

Chapter 26

Pedagogical Reflection on Desire and Perspectives for an Education of Identity



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Abstract Desire is a human dimension that plays a central role in the formation of personal identity. Studies on desire are increasingly frequent and draw attention to the need to overcome perspectives on desire as a dynamic of satisfaction subjected to the influence of hyperedonism. One of the paths to pursue is to humanize desire by recognizing it as an anthropological and inner dynamic dimension that opens us to the other. The contribution aims to develop a pedagogical reflection on desire in dialogue with the most current perspectives of psychoanalysis, such as the view of the Italian psychoanalyst Massimo Recalcati. He affirms that we tend to identify desire with its enjoyment and to attribute it above all to the drive toward infinite potential, disengaging it from the limits of any law. With desire liberated, we end up degrading it rather than recognizing it in its generative dimension as an openness to a positive horizon of the other and of the elsewhere (2012).

According to the philosopher Francesco Botturi, desire is a “tension”, an “invisible center of gravity” which directs the actions of man and which appears in the watermark of all his actions (2009). As an intrinsically anthropological dimension, desire enables us to delineate an experience of new and superior composition capable of “reading” the inner dimensions of the person and to guide the formation of personal identity. The aim of a pedagogical reflection is to rediscover the humanistic meaning of desire as a “vector” that moves the search for oneself to help future generations to explore their identity.

Keywords Desire · Other · Relationship · Education to identity

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26.1 For a Pedagogical Reflection on Desire

Desire characterizes us as an indication of ourselves that is formed inside, and even if we do not know precisely where our desires arise, all our experience is interested in desire as a continuous exchange between us and things, the others and the world.

To use a metaphor, desire is like the air hermetically compressed in a bag, which looks for a crack to escape and express itself externally. Nothing and no one can stop it, indeed, faced with difficult experiences, desire does not get out, but is reborn as the quest which the human being undertakes in the direction of beauty, goodness, and happiness (Ciancio 2003). For us, desire is a promise of happiness and personal fulfillment, a dimension that puts us in relation, creates bonds, both in the emotional and affective meaning and also because it opens us to experiences of growth and transformation (Barcellona 2011). Therefore, to deny desires means to deny people the possibility of expression and self-fulfillment.

If the philosophical reflection desire evokes a recurrent problematic, it is still unusual within pedagogical reflections and educational practices. There is no doubt that this is a subject that has wide references to education of emotions, of affections, of love, even if it still creates confusion. In reality, there are reasons to recall the centrality of desire in an education aimed at promoting the ability to exercise *a deep gaze on oneself*, to prevent young people from pursuing inauthentic desires. This risk is particularly felt in an age of complexity in which personal insecurity tends to be amplified, the quest for self-fulfillment is increasingly difficult to achieve.

However, the pedagogical reflection on desire is not simple. The analysis of the links between education and desire is influenced by interpretations that above all validate the analogy between instruction, learning, training, and education as interchangeable terms. As a consequence, education is reduced to processes of acquiring knowledge, skills, and competences useful for the inclusion of the person in a social, cultural, and professional context. Following these interpretations, education might be seen only as a material dimension of life, satisfying needs, and problems of every day, leaving out that people are *beings open to desire*, and through this, to the *relationship with the other* and in search of a meaning for their lives. In this regard, Roland Barthes comes to our aid when he tries to trace logic at the base of the relationship that the person feels toward the other, when he engages the desire as a space that however appears “not designable” because it is a relationship that we have with the uniqueness of the other: “I will never know anything about him; my language will always be confused, the other will fiddle in an attempt to express his desire, but I will never produce anything but an empty word, which is like the zero degree of all the spaces in which the very special desire that I have of the unique other is formed (and not of another)” (Barthes 1971, 2001, p. 18).

If the other is and always will remain for me an enigma, in this sense also the desire we have for the other struggles to say its reality: the other designates to me the specialty of my desire. Hence the very strict implication that is built between desire and personal identity, between desire and relationships, also in an educational direction.

Referring to the educational relationship, Piero Bertolini pointed out the connection between desire, presence of an erotic component and educational relationship. The author affirms that every educational experience has an “erotic dimension”, involving two (or more) protagonists (Bertolini 1999, p. 42). As a consequence, in education, desire can give rise to two outcomes: (1) one instrumental toward the other, (2) and another of an opening to the other. For the purpose of a pedagogical rereading of desire, on the one hand, desire can be understood as a powerful tool in the hands of people whose purpose would be to achieve a dominion and a possession toward other people, in this case objectified, possessed, and manipulated; on the other hand, however, the erotic dimension can be understood and pursued as an extraordinary original human power, capable of opening up to the other person as a person to be respected, to be valued, and therefore to be considered as a motive for the non-objectifying desire of the other; in short, as someone who can interact positively with our constitutive incompleteness. Therefore, desire as the foundation of an intersubjective relationship, characterized by reciprocity, vivifies both actors in the relationship, stimulating them to overcome their current personality (p. 41).

Desire arises in us, but manifests itself within an intersubjective and profound relationship. When an educational relationship is established there must be an asymmetry between two people, but also an authentic availability, in terms of interest, sympathy, or love, both parties of the educator and the student: “It is necessary that the educator establishes a kind of desire that the other (the student, whoever he may be) participates in some way in his existential heritage and in his knowledge, accepting only from the beginning that such participation is not merely slavishly repetitive” (p. 43). To establish an educational relationship that sustains the growth of the student by avoiding control and domination by the educator, the relationship will imply a non-alienating, not impersonal attention, but “a choice” of the person, because the educator does not relate to an anonymous individual, but to a person recognized in his/her concreteness, with objective determinations and also conditionings.

In order to interpret desire from a pedagogical standpoint, one must think about the educational relationship as a relationship between two in which we have to be able to recognize and give meaning to the set of personal dimensions. The educator must be aware of the reciprocity through which one can see in the other an individual in his/herself, a person primarily to be respected in his/her characteristics, that is to say in his uniqueness. Unfortunately, the current context of crisis and impasse in education especially in today’s school, that is increasingly “empty” in its educational aims, tired of being attracted toward students, does not allow us to glimpse conditions favorable to the promotion of personal uniqueness. In an age of generalized weakening of every symbolic authority, the practice of teaching seems to take the path of reduction to the mere transmission of information and skills. Against this framework of educational crisis, the psychoanalyst Massimo Recalcati, one of the most famous Italian scholars of Lacan’s thought, maintains that instead, we need to rekindle a relationship of desire with knowledge and put it at the center of learning. The essential of teaching consists of mobilizing the desire to know, because knowing does not only mean increasing knowledge, but also and above learning to open

oneself to other worlds with respect to those already known through this opening (Recalcati 2014, p. 84).

If education is a fundamental part of every teaching practice, it is impossible to disengage it from the process of humanizing the person. Consequently, in every teaching practice and learning situation, dynamics are involved which mobilize desire around and through knowledge.

Cognitive and emotional and relational contents are intertwined: the lesson and the time of the lesson are intersected by implications related to the body, to the impulses, to the teacher's gesture that transforms knowledge into the object that causes desire, acts in the world of the person, widens his/her horizon, transforms life beyond the already seen: the teacher not only leads along roads that are not known at all, but, above all, as Socrates shows us, the teacher moves the desire to travel. The lesson is an encounter that breaks the reality of the institutional automaton (Recalcati, p. 99). The ability of good teachers is of being able to renew desire in students, going beyond boredom, and repetition. The good teacher is the one who respects knowledge while transmitting it, he also knows how to keep it "suspended," just as desire is by nature suspended.

In an interaction between psychoanalysis and pedagogy, we can see that the connection between desire and the educational relationship is emphasized in order to trace in the desire the conditions of possibility of learning and of a solid relationship. However, desire does not always find recognition, but it records continuous shifts or slips. From being an original dimension that accompanies the human being since his birth and that leads him to the encounter with the other, in particular with the parental and central figures of care, desire runs the risk, in the course of the growth of the person, of losing his transformative potential. When desire is not able to express the individual difference and the diversity of each one, it becomes blurred in the opacity and indistinctness of the generic and of what does not belong to the person. Hence the risk that we run of losing our desire, and to be "dominated by an unimaginative desire" (Lorenzetti and Baldissera 2000, p. 131) that becomes a destructive anxiety and dissatisfaction.

The meaning of desire then becomes central for understanding both education, and the human being and its essential ends, to formulate a path of education that should lead the growing person to meet the dimension of the possible and an intentionality of meaning to exercise one's own existence.

However, it is puzzling to see how this term does not appear frequently in the scholastic and training dynamics, perhaps due to the excess of intellectualization and cognitivization of education that still prevails in the formative dynamics, due to the primacy of the cognitive on the personal dimensions, emotions, and feelings.

Removed from the language and the life of education, desire opens instead a wide space of reflection as regards some fundamental aspects.

A pedagogical interpretation draws attention to at least three problems identifiable as possible directions of research, to promote desire as a focus for the education of future generations:

1. Desire as an inner and not external quest
2. Desire as tension of every human being
3. Desire as a dimension of personal identity

In relation to these articulations of reflection, it is necessary to introduce some clarifications.

26.2 To Recognize the Difficult Traces of Desire in Contemporary Society

Desire is a dimension that sees us as beings oriented to the self-fulfillment and the identification of our unique desire. But to feel desire is not in itself a guarantee of the feasibility of our aspirations. As a demonstration, we find the many difficulties that in everyday life make desire an illusion, a denied happiness, a meeting with frustrations, and anguishes (Ehrenberg 2010).

One of the critical aspects that prevent us from tracking down the authentic meaning that desire plays in self-fulfillment is due to the expanding horizons of possibilities, knowledge, and resources available by the technological society (Musaio 2016). This leads us to believe that desire resides in what we think and do to attain a fuller life.

In an age that records the continuous improvement of the living conditions of people, and that puts the accent on the search for material well-being, desire changes with regard to the meaning, and the ways in which it is experienced. These changes are not always positive if we consider the effects produced on education by a culture based on mass consumption, technology, and global network, reducing education to a link between communication and cognition as only existential imperative. Moreover, desire is increasingly identified in self-fulfillment, success, happiness, lived in an inner emptiness, and isolation. Rather than feeding ourselves with desire, we empty ourselves.

For these reasons it is necessary a rereading of our current existential condition, to understand the risk of seeking the answer to inner questions only externally. Hence the need to return to the authentic meaning of desire in relation to our “inner freedom” (Mari 2013, pp. 7–8) to be free with regard to things, culture of the idolatry of success and power, to not to remain slaves to the exteriority.

Another critical point is the suffocation of desire caused by mass and technological culture, which tends to dismiss both the individual and the process of individuation, and at the same time the process of formation of the person. As the influences of the external on the internal abilities to learn, perceive, and manifest their affective and aesthetic dimensions grow, the possibilities for the individual to be and feel truly autonomous increasingly fade. Technology, for its part, a great ally of our development, gives us a world rich in connections, but not in relationships. Our time seems to enjoy extraordinary abundances, even if it turns out to be lacking in reference points to guide the construction of personal perspectives and life projects. Consequently, a time full of opportunities imposes the priority of working more on people

and relationships and to enable them to trace personal potential and possibility (Musaió 2016). In this direction, the knowledge of one's desire becomes not only a question of learning and knowledge: "Learning is not just an intellectual question, it is an exercise that engages man in the totality of his faculties, it is an aspiration to complete and go beyond yourself. It is the will to build a relationship with the world and with other people" (Lo Storto 2017, p. 46). Hence the central role of desire as a potential and relational dimension to set the conditions for expressing, consequently, a desire for happiness, and lovingly accompanying oneself to others as presences for one's life.

Among the risks of living in a virtual society of the thousand possibilities and in an "achievement society" (Han 2015), there is also one of becoming "busy" subjects (La Porta 2016), engaged in innumerable interests, but not genuinely oriented to understanding what one's desire is. Hence the need to activate ways and styles of education that help, especially the younger generations, to know the desire that moves within themselves, to learn to be authentically themselves. Education plays a crucial role in outlining itself as a set of possibilities to aspire to something good and beautiful for oneself and for others, not only in the sense of reflection but above all in the direction of a concrete action characterized in an ethical sense (Mari 2003).

Another critical point that prevents the identification of the traces of desire is given by an experience that tends to be populated by surrogates of desire and a desire reduced to feeling, emptied of its being and deprived of the strength to pursue what we really desire, as if in the end desire is a shadow that it cannot sustain in our personal and responsible commitment.

The shifting of desire outside the subject does not allow to orient the dynamics of awareness to understand what it is and in what direction to proceed. So it happens that ours is an era characterized by a rampant "desire hysteria," but not by a reflection on the profound meaning of this word and on the relationship it has with our way of living and relating to others. Therefore, it is a matter of orienting oneself in the search for connections that hold together ourselves, the world and our depth. It is a question of recognizing in desire the reference to an uneasiness, a nonstop quest that originates in consciousness as a perception of an original lack to be filled, as the word "de-siderum" reminds us of our coming "from stars," our being constantly turned to something else, to go beyond ourselves.

26.3 Desire as a Tension of the Human Being

Desire seeks the infinite, even if experience shows us continually that nothing succeeds in satisfying our "desire for the infinite" (Bellingreri 2011, p. 46). So as not to risk getting bogged down in the desire experienced as a multiplication of finite, we need to look for "the right measure of the finite and of the infinite." In addition, one needs to look for the connection between the single determined realities and a fullness of meaning that is announced in them, going beyond what

immediately appears, beyond our immediate experience, beyond the surface of the world to seek instead the answers in the depth of our being.

Analyzing desire from a phenomenological analysis of our perceptive consciousness, Antonio Bellingreri points out how the infinite character of our desire poses the specifically ethical task of “choosing those things or those objects that present a connection with the infinite.” Phenomenologically our desire is a tendency toward the infinite, but so to avoid the risk of getting lost in a search without hope, “it is necessary to choose to understand every determined reality, thing or person our desire encounters, such as an imprint and fragment that infinite gives us” (p. 48).

From within a phenomenological analysis, desire reflects our consciousness as the form of each person’s way of being, the attitude of the intentionality of consciousness able to articulate itself in two ways: in relation to the situation and at the same time in relation to a wider horizon in searching for totality and infinity: “By reason of this intentional duplicity, a person is always a historical text, precisely in the sense understood by hermeneutics, historically situated existence; and together with an ontological sign. To reflect on a person is, on the one hand, always to understand a human existence defined by its belonging to a human community as an original situation that constitutes it and of which it speaks directly, in every word and in every gesture. On the other hand, the person goes beyond the determined conditions. [. . .] Every reality always offers intuition as a determined presence, but it is constituted by the reference to an absence” (p. 49).

Phenomenologically the dimension of desire is a term that refers to something from the other, in this sense, it is a symbol. Consequently, it involves being able to relate it to a link, not to stop at the surface of things, but to be able to look inside, otherwise, our desire would risk being chained to the dimension of having, forced only to possess things and unable to access the dimension of being. On the contrary, as a “tension” that directs us to seek a totality, desires need things and objects, but by reason of their connection with the dimension of being (p. 51). Unfortunately, this connection of desire as a quest for wholeness is not easy to put into practice. People find themselves living in a condition of “existential somnambulism”—Bellingreri states—because they appear to be conditioned by preferences, choices, feelings, conditioned by a “sacralization of the material and impersonal spheres of reality,” situated in a personal existence where there are no actors, much few authors, but only dormant subjects, more or less aware of themselves (p. 67).

A phenomenological analysis guides us toward ourselves, overcoming the narcissistic closure and get closer to the other, to create a bond “I-you” characterized by intentionality and exercise an anticipating consciousness that recognizes desire of every person.

In a pedagogical reflection, desire has to be considered in relation to different expressions in relation to the body, ways of thinking, our relationships to things and with the world, to emotions, to feelings. In fact, desire is like a “woven fabric” of dimensions, events, and situations, within which the profile of the author and his identity emerges, even though different expressions of desire do not always coincide perfectly with who we are. Desire can project different profiles of ourselves, underlining however our desire to be and to be in full awareness (Lorenzetti and

Baldissera 2000, p. 9). This aim is not easy to pursue. And if everything seems to become an object of desire, if our desire moves quickly from one thing to another, we know little about the true meaning of desire and how it comes about also because of the complex implications that it has “Nothing like desire should be lived in the reality of the body, individual and social, and in the concrete reality of the spirit. Nothing like desire should be a stimulus to make the body and spirit dance, so that we do not allow ourselves to be martyred by the myths with which our time suffocates our expressions of desire” (Dumoulié 1999, 2002, p. XII).

We might think that desire is within our reach and we believe we know it deeply, but, in reality, it continues to elude us. For these reasons, every era tries to trace the coordinates in different fields: from philosophy to religion, to art, to psychoanalysis, to literature.

Western philosophy has built most of its elaborations on desire as an intrinsic tendency of being human and his state of lacking. The meaning of the Latin word *de-siderium* indicates a departure from the star, from God, of a fall from the sky and from the stars (*sidera*), consequently, of a desire that is a state of lacking, indeed, we could say that it is the lack from which man draws the strength of personal motivation and conscience. According to C. Dumoulié’s point of view, desire can be analyzed by taking into consideration two aspects:

- As “desire of Being,” as the unification of the human and the metaphysical plans.
- As man’s desire, as the potential and essence of man himself subject to the inhibition and control of the law, as a power that can be freely expressed or morally repressed.

In the interweaving of these points of view, desire “asserts itself as something eternal” (p. 25), which contributes to reaffirming the eternity of the world. Alternating between the logic of the lacking and the expression of the human potential, desire offers the human being a great opportunity for knowledge, to recognize himself in the other as a desirable being, to be able to offer himself to the other in the potential of his own being, in that love which Lacan has defined “love in the face, the narcissistic love of oneself found in the other, the question of being loved” (pp. 224–225).

In the scenario of contemporary reflection, the contribution of Lacan’s psychoanalysis recognizes the primacy of desire in every educational process, emphasizing the need to conceive desire, outside and beyond repressive or moralistic implications, as an element that regulates the relationship between adult and child, between educator and pupil (Massa 2010, p. 35).

If the reference to Lacan seems interesting to understand how in desire as a tension there are latent, implicit affective, and cognitive dimensions, beyond the interweaving that the theme of desire maintains with the theme of education of emotions and affections, it is interesting to undertake a reflection about the generative structure in relation to the ways of personal being, especially in its relationship with the other (Mancini 2003). In this sense, we are dealing with a hermeneutical path oriented to develop desire as a way to access the knowledge of each person’s inner world.

Beyond the dialectic between need and desire, between desire and structure, between desire and experience, it is necessary to try to explain how desire is involved in the process of forming experiences that must no longer only be hidden, protected, or confined to hiding.

As Riccardo Massa says: “What protects and prohibits generally corresponds to the common and traditional meaning we have of the idea of education, and it is precisely this that condemns desire, to the outskirts of education and it prevents us from thinking about the structure of desire by opposing desire itself” (Massa 2010, p. 40).

From a pedagogical point of view, the problem underlined by this author is the need to humanize desire, to allow this dimension to “inhabit” the experience of the child and adolescent, the experience of young people and adults. It is necessary to put desire in the center of education so as not to risk flattening out it only to the satisfaction of needs and caring of others, considering that in an authentically formative relationship desire constitutes the “fire” that activates the encounter.

For these reasons, we hope that around desire can develop not only psychological experiences and reflections, but also anthropological considerations of the human being. Desire is a field of experience and a shared setting among children, young people, and adults, to encounter the real and the imaginary.

The analysis of contemporary thought recognize in desire, despite the issues, an intrinsically human dimension, central in the life of every person, for intersubjective relationships and for the purposes of identity education. As Massimo Recalcati highlights, our era, living the paradoxes of hyperedonism, tends to identify desire with its enjoyment, and to attribute an infinite potential above all to impulse, ending up by detaching it from the limits of all laws. So it happens that in order to free desire from the bonds of a civil morality, one ends up sanctioning its mortification, while, instead, desire, in order to be generative and nourish another desire, and offer a positive horizon of the Elsewhere, needs the Law. Hence the need not to confuse desire with arbitrariness, with whim, with fickleness, with the absence of any reading (Recalcati 2012). The need to develop appropriate explanations with regard to the dynamics of desire which, as the philosopher Francesco Botturi says, it expresses that “tension” which is the “invisible center of gravitation,” as a virtual focal point that attracts and directs the work of man, and that appears through all his acts (Botturi 2009, p. 97). As a dynamic of a projective nature, which goes beyond need, and which is interested in something else, desire presents itself as “an ideal rule of composition of experience,” the reference to a new and higher anthropological condition, which involves a transformation of the subject’s abilities and his actions. For all these reasons we can understand how desire has close connections with a pedagogical reflection and education. In its humanistic meaning of “desiring vector” that moves a human’s ethical quest, desire is “a dynamic position” where a person does not transform reality only to take advantage of it, but more radically to make reality his own, to humanize it, to rediscover himself bringing his rationality to the encounter with that of things and thus take away from them the aspect of opposition they have for the man himself (p. 91).

Because of its complex nature, at the same time ambivalent and elusive, desire must be faced from a pedagogical perspective that recognizes it as a fundamental

dimension in educational processes, considering that the challenge of education does not lie only in preparing the conditions for development, the growth, and acquisition of the full autonomy of the person, but in helping her to listen to herself and her motivations. Unfortunately, this dimension of life of the person is conditioned by the influence exercised by Western culture that has transformed *homo felix* into a subject completely subjected to consumption, to needs, committed to pursuing the individual search for his own happiness, projected to pursue unlimited enjoyment and becoming exasperated. As a consequence, there is a mortification of desire that cannot be identified only in the consumption of the object or of oneself. This is why, as Recalcati highlights, reopening the question about the nature of desire, this doesn't fit here his difference: undoubtedly human beings need air, heat, light, bread, but desire is something more with respect to the satisfaction of needs; desire is "the desire of the Other, a request for recognition, a request for love."

Desire cannot be crushed by the satisfaction of need, it cannot be subjected to the urgency of biological survival (Recalcati 2012, p. 90). In its nature of reference to something else, desire frees the subject from identification with the satisfaction of the object and opens it instead to "exposure" to the other. In this way, desire also opens us to a certain risk of indecipherability, of uncertainty and suspension in the face of the desire of the other. In this regard Recalcati argues: "The human being arises in the background of this question [. . .]. We are all hanging on to the indecipherable will of the other" (p. 74). For these reasons it is more correct to speak of desire in the plural of "portraits of desire," to highlight that there are different ways of representing it, considering that, when we speak of our desire we evoke an experience that in the different meanings consists of making us "feel overcome": "Whenever I experience the desire I feel dispossessed by the government sure of myself, I feel carried by a force that goes beyond me, that goes beyond the power of government and control of the Ego" (pp. 26–27). This current reading of desire directs pedagogical reflection toward a desire that does not only apply as motivation or intentional movement but as an expression of a range of forms and portraits of desire united by an experience that opens the ego beyond itself. When the person desires she/he is not expressing his motivation, but the experience of otherness in him/herself as an experience that involves a loss of identity, a sort of non-identity and non-coincidence. As consequence, desire is an opportunity to break away from the Ego and from his narcissistic illusions, in order to be able to reconquer his own authenticity and in what defines it in its most proper sense (Candiani 2018, p. 63).

26.4 The Role of Desire in the Education Toward Identity

Desire as a quest and as our constant incompleteness, outlines a tension toward the other. For these reasons, it offers us the opportunity to go through our identifications and to open to the question about ourselves and the others: "The unconscious desire, in its impossible dialogue with the sense orients and structures, for each one considered in his singularity, the elements of the experience and the times of his

history. Dires, fixes, so to speak, the particular modes of encounter of each person (virtual desiring subject) [. . .], as well as the concomitant need for a perpetual exile of the subject on the outside of this consideration” (Leclair 1998, p. 308).

Beyond identification with something, desire is not an object, but an “interior and relational dynamic,” a continuous tension that directs us to go beyond ourselves to search for the space of the relationship with the other and to explore the inner motivations of one’s own identity, as Recalcati indicates: “the call of the internal transcendence of one’s desire” (Recalcati 2017, p. 137). Indeed, desire does not define unlimited and unregulated enjoyment without any law, nor responsibility, but rather the ability and capacity for commitment, project, creativity, invention, openness, exchange, love, generation, which gives rise to a horizon made up of hope, future, and fulfillment. These dimensions, expressions of singularity, connote identity in terms of openness and expectation of something positive, and not as a closure in itself and attachment to the ego that we believe we are.

Attention to desire is intertwined with the promotion of the person and global well-being. As Martha Nussbaum argues, linked to the classic recovery of eudaimonia, or the flowering of the human (Nussbaum 1998, p. 22), desire is a tension rooted in the human being, which directs us to think and build ourselves in relation to the recognition of that lack which constitutes us and which at the same time directs us to the project, in order to exercise the capacity to make what is not there and to realize it on the basis of an image, of a prefiguration at first only mental, but which in any case is the result of a creative possibility (Volli 2002, pp. 17–18).

Always in view of the construction of identity, desire helps to fill life, connecting us to pleasure, the search for happiness and fulfillment, as an experience that we can both express and conceal, living both as children and as adults, in relation to family experiences, and in all our fundamental experiences (Terminio 2011). Desire is the experience that allows us to define ourselves in our own psychic identity, orienting ourselves to establish a correspondence between our inner and other selves, as a result of a work of coincidence with ourselves.

As Lévinas has explained to us, the identity of the individual does not consist in being similar to itself and in being identified from the outside, because “the singularity is born [. . .] starting from the logical sphere exposed to the eye and organised in totality by the overthrow of this sphere in the interior of the ego” (Lévinas 1971, 2016, p. 297). The gaze of the other helps us to understand that relationships do not offer themselves to us only as an empirical matter of contacts, but that the relationship “takes place between Me and the Other face to face” (p. 298). The relationship is a dimension that cannot be reduced to any concept, in consideration of the fact that “the true essence of man appears in his face, in which he is infinitely different” (p. 299).

The logic of the gaze of the other is the presence of the other which commits me to understand his misery, to respond to his difficulty, to be responsible, because “Only by meeting others I am present myself. [. . .]. The face that I welcome makes me pass from the phenomenon to being in another sense: in the speech I expose myself to the question about the Others and this urgency of the answer—a pressing question of the present—generates me to responsibility. [. . .] Being attentive means recognizing

the lordship of the Other. [. . .]. My existence as a “thing in itself” begins with the presence in me of the idea of the Infinite, when I look for myself in my ultimate reality. But this relationship already consists in serving Others” (p. 183).

As Lévinas says, the identity that is created through desire is: “Identity that is constituted through enjoyment, is not a psychological state on a par with others, as one among the different affective shades, but it is a reference to the condition of one’s “thirst”, as “the very thrill of the ego” (p. 113). “We live [. . .] of air, of light, of shows, of work, of ideas, of sleep, etc. These are not objects of representation. We live by it. [. . .] The things of which we live are not means nor usable, in the Heideggerian sense of the term. Their existence is not exhausted by the utilitarian schematism that sheds light on them, [. . .]. They are always, to a certain extent, [. . .] objects of enjoyment, which offer themselves to the “taste”, already adorned, embellished” (p. 110).

We relate to life through enjoyment, in every moment of life, to relate to what is different from this moment itself and from us. The originality of the enjoyment of our desire lies in the fact that it gives us an unreflective and naive conscience: “Enjoyment, as a way in which life relates to its content is not a form of intentionality, but is the way in which the person becomes consciousness and interiority of the things, which are fixed thanks to the word that communicates them. Above enjoyment, desire establishes dwelling, possession, sharing of “a discourse on the world” (p. 140).

If the sociocultural scenario appears to be dominated by the need for education to conform to the logic coming from the outside of the person, imposed from time to time by the labor market, now by rapid changes and the results produced by science and technology, there is a risk that education is reduced to a uniformity of needs and skills dictated by adapting to what comes from outside. On the other hand, the attention for the logic of desire restores identity in search of a balance between interior and exterior, between constraints and opportunities, between one’s own and the other’s desire. Summing up we can say that desire brings back to the foreground identity as “an inner space and personal elaboration” that directs us to overcome extraneousness among people, things, relationships, to recognize ourselves in our identity, renouncing to assume only a subjective point of view or an only objective and external perspective about our life.

For an inner understanding of ourselves we need to be involved in reality, with people of flesh and blood and to enter into relationships as beings in our living and desiring bodies.

Desire activates our symbolic nature and helps us to overcome the opacity of everyday life and the reciprocal exteriority that makes our experiences neutral, mechanical, and insignificant. On the other hand, desire restores moments of being to the experience, because it allows us to track down and reveal the more we trace beyond ourselves, in reality and in others, that something more emerges from imagining something that originates from within us and goes beyond us. Continuously our world is “theater and witness of a movement towards the beyond and elsewhere” (Muraro 2009, p. 11).

Desire is the experience lived that accompanies us in everyday life, rooted in a subjectivity always missing, incapable of being satisfied. It traces out as a “movement” that leads the person to the test of reality, delineating an alternation between bodies and souls, inside and outside of us. Desire helps us to go beyond the real and to think that the real is unthinkable if we do not also think of the possible, and sometimes, even the impossible towards which desire directs us (p. 22). Desire allows us to make evident that there is the possibility of something other than our life.

To trace an “education to desire,” the pedagogical reflection recognizes desire as a fundamental anthropological dimension, as a dynamic for the construction of personal identity, and not only as emotion and feeling. This proposal would make it possible to finalize education as a focus on the person and his/her inner world, as a promotion and recognition of personal potential in the perspective of the possible (Musaio 2010, 2014), as attention to an identity that even in the original lack that constitutes us, is able to rework his constitutive fragility on the personal and interpersonal level in the direction of the other.

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