

## SCIENCE AND HUMANITIES FOR A PEDAGOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY ITALIAN EXPERIENCE OF CLINICAL PEDAGOGY

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### Abstract

Who is the human being? After many thousand years, this question remains the main problem for the educational world and for the different approaches in working on the help relation.

The anthropology is a Science or a Knowledge? Understanding more about the human being does it mean to make new empirical research or does it mean to reflect on the wisdom of the philosophy or religion? Is it possible to integrate different approaches and study's methods on the human being in order to understand the depth of a person who is more than an "individual in average"?

A multifaceted approach applied to the study of human being is necessary to understand the person complexity. It also necessary to research models, tools and strategies for reflecting on the pedagogical mission and to put in practice the educational theories.

After the Positivism and as reaction to centuries of philosophy and theology's dominion, we are subdued only to scientific vision of life. Consequently, the human being is considered as number, as code, as combination of one or more correlation. Instead it is time to re-define the pedagogy (as education theory) starting from the person and relevant subjective experience. The experience of a human being derives from perceiving a body, having a mind and using intelligence, feeling emotions and sentiments, and also choosing values (moral dimension) and living spirituality (transcendence dimension). It is necessary to integrate the cultures of the past with the scientific excellences of the present, without going back. How is this process possible? It is very difficult, but this is a great positive challenge for the global knowledge society .

As far Italy, but also Europe, there is a new movement called “clinical pedagogy” that has succeeded to integrate different anthropological approaches in its educational theories. Thus demonstrating that is possible to maintain an own theoretical and methodological autonomy involving in its framework the contribution of other disciplines. The clinical pedagogy is one among holistic educational (or psychological) approaches that considers the human being with referring to his/her individual and social nature. In facts, the clinical pedagogy continues its experimental and humanities researches in a context of applied education. The clinical pedagogy is a new challenge to reflect on the anthropological constitution of the person under point of view of helping relation.

**Key words:** anthropology, theory of education, educational practice, clinical pedagogy.

### INTRODUCTION

Pedagogy, as a discipline, has never had its own autonomy, It always has drawn on philosophy, medical art and on morality. This is not to say that the pedagogical knowledge has not its own epistemology, it means

that as a science, it always appears as an element of the union between different disciplines concerning the human being.

If we trace a brief history of pedagogy we will note that, up to the '800, in Western Europe universities, it was often unify to the chair of moral philosophy, as it was the education of young people to the customs of the society. With the advent of positivism, pedagogy moves toward a more naturalistic view of human being and it remains almost closed in the cage of the nascent sciences of psychology and sociology.

This eradication from every philosophical root of pedagogy leads even to an internal division in the areas of pedagogical reflection, for example teaching, supported by cognitivism or behaviourism, it takes almost an autonomous statute in regard to pedagogy.

From our point of view this division, in the name of progress and modernity from all knowledge of wisdom such as philosophy, theology and spiritual philosophies, it made lose sight of the anthropological aspect, or rather that structure and concentration typically of the human being, that considers a person the subject of each path of aid and not the object of an experimental science. Today's scientific pedagogy wants to be objective, considering a person less and less as a subject of reflection and educational practice. This naturalistic and mechanistic view of human being, makes a person loose its most authentic foundation, freedom.

Clinical pedagogy, already in its epistemological statute, however, does not deny its "wisdom" origins, its connections (but not hoaxes) with philosophical, theological or medical knowledge. So says Guido Pesci: "Lontano da ogni idealismo che vede nella pedagogia una vocazione, intende dimostrare che le basi scientifiche della Pedagogia Clinica sono rintracciabili in un lontano passato, nella filosofia, nella teologia, nel diritto e nella medicina, poiché essa rappresentava e rappresenta il coronamento di tutte le scienze. Perciò compito della Pedagogia Clinica è recuperare da queste discipline tutti i dati e risultati relativi ad esperienze pedagogiche per ridefinirle secondo un conoscere capace di rispondere finalmente con concretezza alle esigenze di civiltà e cultura proprie dell'uomo."<sup>1</sup>

This research of the epistemological roots of a knowledge enriches by far the epistemology of knowledge in its act of becoming a science. Far from any neo positivist deviation, it can be said that there could be a new science without repudiate the previous, certainty that we are dwarfs on the shoulders of giants. The anthropological discourse is reflected in the epistemological and vice versa, and "this game of reflexes" is fundamental to a teaching science that places its scientific basis (theoretical, experiential and experimental) serving the practical and educational actions. In fact, no good theory, if it remains like that, meets real life. The theory itself, if it meets reality, cannot even be called true, not in the sense that it holds the absolute truth, but in continuous dynamic search of it.

## 1 A NEW AND "OLD" BRANCH

Clinical pedagogy was born in Italy in 1974 "when some ortho-pedagogists led by prof. Guido Pesci, gathered in the Upper Room Anti-exclusion in Florence, a very active research centre, replaced the term «ortho pedagogist» to «clinical pedagogist», beginning a new professional scientific movement that drew from research, experimentation and verification on the field, scientific guidance in progressive development to provide solid foundations to professional practice in general and in clinical in particular."<sup>2</sup>

As the article of the 30<sup>th</sup> Clinical Pedagogist conference tells<sup>3</sup>, there were carried out many studies and researches, courses and conferences, there were organized and opened large spaces for academic international comparisons. Study centers flourished and the figure of the clinical pedagogist was also required from the organizers of conferences outside the clinical pedagogy. Methods and techniques presented by this new science were soaked in a multidisciplinary approach of the human sciences, but at the same time, they were a clear example of pedagogical concreteness. This triumphant march of clinical pedagogy found its peak in 2004, where, at the thirty years congress, was announced the European Association of Clinical Pedagogists which collected the various national associations of clinical educators only after obtaining the Certificat European de Formation. Now, ten years from that date, it has come to the

<sup>1</sup> "Far from any idealism that sees a vocation in pedagogy, it will demonstrate that the scientific basis of Clinical Education are traceable in the distant past, in philosophy, theology, law and medicine, because it was and is the culmination of all sciences. So the task of Clinical Education is to recover from these disciplines all data and results concerning pedagogical experiences to redefine them according to a knowing able to finally answer concretely to the needs of civilization and culture own of man." (trans mine) in G. Pesci, *Epistemologia della Pedagogia Clinica e della professione di Pedagogista Clinico*, Ed. ISFAR, Firenze 2004, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> G. Pesci-M.Mani, *Prefazione*, in G. Pesci-M.Mani (a cura di) *Il pedagogista clinico nelle istituzioni*, Ed. Magi, Roma 2007, p.13 (trans. mine)

<sup>3</sup> G. Pesci, 2004: *trentennale del pedagogista clinico*, Pedagogia clinica. Pedagogisti clinici., numero 1 – anno V, n. 09, gennaio - giugno 2004, p. 5-6. (trans mine)

first International Congress of Clinical Education held in Florence in October 2014, and it shows just how much the movement has now taken hold globally. This rising field of human sciences, is not innovative, because "revolutionary" in the pedagogical view, but it emphasizes new aspects of its researches, it reminds that we could have these new elements "without neglecting to give epistemological foundations to clinical pedagogy, tracing in distant roots (2000 BC - 1800 AD) the criteria of validity of this science"<sup>4</sup>.

It will be the comparison between the Aristotelian-Thomistic view and the contents of clinical pedagogy, an example of interdisciplinary research between pedagogy and the humanities. It should be noted from now on that as it will be exposed in this contribution is the result of a reflection that wanted to find, in ontological foundations and partly in anthropological ones, some common roots between an Aristotelian- Thomistic vision and clinical pedagogy, but that the latter has not connection with any religious or cultural identity. In literature we can find, indeed, references and comparisons with other religions such as Buddhism<sup>5</sup>, with other classical authors<sup>6</sup>, finding epistemological roots<sup>7</sup> in some models, and in other inspirers of auxiliary methods (for example, the Socratic method and the reflecting one<sup>8</sup>). It is, eventually, interesting to note how the clinical pedagogy has also considered an intermediate aspect between philosophy, theology and literature, what is the world of myths, in their symbolic-cultural meaning<sup>10</sup>.

Certainly not just the "ancient knowledge" is the base of Clinical Pedagogy, in fact in the treaty of epistemological Clinical Pedagogy we also have many scientific models more properly named, for example Chirstman and Wilker pedology, Sandiford and Smith- Bompass model of the experimental pedagogy, Gonnelli Cioni practical- rational method, Vygotskji defectology<sup>9</sup> or Leboulch functional psychomotor<sup>10</sup> and others.

## 1.1 Greek philosophy and Christian theology: Aristotle and Thomas

According to Aristotle, scientific knowledge was based on some principles, but these, in turn, could not be validated by scientific knowledge. Therefore he needed an "intellecction" (*nūs*), or rather an inductive abstractive process, "a process that moves toward the universal from the observation of more particular cases (induction), gradually depriving what is perceived by senses from its individual accidental characteristics (abstraction)"<sup>11</sup>.

The combination of power-act reflects this "*intelligere*" on the things of the world, as well as on human being. If this principle is initially applied to the world of physics, for example, a seed is potentially act to become a flower, Aristotelian reflection can be extended to the human being. A person has a high level of strength and its change, or rather its steps to the various existential and experiential acts, are already innate in its nature. In particular Aristotle in his "*quid quid movetur ab alio movetur*" referred to becoming, "more specifically, it concerns the transition from the power to the act of an existing that is already there, not the coming into existence of existing itself"<sup>12</sup>. This conception of the existence telling us so much in terms of education, in fact it remind us to order of the ideas that a person already has within itself the resources to deal with change. In Greek we translate the term power with *dynamis*, or rather with a word indicating a *promotione* that already resides in the anthropological structure and that, to become act, in Greek *enérgeia*, has no need an invasive or additional outside intervention, but only media in the self-awareness of own potential. As if to say, everyone has the resources to express itself, to change positively, to achieve its "act" to its full "strengths".

This basic assumption is in line with clinical pedagogy that by refusing "therapeutic" methods (from the Greek *therapeia*, to assist, to treat, to cure), prefers, since its cognitive act, an approach achieved more on the strengths of a person, and less on the efficacy of therapeutic techniques. The move, the change of a person is based on the principle that the latter is already "prepared" to change, so "the pedagogist helping a person is intended to accompany it to the change and to the conquest of new balances considering it as a

<sup>4</sup> G. Pesci, 2004: *trentennale del pedagogista clinico*, p. 5. (trans mine).

<sup>5</sup> M. Perseo – S. Delogu, *La filosofia buddista incontra la pedagogia clinica*, in *Pedagogia clinica. Pedagogisti clinici*, numero2 – anno VIII, n. 17, luglio-dicembre 2007.

<sup>6</sup> G. Pesci, *Epistemologia della Pedagogia Clinica e della professione di Pedagogista Clinico*, p. 9-13.

<sup>7</sup> E. Galasso, *Agli albori della pedagogia clinica*, *Pedagogia clinica. Pedagogisti clinici*, numero1 – anno VII, n. 14, gennaio-giugno 2006.

<sup>8</sup> [http://reflecting.it/reflecting/nuova\\_maieutica.htm](http://reflecting.it/reflecting/nuova_maieutica.htm)

<sup>9</sup> G. Pesci, *Epistemologia della Pedagogia Clinica e della professione di Pedagogista Clinico*, p. 15-16.

<sup>10</sup> Cfr G. Pesci, *Teoria e pratica della psicomotricità funzionale. A scuola con Jean Le Bulch*, Armando Editore, Roma 2012

<sup>11</sup> C. Esposito-P. Porro, *Filosofia. Antica e medievale*, La Terza, Bari, 2009, p. 106. (trans mine).

<sup>12</sup> A. Alessi, *Sui Sentieri dell'essere. Introduzione alla metafisica*, LAS, Roma, 1998, p.299. (trans mine).

whole, with the aim to activate and enhance, through a pedagogical relationship, strengths and resources, to offer the possibility to discover inwardly its strengths and to develop its skills and willingness"<sup>13</sup>.

This last definition is thus in line not only with Aristotelian physics, but also with the metaphysics of the philosopher, that is, with the ontological dimension reflecting on the individual substance (*sub-stantia*) is aimed at that *sinolo* (matter + form) which is in its being the act to exist, according to a logical-ontological principle: the precede of a strength to the act. According to the axiom "*nemo dat quod non habet*" is not a healer external intervention to bring the change to a person, but it is a person who "blooms" toward change.

### 1.1.1 Virtues in Aristotelian ethic

Nowadays, when we talk about ethics, we refer to a prescriptive framework instead in Aristotle, ethics had a descriptive purpose, or rather the analysis of characters or of natural temperaments that guide to the ultimate goal which is happiness. This may not be a possession of a good, or wealth, because happiness is defined as "activity of the soul according to virtue" and possession is something passive and not active. Even the concept of virtue, however, must be free from any today's moral significance, in fact virtue (*areté*) represents excellence in performing a function.

In the second book of the Nicomachean Ethics Aristotle reminds us that virtues are not "natural", "but everyone has their own predisposition, more or less marked, to receive certain ethical virtues; therefore, we possess these virtues only in "potential", and we develop them with habit, that is, translate them into "act". In fact, to become person of value is not enough to have good intentions, we need to put them into practice<sup>14</sup>. Once again the combination of act-power, reminds us that pedagogical anthropology has a set of positive traits "in power" which, although not physically traceable, are still operating in human structure and we have to rediscovered and trained them to improvements.

The fact that there is happiness, good, positivity, tells us that human being is called to the welfare deploying his/her full strengths. When clinical pedagogy defines the term of education, parallel to some psycho-body aspects, it also refers to the behavioral dimension, as the action of the thinking and doing, reminding that integrity of the human being according to the school motto *agitur sequitur esse*. In this case, in the Dictionary of Clinical Education, it is states that: "In all this, we associated methodologies designed to change positively the habits, the rules of life and behavior to achieve a positive image of the ego and a new self-confidence, impulses that help a person to face its own inward reality by facilitating the progressive affirmation of its personality"<sup>15</sup>.

Since these lines are deduced some fundamental concepts, already seen in Aristotle: *Habits*. Term that comes from *habitus*, that indicates in a broad sense, habit. Both to Aristotle and to clinical pedagogy (as to many others), we do not learn a positive behavior as we learn a page of history, but we acquire it through repetition of certain behaviors (experiences) that strengthen a positive image of the 'ego'.

*Inward reality and affirmation of the personality*. The real ethics is not a classist and approval matter. Ethical behavior is, according to Aristotle and clinical pedagogy, that behavior as result of an inner reflection that aims to demonstrate this cognitive act of self through attitudes and behaviors that aim to express its personality in a progressive ways, or rather to put "in action" personological dimension that is "in place". The ethics reflects once again the doing that is an expression of being a person.

### 1.1.2 *Gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit!*

Thomas Aquinas is, in a certain way, a follower of Aristotelian thought and the person who realizes his philosophical and Christian theological reflection. For example if we take into consideration the principle of causality, useful to explain the power act model as it unfolds, we see that Aquinas does not differ much from the Aristotelian axiom "*quid quid movetur ab alio movetur*", except for some specific metaphysical between the *ens participatum* and the *Ipsum Esse subsistens*, surely relevant in the ontological or theological field, but concerning pedagogy, they don't change much our reflection in the preceding paragraphs.

The existence of the Transcendent, of the creative act, does not upset human nature that follows its becoming in order to its anthropological nature. Even the soul of the person no longer understood in a "lay-aristotelian" meaning, but Christian one, and as a gift of God "*ex nihilo*" it does not replace what is in the nature of human being. In this regard it is known the statement "*gratia non tollit naturam, sed perficit*"<sup>16</sup> where Aquinas points out how "the soul is the form that gives unity to its being and makes the person up. In

<sup>13</sup> G. Pesci, *Pedagogia in aiuto alla persona. Il momento conoscitivo*, Ed. Isfar, Firenze 2014, p.8. (trans mine).

<sup>14</sup> [http://www.sebastianointurri.it/1/upload/etica\\_nicomachea.pdf](http://www.sebastianointurri.it/1/upload/etica_nicomachea.pdf) (trans mine).

<sup>15</sup> G. Pesci - M. Mani, *Dizionario di Pedagogia Clinica*, Ed. ISFAR, Firenze 2013, p.97. (trans mine).

<sup>16</sup> Tommaso D'Aquino, *Summa Theologiae*, I,1,8 ad 2.

human being, Thomas observes, that grace does not destroy nature, but it completes its strengths"<sup>17</sup>.

Concerning the principle of causality, Aristotelian and Thomist positions are similar, but it cannot be said the same on the principle of finality. In fact, while to Aristotle this principle serves to highlight how this principle is, in some way, the inspirer (the form) of the Prime Mover (matter) which acts in the implementing the cause and effect principle on the world<sup>18</sup>. In Thomist version this principle is manifested universal and not only according to a scheme of mechanistic explanation of reality. Thomas says that "*omne agens agit propter finem*" which means that the end is not attributable only to the areas contingents of the agent, but also to the spiritual dimension that brings all the bodies to God<sup>19</sup>. In this differentiations there are both an evident theological imprint, and a comprehensive consideration of a person who covers its spiritual dimension and relates it to the bodily and emotional sphere. If the Thomistic doctrine poses a hierarchy of ends, the light of which there is the beatific vision of God, on the other hand the *Doctor Humanitatis* presents us a person not only in its cognitive and relational becoming, but also in its yearning for a spirituality that can be to certain scholars Christianity, different religions or religious philosophies, to others world of ideals and values to aspire to. From our point of view the principle of purpose, in order to an ontological dimension, puts a person in a state of tension towards defining in a more complete way, (though if never exhaustive) the dynamic structure of human being as a being living every day.

### 1.1.3 Aristotelian-Thomistic vision and clinical pedagogy

We have, then, an anthropological construct that, despite of Christian theological influence, leads us to consider a person in accordance with a global dimension that takes into account the psycho-physical sphere, but also the nature of intentional and motivational one, placing a strong structural connection between human nature, its future and its intrinsic finality. Clinical pedagogy, and similarly in other ways, reminds these concepts just as defines the personality:

"The commitment of clinical pedagogy, which aims to follow the path that leads to the development of the personality fully mature and well integrated, it is appropriate to meet the educational needs and the real needs of the individual as a whole, enabling motivation and intentionality, entrusted to effective education, suited to a particular person at that particular time. The respect for the whole and the psychophysical unit of individual, forces the clinical educator to integrate and harmonize the emotional aspects with the functional ones, improving by elective attitudes and behaviors useful for expressing and communicating an effective witness of himself, to manage and modulate expressiveness in relation to emotions and tensions, ultimately acquiring willingness akin to operating skills".<sup>20</sup>

In this definition as well as some other specifically clinical- pedagogical aspects, there are concepts which could be found in the Thomistic philosophy, such as:

a) The idea of *development*. The concept of development presupposes a natural becoming of the human being according to bents already present at birth. Psychology, although debated, on the difference between the "innate and acquired" and often in an ideological way, in terms of development, has not yet found a solution. Many scholars, however, recognize that even those "cultural facilities" are "developable" as they find a pretext in nature.<sup>21</sup>

b) The concept of "*globality and psychophysical unity*". Note that the definition does not use the term "or", but the word "and", meaning that the totality of the person is not exhausted in a psychophysical unity. The whole includes in itself the psycho-physical, but not vice versa. The definition, however, does not address these two concepts in a distinctive way (it does it for obvious reasons of study only on a logical aspect), but according to an interactive formula using the terms "*integrate, harmonize and improve*". Only in this viewpoint we can think of an educational path as a synergistic act "*emotions, functional aspects, attitudes and behavior*", or rather all aspects that emphasize, once again, as the pedagogical clinical action is not an

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.vatican.va/holy\\_father/john\\_paul\\_ii/speeches/2003/september/documents/hf\\_jpii\\_spe\\_20030929\\_congresso-tomista\\_it.html](http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2003/september/documents/hf_jpii_spe_20030929_congresso-tomista_it.html)

<sup>18</sup> Cfr Aristotele, *Del cielo*, I, 27 la 33; II, 29b 13; e Id., *Fisica*. II, 193b 2

<sup>19</sup> Cfr Tommaso D'Aquino, *Summa contra gentiles*, III, 2; 17-19; Id., *Summa Theologiae*, I, q.2, a.3; I-II, q.1, a.2.

<sup>20</sup> "L'impegno della pedagogia clinica, che mira a seguire la via che porta con sicurezza allo sviluppo della personalità completamente matura e ben integrata, è idoneo a soddisfare i bisogni educativi e le reali esigenze dell'individuo nella sua globalità, attivando motivazione e intenzionalità, affidati a un'educazione efficace, adatta a quella determinata persona in quel particolare momento. Il rispetto della globalità e dell'unità psicofisica dell'individuo obbliga il pedagogista clinico a integrare e armonizzare gli aspetti emotivi con quelli funzionali, migliorare per vie elettive atteggiamenti e comportamenti utili per un esprimersi e un comunicare efficace e testimoniale di sé, gestire e modulare un'espressività in relazione alle emozioni e alle tensioni, fino ad acquisire una disponibilità affine alle competenze operative." (trans. Mine) in G. Pesci - M. Mani, *Dizionario di Pedagogia Clinica*, p. 171. (trans mine).

<sup>21</sup> A. Farneti, *Elementi di psicologia dello sviluppo. Dalle teorie ai problemi quotidiani*, Carocci, Roma 2000, p.28ss.

"external" to nature, but a *continuum* that urges the "provisions" ("power" in Aristotelian-Thomist terms) to an appropriate" operational expertise "(act or virtue) in a particular field / context of life.

c) Finally we want to point out that the concepts of "motivation and intent" are highlighted when speaking of "globality", or rather when we refer to that aspect that goes beyond the simple synthesis psycho-physical of a man, to cover an higher sphere that involves ideals and values. Choices of change in a person, take place far beyond the simple principles of pleasure and reality (Freudian school) or of reward (behaviorist school), but on a much more complex anthropological structure that is the person. The status of "tensions" typical of a person, is something that requires respect for dignity characterizing human being much more than an intelligent animal that develops in phases or stages. Not surprisingly, clinical pedagogy does not speak of a universal path of help, because every being is unique and unrepeatable and then each path is valid to help "that person at that particular time."

## 2 HUMAN BEING AS SUBJECT OF THE SCIENCE

With the rising of positivism, of theories on evolution and on formation of new disciplines, such as sociology and psychology, the educational landscape has suddenly impoverish of some of its constructs and philosophical reflections, approaching a person only as an experimental, technical, evaluative and sectional way. All this has reduced by far the value of a person in its global dimension, then the psycho-physical and spiritual unity. The person, like the environment, was known only for its phenomenological aspect, without considering the other personal universe that resides inwardly.

The human being, according to some scholars, is the animal that, like other animals, can be measured and evaluated, and a human science can only deals with those aspects. Pedagogy has become so "training", the research is only experimental (and experiential), educational activity is a consequence of pure statistic.

### 2.1 Sociology or "sociologism"

Sociology knows its beginnings with the figure of Auguste Comte, who believed that with the advent of sociology, time to study, in a scientific way, individual and society had come. Hence the birth of positivism that supports, in general, that science is applied only to *observable phenomena*, directly attainable through experience: on the basis of accurate observations, we can infer those *causal relationships* between events that allow us to predict the future repetition. All that is history, culture and philosophical reflection cannot be considered science and an individual is only what we can see and measure.

If we take a step into the past we can remember that in 1887 the *Dictionnaire de Pédagogie* edited by Buisson, defines "pedagogy" as science and art concerning education; Pedagogy is the science of education that has, as its goal, the common good. This means pedagogy is a science even if it has aspects of values inside. In 1911, when positivism was at its peak, Durkheim in the *Nouveau Dictionnaire de Pédagogie et d'Instruction primaire* revises the "item" by creating a distinction. Education is seen as a social issue (the training action on children by parents and by teachers) and, as such, is capable of scientific knowledge. Pedagogy, however, deals with the *theory* or rather with the way of thinking about education. For this reason we can talk about a science: a) only in reference to the social issue, widely understood, and not only in reference to the relational aspect; and b) only if we can measure the data. In this sense, the social issue is a *conditio sine qua non* to find an educational path, pedagogical clinical one, therefore, in a scientific manner.

Maritain calls this approach "sociologism" and brings it back among the most frequent pedagogical mistakes: "the essence of education is not educating a future citizen to conditions and interactions of social life, but first of all is making a man and thereby preparing a citizen. To oppose education for a person and education for a community is more than vain and superficial"<sup>22</sup>. Seeing the person only in relation to society is like seeing a student only in relation to the class; is how to think of arranging educational specific goals (not general purpose) the same for everyone within an educational context. May not be the society / class / the educational context to manage educational / training path exclusively, but every single person has the right to have its own educational process, because each person is unique and unrepeatable. A person is an active part of the context and the latter cannot be the principal element in a pedagogical relationship. The clinical pedagogist, even in its own culture, not just a "employee" of a company (theory dear to functionalism), but is "an independent professional who becomes the active part in the deep change of society, and is [...] a great help to those who are waiting for a clinical finally understood like help to a person"<sup>23</sup>. At the centre of a help path there is not only the individual, but the person as a whole, in its

<sup>22</sup> J. MARITAIN, *L'educazione al bivio*, La Scuola, Brescia, 1996, p. 31. (trans mine).

<sup>23</sup> G. Pesci-M.Mani, *Prefazione*, in G. Pesci-M.Mani (a cura di) *Il pedagogista clinico nelle istituzioni*, p. 16. (trans mine).

knowable quantifiable, measurable appearance, but also in its inward dimension, of its more authentic and deep being.

The statistical or experimental element is not the only means of knowledge of a human being. Contrary to this, the experimental research has assumed as a champion of scientific neutrality on the basis of the claim as "data does not lie", "data is not subjective," "the principle of falsification goes against any reasonable doubt". The writer does not disparage the experimental science arising from sociological positions, however he does not consider them absolute. The experimental research is an evaluation tool that has its own peculiarities, but cannot be considered the only scientific construct to know and help a person. Experimental research has to provide numbers, correlations of various kinds and interpretation of data, but also must dialogue with the other sciences, and this not only in the process of hypothesis, but also of investigation and results. Concerning critical points empirical research can not only take into consideration their constructs, but like the other sciences that should allow questioning by the experimental sciences to avoid falling into metaphysical theories far from reality, it must accept theoretical criticisms that are outside from methodological and statistical aspect. Only then we can speak of transdisciplinarity and there may be an integration of knowledge, methods and research techniques<sup>24</sup>.

## 2.2 Psychology or “psychologism”

An another science that was erected as the only source of human knowledge was psychology. Just think of the two great schools of the twentieth century, behaviorism and cognitivism that have had great resonance in the educational field. For example behaviorism defined competence only as what a person can do in public in a specific field and according to specific conditions; or on the other hand the cognitivism defined the human mind as a structure designed to process information and implement behavior, with all different theories of learning that start from *problem solving to the mastery learning*.

This "invasion" of psychology in the pedagogical world has meant that the psychology of education has replaced pedagogy and the special psychology has made a clean sweep of the "special education". Many pedagogists attracted by these psychological thought schools, have completely renounced the nature of their discipline, becoming psychologists and sociologists when it deals with school, politicians when it deals with social issues.

Resuming some of the Aristotelian-Thomist themes again we can do a criticism of cognitivism and its computer metaphor to face up to cognitive and social skills. Neo-Thomism wisdom, which reminds that dimension of the Aristotelian-Thomist practical rationality, moves the quality of human action, and therefore of educational act, from a purely logical and analytical dimension, to a more subjective one. The centrality of the person remains the foundation, to reduce a possible educational "change" to the only deductive strengths, it lose sight of the richness and depth of the human being who chooses or does not, not only on the basis of logical calculations, but also on the basis of what is and feels to be.

Clinical pedagogy, as its epistemological structure, rejects not only the denial of humanistic knowledge, but also psycho-sociometric definition of knowledge of person. This does not mean that clinical pedagogy does not research the scientific standards required and research results of the Center Kromos, which have changed or improved the different methods and different techniques deposited, are a witness. We cannot limit the knowledge of a person on abstract reasoning, all the same, We cannot avoid those approaches that make the person a grid of variables and nothing more. The real research must bring news, it must not only support scientific models at the expense of others or forgetting those of the past. A scientist must not always inaugurate something new, he must also know how to work and learn about what has been said. If there is no absolute scientific truth, then there is not the only one method of investigation.

But especially when it deals with human beings, we cannot restrict to data, we cannot stop the "phenomenon", we have to understand that the person is a "energetic and mysterious synthesis" and the clinical pedagogist takes extreme care, therefore, to human being in its integrity and its precious uniqueness, being aware that in each individual dwelling forces and energies that, if awakened and liberated, can constructively support the ascent of the most bitter curve of pain<sup>25</sup>. Often the most difficult and successful paths, come from the solutions of problems or conflicts, different than those "evaluated" in diagnosis. This is apply to medicine, psychology, pedagogy, and for all those disciplines at the service of the person.

## 3 BODY APPEARANCE

In clinical-educational path, the starting point, after the acceptance and the educational request of the

<sup>24</sup> C. NANNI, *Educazione e scienze dell'educazione*, LAS, Roma, 1986, p. 70-82 o A. VISALBERGHI, *Pedagogia e scienze dell'educazione*, Mondadori, Milano 1981, p. 21ss.

<sup>25</sup> L. Lampo, *In rete con le altre professioni d'aiuto*, Pedagogia clinica. Pedagogisti clinici., numero1 – anno VII, n. 14, gennaio-giugno 2006, p. 15. (trans mine).

person, is the verification of the SSW (Strengths, Skills and Willingness). In particular "pedagogists in aid to a person are not called to do only a" test ", but a check of the SSW, or those "positive" aspects, able to describe the individual, according to a" proximal " point of view (cf. Vygotsky) , future-oriented, and to identify areas of educability of a person, or rather, those aspects that in a global process of development can be more than others "stretches out" by a person through instruments, methods and educational terms."<sup>26</sup> The verification of the SSW, previously defined pedagogical diagnosis<sup>27</sup>, is not a simple collection of information, much less a psychological interpretation of recent or remote stories collection or of tests and graphics, but a reading that a person allows us to make of itself. In particular, the verification of the SSW is a set of multiple analysis processes directed to particular aspects of a person:

- Historical Personal analysis
- Analysis of autonomy and Self-awareness
- Analysis of graphic and chromatic expressiveness
- Analysis through the use of test
- Analysis of expressive verbal skills
- Analysis of expressiveness motor
- Analysis of the ability and willingness to learn.<sup>28</sup>

From the verification of the SSW emerges that the clinical pedagogical approach is a global one. This contribution has so far discussed the cognitive, affective-relational, social and spiritual dimension of a person. In fact, clinical pedagogy, opening a window to the epistemological eastern wisdom, especially to Taoist and Indians priests who have passed on "those relaxation techniques that led progressively to the movement control and consequently to the willingness of all being"<sup>29</sup>, it considers the body as a resource for educational path. On the anthropological aspect, the body is not only a "soma" or a "pot of the soul", but it is a co-essential dimension of the human being. This is underlined by the fact that within a path of help, there are also interventions based on physical quality. For example, the method of *Touch-ball* can be an experience to offer "an opportunity to alleviate the suffering, to restore well-being and new psycho-physical, emotional and socio-relational balances"<sup>30</sup> or the Discover Project whose purpose "is to act on the whole body as the coordinating centre of experiences and axis of a new and more suitable orientation toward life."<sup>31</sup>

This is expected because the body and the perception of it, is a dimension of the innate anthropological structure of equal dignity and functionality of other dimensions. As observed by Carboni, "we know that a person comes to define the entity that is called *bodily schema* right through the integration of emotional experiences with all of the sensory experiences, together with the proprioceptive dimension, and this is the union of the perceptive dimension with the representative one which can be a self-image in the sense of embodiment, as an act intended to dynamically change over time in a constant search for adaptation."<sup>32</sup> It is on this principle that are based the different types of intervention of bodily methods within a wider vastness of intervention that integrates and balances the different strengths, skills and willingness. The body, perhaps more than the word "is an organ of personal communication, expressing each individual situation."<sup>33</sup> In a certain way the body manifests, speaks, evoking and projects. Neglecting the body in relation to aid or treat it only as a "soma", would mean not work in a comprehensive manner on the entirety of the personality that reminds the totality and the psychophysical unity of the person.

The body, in addition to speaks of us, is also the great mediator between us and the environment. We sometime forget that in the relationship with the other, even before the word, the first to communicate is our body. Often the discomfort experienced on our body, even if unknowingly to us, is shown to the another and infers about the different way of communicating. As observed by Luccini, often "we also struggle to establish satisfactory relationships, often being unable to best to use our body, that is what we have more similar to the other to communicate."<sup>34</sup> To intervene on our bodily schema is basically to rebalance the personological

<sup>26</sup> La Redazione, *Professional Act. Pedagogia in aiuto alla Persona*, Pedagogia clinica. Pedagogisti clinici., numero 1 – anno XV, n. 30, gennaio-giugno 2014, p.11 (trans mine).

<sup>27</sup> G. Pesci, *Pedagogia clinica: pedagogia in aiuto alla persona*, Omega, Torino 2012, p. 63-66.

<sup>28</sup> G. Pesci, *Pedagogia in aiuto alla persona. Il momento conoscitivo*, p.30. (trans mine).

<sup>29</sup> G. Pesci, *Epistemologia della Pedagogia Clinica e della professione di Pedagogista Clinico*, p. 9. (trans mine).

<sup>30</sup> G. Pesci-S.Pesci, *Touch ball. Metodo per favorire l'equilibrio e il piacere*, Ed. Magi, Roma 2006, p. 79. (trans mine).

<sup>31</sup> S. Pesci et al., *Interventi clinici*, Armando, Roma 2009, p. 17. (trans mine).

<sup>32</sup> M. Carboni, *La conoscenza di sé nell'esperienza della corporeità*, in *Pedagogia clinica. Pedagogisti clinici.*, numero2 – anno VIII, n. 17, luglio-dicembre 2007, p. 6. (trans mine).

<sup>33</sup> L. Luccini, *Il movimento autentico*, Pedagogia clinica. Pedagogisti clinici., numero 1 – anno V, n. 09, gennaio - giugno 2004, p. 21. (trans mine).

<sup>34</sup> L. Luccini, *Il movimento autentico*, Pedagogia clinica. Pedagogisti clinici., numero 1 – anno V, n. 09, gennaio - giugno 2004, p. 21. (trans mine).

structure in any context, in the difficulties with learning, as in relationship problems. The body is a strength such as each resource of which nature has given us. Do not consider this in an educational context as in a relationship help, it correspond to not fully consider the person, to fragment it into parts, in an attempt to improve a single component, damaging though "the human machine" complexity.

Cognitivism, spiritualism and behaviorism often have forgotten the importance of the body. We are not only our mind, as we are not only our soul or just behavioral response, we are a complex living being, not traceable to categories or standard dimensions. We are unique and unrepeatable and so we are on the level of being and feeling our body. It is something that goes beyond a neurological or hormonal bond, even over an emotional aspect imaging ourselves; it is something that is rooted in the anthropological structure, in the endless links between inwardness in ourselves and inwardness with the environment; our body is part of our life.

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