provides an opportunity to express one's own experiences and engage in teamwork discussions, thus preventing the inclination towards individualistic interventions and instead promoting a culture of co-responsibility between educators and students, as well as between professionals and patients. Love, along with other dimensions that possess an essential nature, such as the search for goodness, beauty, and truth, reconnects with the innate human aspirations that can be qualitatively explored. This particular *qualitative* approach is grounded in the unique characteristics of each individual, including emotions and feelings, relationships, and the methods that shape the manner in which educators and students engage in active listening. Feeling and living an educational relationship inspired by the call to love for the other means recognising the *essential* nature that projects the relationship toward achieving educational purposes and seeking the person's most profound components. The *profound nature* of personal being eludes our perception and necessitates a deliberate unveiling. Due to these factors, educators often navigate within the realm of the unexpressed, known as the 'pedagogical implicit' (Perla, 2014; Pagano, 1999), constituting a distinct educational territory encompassing emotions, affection, value, and meaning. Understanding these dimensions and mastering the art of crossing them is crucial. The inherent aspirations found in love, beauty, and the pursuit of truth necessitate navigating through the element of indecipherability that resides within every individual:

Person is that factual reality that continually evokes existential wonder. It is the most intelligible of all things—in the most literal sense of the word: that 'I am I' is, for me, the truth that absolutely understands itself and communicates its character to every other content. Nevertheless, at the same time, it is an unfathomable mystery that I am I; ... that I am the centre of being, as are you... (Guardini, 1987, p. 188).

Upon examining personal reality, it becomes evident that there exists a component of mystery. However, it is vital to not disregard that the human being exists within the interconnectedness of all their unique structures and processes, inherent their tangible nature. The presence of the person's reality is deeply ingrained in every process since 'Everything derives its authentic character from the individual' (Guardini, 1987, pp. 190–191). Pedagogical anthropology aims to reconcile the ongoing discourse surrounding the multifaceted nature of individuals, taking into account the unspoken, implicit, and mysterious aspects of the person. The longing within human beings is influenced by various callings, embracing components of aspiration, 'nostalgia' (Vico, 1988), and 'melancholy' (Guardini, 1993). These callings never allow the person to experience a sense of complete fulfilment, as they perceive themselves as an individual constantly evolving, whose essence lies not in attaining perfection, but in the perpetual pursuit of it.

Pedagogy can be reconnected to love as a deep aspiration to validate theoretical paths and practical implementation, in order to generate a *pedagogy that promotes the uniqueness and irreplaceability* of each person, granting them a distinctiveness that cannot be compared to anything else. Indeed, the attentive educator acknowledges that love is a fundamental experience in our lives, intertwined with other crucial inquiries that demand pedagogical contemplation. Due to its broad intersections with ontology, anthropology, ethics, and values, love functions as a pedagogical synthesis. It is an integral aspect of an individual's fundamental trust and esteem, and serves as the central element of self-realisation, which is not superficial but rather emerges through the harmonious display of feelings, knowledge, and volition, culminating in a distinct and unmistakable synthesis of personal actualisation. Love can be drawn upon as *extension for pedagogical reflection* within its various nuances. While it may originally stem from specific aspects, love ultimately permeates the entirety of our personal lives. Pedagogical reflection is becoming increasingly essential in the process of education and formation, as it comprehensively captures the constant tension individuals experience in actualising their true selves, which entails the harmonious expression of all personal dimensions without unmotivated reductions.

Educating for love is not merely one of several educational options, but rather a fundamental approach to education, with its significance rooted in encountering others. The fulfilment of this encounter lies in establishing

a relationship and in the ability to cultivate it founded on a deliberate intention to aid the other person in discovering enduring love, regarded as a fundamental emotional priority, referred to as the *order of the heart*. According to Roberta De Monticelli,

Love is not just the primary positive emotion, but also the catalyst for activating the layer of sensitivity associated with *personal feelings*. This activation serves as a prerequisite for the genuine capacity to perceive distinctions in value and the ability to differentiate oneself from others, experiencing true axiological encounters and thereby preventing the entrapment of self-centeredness (De Monticelli, 2012, p. 165).

The practice of demonstrating affection in educational activities facilitates connection with both objects and individuals. When an individual approaches reality with attention and love, specifically by prioritising love for both reality and people, they acquire the capacity to observe and contemplate even the most basic and seemingly insignificant matters with awe. The real purpose of these matters is to gauge the extent of one's dedication to education, facilitating the transition from conscious to unconscious thinking (Bodei, 1991, p. 55), and consolidating the diverse and intricate aspects of the world by harmonising thought and emotion. Pedagogical love functions as an invitation to carefully observe and recognise the potential of each individual, cultivating the integration of emotional and intellectual reflection in lieu of the pervasive conformity in thought, action and feeling that is so prevalent in our present time. Exploring the different components of personal hiddenness, loving educational action facilitates the unveiling of the concealed entity that derives sustenance from the contamination of reflection with diverse expressions of life such as poetry, mythology, references to sacred literature, various manifestations of primal emotions, and the experiences of suffering and love, all of which offer pathways for discerning meaning.

From this particular standpoint, love denotes the innate essence of human experience, aspiring towards a path of enlightenment to validate its

sense of belonging to the realm of the cognisable, from its very inception and quest to find a place in the universe. Love is a manifestation of man's inher-

ent aptitude to have self-respect and the profound understanding of a place that accompanies him to the encounter with his own being (Zambrano, 1998, p. 30)

in its auroral form. The encounter occurs within the context of the rise of 'poetic reason,' which stands in contrast to the prevailing dominance of a merely cognitive and utilitarian reason. Poetic reason is driven by a profound love for life, for the others, and a sincere desire to welcome and care for them, and goes beyond mere logical and argumentative capabilities.

Our cultural tradition has a rationalistic prejudice, resulting in a diminished connection between reason and emotion. This bias favours rationality and excessive abstraction, ensuing in shallow forms of knowledge and generic approaches that lack substance. Consequently, this detachment prevents us from genuinely empathising and recognising the other from a sensitive perspective. The predominant reliance on cognitive processes of a logical-formal nature has ultimately brought to the depletion of all those nuances of life that pertain to the sensitive, emotional, and sacred aspects of the initial contact that human beings establish with reality. Hence the need to rediscover the most profound components and redefine the relationship between abstract thought and life, incorporating logic, emotions and love. In the ideas of authors like Maria Zambrano, who explores the notion that can combine the practicality of realism with the metaphysical perspective (Russo, 2003, p. 56), there is an emphasis on the need for rationality in our time to be enriched by experiences that teach us to love as a deep understanding of our relationship with ourselves and our inner life. Poetic reason (Zambrano, 1998) helps us delve into our deepest selves. On the contrary, reason focuses primarily on rational thought and disregards the original feeling that shapes our understanding of ourselves in relation to the others.

Since our understanding is built upon the motivations of both the mind and heart, it is through the languages of art, poetry, symbolism, and metaphors that we are able to comprehend that the world around us necessitates not only a linear explanation of its various components, but also an appreciation of its uniqueness, originality, and capacity to inspire awe within us. By emphasising the importance of the role of feeling into education, an approach can be adopted that not only captures attention but also leads to the discovery of enthralling insights into the various forms of poetic feel-

ing. The feeling mentioned here refers to a mode of philosophical thought characterised by its attention to both the discursive nature of reason and a knowledge that is nurtured by an embryonic logos. This 'pure knowledge' originates from the soul's introspective conversation with itself (Zambrano, 2004). Maria Zambrano employs the metaphor of the 'clearings of the forest' to symbolise the various stages of self-discovery, which the soul temporarily traverses only to swiftly move on to new existential journeys. Zambrano draws on Heidegger's idea of the 'clearing,' which signifies the correspondence humans and the voice of being. However, Zambrano's interpretation adds a unique dimension by transposing Heidegger's neutral being into a powerful presence of love, which acts as a summoning force and triggers an 'original feeling' within us.

In Zambrano's perspective, the concept of Heidegger's 'clearing' can be seen as a reflection of the connection between oneself and the voice of being, much like how man traces the condition of correspondence. However, Zambrano's sensitivity adds an interesting twist, as Heidegger's neutral being seems to transform into the presence of love, which serves as a summons and calls us towards the appeal of an 'original feeling.'

Maria Zambrano's perspective reconnects with the Spanish philosophical, poetical, and mystical tradition, including figures like Ortega y Gasset, Unamuno, and St. John of the Cross. She emphasises the need to discover a poetic reason that can transcend the separation between subject and object, which is common in modernity. This new knowledge should be based on experience and characterised by participation, feeling, and love rather than mere argumentation, observation and description. When reason and poetry come together, they create a poetic reason that enables us to intimately, secretly and sacredly experience every aspect of life. The prevailing approach in this manner is centred around something other than observing and investigating, namely attentively listening to both reality and others. Listening takes precedence over seeing. As a result, when understanding and comprehending, our focus should be on listening, as the truth of someone entrusted to us is not something we conquer or achieve at the end of a process, but rather it is presented to us as an event, a happening, or a revelation of their being. Mounier's perspective suggests two distinct approaches to understanding the universe and one's personal existence. One approach involves objectively studying the personal universe through an uninfluenced

description, which Mounier argues 'presents only imperfectly a reality that is not first and foremost objective' (Mounier, 2004, p. 31). The second approach as a way of participating in personal experience involves listening to the call and actively engaging in one's personal life and the personal lives of others. The reason for the distinction between these two approaches lies in the fact that, according to Mounier, the person cannot be equated to any other object, be it a stone, a tree, or an animal; Mounier argues that

the person is not merely the most wonderful object in the world that can be understood and known from the outside like all other objects. It is the only reality that we know and build simultaneously from within. Being present everywhere, it not given to us in any place (Mounier, p. 30).

The primary way in which we come to know the person standing in front of us is through a profound *feeling* that reveals their true nature in its entirety. Therefore, despite the importance of reasoning activity, it is not the sole means by which we can comprehend and love things and others. But it is first of all with the heart, not with reason that we are able to give meaning to reality and interpret it in the light of human purposes. If we attempt to speculate that by embracing a loving educational mindset, we can gain insight into the various ways in which others express themselves, we can witness that the true essence of the other cannot be fully comprehended through conceptual examination alone. This is because the other person's true nature is revealed to me through the medium of feeling, care, and love.

When it comes to pedagogical investigation, we can draw a parallel and hypothesise that in order to progress, educational argumentation and proceeding must go beyond reasoning that is disconnected from real life, existentialism, and the dynamic nature of educational processes. The purpose of education should be to enhance and refine one's skills in order to facilitate a deeper connection between individuals. In the educational and helping relationship, the existences we come across are not easily categorised or fit into predefined schemes. They are disorientating and surprising due to the unpredictability of their situations and outcomes. What adds to the complexity is the implicit silence that these existences preserve, as well as the unspoken that resides within each person. This unspoken present is something that is yet to be fully understood, unveiled, recognised and loved.

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