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Love and Social Generativity

Miłość i społeczna generatywność (życiodajność)

Abstract: This paper relates love to generativity through pedagogical anthropology, in which the person and environment can be seen as a network of participatory relationships. In fact, 'love is the unity of the community as the vocation is the unity of the person. Love is not added to the person as more, as a luxury: without love the person does not exist' (Mounier, 1961, p. 521). Therefore, we introduce the concepts of human and social generativity and their dynamics (desire, bringing into the world, taking care and letting go) as well as their effects. Then, we analyse intergenerational relations as an example of donative love.

Keywords: social generativity; pedagogy of reciprocity; education and care; pedagogical anthropology; intergenerational relation.

Abstrakt: W niniejszym artykule miłość odnoszona jest do generatywności (życiodajności) poprzez antropologię pedagogiczną, w której osoba i środowisko mogą być postrzegane jako sieć relacji partycypacyjnych. W rzeczywistości „miłość jest jednością wspólnoty, tak jak powołanie jest jednością osoby. Miłość nie jest dodawana do osoby jako coś więcej, jako luksus: bez miłości osoba nie istnieje" (Mounier, 1961, s. 521). W związku z tym wprowadzam w pojęcia ludzkiej i społecznej generatywności oraz ich dynamikę (pragnienie, wprowadzanie w świat, opieka i odejście), a także skutki

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tych zjawisk. Następnie analizuję relacje międzypokoleniowe jako przykład miłości będącej darem.

Słowa kluczowe: społeczna generatywność; pedagogika wzajemności; edukacja i opie-ka; antropologia pedagogiczna; relacje międzypokoleniowe.

1. Introduction

Love is a feeling linked in common understanding almost exclusively to the private and individual dimensions rather than to the social dimension. In a postmodern society and culture supported by the myths of autonomy and independence (Bauman, 1993)[1] and in which the subject is fragmented (Collins, 1988, pp. 255–259) and searching for self-affirmation, love, as Paul Ricœur argues, ends up moving between the abyss of wandering desire, which is never satiated by the infinite possibilities that can be experienced, and the ambition of an institutional constancy capable of providing continuity and stability in permanent restlessness (1960, pp. 1665–1676). In an essay first published in the 1990s, the French philosopher compares *Love and Justice* (1991), asking whether dialectical interaction can exist between these two dimensions, such that ethics beyond the dominant utilitarian normative statute can be proposed. Therefore, on the one hand, if love is presented in its 'poetry' and 'metaphorisation' (Ibidem, p. 190) as praise, command and sentiment and justice is prosaically distributive between rights and duties (Ibidem, p. 195), on the other hand, there is a tensional plane that could lead to an encounter: Both dimensions present themselves as normative principles of human action; that

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[1] In *Postmodern Ethics* (1993), Zygmunt Bauman differentiates modern ethics, guided by universal moral codes, from postmodern ethics, which is imbued with technology, consumer culture and a constant sense of risk. In the latter, ambivalence and contingency prevail, and 'the ethical codes are plagued with relativism' (p. 14). According to Bauman, in fact, due to technological globalisation and the transition from the industrial to the post-modernist era, individualism is increasingly entrenched. Placing the individual at the centre of the social universe has brought about significant transformations at the level of cultural values, identity and human relations, particularly regarding love relationships. Bauman, speaking of the concept of 'liquid love' (2003), defines it as a medium to satisfy the needs of individuals and emphasises the fragility of love relationships in contemporary society due to the fear of establishing lasting and meaningful bonds.

is, love and justice address action, each in their own way. However, the norm of love calls for a logic of superabundance, which Ricœur exemplifies with the biblical passage from the Sermon on the Plain (Lk 6:27–28): 'Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you,' while the norm of justice calls for equality and reciprocity of action (Ricœur, 1990, pp. 202–203): 'Additionally, just as you want men to do to you, do the same way to them' (Lk 6:31). The exclusion between the two normative principles (Ricœur, 1991, p. 198), if rationally conceivable, reduces the potential of both (Ibidem): love, without the reciprocity and equity inherent in justice, risks turning into possession or a-morality; in contrast, justice, without the gratuitousness of love, makes exchange a result of mere utilitarian calculation. The dialectical synthesis between the two normative models does not exclude their differences but should integrate them into a principle of loving-justice or righteous-love. This is an interesting interpretation, although not without its criticisms. The first criticism is its being utopian and difficult to realise, and the second, as Emmanuel Lévinas points out, is that distributive justice is not a justice *tout court*; rather, it should be linked to responsibility for the other (1985, p. 119).

Indeed, in a fruitful dialogue between the two authors (Lévinas & Ricœur, 2010), Lévinas states that responsibility is 'the strict name for love' (Ibidem, p. 78), the only one capable of accessing personal identity. The two authors then agree on an ontological reading in which:

> The unique individual is loved, and at this stage one is bound to others with an obligation to him in which responsibility is not yet a calculation, not yet discursive. With oneness, there is no justice; it is before justice; it is much more than justice; it is charity (Ibidem).

Thus, ethical love is born from the encounter with the other and the call of his 'face:' being vulnerable means that it can be touched and wounded, and it is the image of a fragility that unites us and, at the same time, commits us to the commandment 'Thou shalt not kill!' (Lévinas, 1987b, pp. 61–74). It is a love that is not born, however, from prohibition but from the call to attention and dedication to the 'thou' before me and to thirdness as openness to every other man. Therefore, the love that constitutes us as ontologically relational beings is translated into the ethics of responsibility and proximity (Lévinas, 1987a, p. 15).

The human being does not exist as a solitary individual, but he is a relational being whose highest expression is precisely in the capacity to love. True human advancement inevitably passes through openness to the other, for which love is manifested in its fullness in the desire for the autonomous development of the 'thou,' as if to say that the *I* 'wills above all the existence of the thou;' so, the aim of love resides in 'the value that the *I* anticipate for the *thou*' (Nédoncelle, 1966, p. 13).

> That means that the *I* does not impose its own scheme upon the thou but discerns the individual and unique value of the other and would seek to help the other the better to be what he, and he alone, can and should be (Allen, 2014, p. 169).

This is an anthropological vision that, as Emmanuel Mounier has advocated for, *decentres* the person in the experience of *the apprenticeship of the thou*. Indeed, without the encounter with the other and without love, the person becomes a stranger even to himself; he does not *reknow himself*. Thus, love is an indispensable element for the unity of the person as well as for the unity of the community. A human being becomes, in fact, more human if he or she is within a community of persons, and vice versa, a community is a human society only when it is built on relationships between persons. Mounier's personalism seeks to overcome, on the one hand, the limitations of capitalist individualism (based only on property) and, on the other hand, the dictatorship of socialist collectivism (which reduces the human being to an indistinct unity). Moreover, in a theological opening, the person refers to *creaturehood* and to his being image of God; hence, the love relationship is manifested and realised through an act of self-giving: 'The communion of love, in liberating him who responds to it, also liberates and reassures him who offers it. Love is the surest certainty that man knows; the one irrefutable, existential cogito: I love, therefore I am' (Mounier, 1952, p. 23).

The person, therefore, overcomes the limits of individuality, a condition for which the self is the whole, affirming itself in the loving gift addressed to others: *I give myself, I love, therefore I am*. In other words, 'love is a possible response to a true encounter of essential individualities' (De Monticelli, 2003, p. 175).

The personal being is manifested especially in the dimension of promise. This refers to the capacity to *put oneself in the presence of* because it allows one to anticipate something that one would like to realise, committing oneself so that it happens. The anticipatory gaze is an emblem and image of the relationship between the instant and duration, both of which are qualifying expressions of the human, as are identity and difference. To promise is, therefore, a gamble because it challenges our own finitude, both in substantive terms (in our human pause between life and death) and in moral terms (recognising ourselves as the object and subject of error):

> What does it truly mean to swear fidelity? and how can such a promise be made? The question cannot be asked without giving rise to an antinomy. The promise, in fact, is made based on some present inner disposition. However, can I affirm that the disposition, which I have just now that I commit myself, will not change later on? (Marcel, 2002, p. 138)

The promise, in fact, envisages thinking of an *after* with respect to the present condition, not only as possible but also as desirable and realisable; in other words, it acts on the borderline between the freedom and intentionality of man, who is aware that he cannot define everything.

In a personalist anthropology, the promise acquires further value because it questions the person's ontological relational and transcendent disposition. The moment of commitment is in fact something that goes beyond mere sentiment and that can come and go: 'The moment I have committed myself, however, the situation is altered. Someone else has registered by promise and henceforth counts on me. In addition, I know it' (Marcel, 2002, p. 159). Marcel observes, 'The personality infinitely transcends what we may call its snapshot states' (Ibidem, p. 162). Thus, the guarantee of giving continuity to acts of creative fidelity is a bond of transcendent fidelity, one that transcends time but keeps us *in time*. Indeed, this capacity to go further in duration is not linked to the specific relationship and represents the political and civil *generation* of the promise of love, which originates and sustains a community (Alici & Pierosara, 2022), which is not the mere summation of the people who make it up, nor is it based on duty divorced from the singular will. Commitment to the duration of the relationship, fidelity to a feeling

and a person are basic to community building; these personal capacities are generative source to be relied upon to spread into political love.

In this case, when we talk about love, we are talking about relationships; however, we are not referring to a specific relationship (maternal, fraternal, friendship, etc.); instead, we are defining a solicited and available propensity towards the human. The love we refer to embraces the person, regardless of the relationship he or she has with us, allowing us to recognise his or her identity: it is the only full and absolute recognition of the existence and uniqueness of another that is given to us to exercise, not as empty knowledge, but in the evidence of feeling; it is a love free of the obligation to respond and exchange, it is donative; and it is based on the recognition of the uniqueness and value of each person because 'with each man there comes into the world something new that has never existed, something first and unique' (Buber, 1990, p. 27).

Love is not identification and homologation with the other; 'it respects his existence by grasping it from his being,' and hence, 'it does not demand changes from the other but asks him to become what he is' (Sichel, 1983, p. 30). Love is expressed as a gift, therefore, in its being a movement of expansion and a force of transcendence capable of nourishing the possible through the encounter and relationship with the other. The pedagogical love-gift, especially in the offering of new existential possibilities that the subject can personalise with its sign of novelty, is precisely based on the trusting attestation of one towards the possibilities of being of the other, up to the constitution of an educating society, which is 'aware of its educational responsibilities towards the new generations, such as to make it an educating subject' (Vico, 2008, p. 75).

2. Love-giving and generation

In postmodern schizophrenia,[2] relationships have mainly been played out on the 'short plane,' that is, based on the affective logic of quick gratification

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[2] The postmodern culture of the late 20th century used the term 'schizophrenia' not only for individual clinical diagnosis, but to identify the postmodern subject in general: 'People categorised as "schizophrenic" have long been entrusted with this duty of symbolising society,

while rejecting the continuity of ties, which have been abandoned in lieu of the logic of exchange. In this way, life is played out on purely subjective choices oriented by instrumental and functional principles. Relational man has been transformed into an individual devourer of relationships. In a society where everything is a commodity that can be bought and sold, alienation is total (Baudrillard, 1998, p. 190). Even the body detaches itself from the person, going in search of ready satisfaction of immediate need or something to soothe the sense of emptiness that pervades it since it has lost its connection with otherness: 'Now the self-sufficiency of eroticism, the freedom to seek sexual pleasures for oneself, has risen to the level of cultural norm' (Bauman, 1998, p. 21). Community living is also transformed into a stage for the affirmation and confirmation of the self.

How, then, can value be restored to the relationship? Jacques Godbout wrote an essay at the turn of the previous century reflecting on the distinction between gift and solidarity (2000, pp. 7–17). Referring to social behaviour, he detects two distinct roots between the terms: Gift recalls the religious tradition of thought, while solidarity refers to French-style brotherhood, linking it to workers' struggles and the need for collective action among like-minded people to achieve satisfactory results. For the author, a gift would be distinguished from solidarity based on freedom because it does not involve any form of obligation and, on this basis, creates a social bond, whereas solidarity is only possible as a result of an already established bond. Indeed, as Simmel points out, there is an antidote to alienation and the transformation of human relations into bonds between objects, as is typical of mercantile exchanges, and it is gratitude: 'We do not thank somebody only for what he does: the feeling with which we often react to the mere existence of a person, must itself be designated as gratitude' (1950, p. 389).

It is impossible to reciprocate a gift because the freedom that is intended can no longer be present in the countergift. Freedom and trust animate the gift, founding the bond on a logic of positive debt. This implies that the person receiving the gift does not feel obliged to reciprocate but feels in desire to

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its structural elements, its definition of personhood, its contradictions [and] its paradoxes' (Barrett, 1998, p. 484). In Postmodernism, the *subject* is *decentralised* and loses the ability to organise meaning. Even time is experienced as fragments, images and hyperreal superimpositions. The subject is unable to organise past, present and future into a coherent experience. Schizophrenia can be defined as the breaking of the signifying chain that constitutes meaning.

give in turn. The gratuitousness of the gesture and the esteem in the other's value and potential make the person free and not indebted to the person who activated the bond: 'What matters is not so much giving back, as it is giving in one's turn, not restituting but taking back the initiative in gift-giving' (Hénaff, 2002, p. 139). In these terms, we could say that the gift builds interpersonal and social relationships and nurtures the spirit of community, which has been true ever since primitive cultures, and can be seen as being based on three elements: giving, receiving and reciprocating (Mauss, 2002). I give in the hope and trust that my gesture can be reciprocated, understood in the vital spirit that animates it and that asks to open to the other, giving oneself. The love that nourishes the gift and sustains relationships, making them generative, is that 'people feel they owe a great deal to others, but this obligation is more in the order of gratitude than coercion' (Scabini & Greco, 1999, p. 94).

This interpretation cannot forget the most significant gift for man: the gift of life. It inserts him into an order that transcends and engages him in an intergenerational line. The gift received inserts one into a bond that liberates because it creates a secure base on which to build one's own personal human journey. Paul Ricœur recalls, in fact, that the French word *riconaissance* can be translated as both gratitude and recognition (Ricœur, 2005, p. 243).

Thus, generation is the gift par excellence and is linked to education (Crotti, 2018, pp. 28–32): 'to generate is a transitive verb because life transits, passes through us and continues through us' (Ibidem, p. 29).

2.1. Natality as a pedagogical category

At the time of birth, not only does the child come into being but also the person as father and mother – the relationship unites in diversity, thanks to the love that nourishes the gift: 'to generate one must practise the constancy of a commitment that is ethically grounded and affectively substantiated' (Ibidem). Moreover, the identity of the nascent person will be the fruit of the vital bond that nourishes that relationship, moving from generation to generation (Lizzola, 2009).

The birth condition of the human being, that is, his coming from something else and not being the result of self-multiplication, incontrovertibly

manifests that being is being-in-relation and that from the very beginning, man is the one who receives, *first and foremost*, life. The love that nourishes (or should nourish) birth is a surplus life that makes possible the beginning of a new being endowed with autonomous energy. Love is not a feeling added to life, but is constitutive of life itself (Chardin, 1965, p. 45).

Observing birth through the ontological and hermeneutical category of *natality* (Cavarero, 1991, pp. 84 ff.; Musi, 2018, p. 93) permits pedagogical reflection on the reading of a being that does not have its own origin but receives it in a logic of gift, which is the motor of relationship (Godbout, 1998):

> the new therefore always appears in the guise of a miracle. The fact that man is capable of action means that the unexpected can be expected from him, that he is able to perform what is infinitely improbable. And this again is possible only because each man is unique, so that with each birth something uniquely new comes into the world. With respect to this somebody who is unique it can be truly said that nobody was there before (Arendt, 1958, p. 178).

In this interpretation, generativity is an act of symbolic filiation based on the dynamic of love-giving and mature awareness and respect for the dignity of each person, trust in oneself, in others and in institutions and ethical responsibility for one's own and others' good (Elia, 2016, pp. 27–39). In contrast, the denial of a relational origin based on self-celebration and the postmodern myth of the self-made man reduces any possibility of encounter and commitment, also nullifying any ethical appeal (Gilbert & Petrosino, 2001, p. 28). Instead, referring to the construct of birth as *initium* (Arendt, 1958, p. 177) and reading it as a metaphor that constellates our lives up to the observation that 'who loves generates himself at every moment' (Zambrano, 1991, p. 275), we grasp how 'being born is not a leaving-for, but first and foremost being a-leaving-from' (Musi, 2018, p. 94).

Mature love makes a gift of existence, which leads to surrendering the desire for pure possession and fullness and that then offers itself without reserve; to this end, Zambrano states that 'the one who truly loves already dies in life' (1991, p. 257), not proposing a destruction of the person through love but rather emphasising the profound change it generates. There is, in fact, a close link between the generative-maieutic dimension and the ethical dimension: the commitment to be born completely, that is, to complete one's

generative project, provides a foundation for responsibility towards others and confers personal identity as relational.

On the part of the one who gives birth, in a context of love-giving, gratitude prevails towards the superabundance of life of which one has been the medium; this awareness nourishes a relationship open to life itself that has manifested itself in the other from oneself and cannot but be nourished by freedom. Therefore, gratitude is outside the logic of mercantilistic exchange because, like the gift from which it derives, it has an initial freedom that overflows any possible response, except in the order of a continuation of the gift itself: 'The most vital way of receiving is to give thanks' (De Giacinto, 1983, p. 47).

2.2. Natality and generativity

To be grateful means to recognise ourselves in our own finitude, in the condition of being recipients in our turn; therefore, to generate becomes a form of response to the gift that goes beyond the very dynamics of giving birth in a purely biological manner. For this reason, generating goes beyond the purely reproductive phenomenon, placing us in the order of initiation and renewal on a continuous timeline, hence being nourished by a perspective of meaning. Man, as a *new entity*, carries within himself the germ of the beginning and, by witnessing in the generative act his own capacity for rebirth, arouses in the newborn the desire for growth, development and fulfilment, opening him in turn to new beginnings. 'The act of generating is not something that has to be learned; it is, rather, an act innate to human beings' (Magatti, 2018, p. 2); it becomes, for sociopsychological life cycle theory, a determining element, especially in the transition to adulthood (Erikson, 1963, p. 267), because it is defined as 'that is of interest for what has been generated by love, necessity or by accident and that goes beyond adherence to an irrevocable ambivalent obligation' (Erikson, 1968, p. 72) but calls for the ability to decentralise from immediate individual needs to promote the well-being of future generations (McAdams, 2006, p. 81). Generativity, in fact, is in the generational transition, expanding the egocentric dimension on the plane of care to promote social development in a dynamic balance between change and preservation. Moreover, generativity is not only con-

cerned with the level of biological fertility but also extends to the capacity to activate oneself for the creation of new products and ideas, adding to the level of caring for one's own and others' children as well as the capacity to engage in the community. Generativity is a process activated by the initial gift love and is based on several essential steps: desiring, giving birth, caring and letting go (Magatti, 2018). These basic aspects of generativity are declining in intentional educational practices animated by the aim of accompanying men to become increasingly more a man. In love-giving, in fact,

> the common, original meaning of *intentionality* and *care* lies in the little term *tend*, which is both the root of intentionality and the meaning of care. *Tend* means a tendency, an inclination, a throwing of one's weight on a given side, a movement; and also, to mind, to attend, to await, to show solicitude for. In this sense, it is the source of both love and will (Rollo, 2007, p. 292).

If care is man's way of being in the world (Heidegger, 2006, p. 559), then, by caring for the things around him, man constructs his world as a *horizon of the possible*. However, the man who cares for the things in the world is aware that he cannot identify with them. His caring for things needs to expand caring for others. This process can express itself in defective forms, as in the case of 'replacing oneself by dominating,' which is the result of indifference or substitution and which creates a tacit and disguised dominance; in contrast, caring requires a 'liberating anticipation' that, instead of putting oneself in the place of others, helps 'the other to become transparent in one's care and free for it' (Ibidem, p. 355).

For this reason, a key aspect of generative educational practice is letting go, that is, supporting the person to become his or her own artefact because 'only in the experience of being loved can a child learn to love' (Pestalozzi, 1926, p. 135). Letting go corresponds to letting the other be in fullness: 'It means having completed the path that leads to delivery, a passage that can be reconstructed through the common etymological root between generating and generations (*genus*)' (Crotti, 2018, p. 29). The education that accompanies the generative path animated by love-giving implies, in fact, the progressive involvement of the child. Educating does not mean fabricating an inanimate object or shaping an individual according to an externally imposed principle; rather, it means 'supporting the appearance of a freedom' (Meirieu, 2012,

p. 46). In Mounier's words, education does not have the 'task of making, but of arousing persons: by definition a person is aroused by an appeal and not manufactured by training' (1961, p. 192). By educating and educating oneself, one activates in the other the desire to educate oneself; in other words, 'We have to give the best of ourselves so that the other will do the best of him/herself' (Ibidem). Indeed, love in others can only be evoked by love for the other.

3. Conclusion: Social generativity and generational love

Generativity animated by love-giving, as anticipated, manifests itself in all relational orders, not just the domestic one; above all, it manifests itself by going beyond the purely biological dimension of human reproduction. Although we may agree with Godbout's assertion that behind the gift to strangers lies a primary bond (1998, p. 80), the reciprocal anthropological gift that nurtures the family is a necessary but not sufficient aspect for generative openness to manifest itself at the social level: It is useful for the person to be aware of the gift received and to be active in donative relationships out of gratitude rather than obligation, but such imprinting may derive from the original relationship, even if this is not connected to biological origin. The *filiation-fact*, which is determined by the two procreators, also requires a *filiation-relationship*, which can be defined in terms of relationship and mutual recognition in the order of affection and generative commitment so that the subject feels that he or she is loved and can love (Milani & Crotti, 2022). Sometimes, generativity manifests itself in relationships that do not have a biological basis but are born from a love that welcomes the other in his or her uniqueness and intrinsic value, from the gift of care and the decentralisation of the self that makes space for the child's life (Ibidem, pp. 2–4).

The proposal of a socio-anthropological model for coexistence based on love-giving also challenges the utilitarian paradigm dominant in contemporary society, which impregnates sociality with relationships that are convenient, virtual, short lived and easily replaceable, creating a perpetual experience (that is) of distrust, closure and self-centredness. Instead, the symbolic reality of the gift sees a generative love that bases the bond on the absence of the instrumental need of the other because it proposes experiences of free sharing and interaction based on *caring*.

The link between the personal and collective dimensions of generativity is manifested in social responsibility, a phenomenon Erikson discusses in *The Ghandhi's Truth* (1993): generativity, when nourished by care as caring and concern for otherness, expands from the level of attention to the product of the individual (children, ideas, relationships, etc.) to the level of concern for future generations to care for the entire human race. This threefold division of the generative process on the level of love and care represents its own ambiguity (Erikson, 2004): generativity, which can be understood as the intergenerational transmission of what is of value, could only be sought at the first levels, though never reaching the level of caring for humankind. An example is the familistic structure, or nationalism or localism, in which people create circles of internal generativity aimed at protecting themselves, their children and/or their group but act defensively towards the outside world, excluding those who do not belong to the reference group. A shift to the broader social level, one capable of respecting the relational ontological nature of the human, requires instead nurturing and promoting with constancy and patience the link with love-giving: Social generativity then becomes a process that stems from the creaturely and fragile dimension of the human being, which is inherent in an anthropology based on birth and the unborn but from it starts to support a generative action that is creative, oriented to care and responsibility; this has its peak in the autonomy achieved by what has been generated. Generativity, in this case, transcends the personal level and develops in the human community, recognising difference as a value rather than a limit. The personal dimension, therefore, acts as an equal and reciprocal force with the social dimension: a municipality, a social cooperative or an association can create, develop and sustain within its social relations of a generative or degenerative nature; in the same way, the individual, as anticipated, can generate, nurture and let go of a collective action with the result of promoting social cohesion or can only satisfy a possessive and self-referential need. Thus, the social relationship that activates social cohesion must not only be generated but also be nurtured to survive and must be an activator of new relational bridges with original actors and new and different relationships.

Social generativity unfolds, therefore, in relationships open to strangers, such as in the reality of volunteering, or in family dynamics that transcend the biological bond, such as in the case of fostering and family adoption but

also in cultural, political and social commitment for the good of generations. The 'great generativity' (Erikson et al., 1986) emerges, in fact, in many older adults who continue to show a strong commitment to the promotion and development of future generations, acting as grandparents, mentors or advisers. A new ethical reading is established in these cases, one that requires co-responsibility not only as a response to one's own words and actions, but also as a commitment to the other for his or her growth and integral formation.

A practice of social generativity based on love-giving is, in fact, the one that should animate the dialogue and encounter between generations, which, however, is one of the greatest social crises today (Crotti, 2018). Such complexity depletes the value of intergenerational relationships, in which the pedagogical challenge of restitution is played out, whereby

> every restitution is a re-establishment, establishing a new, in the sense that it allows events and links to be re-read in a new way by relaunching their assumptions. This means that in reality, human things do not survive if their foundation is given once and for all. They sustain themselves only by virtue of their constant re-founding (Stoppa, 2011, p. 171).

According to this reading, cultural capital is exchanged between generations, and we can observe this by the way adults demonstrate their social responsibility, both privately and publicly (Imada, 2004, pp. 92–93), because the encounter with the other implies a readiness to change, which stems from being open and porous to the history and life of those who come into contact with us, who *regenerate* us (Musi, 2018, p. 106). In contrast, a society that does not build meeting places and does not support primary forms of generativity runs the risk of closing itself off in self-referentiality, which feeds the fear of everything that does not correspond with the defined identity or model. In this framework, security becomes an extreme value, even between generations.

In fact, even though intergenerational learning is the oldest form of knowledge, over time, the opportunities for people belonging to different generations to meet have diminished: Social changes, which see family environments becoming smaller and geographically more distant, together with cultural, economic and demographic changes, have made society increasingly distinct in terms of age groups. Social and public services themselves

are distinguished based on the target age group of the users and response to their needs, while traditional opportunities for age group mixing are rapidly diminishing (Fitzpatrick, 2024).

In contrast, an inclusive and supportive society (Lacharité, 2014) promotes forms of collaboration with the aim of hosting and increasing the number but also the quality of relationships 'since it is not only the size of the network or the frequency of contacts that makes the difference' (Walsh, 2008, p. 125) but also the meaning and significance attached to them.

The concept of generativity introduced by Erikson – revised in the 1980s by John Kotre – expands to be 'a desire to invest one's substance in forms of life and work that will outlive the self' (Kotre, 1984, p. 10), separating generativity from parenthood and freeing it from a specific age. Furthermore, different types of generativities are depicted: biological, parental, technical and cultural. However, the different type of generativity are united by man's idea of surviving himself by contributing to the lives of others, and manifest themselves at different moments in life: although biological generativity has an early origin, coinciding with early adulthood, cultural generativity transcends single existence and works on a symbolic level (Maxfield et al., 2014), activating itself at a later point in life and reaching its apex in the capacity for storytelling (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1992). The narration of one's generative experience allows the adult and elderly to retrace life's choices and actions through a meaning transcending temporality itself: Care becomes the thread that nourishes the resumption of an existential path capable of overcoming the present condition, also making possible a generativity that, coming from the past, delivers a possibility of the future to the newborn (Ehlman, Ligon & Moriello, 2014). The intergenerational transmission of generativity and care is a process through which one generation hands over aspects of its generative potential, such as values and behaviour patterns, to another. Early research on the intergenerational transmission of generativity came from relatively stable societies, where the transmission process was facilitated by the fact that adjacent generations faced relatively similar socioeconomic challenges and could make use of similar solutions. In contemporary society, in which generations seem to live in an oxymoronic situation of 'distant proximity' because they share the same fragmented and perennial crisis-ridden sociocultural context but do so separately and individually, the intergenerational transmission of generativity seems to be interrupted. These

trends may lead to what some experts have termed a 'care crisis' in ageing societies (European Commission, 2022), a situation in which growing care needs may not find family assistance and even limited formal care services difficult to sustain. Generativity, in fact, also changes the approach towards ageing, which is part of an evolutionary process that is certainly personal but that takes place within the micro- and macrosocial context and develops because of the relationships between generations (Villar, Serrat & Pratt, 2023). The decision of the European Commission to devote the year 2012 to active ageing (Decision No. 940/2011/EU of the European Parliament), linking it to solidarity and intergenerational cooperation, had the merit of focusing attention on building a system of biopsychosocial well-being of the elderly through the care of the affective and ethical bond that animates (or should animate) the generations.

Love-giving is, in fact, an intergenerational love, if here we mean both its capacity to generate and its transcendent being and its unfolding from generation to generation. Being a family today is a complex task that goes beyond the mere good predisposition and interest in bringing up one's children; moreover, the social fabric appears increasingly frayed. In this context, pedagogical work can only be about supporting internal generative relationships and solidarity in the community as well as reweaving sharing relationships in territories. It is necessary to strengthen the link between personal and social generativity because the community and social dimension promote readiness to welcome the other, just as personal openness and solicitude towards otherness stimulate the construction of generative territories and communities.

Therefore, the pedagogical professional is transformed from a provider of services to an 'activator of relational processes for the shared solution' (Giordano, 2018, pp. 40–41), acting metaphorically as a *weaver of networks* and in a purely educational key, that is, aimed at *ex-ducere of* what potentially already exists in the social fabric as solidarity availability:

> In order to return to weaving the web of the human, it is necessary to take care of the generations and their generative value, but also of the warp, i.e. the relational weft that binds one to the other and that, in so doing, enhances the beauty of the one and the other (Crotti, 2018, p. 173).

The education to live generative interpersonal relationships is nurtured by the love-giving nature of the person, for whom love is not an attribute of character or a mode of action but rather the very meaning of existence: 'The act of love is man's strongest certainty, the irrefutable existential *cogito*: *I love; therefore, being is* and life is worth (worth living)' (Mounier, 1961, p. 455).

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