The forms of deformation: between General Pedagogy and Clinical Pedagogy Giancarla Sola

1. General Pedagogy: education and self-formation

The identity of pedagogy is historically connected with the question of *education*. Over time, the latter concept came correlating multiple meanings, related primarily to the dimensions of breeding, growing up, cultivating and taking care of; therefore, to the areas of directing, leading and disciplining; furthermore, to the aspects of shaping and modeling, teaching and instructing. Also in light of this broad semantic horizon education is today, at the beginning of the Twenty-first century, commonly understood as the process by which every human being has the ability to achieve full expression of himself through the development of his faculties (innate and acquired).

More specifically, education is a process that begins in early childhood and continues in later stages of life, within which the relationship between two or more subjects is decisive. It also concerns a type of relationship where, traditionally, someone educates and someone else is educated. In fact education means, at the same time, the act and the effect of educating: ie, the action of educating and its outcome. In this regard it does not seem superfluous to recall that the term "education" has three different etymologies. The first – relatable to the Latin verb *educāre* – allows to recognize education as act and effect of "breeding", "feeding", "growing", "taking care of" and "instructing". The second – referable to the Latin verb *educēre* – authorizes to interpret it as act and effect of "pulling out", "extracting", "getting out", "bringing to light" and "let blossom". The third – connect-

able with the meanings of the Latin verb edocēre - recalls to consider it as a schooling and a teaching which pass through the act of "informing", "showing" and "demonstrating". The triple etymological derivation of the word "education" suggests, therefore, the following. In the first and in the third case, it is the one who performs the action of educating who plays a central role in the educational process. In the second case, however, it is the subject to whom the action of educating is directed who takes a decisive factor within the educational relationship. And this since it is recognized to him an inherent tendency to education (ie, already present potentially) which comes to expression (ie, it is translated into action) through the action of the educator. The etymological and philological considerations here briefly recalled help to outline some of the semantic assumptions which led (not only pedagogy) to recognize in parent-child and teacherpupil relationships some of canonical examples of the educational relation. It is also in these premises that not only the historical correlation between pedagogy and education, but also the main meanings in which pedagogy has studied the issue of education are rooted.

Without going into the folds of the history of pedagogy and the different critical positions, moving from which the pedagogical debate has addressed the issue of education, it is possible however to observe how pedagogical research focuses predominantly on education at least up to the Nineties of the Twentieth century. Before this period – as it is possible to note observing the topics discussed in the scientific literature -, the focus of pedagogical discourse is mainly given from education and from educating, then from the dimensions that with the "educational event" expression that is very frequent in those years - possess a marked principle of relevance: foremost, teaching and learning. From this point of view it is also possible to observe the close bond that has come to be stationed between pedagogy and didactics. In the Eighties and Nineties - especially as a result of the contribution given by the philosophical reflection in pedagogy and, therefore, by the philosophy of education, as well as by a deeper epistemological awareness - there is a gradual change of perspective, that in the following decades will determine significant mutations not only regarding the study of education, but also in the identity of pedagogy. Among the different heuristic guidelines that build the pedagogical discourse it is possible, namely, to notice the consolidation of a particular field of research that, by distancing itself from the invasive forms of practicalism, technicism and didacticism, is oriented to reinterpret education making use of philosophical *logos*, in order to better grasp the constitutive problematic essence of this dimension of life. This pushes progressively to investigate the educational relationship giving more importance to the subjects involved in it. In other words, it becomes clear that in order to have a thorough knowledge of educational relationships (of any sign they are) it is first necessary to start from the study of individual subjectivity in order to arrive later to the understanding of the inter-subjective dynamics.

Also returning value to the meanings of the humanistic categories of Western culture - foremost the Greek-classical paideia and the Roman-Latin humanitas, the Christian-medieval perfectio and the Renaissance-humanistic dignitas hominis – a non-marginal component of the pedagogical debate in the last years of the Twentieth century directs attention to the human being, interpreting him as a co-responsible subject of his educational process. We are in front of an historic passage and a pedagogical turning point which are taking shape slowly, and not without difficulty. A variety of factors contributes to this change, amongst which it is also possible to recognize the gradual tendency to break free from the legacies of a pedagogical tradition that for a long time has led (directly or indirectly) to interpret and understand education primarily in its relational and interpersonal dimensions. And this also as a reflection of the Christian-medieval category of perfectio, which recalling the Holy Scriptures synthetizes the educational ideal expressed by the bond that develops between God (The Teacher, par excellence) and man (the disciple, by custom). An increasingly widespread process of secularization affects, therefore, also on pedagogy, gradually pushing this science to focus its reflection on the faculties that the human being has of becoming educator and teacher of himself; namely, to educate himself. At this change of perspective, then, contribute in a decisively way the studies that, for example, have been conducted in the Italian pedagogy, since the Nineties, about the neo-humanistic category of Bildung: the formation of the human being. All this, in short synthesis, helps to delineate the idea of self-formation that, alongside education, looms another horizon of pedagogical research.

So, together with a progressive reorganization of the pedagogical discourse that has driven pedagogy to promote a rigorous construction of its scientific statute, the issue of self-formation comes to identify a new object of pedagogical research, distinct from education. If, before the Nineties

of the Twentieth century, within the Italian pedagogical debate, the term "self-formation" is mostly synonymous with the word "education" – used to emphasize the philosophical value and recall the meaning of Greek paideia (namely, an "harmonious" formation) that characterizing the educational process – the spread of studies on Bildung involves an epistemic restructuring of the heuristic areas of pedagogy. This is required in order to operate a clarification in the pedagogical lexicon. The term "human formation", therefore, comes to indicate the process of a harmonious building of each subject, interpreted in his uniqueness and individuality. The self-formation is not instruction, learning, preparation, acculturation and even education. It, rather, includes all these meanings, in the sense that the human being gives form to himself even through the paths of instruction, learning, preparation, acculturation and education. It also evokes the being of the human kind, in his ontological (and often inscrutable) unit and depth.

The pedagogical concept of "self-formation", therefore, can not be restricted neither within the "abstract" meanings usually attributed to the idea of "cultural education", or within the "concrete" meanings conventionally assigned to the category of "professional training". If, as Goethe taught, the innate harmony of every human being (and therefore also of man, understood as a species and not as a gender) is kept in the Bildung that is always a process of *Umbildung* – transformation – (cf. Goethe, 1817: 53), and if, as argued by Franz Rosenzweig, man is above his Bildung (cfr. Rosenzweig 2000: 186), then to talk about self-formation means, in pedagogy, facing the problem of ontological and anthropological structure of the human being. This perspective leads up to Nietzsche's abyss threshold from which it is possible to see, not without feeling dizzy, «the mysterious depths of our being, of which we are the appearance» (Nietzsche, 1872: 35). Stopping on this "human border" it becomes clear that as Bildung - contrary to what Heidegger erroneously proposed (cf. 1942, 1954) does not coincide with a Vorbildung: namely, with a "conformation" that reproduces a model. This is because the self-formation is never a process of adjustment (enforced and coercively imposed from the outside) to a supposed canon of perfection, but expresses a path (wanted and sought freely) that leads each human being to the discovery of his own form, his essence and his substance. So, the idea of education implies first of all "to be educated" by someone, while the idea of self-formation properly means

"to form themselves." In the first case, the one who educates has the responsibility of the education process. In the second case the subject takes responsibility for his own formation.

From the point of view of pedagogy, therefore, there is the following distinction: every human being can educate (erziehen) another human being, but no human being can form (bilden) another human being. And this because only the subject can really form himself (sich-bilden). Within these semantic clarifications coming from German language and German cultural tradition it seems appropriate to remember - first of all on the basis of the Gadamer's lesson – that to the subject must be recognized and given the responsibility of "educating himself" (sich-erziehen)" (cf. Gadamer, 2000). The human being, therefore, can be educated, educate himself and form himself (but, in terms tightly pedagogical, he cannot be formed by any other). These are three different but interconnected dimensions that affect the real and concrete life of man. This clarification was achieved on the ridge that leads from the Twentieth century to the Twenty-first century, when pedagogy could be legitimately interpreted (and, therefore, epistemologically identified) as the general science of self-formation and the education of human being.

2. Clinical Pedagogy: deformation and miseducation

The acquisition of a more robust and rigorous epistemological statute has gradually allowed pedagogy not only to understand, define and determine the differences between education and self-formation, but also to detect how these dimensions denoting man's life manifest themselves pretty often in *critical phases* and *states of crisis*.

Taking into account the contributions that the modern age brings – also through that process of civilization about which Norbert Elias spoke (cf. 1969-80) – to the progress of humanity and to the welfare of subjects (for example, the development of knowledge and, therefore, of science, technique and technology, as well as the improvement of sanitary conditions), must also be included education. In this respect, it seems sufficient here to notice as literacy, schooling and instruction have become (at least, in Europe and in the "Western world") an inviolable right (at least, in principle) for everyone: without distinctions regarding sex, ethnicity, lan-

guage, religion, political opinion, economic conditions and social positions. However, if the analysis moves from the macro-economic, political and legal dimension to the micro-individual, personal and subjective condition, it becomes clear how education is today, in the modern age, in critical conditions and in state of crisis. It is a heterogeneous "problematicity", different from that which has arisen in previous times, so that within the traditional "educational institutions" - first of all the family (with the relationship between parents and children), the school (with the relationship between teacher and student) and the society (with the dynamics between public and private) – are found, with increasing frequency, forms of miseducation. At this state of facts, of which bear daily witness the newspapers, are also related forms of deformation which, although they appear less obvious, are now the cause and effect of forms of miseducation. This has gradually led pedagogy, just as general science of self-formation and education of the human being, to deepen the connections between education and absence of education, between self-formation and absence of lack of self-formation. In this way, therefore, the heuristic perimeter of a research area has gradually taken shape, whose epistemic identity came from the study of the deformation and miseducation of the human being. This is the Clinical Pedagogy.

The clinical pedagogy is a "pedagogical science", specific and sectoral, which has in general pedagogy its fundamental and foundational knowledge (Gennari, 2006: 121; Sola, 2008c: 16). More generally, clinical pedagogy belongs to the family of "sciences of formation", as its epistemological system and its teleological horizon show a marked principle of relevance to the problems of formation of the human being. It, however, is not attributable to the field of "science of education", as its scientific status is rooted in the general pedagogy and not in the interdisciplinary relation that pedagogy establishes with other sciences – for example, with philosophy, psychology, sociology, thus giving rise to the philosophy of education, psychology of education, sociology of education, etc. (cf. Gennari, 2006: 122-124) -. It is, therefore, faced with a theorical and practical science, which curving the general knowledge about the self-formation and education to the particular aspects of deformation and miseducation, operates primarily sub specie paedagogiae. This means, in other words, that the clinical pedagogy is structurally related with the general pedagogy, without abdicating its epistemological autonomy.

Before considering the differences between deformation and miseducation, a preliminary consideration is appropriate. Inside the pedagogy, the study of education has been decisive to make gradually emerge the issue of self-formation. It is in light of these "historical prerequisites" that even today, in the contemporary pedagogical debate, there is a centrality of "educational" compared to "formative". Not so it is within the horizon of clinical pedagogy (cf. Sola, 2008c), where – in light of the epistemological and methodological criteria – the study of the deformation is a prerequisite for better understending miseducation.

A) The term *deformation* identifies, in clinical pedagogy, a "departure" from the formation which can be caused by multiple factors. The prefix "de-" (as preposition that indicates "a movement from place") recalls a "distancing" and a "separation" that induce "loss": specifically, of selfformation. Up to here there are the etymological meanings of the concept. But the deformation, in the context of real and concrete life of a subject, is above all a malaise of which the subject can not understand the causes, because they are rooted in the crisis of his own being. In the formative becoming of the human being the deformation constitutes a transitional phase, of which the subject remains often unaware. Sometimes, however, it turns into a state: that is, in a condition that persists over time, causing suffering and pain. This is not a physical illness or a psychic pathology, although it can be the origin of both. A deep and intimate disharmony: this is the uncertain perception that the subject in a state of deformation has of himself and to which does not find the right words – namely, a language – to describe it. Then, he simply says "I am in a state of crisis." For who is in a state of deformation, the general feeling of disharmony becomes more acute, resulting in a persistent malaise that can have the most different manifestations: for example, panic attacks, feelings of depression, eating disorders, alcohol and drugs addiction. The deformation, therefore, has its roots in the inner structure of the human being, where the formation has its origins.

B) The term *miseducation* identifies, in clinical pedagogy – for the same etymological reasons mentioned above about the concept of deformation –, a "departure" from the processes of education that allow the subject not only to be educated and to educate himself, but also to form himself. The miseducation, therefore, is the effect that an inadequate educational relation produces within the subject. Even the miseducation can have different

manifestations representing a phase or a state. It can not be confused – it seems appropriate, here, to specify it – with what is commonly meant by the term "rudeness", because it is a dimension of human life that is not solely relatable to the possession (or lack) of the "good manners". The miseducation has its genesis in the relationship that is established between two or more parties, and it can also influence the formation, deforming it. In other words, the relationship between parents and children, teachers and students, as well as friendships and affectionate relationships can be a source of miseducation whenever these bonds do not allow the human being to experience, properly, the dimensions of *educăre*, of *educăre* and of *edocāre*.

Focusing its heuristic attention on deformation and miseducation, clinical pedagogy sheds light on those *forms of deformation* and *miseducation* representing today, at the beginning of the Twenty-first century, an issue that can no longer be avoided. And this is not only from the pedagogical point of view.

3. The hidden form

Turning the speech from epistemic-heuristics identities of general pedagogy and clinical pedagogy to concrete and real dimensions of people's lives, it is possible to outline some kinds of considerations. Taking a quick glance to modern human being, it does not seem a forced interpretation to see his existential being-in-crisis. The increasing use of psychotropic substances, of alcohol addiction, of depression cases, as well as the spread of panic attacks or of behavioral, attention and learning disorders are worrying signals of a general malaise that is studied, in its particular aspects, by a plurality of sciences. It is studied not only by medicine, neurology, psychiatry and psychoanalysis, but also psychology, sociology and anthropology, as well as biology and genetic. Each of them (moving by their own statutes and their own scientific methods) produce knowledge providing better understanding of the causes and effects of addictions, disorders, illnesses, diseases, and states of crisis. Within this wide landscape - of course more detailed and complex than we could include here for reasons of space and opportunity – an additional and double scientific contribution is presented: that offered by general pedagogy and, more specifically, by clinical pedagogy.

In this respect, the pedagogical debate has - it seems appropriate to report it - scientific positions which do not always agree. It is, in other words, a consideration whether clinical pedagogy, as science of deformation and miseducation of the human being, can prove its effectiveness in understanding and dealing with some types of malaises, bringing substantial improvements to the lives of subjects. Considering this perspective, some questions are taking shape. For example: can we exclude, with certainty, the "deformation" from the causes that determine (or contribute to) the emergence of depression or panic attacks? Is it certain that the "miseducation" is not involved in the genesis of learning disorders or attention deficit? Can we deny the possibility that the deformation and/or miseducation play a role (more or less important) in the beginning of drug addiction? If the answers to these questions are negative, then it will be necessary not only to recognize that the clinical pedagogy can contribute to the understanding of the states of malaise affecting modern man, but also to recognize how the forms of the deformation and miseducation require – to be identified, addressed and resolved - the (theoretical) knowledge and the (practical) skills of another professional: the clinical pedagogist.

Clinical pedagogy and clinical pedagogist deal, in other words, with the hidden form of the formation of the human being. The formation, as ontological structure of the human being (cf. Gennari, 2015: 34), is not immediately visible from the outside. Indeed, it remains largely hidden in the deep and intimate dimension of each subject, affecting however, significantly, his life and the quality of his existence. The form of formation is constantly changing because of its original impulses to transformation. When the process of transformation (cf. Sola, 2003) takes place in the sign of harmony and balance, the human being forms himself. When the dynamics of transformation are given in terms of disharmony and imbalance, the human being deformed himself. Between formation and deformation there is a dynamic relationship, by virtue of which the subject is formed surpassing phases (ie, periods of limited duration) of deformation. However, when a deformation phase turns into a state of deformation (ie, a lasting condition) formation stops, crashes, it will not allow the formation of the subject to become harmonious. Since the formation always involves becoming transformative, each situation of calcification or crystallization of the formative process can result in deformation, that causes in the subject a state of pervasive and permanent crisis. The latter originates in the hidden depths of his *being*, where the ill-being takes over the well-being, affecting the quality of the existential experience.

The task of the clinical pedagogist, then, is to educate the subject to find the hidden form of his own formation, becoming conscious and aware of the reasons that produced the forms of his deformation. The clinical-pedagogical counselling is, therefore, a pedagogical relationship whereby the clinical pedagogist helps and supports – here there is the clinical dimension – the subject, educating him to rethink the malaise which destabilizes him in relation to his "formative archeology" (Sola, 2008c: 41). It is through this process of (semiotical and hermeneutical) interpretation in the history and geography of each subject that anxiety, eating and deficit disorders or learning disabilities –just for a few examples – can also manifest themselves, and therefore be interpreted, in clinical pedagogy, as symptoms (ie, as signs, effects and/or consequences) of a formative malaise that has remained hidden, because the form of formation of the human being is hidden. The clinical pedagogy introduces, inside knowledge that deals with human welfare, another research perspective and another type of intervention. The first is the study of the connection between formation/deformation, education/miseducation, and deformation/miseducation. The second is the methodological procedures that innervate the pedagogical-clinical counselling.

Thus, an idea of care is taking shape, substantiated by the concept of clinical diversity. With this last expression we want here to refer to the many ways in which "clinical" can be understood and, therefore, articulated. The "clinical" identifies, first, that part of medicine that studies the morbid manifestations of the disease through a direct observation of individual patients, establishing diagnosis, prognosis and appropriate treatments to individuals. We speak, therefore, of "clinical trial" and "clinical therapy", but also of "clinical case", "clinical picture" and "clinical gaze". Then, there are the "clinical sciences", to which properly belong the general clinical medicine and the general clinical surgery, as well as the specialty clinics like, for example, the paediatric clinic and the ophthalmology clinic. Outside the context of medicine and surgery should be noted, then, clinical psychology, but it is also possible to recognize the presence of clinical philosophy, clinical anthropology or clinical sociology. Each of these sciences, in synthesis, assigns to the "individual dimension" a decisive role, although each pursues this objective expressing the clinical differently. This also applies to clinical pedagogy. Here, the *diversity* and *specificity* of *clinical* are reflected, both theoretically and operationally, from the specifics (for their "particularity") and unrepeatable (for their "uniqueness") aspects of the deformation and miseducation in subjects – working for solving problems related to them.

Therefore, from formation and education to deformation and miseducation: the *hidden form* of the human being is preserved even in the weaving of these relations, which need to be further studied, investigated and known. This is because deformation and miseducation produce a *diaschisis* in the ontological structure of the subject: namely, a division, a separation, and a laceration in formation, which destabilize the overall well-being of the human being. Therefore, the *clinical gaze* of pedagogy lingers precisely on the interpretation of this structural unit of the human being.

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