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The Gift

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The Gift of Desire: The “inner voice” between Neuroscience and Theory of Attachment

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ABSTRACT

What is profoundly under question, especially today, in the aftermath of the pandemic, is on one hand the phenomenon of desire, on the other hand the experience and capability of desiring of the human being. Taking a look at the social situation of the country – recalling first the investigation of the 44th Censis Report 2010, the contents of which in some ways are re-proposed in a naturally evolved way in the following one of 2020 –, we are given an image that relaunches our thought towards a need to deepen the ontology of desire and a possible educational pedagogy about it. Our society is depicted as “with no inner desire”: a crisis of desire emerges, in the sense of a crisis about the power of having a vision about the future and capacity of planning with excitement. In this paper, recalling Kant and his transcendental productive imagination as well as the new path of affective neurosciences perspective, going through the Theory of Attachment, I aim at opening a possible way to overcome this impossibility to desire arguing a different hermeneutics in comparison to what the tradition, especially that of J. Lacan, left us about this important and vital faculty of the human being.

Keywords: affective neurosciences; attachment; desire; faculty of desiring; productive imagination.

1. THE “DESIRELESS SOCIETY” AND THE “IRRATIONAL” SOCIETY

Before even thinking about the construct or concept of desire, what is profoundly under question, especially today, in the aftermath of the pan-

demic, is on one hand the phenomenon, on the other hand the experience and capability of desiring of the human being.

Taking a look at the social situation of the country – recalling first the investigation of the 44th Censis Report of 2010, the contents of which in some ways are re-proposed in a naturally “evolved” way in the following one of 2020 –, we are given an image that relaunches our thought towards a need to deepen the ontology of desire (Censis, 2010).

Our society, in Italy, is depicted as “with no inner desire”: a crisis of desire emerges in this relationship, in the sense of a society deprived of the capacity of planning. In 2010, the social situation of the country was reported as “flat”, without “thickness and vigor adequate to the challenges we have to face”; a society in which “we are no longer able to identify a basic device – central or peripheral, moral or legal – which regulates behaviors, attitudes, values” and which “even flattens all the subjects present in it, in particular their subjective capacity and vigor” (*ibid.*, p. XIII).

The Iard Report shows a sort of weakness within the intentionality of young people as one of the most evident trait of the “waning of desire” and along with it, the crisis of the idea of vocation in the liquid society: “[...] they perceive themselves first of all immersed in the present. Almost as if it were the only ecstasy of time and according to a conscientious modality that we would define as punctual” (Bellingreri, 2014, pp. 16-18). Fear, distrust in the future and a sort of a distance of oneself from the past are “specters” that in some way have caused young people to “proceed by expedients, surviving with a sort of navigation by sight” (Buzzi, Cavalli, & De Lillo, 2002).

In the 2020 Youth Report of the Toniolo Institute we read: “Young people need solid references, even more when everything around is uncertain and changes rapidly” and in fact the only stable reference is the original family “which however combined with the weakness of all the rest, tends to accentuate social inequalities, even more exacerbated by the impact of Covid-19” (Istituto Giuseppe Toniolo, 2020, p. 7). So, another hermeneutic instance accompanies the others: it is that of contradiction which, naturally, gives rise to the disorientation of our times.

The youngsters seem to be deprived of tension, of planning, of creativity, of orientation and therefore of desire.

But we find something special in reading the same reports on the country’s social situation: conversely, 10 years later, in the 55th Censis Report, our society is portrayed as “irrational”: it seems, in fact, that the “rational reality”, symbolically embodied but also physically embodied, by adults such as politicians, teachers, caregivers, has somehow betrayed, in Italy, the expectations of young people and families, disappointing promises and expectations; “this depends on the fact that we have entered a new

cycle, that of diminishing returns on social investments. And this determines a vicious circle: low economic growth, reduced returns in terms of tax revenue, therefore the triggering of the spiral of public debt, widespread social dissatisfaction, therefore the rejection of the rational paradigm” (Censis, 2021).

Lacan writes: “[...] we must distinguish the function of the question from desire” and again “Its problematic nature is precisely the role played by the question” (Lacan, 2016, p. 98). The “What do you want?” it is a question – continues the author – which actually answers (*ibid.*).

Desire therefore has something to do with demand and question. And we know that the question has to do with meaning. With reason.

The design creativity that makes up desire, which is lacking in the society of 2010, is anything but irrational. It has a reason, rather it is endowed with meaning, orientation and form – as Erik Fromm (2020) affirms in his essay on creativity.

Therefore, an abandoned society, “deprived” of desire, lacks planning, vision, creativity, commitment to act, and as it has been said, becomes and evolves in an irrational sense.

Looking at desire from a univocal point of view, while maintaining a certain contradiction or paradoxicality, or even mystery, perhaps does not give back us this important phenomenon of the human nature in all its breadth and depth, which rather reveals a strong link with planning, vision, creativity, theoretical-moral tension, energy and orientation.

2. ONTOLOGY OF DESIRE: FROM UNCONSCIOUS PHENOMENON TO TRANSCENDENTAL FACULTY

There is also a “multiverse” of the psychological tradition that deals with desire: it seems to be composed of various studies that essentially focus on the concept of “motivation”, distinct and in some ways included, with that of “need”. These constructs, in the light of the reflections that we will carry on here, could be “absorbed” in a certain sense by the broader and deeper concept, phenomenon and experience of desire itself. Indeed, J. Lichtenberg, F. Lachman and J. Fosshage, among others, write:

What is a motivation? [...] understood as an instinctual drive [...] involves a complex intersubjective process from which affections, intentions and objectives emerge making a dense discussion that suggests precisely that Desire is in some way “capable” of encompassing these aspects within itself, while distinguishing them in the different characters. (Lichtenberg, Lachmann, & Fosshage, 2012)

Nonetheless, it seems to be a common experience to find oneself with a desire that, in fact, seems to surpass one's own will, just as the phenomenology of erotica shows in the reception of classical Greek philosophy and poetry. Renaud Barbaras, a French phenomenologist, brings the experience of desire back to that of a "passivity" of the human being:

[...] on the contrary, it is constituted as a priori of passivity and as a condition of the transcendence of the world. The world strikes us beyond desire and necessarily delimits its movement [...]. (Barbaras, 1999)

Every desire shows up on the scene of "my world" and, therefore, characterized by this first contradiction, it defines human being's identity and at the same time transcends and limits it; equally contradictory is the origin of its nativity: every new life, every new creature that emerges into the world, certainly carries within itself "the ability" to desire, as an assigned heritage, a kind of innate gift but it is mainly configured as a "passivity", a capacity "in its potentiality" that can, in some way, be actualized only thanks to an action or initiative. This action first comes from the other, from outside of the self, as if it were an inheritance received from the other (Negro, 2012, p. 507).

There is no doubt, however, that the most representative author with regard to the studies on desire, understood as an unconscious phenomenon, was, as said, J. Lacan: ambivalent, marked by contradiction, paradoxical, the tradition of psychoanalysis, mainly Lacanian and Freudian one, offers an image of desire as belonging to the realm of the unconscious, the irrational.

Lacan, precisely highlighting a dialectic that brings with it divisive traits, states: "[...] from what do we defend ourselves if not from our own desire?" (Lacan, 2016, p. 16).

Still on the paradoxicality of the phenomenon M. Recalcati proposes a sort of overview of desire by tracing its portraits and affirms that it is "the most proper" of the subject; but at the same time we are not the master of our own desire: "the experience of desire is never an experience of mastery [...]: it is not 'I' who desires but it is the desire that desires beyond myself" (Recalcati, 2018, p. 36).

It has to do with the other, it comes from elsewhere but at the same time it seeks appropriation, it is transcendent and immanent, it is the most "mine" and at the same time it surpasses me.

While defining my essence, at the same time it is "a lack of essence".

Another characteristic of Lacan: "Desire is a metonym even if the human being makes fun of it" (Lacan, 2016, p. 16).

However, agreeing with the thought of the authors mentioned, I want to argue about a fundamental assumption, regarding the correlation

between “desire” and “division of the subject”: it would seem, in fact, that one’s experience of identity vanishes, giving way to another identity precisely when one’s own desire “emerges”. That is, despite being born in the context of an identity, desire, in its coming to light, would bring about a “loss” of identity, from the same identity that has generated it: desire, despite being an “experience of an otherness [...] always carries with it a share of a loss of identity, a disidentity, a non-coincidence [...] a division of the subject” (Recalcati, 2018).

Desire would have a force of disintegration, it would cast identity, rather than a self-strengthening by virtue of self-awareness; in a dissociation or division, in fact, it would be “the experience of a sliding, of a stumble, of a slip, of a loss of mastery, of a fall of the self” (*ibid.*).

What, then, is desire, in its many forms, between the unconscious and awareness, one might ask. Is it possible to trace an outline in order to be able to clarify its structure and function for human life, overcoming or deepening its contradictions?

However, Lacan (2016) writes: “[...] we must distinguish the function of the question from desire” and again “Its problematic nature is precisely the role played by the question”.

The “What do you want?” it is a question – the author continues – and every question actually answers.

Desire therefore has to do with demand, meaning, reason.

It is worth investigating its ontological structure and seeing if it is not possible to move from the study of the phenomenon of desire to that of the “faculty” of desiring: this passage would allow us to think of a pedagogical action aimed at the development of desiring understood as a faculty/ability, as the cognitive and non-cognitive skills.

It is in the anti-Oedipus that we find a suggestion.

Deleuze and Guattari refer to the critical revolution: they affirm that there is a sort of

specific machine that stages desire, this machine is only theatrical [...] while desire appears as what produces the phantasm, doubling the lack, making it an incurable insufficiency of being. Hence the presentation of desire as supported by needs (propping theory). (Deleuze & Guattari, 2002, p. 28)

The main ontological character of desire, in this vision, is an “acting” essence: desire stages another reality, it is therefore in some way “productive”.

The authors affirm: “We must say thanks to Kant since he brought about a critical revolution with regard to desire” (*ibid.*, p. 27); in the *Critique of Judgment* Kant states that desiring is “the faculty of being through

one's own representations, the cause of the reality of objects in such representations" (Kant, 2019, p. 28). In the Kantian sense, then, desiring is that "faculty of being" capable of producing representations of objects whose reality is given by its own representative activity: that is, the reality of the objects, of the contents of the representation is not "real" but, in some way, "staging", built from the representation itself (*ibid.*).

The concept of representation now becomes central to the analysis of desiring. Lacan himself in one of his *Seminars on Desire* refers to a particular experiment which clarifies the power of representation as a human faculty:

The psychologists of that school which was called the School of Marburg [...] conducted with great perseverance all sorts of experiments on a kind of insights they called thinking without images. It was about thinking without images. (Lacan, 2016, p. 128)

A representation (*Vorstellung*) on one hand, understood in Kantian terms, constitutes the function of the intellect in general and appears to be not only the product of the productive imagination but also, in some way, the function of the intellect; on the other hand it combines intellect and sense.

Therefore, desiring could have to do with both of these functions, sense and intellect. On one hand, then, imagination is a necessary ingredient for the composition of knowledge as it is involved in the perception of reality; on the other hand, it is not limited to "reproduction" alluding instead to one of his production works. In addition, the imagination has, in some way, a capacity of "synthesis". Imagination is therefore productive, it belongs to the faculties linked to perception, it cooperates with knowledge in a creative sense and it is synthetic.

The productive imagination, then, while it operates a cognitive synthesis between the multiplicity of sensitive data and the intellect, on the other hand it creates new ideal contents, not limiting itself to a bare reproduction, producing as well a sort of "effect" on the soul. This "effect" is precisely the key point of this study: this "effect on the soul" could be seen as the trace of a synthetic connection that the imagination produces between a faculty of a gnoseological order, of a cognitive type and a faculty of an emotional order (Kant, 2019).

A Theory of Desire could therefore be based on a triple paradigm:

- "critical thinking", linked to the productive imagination which culminates in a discernment, on one hand;
- "feeling", as an effect on the soul and sensation of this effect, on the other hand, this sensation could be interpreted as a feeling an emotion, a sort of an emotional "charge" recalled by the representation, as new content

- linked to the dynamics or the game – to use a Kantian expression –, between the two faculties that operate in the desire, intellect and sense;
- “relationality”, since desire is driven by relationality, coming from the other and directed towards the other.

3. THE GIFT OF DESIRE FROM THE NEUROSCIENTIFIC PERSPECTIVE

The affective neurosciences offer relevant support to this hypothesis by framing desire in the structure of the fundamental Emotional Systems. We owe to Jaak Panksepp a first complete vision of the fundamental Emotional Systems understood as “primary affective processes” which have an original archetypal and primary influence on the “faculties of our mind” (Panksepp & Biven, 2020). The basic Emotional System which offers a new vision and in some ways seems to justify the setting of the “transcendental nature” – that we have argued for in the usage of the productive imagination as a structural key element of desiring –, is called by Panksepp, precisely, “Seeking System”, “System of Searching” or “System of Desire” (*ibid.*, p. 93): “seeking” is the English expression used to designate this system and actually in its semantics is possible to grasp the “movement” of the system itself, in a meaningful way: referring to the exploration typical of behavior of secure attachment mentioned by Bowlby and Ainsworth in the Strange Situation in relation to the famous Attachment Theory (Bowlby, 1976) it renders the sense of projection into the future and recovery of the past.

In the middle of the last century, the Seeking System was practically unknown and behaviorists – such as Skinner –, were interested in studying the “sense of reward” that some experiences gave, by mainly observing and concentrating – in laboratory experiments on rats –, on the associations of this reward with the restoration of homeostasis. Sensory and homeostatic gratifications seemed to be, for researchers and for the twentieth century, the same “engine” of desire so as to hypothesize a name for the system identified as “expectation”: “Food, water, heat, the sexual act, and so on, were considered gratifying experiences as they restored homeostasis to the body (a key idea for drive-reduction theorists)” (*ibid.*). But, in this paradigm the search for food, water or heat could be explained without recourse to affective or emotional states, so much so that Skinner came to believe that it was a gratifying experience in itself, self-conclusive, understood as aimed only at the “reduction of drives”. However, the scholars noted and believed that, in relation to the learning of the behaviors that “lead” to obtain those rewards – i.e. the sensorial properties of the rewards such as

quality, quantity or even the delay of the rewards – the so called “incentive properties” “were much more important in controlling the learning than changes in homeostatic states of the body” (*ibid.*, p. 90). This observation was of greatest importance because behaviorists understood that the better the “quality” of the reward was, the faster the tested animals would “learn” that behavior leading to the reward; hence, the deduction for which “the reduction of drives” as the only source of gratification that would have justified the “research”, by itself, was not effective.

Panksepp, starting from the 1990s onwards, came to elaborate, interested as a neuroscientist in brain functions rather than behaviors, the Seeking/Research or Desire System. Located “in neuronal circuits originating from lower regions of the brain, including the ventral segmental area VTA and the lateral hypothalamus” (Panksepp & Biven, 2020, p. 94) the System (from now on called MFB-LH) “generates an energetic exploration and search” along with the accompanying affects described as “euphoric excitement” rather than the simple feeling of reward or pleasure behaviorists had spoken about.

Furthermore, involving the cognitive level, the feeling is that of “anticipatory longing” which is charged with a “sense of waiting”, simultaneously generating “expectations” (*ibid.*, p. 90).

Taking up Kant’s transcendental analysis and grafting it into the neuroscientific discourse, we could say that, precisely at this point, in the encounter between the emotional level and the cognitive level, the productive imagination can be activated, charged with images and anticipatory figures on one hand and on the other hand with noetic contents, in the form of critical thoughts and choices, that could generate that “internal state” of “euphoric excitement”.

These considerations lead Panksepp to affirm a fundamental assumption: “the MFB-LH system is more activated when people are in a state of homeostatic need and there are opportunities to find good sensations in the environment” (*ibid.*, p. 91).

Therefore, for the System of Desire to be “activated”, and so to begin to desire, we would say, it seems that two elements are needed: on one hand a state of need, even in the homeostatic regard, and on the other hand the “opportunity to find good sensations in the environment”.

It seems that what we can learn from the contribution of the study of neurosciences is that is necessary for the raise of desire to be in a “state of need”, so to “lack” of something, on one side; at the same time, on the other side, it is needed, as a counterbalance to “negative sign”, so to speak, a state of “positive sign”, that is a positive hypothesis of “finding” what one is looking for and feels the need of.

“The conclusion”, Panksepp succinctly states, “is inevitable. Cognitively, the MFB-LH offers affective gratification in the form of a general euphoric state of anticipation, initially even without having any particular goal in mind [...]. Accordingly, people also feel more interested in the world and in making plans for the future clearly when they are in a state of considerable expectation” (*ibid.*).

4. A PROPAEDEUTIC FOR DESIRE THROUGH THE ATTACHMENT THEORY: A POSSIBLE PEDAGOGICAL HERMENEUTIC FOR THE CONTEMPORARY AGE

In the light of the reflections carried out so far, let us try to think about a possible reflective path for men and women of our age who want to regain, in some way, the “gift” of their own desire.

The “first movement” of transformation can therefore only turn to the interiority: it is the “inner space” that must be questioned, encountered and regained. Inner space, dialectics and hermeneutics can be the general traits and vectors of a path of metacognition on authentic desire and the authentic ability to desire that intertwine with the sense of good and vocation, with particular regards to for the teachers of our time.

So far, it has been defined that desire/desiring could be understood starting from its structure as within the faculty of reason and characterized as transcendental, as a thought “charged” with emotion, as discernment and as founded on the capacity of representation, by virtue of the productive imagination; it therefore stands as “creative” since it is capable of producing new ideal contents; it is relational, since it is capable of relating, in accordance with several faculties simultaneously; this dynamic also seems to be potential precisely by virtue of its dependence on the capacity of representation. Representation now is the key element to come to a deeper understanding of the nature of desire: in fact, seen as a faculty – the ability to produce representations – it could be developed at different degrees or even not, depending on the attachment relationship.

J. Bowlby (1976) in the famous Attachment Theory speaks about the Internal Working Models – IWM –, meaning with these mental structures capable of creating representations of the self and the other. IWM are capable of providing the growing child with an orientation map precisely towards the self and towards the other. Mary Ainsworth’s research around Bowlbian’s Theory of Attachment and the Strange Situation brought further clarity to the definition of the nature and structure of IWM: it was believed that their structure was such as to allow children “to adapt to

changes in the environmental context expanding the behavioral repertoire at their disposal” (Bowlby, 1988, p. 68) and emphasizing their dynamism highlighting “the intrinsically relational character of the processes that are the basis of behavior. The term Model in fact indicates that the structure of representation is relational and that it originates from the relationship with the real world, while the working term underlines the dynamic quality of the models” (Ortu, Pazzaglia, & Williams, 2013, p. 68). What is clear, therefore, is that on the basis of and starting from the early dyadic relationship, from the “interactive dance” of mother and child, and on the basis of the responsiveness and sensitivity of the mother to the emotional needs of the child, models are built: they are such structures and representations in which to understand, precisely as referring to a conceptual paradigm, the self, the external world and the others; they also help the individual to predict and understand his/her environment, promoting behaviors that ensure survival, such as “maintaining closeness to another clearly identified person, deemed capable of coping with the world adequately” (*ibid.*) and they establish a sense of security for the individual.

In fact:

Once constructed, mental representations of oneself in relation to others tend to be relatively stable over time, thus allowing predictions about future evolution to be made, and to self-perpetuate, since each person is inclined to recreate congruent with its own relational history. (*ibid.*, p. 61)

I.e. each model acts as a filter for future relational experiences and will unknowingly select to experience only those relationships which will confirm the conceptual paradigm of reference in which the same models were formed, hence the character of self-perpetuation. Intimately linked to mental representations, it can be said that the models create “the internal onto-gnoseological-ethical and emotional environment” of reference for the subject, within which to understand a total vision of the world, of the self and the other, a general *Weltanschauung*.

We could therefore deem that it could be useful to plan a project at the service of contemporary humankind in this sense: educating to “desire” in the sense of being able in a meta-cognitive sense to appropriate the knowledge and functioning of one’s own desire: a wonderful “transcendental synthesis” and interdependent link between cognitive level – in the forms of higher cognitive functions related to discernment and decision-making –, as well as learning, an emotional-affective and ethical-relational level, making desiring a *Mittelstellung*: a “bridge” faculty among others, capable of being an orientation tool of great power for human beings.

Such a path on the knowledge, on the function and on the “self-conscious-aware-deliberate” use of the faculty of desire could therefore be placed as a “propaedeutic” to the contemporary teacher training and also as a support for parenting: a deepening of this “middle faculty” between critical thinking, imagination and emotional-affective capacity, suggests that it can constitute a valid metacognitive and operational tool, also functional to re-understand the ultimate goal of all educational activity, to be framed as always “in situation”.

We would understand this propaedeutic in the context of a multifactorial preparation: while Kant introduces us into a hypothesis of interpretation of desire that is complementary to that of psychoanalysis, especially the Lacanian one, referring to the importance of the faculty of the productive imagination which constitutes a pillar of the Architecture of Desire by founding its representative capacity, Bowlby’s contribution on the transmission of IWM, brings the educational relationship back as the *focus* of our discourse, as a vehicle of representations and research/desire. Both of these contents suggests, through the precious contribution of the findings of affective neuroscience, that a pedagogy of desire could, with its elements, constitute a possible hypothesis to guide the disorientation and irrationality widespread in our time.

5. DESIRE AS A REGAINING OF THE “FUNDAMENTAL EVIDENCES”

Luigi Giussani identifies a basic matter with regard to the various educational emergencies of the whole of human existence: the primary needs of reason (Borghesi, 2015, p. 45).

What he means with it is that these needs is a complex of needs which could be understood also as existential desire which moves all the other particular desires; this complex is also defined as “criteria of judgement”: in fact, it is through these criteria that one’s own experience is evaluated, under all aspects. According to the author, there is a specific dynamics that occurs within the reason: through a comparison of the complex of needs with the specific reality that impacts with one’s own reason – which call for a sense of fullness, totality and satisfaction – the human being could carry out a sort of asceticism towards his own liberation; he writes:

Normally, in fact, everything is faced according to a common mentality: supported, propagated by those in society who hold power. (*ibid.*)

What happens is that the tradition that permeates the context in which we grow up – the whole of society –, but above all starting from the bond of

attachment relationship, when it is characterized as “abusive”, do nothing but embody a sort of power and

settle over our original needs and constitute a sort of a great incrustation which alters the evidence of those first meanings. Therefore, if one wants to contradict or critically judge by virtue of an uneasiness one feels, one has to face a difficult task since she/he finds himself having to challenge public opinion. (Borghesi, 2015, p. 44)

It is paradoxical to think, as we have seen, that precisely those formative places essential to human life – the family, communities, religious communities, schools – can, contrary to the authentic nature of which they are made for and for which they were born, contradicting the intrinsic value that they have, run the risk of implementing an “alienating” type of education instead of a generative and restorative one for human flourishing, manipulating and altering identities and desires.

The boldest challenge to that mentality that dominates us [...] is precisely that of making our judgment of everything habitual in the light of our primary needs/evidence and not at the mercy of the most occasional reactions. (*ibid.*, p. 14)

This is how the warning sounds, the existential fascinating solicitation of the author, who carries on saying:

it is always necessary to pierce these images induced by the cultural climate in which one is immersed, to get down to picking up one's own needs and original evidence and on the basis of these judge and evaluate every proposal, every existential suggestion. (*ibid.*, p. 54)

And it is precisely on the basis of this solicitation, on the comparison of everything with elementary-primary needs or evidences, on their “practice”, that one can “realize” if an alienation is in the place; the alienating work, as we said, which every type of parent, caregiver, teacher or community, society can realize is done when they bring into play a relationship of power: this “abusive” relationship can induce images, thoughts and therefore desires on the man and woman, the child, the student, the faithful, precisely at the level of representations of the self/other/world.

In fact, in an experiential way, existential desire does not arise as a construct of a judging rational *a priori*, precisely because of its emotional-affective relational nature, configured as a criterion of judgment, endowed with the characteristics of an internal working model, coincides with “that radical commitment of our ego with life, which is documented in these questions”; thus embracing the emotional-affective and ethical level, exactly by virtue of the modality in which it is formed, it takes shape in the affective relationship.

By the word and concept of “heart” we mean an interior place of a “polarity” between *ratio* and *affectus*: it is a space in which this convergence, always required, is declined in a tension between a converging polarity of feeling, drive, emotional aspects and reason, cognitive-rational aspects with a non-diverging or Cartesian tension, as documented by the affective neurosciences that moves in a systemic and integrated perspective of the different spheres of the human being.

The heart is the beginning. The beginning of the spirit. According to its nature of first “spark”.

Therefore, the complex of needs, the existential desire cannot be resolved in the reason, nor in the drive. The author mentioned talks about a “tension” between this polarity of desire as based in the *ratio-affectus*, but we do not even think this is about a tension, as we want to interpret it – by the virtue of all different authors we refer to – within an holistic approach.

It is affirmed, in fact, that the heart in the *ratio* finds its exemplary expression, not resolving itself into reason: the “criterion of judgment” is always about and made of an affective knowledge, in which the emotional-affective element originates from the cognitive ability. In fact, in the division of the two human matrixes, synthetically speaking the cognitive and emotional one, or in their paradoxical usage which has been spoken of, lies the seed of alienation.

Indeed, L. Giussani stated:

Why call it heart instead of reason? Because the heart is the place of *affectus*, but *affectus* is not antithetical to reason, it is the ultimate aspect of reason, of reasonable dynamics. (Borghesi, 2015, p. 55)

In conclusion, one could almost say that when facing the reality, a specific situation, always a desire comes up, and if one uses the desiring as the “middle faculty”, as we have defined it, one can truly judge one’s own existence with authenticity. It’s about a feeling in the first place, then a judgment that helps to identify the situation and what a person aims at, giving clarity to one’s life path.

Existential desire, the desiring ability or faculty, which takes the form of the ability to feel and judge, as a deeply “affective judgment criterion” based on primary needs or evidences – that primarily consist of raw emotions – “arises from the tension between the *vires* appetitive (instinctive) and *ratio* control” (*ibid.*, p. 57).

The final point, therefore, intended as a “nerve”, since it is exposed to the risk of alienation, on which we intend to offer a dialectical contribution to what Giussani argued is exactly this: in the light of the reflections made, above all, of the origin of the faculty of desire so intertwined between Emo-

tional and Cognitive Systems, in order to be able to use the desire seen as a “System of Evidences” it is necessary to clarify the nature of this System of Evidence. Intending desire as a System of Evidences allows us to identify it as originator of identity, that can make humankind truly free since it offers that criterion of judgment which restores woman and man to her/his authenticity.

“The religious sense is an infinite desire for truth, i.e. reason, and for happiness, i.e. freedom. Reason and freedom are the form of a desire that is not anarchic but inclined towards a satisfaction that exceeds its measure. It is the natural impetus that moves reason and will towards the end to which, consciously or not, they aim” (Giussani, 2000, p. 83): by virtue of the intimate connection of the ontological-structural aspects that seem to unite desire and the religious sense, which we have plumbed through all the reflections made in this paper, we could transfer what in these analyzes emerges as referring to the religious sense to desire – existential desire –, emphasizing its value as a fundamental experience for the existence of the human being, free from its particular expressions: we are therefore referring to desire, understood in its synthesis as the value of the spirit, at the bottom of the soul, using an expression dear to Guardini (1976).

Going further: what is this *vis* capable of?

It takes the form of a question and its inclination, its *vis*, its ability is the question itself. Indeed the “complex” of questions; at the same time, Existential desire is also the criterion of judgment for the search for the answer, namely:

in the verification of this correspondence between the self/subject and the original notion of experience lies at the center of Giussani’s reflection. For it, a position is all the more reasonable the more it corresponds – conforms – to the inner imprint that lies at the root of the Self. (Borghesi, 2015, p. 57)

This correspondence, therefore, is generated by the coincidence of the existential desire with what the subject impacts on: that complex of needs that make up the existential desire is simultaneously a question, it has been said, but also a criterion of judgment, a point of comparison with which to judge whether what you come across corresponds to the primary needs themselves.

It is interesting to note the correspondence of these reflections with the movement of the child who observes his parent in his relationship and naturally “judges” him/her: the child is endowed with that complex of needs, which correspond to his existential desire, which is simultaneously developed starting from the early relationship with his/her parent-caregiver and depends on it – as seen – but at the same time it is the criterion that the child him/herself uses to protect him/herself! (even by the parent-caregiver, developing a series of defensive cognitive-emotional-behavioral strategies!).

6. CONCLUSIONS

This pedagogy is intended to be framed within the context of teacher education as well as parenthood support, which certainly require a “multifactorial” education: while Kant introduces us to a hypothesis of interpretation of desire complementary to that of psychoanalysis, especially the Lacanian one, referring to the importance of the faculty of productive imagination which constitutes a pillar of a sort of Architecture of Desire by founding its representative capacity; while Bowlby’s contribution on the transmission of IWM, brings the educational relationship back to the “centre” as a vehicle of representations and of “feeling” the search or desire; both of these knowledges suggest us, through the precious contribution of affective neuroscience, that a pedagogy of desire could, with its elements, constitute a possible solution to the disorientation we experiment in our time.

Consequently, such knowledge and competence that could embrace the emotional-relational skills of the teacher and parent should not be missing in a path of preparation for the contemporary teaching profession and parenting. In the same way, the parent or caregiver, increasingly “struggling” in their educational task that characterizes these roles by nature, could benefit from a path of this type in the commitment of care the children.

Men and women, the parent and the caregiver, the educator and the teacher, responding to the educational emergency of the search for reference points, stability and certainty, in this propaedeutic, focusing, first of all for themselves, their own faculty of desiring, could in turn intercept the opaque points of the children/pupils/teens in this faculty which is so fundamental and driving for all the others, of a cognitive and non-cognitive type – as mentioned in this paper –, when the youngsters seem to be demotivated, disinterested, distracted, ethically empty or disrespectful.

This is the sense of such a pedagogy: offering the tools – the System of Evidences – to verifying the “goodness” of one’s own desires expressed and communicated, in a guided dialogue by the adult, oriented towards the good and well-being of all family members or school students, from a systemic-relational perspective. On a closer view, we truly believe that this “practice” of the pedagogy of desire in the family and school, conceived in this way – as a path of knowledge –, could also turn out to be a valid tool for the rebuilding of the intra-family/classroom relationships at the same time when they are dis-functional hindering the same well being of all members of a community.

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RIASSUNTO

Ciò che è profondamente in discussione, soprattutto oggi, all'indomani della pandemia, è da un lato il fenomeno del desiderio, dall'altro l'esperienza e la capacità di desiderare dell'essere umano. Dando uno sguardo alla situazione sociale del Paese – richiamando innanzitutto l'indagine del 44° Rapporto Censis 2010, i cui contenuti per certi versi vengono riproposti in modo naturalmente evoluto in quello successivo del 2020 –, ci viene data un'immagine che rilancia il nostro pensiero verso una necessità di approfondire l'ontologia del desiderio ed elaborarne una possibile pedagogia educativa. La nostra società viene dipinta come “senza desiderio”: emerge una crisi del desiderio, nel senso di una crisi della capacità di visione del futuro e di una capacità di progettare con entusiasmo. In questo contributo, richiamando Kant e la sua immaginazione produttiva trascendentale nonché la prospettiva delle recenti ricerche delle neuroscienze affettive, passando attraverso la Teoria dell'Attaccamento, in questo studio propongo una possibile via per superare questa impossibilità di desiderare sostenendo un'ermeneutica diversa rispetto a quella che la tradizione, soprattutto lacaniana, ci ha lasciato riguardo a questa importante e vitale facoltà dell'essere umano.

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