

The challenge of “rationality” and “commitment” within “Pedagogical Problematicism” paradigm¹

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Abstract

The thought of Giovanni Maria Bertin and the “Pedagogical Problematicism” approach he forged, aims to establish “the education challenge” as an essential issue for the whole of society. Studies adopting Problematicism as their theoretical framework build upon or argue in favour of two core notions: “rationality”, conceived of as a methodological horizon (i.e., a guideline for conferring meaning on education); and “commitment”, conceived of as fundamental to an ethical and political vision of education. Like other deleterious effects of globalisation, the coronavirus pandemic poses new questions to both education professionals and scholars, providing us with new and urgent issues to be analysed from the viewpoint of Problematicism. In the contemporary scenario, Pedagogy should be considered as an authoritative reference in the public debate, as a discipline capable of (re)orienting educational practices towards more autonomous and critical thought and as a scientific discipline at least as influential as the other human sciences. The following three sections included in the Issue introduction, aim to highlight the categories of Bertin’s philosophy of education by applying them to contemporary dilemmas and emergencies. In the first one (*Towards a new Problematicism*) Massimo Baldacci underlines the

¹ This introductory essay has been conceived by the three authors. However, in compliance with the requirements of the national research assessment, we acknowledge that the first section has been written by Massimo Baldacci, the second section has been written by Maurizio Fabbri, and the third section has been written by Alessandro Tolomelli.

connection between Antonio Banfi’s and Bertin’s thoughts as references to read the contemporary education dilemmas. The second one by Maurizio Fabbri (*Experience and reality. Epistemological and political implications of the concept of reason in Antonio Banfi and his reasons for actuality*) has focused on the connection between Pedagogical Problematicism and politics. In the third one (*What use for pedagogical problematicism in 2022? Problematicism and uncertainty against polarizations and binary thought*) Alessandro Tolomelli uses the Problematicism approach to read two typical bias of the contemporary main stream way of thinking as the polarization and binarism tendency.

Il pensiero di Giovanni Maria Bertin e l’approccio del Problematicismo Pedagogico da lui forgiato, mira a porre “la sfida educativa” come una questione essenziale per l’intera società. Gli studi che adottano il problematicismo come quadro teorico si basano o sostengono due nozioni fondamentali: “razionalità”, concepita come un orizzonte metodologico (cioè una linea guida per conferire significato all’educazione); e “impegno”, concepito come fondamentale per una visione etica e politica dell’educazione. Come altri effetti deleteri della globalizzazione, la pandemia di coronavirus pone nuove domande sia ai professionisti dell’istruzione che agli studiosi, fornendoci questioni nuove e urgenti da analizzare dal punto di vista del problematicismo. Nello scenario contemporaneo, la Pedagogia va considerata come un riferimento autorevole nel dibattito pubblico, come una disciplina capace di (ri)orientare le pratiche educative verso un pensiero più autonomo e critico e come una disciplina scientifica almeno altrettanto influente delle altre scienze umane. I seguenti tre articoli, inclusi nell’introduzione del numero della rivista, mirano a mettere in evidenza le categorie della filosofia dell’educazione di Bertin applicandole ai dilemmi e alle emergenze contemporanee. Nel primo articolo Massimo Baldacci sottolinea il nesso tra il pensiero di Antonio Banfi e quello di Bertin come riferimenti per leggere i dilemmi dell’educazione contemporanea. Il secondo, di Maurizio Fabbri, è incentrato sul collegamento tra problematicità pedagogica e politica. Nel terzo, Alessandro Tolomelli usa l’approccio del Problematicismo per leggere due pregiudizi tipici del modo di pensare del mainstream contemporaneo come la polarizzazione e la tendenza al binarismo.

Keywords: Pedagogical Problematicism; Giovanni Maria Bertin; Critical Pedagogy; Philosophy of Education; Antonio Banfi

Parole chiave: Problematicismo Pedagogico; Giovanni Maria Bertin; Pedagogia Critica; Filosofia dell’educazione; Antonio Banfi

1. Towards a new Problematicism

Giovanni Maria Bertin’s Pedagogical Problematicism was built on the foundations of Banfi’s critical rationalism. In the genetic relationship that binds the works of these two scholars lies the theoretical issue of Problematicism, the reasons for both the fecundity and the limits of this approach. Limits on which we can and must work in order to continue to develop this perspective. In this respect, we should avoid all apologetic attitudes towards the cultural heritage of these thinkers, however great this may have been. We must rather start from the problems they left open and therefore handed down to us, seeking to take them a few steps further. To use an overused but happy image, climbing on the shoulders of these giants we may perhaps be able to look a bit further. In any case, we have to try. A tradition of thought is maintained alive and fertile as long as we continue to develop it. But when on the other hand we stop, it withdraws into the scholastic, feeding off the repetition of the identical, and inevitably it wilts. Developing a tradition also means making it interact with current issues – testing it on these –, with new and rethought perspectives. The historical and social scenarios of education have changed profoundly in the last thirty years, and pedagogy itself has been reconfigured, aiming to keep a grip on these scenarios. Firstly, the scientific requests of the pedagogical discourse have increased, according to a fully legitimate and fertile trend, but which at times risks scientific and reductionist drifts, losing sight of the complexity of pedagogical knowledge and (precisely) the Problematicism of the educational experience. Secondly, pedagogical knowledge has been developed further, to respond precisely to the problems of educational practice in their diversified phenomenology. This enhancement of educational practice also appears legitimate and fertile, but is not free of hazards: from that of a fragmentation of pedagogical knowledge that loses the sense of educational problematicism as a whole, to that of an empiricist drift with no theoretical compass to guide educational pathways.

Working starting from Problematicism in order to seek to renew it, therefore. And seeking to renew it according to two coordinates: tackling the internal problems left open by its founding fathers; making it interact with today’s Pedagogical Problematicism, with the demands of scientificity and the adherence to its characterising educational practices. In this essay, we focus merely on testing this working direction. As explained, the first knot to unravel is the relationship between Pedagogical Problematicism and Banfi’s critical rationalism. And so, we must start from here.

In his *Principles of a Theory of Reason*, a paradigmatic work of critical rationalism, Banfi (1967) describes the structure of reason according to the ideal unity of scientific reason and philosophical reason, which mutually relate to each other in order to be achieved. They are separated in their inherent principle, but are connected in the transcendental idea of reason. Science represents the moment of *definitive universalism* of reason. Indeed, the categorial systems of scientific disciplines ensure the transposition of experience into a rational universal order. This however requires that the categorial structures be independent from experience, and that such independence can only be based on philosophical reason.

Philosophy on the other hand constitutes the moment of *systematic independence* of reason. For philosophical reason, the positions of experience have no value in their immediate being in the self, but only as aspects of a

rational systematics. This systematic demands the ideal unity of three moments: the *dialectic moment*, in which reason is negatively faced with the determinacy of the individual positions of experience; the *eidetic moment*: in which antinomy finds a transcendental synthesis in the idea, the value of which is purely regulatory; and, finally, the *phenomenological moment*, in which experience is thought of in the light of the idea, thus achieving its universal resolution in an open rational systematics. For this resolution to be possible, its universality must however be guaranteed, and this requires the function of the categorial systems of science. These therefore represent the phenomenological syntheses of the transcendental structure of experience.

Scientific and philosophical reason therefore mutually relate to each other, and their ideal unity expresses the very ideal of reason. A Pedagogical theory that is consistent with this framework should integrate a *Science of Education* with a *Philosophy of Education*. A system of scientific categories on one hand, and a constellation of transcendental ideas relating to education on the other. In relation to Banfi's system, Bertin however referred only to the sphere of philosophical reason, distinguishing between the Philosophy of Education and Normative Pedagogy (Bertin, 1968/1975). *Normative Pedagogy* has the task of choosing the educational model to be implemented in a given historical and social situation; the *Philosophy of Education* on the other hand has the task of ensuring the universal resolution of educational models in an open systematic, in a phenomenology of the educational experience which represents the plane of the possible, rather than that of history.

According to Banfi's theory, to take on a universal character, educational experience should however be resolved firstly according to the categorial structures of a science. Yet in Bertin's theory, experience is analysed directly according to the rational idea. This however risks making this analysis abstract, or at least very general. Without the mediation of the categorial systems of science, experience and reason risk remaining distant, and connected only partially. In this way, the educational experience is clarified only generally by the idea, and the regulatory capacity of the idea produces only general guidelines for educational practice. A theory of education with this arrangement is certainly precious, but it risks a certain level of abstraction. However, Bertin mostly avoids this abstraction as he does not consider educational experience in its immediacy, but rather organised according to its typical normative forms: *educational models*. The latter thus take on a mediating function between experience and reason. The Philosophy of Education then resolves these models in an open systematic according to the transcendental idea, ensuring a critical attitude towards the educational choice. However, this emancipation from the risk of abstraction is valid in pragmatic terms, but is not adequate on that of the theoretical analysis of the educational experience. Here, the lack of a categorial system of a science of education implies a direct relationship between idea and experience that can lead only to very general outcomes.

Consistently with Bertin's intentions, Problematicism thus represents a critical and anti-dogmatic philosophy of education. It is however lacking in a complete *Science of Education*, to fully reflect Banfi's architecture of reason. This Philosophy of Education is devoted mainly to the critical reflection on educational *purposes*, leaving the problem of educational *means* to Experimental Pedagogy. Thus, Pedagogy tends to lose its own unity. Bertin therefore selectively accepts Banfi's theory of reason: he refers to the motif of philosophical reason, yet neglects much of that of scientific reason. But according to Banfi, these represent two sides of the rationalist coin.

This arrangement thus leaves major problems unsolved. Can we remain attached to the idea of a purely philosophical Pedagogy today? Or must we think that it is possible to reconstruct a unitary Pedagogy based on the relationship between the Philosophy of Education (the discipline of educational purposes) and Experimental Pedagogy (a science of educational means)? But would this be a real epistemological unity, or a merely pragmatic juxtaposition? Does the Banfian solution of an ideal transcendental unity between a Philosophy of Education and a Science of Education, their rationally founded integration, offer an appropriate perspective that deserves to be worked on? Even simply as a working hypothesis, to assume this perspective we must however respond to a question that we have not yet considered. Does Banfi’s theory of reason represent a satisfactory basis for a pedagogical epistemology? In this respect, the abstraction of Banfi’s theory was criticised by Preti (one of his students).

According to Preti (1983), Banfi’s limit was that he had remained too close to the idealist speculative philosophy, which is based on a system of abstract categories. In fact, Banfi’s thought is hinged on the idea of the autonomy of reason, and therefore reason does not move from the facts of the intellect or of reason, but meets them again only secondly and within the limits of the aprioristic system of rational ideas. In other words, the limit of speculative philosophies (also including Banfi’s), is that of neglecting the function of mediation exercised by the intellect (in Kantian terms) between experience and reason, as the categories of intellect are what shapes experience. In this way, reason and experience risk remaining on a plane of mutual externality: the first remains abstract, the second remains confined within its anarchy. This critique is better clarified if we consider that Preti translates Kantian intellect into the conceptual structures of science. Thus, the categorial systems that shape experience, overcoming its immediacy, are those of the sciences.

In Banfi, on the other hand, reason self-sufficiently resolves the peculiarities of experience. But according to Preti, this is not the function of reason. In this respect, Preti seems to refer to Kantian architectonics, i.e., the distinction between “reason” (*Vernunft*) and “intellect” (*Verstand*) and their relationship: reason does not directly regulate experience, this is the task of the categories of intellect, but rather it exercises a regulatory function over the use of the intellect. Therefore, it is intellect (that is, scientific knowledge) that builds and shapes experience in a manner that conforms to the structures of reason, and it is therefore thanks to its intermediation that experience can be transposed on a rational plane. This is a similar problem to that of Kantian schematism, even though this is placed on a different logic level. “Schematism” is the activity through which the intellect provides “schemata” for concepts, i.e., rules for determining (empirical or pure) intuition according to a given concept. The schema constitutes the intermediate structure that makes the empirical and categorial planes uniform, and thus makes it possible to transpose sensitive data according to an intellectual order. Similarly, for Preti intellect, i.e., scientific research knowledge, provides the linguistic and syntactic structures used to build and shape experience.

But let’s return for a moment to the problem of Pedagogy. A mere Philosophy of Education (which corresponds to the plane of reason), without the support of a Science of Education (relating to the plane of the intellect), or at least a Pragmatic Pedagogy (which organises the educational experience according to educational models)

runs the risk of remaining abstract or highly general in relation to the concrete educational experience. On the other hand, Preti also underlines the limit of an intellect deprived of the regulation of reason. Without the guide of reason, intellect cannot adequately ensure the reconstruction of experience. Preti therefore seems to base his theory on Kantian architectonics, while reinterpreting the meaning of its levels. The need for transcendental logic implies the inadequacy of a merely empirical, positivist pedagogy such as *Experimental Pedagogy*, deprived of the *Philosophy of Education*. In fact, this leads to a unilateralism that is complementary to that of a merely speculative Philosophy of Education. Certainly, we may ask how far Preti’s criticism of Banfi hits the mark. It is not true that Banfi neglects the role of scientific knowledge. Simply, he does not place it on the level of the intellect, but rather on the level of reason. In Banfi, science is considered as scientific “reason”, complementary to philosophical reason. Therefore, the accusation of abstraction in Banfi’s philosophy remains controversial. In this way, for Banfi there is a horizontal circularity between scientific reason and philosophical reason, while for Preti there is a vertical circularity between reason and intellect (and between intellect and experience).

Preti’s research programme (1976) is one of philosophy as epistemology, which is tasked with investigating the structures of the intellect, i.e., of scientific knowledge. A programme in which Philosophy cannot be situated on the same level as science, because it is given a task which requires it be placed on a higher level, as it takes on the structures of scientific knowledge as its own object of investigation. It is therefore a matter of investigating the functional structures of scientific knowledge and their genesis. On the first question, we should only say that Preti sets it within the terms of a hierarchy of linguistic levels, and specifically as a relationship between common language and scientific language (Preti, 1976). This leads to a systematicity of levels of knowledge: the ideal language (which deals with the higher level of reason) demands of the languages of science (situated at the intermediate level of intellect) the syntactic structures according to which they must build the assertions that give scientific meaning to experience, which is expressed by the words of common language to which they are reconnected through rules of correspondence (such as, water is H₂O).

Let us look at the question of the origin of the structures of knowledge. Where and how did these structures originate. In this respect, Preti offers the theory of the primary character of vital practice (of the “flesh”) over *logos*, to reason. Preti (1983) criticises idealistic rationalism because the ideas of reason do not derive from intellect or the history of science, but lie immediately within the sphere of reason. This position is upturned, taking on a similar attitude of that of Marx towards Hegel. Preti’s criticism therefore targets the Banfi of the *Principles of a theory of reason*, according to which the rational idea is achieved not by intellectual abstraction nor by immediate, intuitive experience, but rather through a dialectic practice within philosophical thought. The process thus remains intrinsic to philosophical reason, which thus self-produces the transcendental idea of its antinomial structure. This approach according to Preti must be changed. But in which direction? According to Banfi’s speculative rationalism, the origin of the rational idea is reason itself, and its process is dialectic. In other words, in principle, the origin lies in *logos*. On the other hand, we have to assume that, in principle, the origin lies in *praxis*, and it is only through intellect that from here we arrive at *reason*. Therefore, the plane of origin must not be identified in *logos*, but in the life of men in flesh and blood, in social practice that relates them

mutually and to the world. The needs of life are what drive man to develop technique, science and culture. In other words, *logos* derives from *praxis* and returns there: their relationship is circular (and therefore so is the relationship between practice and theory). Yet the “world of life” that *logos* originates from does not have the ante-predicative character assigned to it by phenomenology, it is already built by ordinary language.

Language constantly intervenes in the organisation of experience, even that of common sense, which is shaped by ordinary language. Experience is processed according to the methods of the intellect, describing facts and placing them in relation to each other. And, in this way, it reconstructs the structures of the experience of common sense in different ways. Here, reason plays the role of *ideal limit* of the need for universality. On this basis we can reset the analysis of educational experience, moving from practice to reason through the mediation of the intellect. In terms of practice, knowledge is based on evidence, which is of vital value and represents an instrument of life. On the next level, through a process of abstraction and idealisation of contents and their relationships, knowledge is organised scientifically, according to the categorial structures of various knowledge. Above this level, Preti places the *transcendental plane*, where the regulatory ideas of reason lie.

With all this, however, it is not sufficient to consider Preti’s thought as a break with Banfi’s, we also have to understand the elements of continuity. In this respect, Preti’s contribution can be considered a more advanced stage of the research programme of critical rationalism, a stage that develops the Kantian plane of the intellect along the lines of logic empiricism, rather than an alternative programme. In this respect, the “nucleus” that establishes the continuity between Banfi’s theory and Preti’s thought within the established research programme of critical rationalism is made of a *transcendentalism* that gives a merely methodical value to concepts and ideas in relation to a concrete and vital experience.

The question we now aim to pose is if, compared to Bertin’s Problematicism (the result of a selective reception of Banfi’s Critical Rationalism) it is possible to assert the two motifs of Preti’s thought that we underlined: the relevance of the intellect (i.e., scientific knowledge); and the primary character of vital practice. These motifs are rare in Bertin’s thought. His theory is in fact built on the relationship between philosophical reason and educational experience, and the task of the former is to rationally resolve the Problematicism of the latter. To develop the tradition of Problematicism, we will attempt to process it in relation to these motifs, without changing their fundamental nucleus: the methodical and transcendental arrangement borrowed by both Preti and Bertin from Banfi. In *Educazione alla ragione*, Bertin (1968/1975, pp. 17-9) states that the investigation of the educational experience demands that first of all the general concept of experience be defined, that is to say its transcendental idea, in terms of the integrative relationship between subject and object, between I and the world. In other words, the rational idea has a logical primacy: we must start from the idea in order to investigate experience. Furthermore, in defining the relationship between the plane of rationality and that of experience, he states that this relationship has two moments: one merely *negative* which marks the problematicism of experience in relation to the idea, the other *positive* which consists in the rational solution of this problematicism (ivi, p. 23). Experience therefore takes on the character of negativity (Problematicism) in relation to the positivity of the idea; a negativity that can only be overcome by transposing experience according to the antinomian structure

of the rational idea. We must therefore start from the rational idea to enlighten the problematicism of experience, and to resolve the latter we have to see it in the light of the antinomian tension of that idea, avoiding re-absorbing it unilaterally in one of its poles. According to the principle of the primary character of practice, it is a matter of changing the relationship between reason and experience, starting from *educational practice* in which people in flesh and blood interact. We must therefore start from the “problems” of educational practice and return to them, to resolve them not only in theoretical terms but also “practically”.

The problems of practice do not correspond to the problematicism of experience, however. The problems of practice are of a practical nature, arising from concrete educational situations, and a given historical and social context. Pedagogy must not be based upon a rational idea but on the problems of educational practices. In this respect, Preti’s indication (1975) on the connection between transcendental settings and the Philosophy of Practice is precious. In relation to the latter, we can refer to the pragmatist concept of Dewey in *Fonti di una Scienza dell’Educazione*, where he expressly states that «educational ‘practices’ provide data and arguments that constitute the ‘problems’ of the investigation; they are the only source of the *fundamental* problems to be investigated» (Dewey, 1996, p. 24), specifying that educational practices are the test bench of the validity of the very results of the investigation. It is therefore a matter of starting from the problems of educational practices, developing them in theoretical terms in order to offer solutions, the validity of which must be tested in the body of the same practices. Starting from practice and returning thereto, through the passage from the theoretical (rational in its broad sense) level. In this perspective, practice is not negative in relation to the idea, it does not represent the irrational in the presence of the rational. A caesura between the irrational educational experience and a rational pedagogical processing makes the relationship between these two levels unexplainable. Educational practice does not constitute an irrational experience, it is already structured according to the cognitive forms of common sense. The latter can be intellectualised and are susceptible to rational processing. Furthermore, common sense is expressed in ordinary language, which therefore constitutes the first level on which to structure educational practice. Undoubtedly, with the vagueness of ordinary language, and the contradictions of common sense, and therefore with the Problematicism underlined by Bertin. However, this Problematicism must not prevent us from understanding the positive elements that shape experience. In this respect, we must not underestimate the contribution offered by the analysis of ordinary language (see Kneller, 1975), as Bertin does (1982). If the problematicism of experience is at least partly linked to the ambiguity and vagueness of ordinary language, firstly resolving these limits through informal linguistic analysis means setting the course for forms of scientific analysis.

Even though educational practice is already organised according to the symbolic plots of ordinary language, this does not however imply that it can be directly transposed according to the rational idea. The structure given by ordinary language is heterogeneous, vague and ambiguous. The plane of experience and the rational plane are therefore not uniform. The idea is too formal to give a fine structure to experience, which can only be enlightened in broad terms. This is the limit of the purely theoretical analysis of the educational experience. The rational transposition of experience must therefore be prepared by its *intellectualisation* (see Dewey, 1986).

According to Preti, the moment of intellect provides for the intelligible shaping of experience. This intellectualisation of practice uses categorial systems in the various fields of knowledge, thus achieved through the reconstruction of experience according to scientific concepts.

To transpose the educational experience according to the rational idea, we must first have completed its intellectualisation according to the conceptual network of a science of education. Also for Banfi, scientific categories represent the elements of a Phenomenology of the educational experience. The idea however plays a role of coordination and ideal unification of the scientific perspectives and concepts used. Therefore, it is not ordinary experience transposed according to the idea, but rather experience reconstructed in a scientific form. This indication is also valid for the “problems” of educational practice as an object of pedagogical investigation. In fact, already defined problems are not given in practice. At the start, the situation is only obscure and confused (Dewey, 1974, pp. 136-44). Its description in terms of ordinary language remains at least partly imprecise and does not allow an accurate theoretical definition of the problem. The passage from an obscure situation to the clear definition of the problem demands a process of *intellectualisation*, based on scientific conceptual systems. In this way, the correlation with an antinomian rational idea can be made on a more effective and concrete basis. The antinomian idea plays a regulatory role in scientific analysis, ensuring the unitary connection of the concepts used. Transposition according to the idea also ensures greater theoretical breadth of the analysis, focusing the specific problem within a general problematic.

In a theoretical architecture of Problematicist Pedagogical knowledge, this would therefore mean overcoming the bipartition between educational experience and philosophical reason, moving to a tripartition that also includes scientific intellectuality. Taking Preti’s architectonics as a reference, this would mean envisaging a field of experience that falls entirely within the idea of education and is characterised by its own categorial structures used to scientifically reconstruct ordinary educational experience. In addition to this is the principle of the unity of theory and practice, which connects the levels of pedagogical knowledge in two ways: one theoretical-interpretative and the other pragmatic-operational. The first ascends from experience to categories according to the unitary regulation of the idea. The second descends from educational models to educational practice according to the critical regulation of the idea. The first, ascending, offers an intellectual analysis of the educational experience, and therefore its rational transposition. The second, descending, ensures a critical integration of educational models through the transcendental need expressed by the idea, and therefore an operational translation of the chosen solution into educational practices. Obviously, these are purely general indications, and would need to be substantiated by a whole series of theoretical clarifications. What I would like to underline here, however, is that to continue to develop the tradition of Problematicism, working on its open problems, it is necessary to dialogue with other paradigms of thought. Here, Preti was exemplary: while moving from Banfi’s Transcendentalism, and holding firm the anti-dogmatic need that pervades it, he tackled logical Neo-Empiricism and Deweyan Pragmatism. Undoubtedly, the risk of opening these and other issues is that of falling into eclecticism, compromising the coherence of the critical-rationalist and problematicist setting. However, this is a risk that must be run, obviously constantly checking the internal coherence of the setting renewed by these

comparisons. Otherwise, as we said at the start, we run a far more serious risk: that of folding Problematicism away in a scholastic setting that aims only to comment the texts of its founding fathers. The trust that Problematicism constitutes a robust and vital paradigm of pedagogical thought must lead to facing the challenge of its renewal without fear, with reasonable trust in its possibility of continuing to develop and represent a fertile reference for Pedagogy.

2. Experience and reality. Epistemological and political implications of the concept of reason in Antonio Banfi and his reasons for actuality

It is well known that the main preoccupation of Antonio Banfi – especially the early Banfi (1959)– was that of establishing a theoretical mechanism able to resist the sirens of Dogmatism and the easy seductions of metaphysical thought. The aim was to outline a way of doing theory, which did not establish forced and aprioristic identifications between reality and concepts, but which subjected the latter to the scrutiny of the former. Against the assumption of metaphysical tradition, which theorised the being of themselves of things and the consequent legitimacy of human knowledge, Banfi stated that knowing means first and foremost overcoming the rejection and contradictions that stand between practice and theory, experience, becoming and reality. Precisely because, in the Kantian sense, the real cannot be the subject of knowledge as such, but requires investigation of its partial, historically situated forms through which we gain experience; it derives that the very concept of experience must be thought of in sufficiently broad terms to allow the elements of diversification to emerge, its open and flexible, and always unpredictable, face. For Banfi, underlying experience is «...the infinite wealth of its contents, the variety of its aspects, the differentiation of its structures, the typicality of its directions and spheres, the diversity of their relations and balances, the complex wealth of its processes and the vitality of its values...» (Banfi, 1996, vol. I, p. 259).

Therefore, against all attempt of reduction or ontological foundation, which purports to regulate or preordain experience, lies the need to give voice to experience itself, its flow, its elements of pluralism, contradiction and ambivalence. In epistemological terms, the problem is that of understanding how that variety of aspects and contents can be captured and represented. Indeed, it is obvious that, as the real cannot be entirely perceived, in the same way that experience can be observed and studied, first and foremost in the contexts in which it takes form. And these contexts are made of many, plural, multiple, potentially infinite and infinitive events – as explained – but also of viewpoints, those of the ones who aim to analyse it: Gregory Bateson teaches us (Bateson, 1984).

In this respect, Banfi makes a precise choice, offering a concept of experience, understood as the integrative relationship of the subject determined by the object and reciprocally the object by the subject (Banfi, 1959). This relationship «tends to assume, in speculation, that neutral, extra-ontological position, independent from a presumed being in the self of the subject as well as the object...» (Banfi, 1959, vol. I, p. 258). Saying this, he immediately expresses the nature of his own standpoint: experience is made of a subject, an object, which are not the guardians of preordained essences, but must rather be understood according to neutral meanings, and

their mutual relationship, which is expressed in terms of the integration of one and the other. These few words however contain an epistemological revolution. In this perspective, in fact, experience cannot continue to be thought of in subjectivistic terms, i.e., as an emanation of an absolute, founded and founding subjectivity, able to hover above the world of history, remove itself from the limits of sensory experiences, be reflected in terms of self-evidence and hold a privileged relationship with the pure world of ideas.

To allow this to happen, it is not enough to think of experience in correlative terms, but rather it is necessary that the very terms of the correlation be represented differently: when Banfi writes that the subject is determined by the object and vice versa, he means that the subject does not necessarily identify with the I and with the conscience, and that the object is not bindingly identifiable with the world, nature, the environment and everything which, negatively, goes beyond the boundaries of subjectivity itself. The subject and the object must be understood in neutral terms, as they are no longer conceived in aprioristic terms: it is in accordance with contexts and historical events, the power relations established between the two, which have to be ascertained if the subject is truly to be free and singular or the passive emanation of an impersonal and standardised conscience; if the object is truly the expression of an impersonal reality, governed by mechanistic laws, of cause and effect or not rather the expression of a much broader reality, of which only the most immediate evidence is perceived. Banfi's passage here is interesting – also revealing elements in close harmony with the Heideggerian lesson and the categorial revolution of *Being and Time* – as it allows us to think of the subject and the object in terms of similar heuristic, epistemic, historical and existential consistency. Indeed, traditionally the object was merely the expression of a reality posed by the subject, often regulated by mechanistic processes, the slave of - all in all predictable - logics of cause and effect. On the contrary, the subject was the expression of high determinations, potentially free from experience, thinking, intentional, of high moral and intellectual value: created in the image and likeness of God, the subject could choose, even only between good and bad, in contrast to the object, which was already a given thing in its place.

In this traditional ontological bipartition of the subject and object, the relationship binding them was only apparently dialectic and antinomian: in fact, it suffered from an act of hierarchisation which placed the former at the basis of the latter, according to the typical method of proceeding of transcendental idealism. It is not difficult to understand the implications and repercussions that the Banfian concept of experience has on this conception: if the subject and the object are in fact mutually determining, their interaction will be the experience gained of the respective balances of power, and the subject can experiment extreme forms of conditioning, aiming to enslave and reify it – according to Sartre's well-known lesson (Sartre, 1985) – and the object, far from being passive and given, can convey capacities of self-regulation and capillary, pervasive conditioning, all but the expression of a given world set from the outside (Lovelock, 1981). In this perspective, it is difficult to understand who or what guides and orients experience, and certainly it is not possible to define it *a priori*. In theory, depending on the weight exerted by one and the other pole of experience, it is possible to think in phases, in which one of the two radically prevails over the other and phases in which there are situations of balance. If things were simply set in these terms, however, we could think that it is the corresponding relations of strength and power that

decide for one or the other: in turn, in favour of one, the subject, or the other, the object, or their mutual negotiation.

Banfi expresses a broader, constructive vision of this interaction, using the concept of integration: the relationship between subject and object must be understood within a mutually integrative function. Therefore, they are indeed mutually determining, but they are in the sense of being each able to accept the demands of the other, being able to mutually listen, avoiding the absolutization of one of the two poles, which compromise the recognition of that which is only apparently contrary. There is not necessarily antagonism between the subject and object, at least not *a priori*. Then why continue to assert them as antinomian and opposite, one far from the other, so distant that they have to commit to a path of mutual integration?

Because it is their radicalization which gives voice to their very *raison d'être*, their respective initial identities, the purity of their models of reference: how to prevent, for example, the moment of subjectivity from narrating an existential plot, made of free choices, goals of self-realization, experiences of breaking bonds and emancipation from the logics of dependence and slavery? And how to prevent the moment of objectivity from drawing attention to the priorities of the environment, time and history, to the constraints imposed and relieved by community life? Once these positions are placed in absolute transparency, it becomes possible to allow the reasons and founding elements to emerge, along with the injustices and those of arbitrariness and distortion of experience. The movement of mutual integration aims to overcome violent and ethically unfounded unilateralisms, based only on the triumph of free will over reason: precisely for this reason, there cannot be a point of departure, but a possible point of arrival, before which the terms of the relationship must be free to represent themselves in their own relative autonomy.

Integration is neither a given condition or an intended condition, it is rather a possible process: to occur, it uses the faculty of the rational moment which, in turn, is presented as a request, a need that can govern the path of humanity and guide it in constructive directions. From this viewpoint, the Aristotelian assertion that man is a rational animal is hopefully untrue: indeed, as we know, humanity can be profoundly irrational. Within this, it is however possible to state that reason, due to its particular characteristics, can help us to pursue good and virtue, understood as perspectives that partially overcome egoisms, absolutisms and dogmatisms, which prevent experience from evolving in positive directions. For Banfi, both experience and reason act in terms of integration between the subject and the object: there is an inextricable link between the concept of reason and that of experience, and indeed we cannot state that the former is external to and above the latter. To understand the sense of this passage, we have to distinguish between experience and facticity: the events of time and history are configured as a set of facts and data, until a system of correlations helps us to associate them, in order to give them meaning. It is experience that allows this task of slow, progressive, gradual and always partial and infinitive construction of meaning to be performed: experience is something different from reality and configures a second-level processing of reality itself. In doing so, experience can be expressed in terms of integration between the subjective and objective determinations of experience, as rational activity helps us to overcome the limits of the intuitive moment of knowledge and produce more dialectically advanced syntheses.

Banfi writes,

«Rationality is the form in which the synthesis of knowledge is implemented... Knowledge as rational therefore stops being determined by the specific features of the subject and the object: it is the process by which, through the dialecticism of experience, the ideal pure correlation of the two terms, which is the pure theoretical limit of every concrete knowledge and the source of its problematicism, it develops as a universal system of partial correlations of the subject and object as determined, removed from their dogmatic position. It is only in rationality therefore that the theoretical order is fully implemented and resolves within itself all otherness of relationships...» (Banfi 1967, p. 64).

It is hard not to note Hegel's influence on the words of Banfi. Banfi assigns reason the task of going beyond the framework of the previously experimented models of rationality, that now, widely applied, have become a habit and, as such, have joined the intuitive sphere of knowledge and the spontaneous relations that govern experience. The rational exercise offers the possibility of not continuing to suffer the traditional methods of interaction between the subject and object and representation of one and the other. Rational exercise has, for example, the ability to not continue to think of itself as subjects that are the guardians of free will, able to transcend the conditionings and obstacles of experience, or vice versa, as merely passive and manipulated subjects, intended to suffer the failure of their own expectations and hopes of realization.

However, in Banfi's thought, far from being guaranteed and in the same order as reality, the dialectic movement corresponds to a possible choice, with all the difficulties of application that this implies. Behind Banfi's idea of reason, there is no - unlike in Hegel - autopoietic tension of an absolute spirit, which is imposed due to needs linked to the very process of disclosure and revelation, but the ambivalent and contradictory path of a cultural evolution, which is not intended to be realized, indeed it is always at risk of defeat and regression, but it is at the same time able to recognize the favourable conditions for new evolutionary accomplishments. And not only: while aware of its own limits, reason is able to imagine a purely ideal plan of overcoming rejection and conflicts that stand in the way of object and subject. Through rational activity, the ambivalences and tensions governing the relationship between the objective and subjective moment of experience can, in the transcendental moment, find an effective framework for orienting the action of the dialectic process in a purely theoretical, historically unrealizable perspective of full integration, overcoming the respective elements of unilateralism and the corresponding forms of violence, dogmatism and egoism. Thanks to reason, on one hand, it is possible to remain lucid and aware that this perspective can never be realized in time and history, and is destined to remain a pure ideal to be inspired by; on the other hand, it is possible to re-orient the path of humanity, every time the force of obscurantism risks switching off the light of rationality.

It is not only this, however, which protects Banfi's thought from the risks of falling into dogmatism. Another fundamental aspect refers to the distance between experience and reality which we mentioned at the start of this essay. As explained, experience enjoys a direct relationship with knowledge, and is to some extent guided and regulated by it; it may be so in a rigid and aprioristic manner, as in dogmatic thought, demanding to govern it

from above, or in a flexible, two-way manner, as in anti-dogmatic and problematicist thought, which accepts to dialogue with practice. Also in this second case, we must in any case pay attention to the risk of confusing the practices with which we dialogue and in which experience is expressed with reality itself.

«The subject of knowledge», Banfi wrote in 1926 in *Principles of a Theory of Reason*, «is such only in relation to the object, and the object such only in relation to the subject; or, in other words, each of the two terms, not characterized by any given content, is defined only as a function of its mutual relationship...» (Banfi 1926/1967, p. 19). Precisely. What goes for experience goes for knowledge, and vice versa. Both experience and knowledge have something to do with the construction of interactive practices between the subjective and objective pole, according to meanings which prevent their identification *a priori*, as thought and knowledge are not less contingent of experience faced with reality. More of Banfi's words:

«It has been stated that knowledge is essentially contingent when faced with reality. Now, this proposition, considered in its truth, has a far more complex meaning than that which, at first glance, may appear as immediately intuitive, that is to say that things are independent from their being known, and that therefore in knowledge there is an implicit moment of existentialism determined by the real... If knowledge is understood as an act or a state of the I, as particularly determined, things are objectively independent from it...» (Banfi 1967 p. 47).

It is not possible to fully understand this reflection without considering the links between Banfi's thought and that of Kant. For Banfi, as for Kant, the noumenon exists and is part of a reality which only to some extent can be perceived and represented through knowledge: is it the I that sets, or attempts to set, the latter, but the things it tries to perceive have more to do with our idea of reason and experience than with actual reality. Reality lives beyond the domains of knowledge and can however act as a stimulus for the definition of new understandings of reason and knowledge.

After Kant and, even more so, after Freud, it is not hard to think that, beyond and above the I, there is not only the external reality, but also the internal one: that world which is not easily accessible to knowledge is part of the reality that surrounds us, of course, but also that which lives inside of us. The gnoseological I is a part of the mind and the personality, not all the mind, not all the personality.

As we said, and we repeat, the noumenon cannot be perceived and known in its pure objectivity, and knowledge is the point of arrival of a process of phenomenal processing: we can know experience, not reality. This does not mean however that reality does not exist and that signals, information and requests of various kinds come from reality. Just think of the environmental issues: for thousands of years, we thought that matter was dead, inanimate, without a spirit and that a body with a soul and superior intelligence, like the human one, could hover above matter itself. So, this idea has led humanity to think of itself not as part of the planet, to which it owes its life, but as the master of the planet. Technological development has misled us to think it can exert a limitless power, and in the meantime someone theorized on the non-existence of the noumenon... Today, this planet is our home, it is telling us and reminding us that reality exists and, in this direction, leaves us precise signals,

warnings that are increasingly close to their expiry date, after which it is possible to argue that we will no longer be the ones to decide. The real cannot be known, of course, because knowledge is, by necessity, limited and situated: it is possible to investigate experience, but not actual reality. Yet in the last century, scientific research has developed significant knowledge, which helps to understand how reality works, more than was ever possible in the past. Today, for example, we know that:

- Underlying life there is a distinction between simple and complex systems, more than between spirit and matter. The atoms that make up a table are the same that make up our body, but, beyond a certain threshold of complexity, it is matter itself that organises according to a precise system of information and becomes able to query the meaning of knowledge itself (Wohler, 1828);
- Precisely because space and time are relative and connected to each other, matter and energy are also found to be interrelated: bodies stop being configured as jointly organised realities, to become forms of stored energy. As it is possible to transform energy, this energy can also be transformed into matter: it depends on their speed of movement (Einstein, 1915);
- Quantum mechanics and the theory of chaos confirm the idea that we are part of a reality in which everything is interrelated: particles that are even very far apart communicate instantaneously with each other, and so we believe consider that they are part of the same entity (Heisenberg, 1927). Something similar is theorised by the so-called “butterfly effect”: all that is needed are some negligible effects, like the flight of a butterfly, to trigger catastrophic reactions on the other side of the planet (Ekeland, 2010).
- Finally, the anthropic principle. Supported by mathematical calculations, Brandon Carter demonstrated that it was extremely unlikely that matter could take over from anti-matter, life over non-life, the reproduction of DNA over entropy and the failure to organise information: and yet, this has happened (Barrow & Typler, 2010).

It is not possible to know reality as reality, but some great scientific acquisitions of the 20th century help us to understand large parts of reality, which perhaps can no longer be reduced to within the confines of experience, or rather, that which we understand to be experience. Certainly, we have relative, only partial, views of it, conditioned by our very own way of knowledge, but these are views which lead far and are mainly positive. They help us to think that in reality there is a subtle self-regulating ability, a search for balance, the positive prevailing over the negative, a processuality which recalls that theorized by Banfi in his principle of integration.

Perhaps, an operating principle and method are imposed in reality which foster the integration between “subject” and “object” on a cosmic scale. If we narrow our view and focus once again on the human universe, we realize that the enemy is no longer represented by metaphysically-derived “subjectivism” but rather the assertion of a different desire for power, which is expressed on two levels: on one hand, the technocratic supremacy, which radicalizes the process of distortion of humanity and the whole environment; on the other hand, the assertion of a nihilistic dogmatism, which risks cancelling all possibility to exercise rationality, through the assertion of a metaphysics of crisis, where crisis becomes both essence and ontology (Fabbri, 2014, 2018, 2019).

Both these concepts of reality reject the deviation theorized thus far between experience, occurrence and reality, and purport to replace reality itself, hiding it beneath the veil of its own narrations. Both seem to state a kind of identification between logos and reality, which is based on the identification of strong, sovereign and today dominating words, thanks to the redundancy with which they are spoken and repeated: globalization, crisis, pandemic, war are strong, sovereign words, which have followed on from each other in such a short time, always saying the same thing, that experience is escaping us, that we are not in a condition to guide and govern it, and that reality has the upper hand over everything.

Let's be honest: it is not reality but experience which pretends to be reality, returning to a new dogmatism, which denies the existence of alternative words and forms of experience, which hands over critical thought and social antagonism to the dispirited and dispiriting minds of the “no vax”. It rejects the integration between subject and object, because the triumphant objectivity of financial speculation, the leviathan that kills economies, cultures and climatic differences and which announces the engineering of bodies, make subjectivity dangerous as it is too close to those words which pursue marginalization. Which words? Reason, integration, empathy, understanding, experience and reality, in fact. Perhaps these words are closer to the “true” face of reality, that view of the universe that exists regardless of us and which today is sending us increasingly clear signals.

3. What use for Pedagogical Problematicism in 2022? Problematicism and uncertainty against polarisations and binary thought

In the Problematicist pedagogical perspective, complexity and problematicism are fundamental characteristics of human experience, in turn considered in its various aspects and different fields, underlying all learning processes. The idea of “experience”, borrowed from Antonio Banfi, as a relationship integrating subject and world, is characterized by problematicism because every historically and spatially situated existence is characterized by the partiality and instability of the very attempt at integration which is therefore never unambiguous, stable and definitive (see Bertin, 1984, pp. 17-19).

In this perspective, there is no room for dogmatism, fixed, pre-defined rules, laws set in stone. In other words, it is a question of considering the impossibility of an aprioristically and unambiguous definition of the meaning of experience, as it is declined in its concrete, personal and collective application (see Bertin, 1968, p. 28). The steps I take to understand and be understood, to approach others and be approached, to settle – both cognitive and emotional – conflicts are found to be insufficient even in the cases in which, with legitimate satisfaction, I record progress in those directions: not because I underestimate my progress, but because the goal I am aiming for continues to move forwards and show me the road which I, always and again, have to take and follow. The goal, in fact, the integration between the two poles - I and the world - is a limiting, regulatory and transcendental idea. It “serves” to promote our processuality, warning us of our limits, fostering both critical lucidity in recognizing the partiality of our achievements and research, day by day, and in situation, of the conditions for achieving them in a less partial, and more complete, manner (see Bertin & Contini, 1983, p. 29).

It is important to underline how the many voices and meanings experience holds in this perspective are not purely passive and reductive, the resigned acceptance of a vital experience that is not easily pigeon-holed and “weighs” down with its opaque multidimensionality. On the contrary, there is a clear awareness of the inherent potential of determining the fundamental ambivalence characterizing every aspect of life. On the other hand, this basic consideration cannot be separated from the other fundamental pillar supporting the whole Problematicist Pedagogical building: the moment of rational intervention seeking to govern and resolve this problematic moment, once again from a transcendental standpoint. This moment is qualified in terms of the request (a term which in fact also indicates the plane of the possible – positive and negative - on which it is placed) aiming to resolve unilateral, incongruous (and in this sense problematic) forms respectively towards multilateralism and congruence, acquiring or clarifying the most appropriate criteria for each of these operations.

“Transcendental Rationalism”, which is the existential direction in which this search for integration leans in a Problematicist perspective, becomes the form in which philosophy offers itself as a *meditatio vitae*, a reference to strive for in the unlimited fertility and infinite spontaneity of «bare life» (Banfi, 1961, p. 197). The transcendental position of the rational moment characterizes it in terms of the regulatory principle of an ideal integration of the polarities constituting the I-world antinomy. In other words, assuming the hypothesis of rational solution in a methodological perspective allows us on one hand to avoid improbable dialectic syntheses, and on the other to meet the need to make choices within the historical dimension in which we find ourselves.

The transcendental perspective of rationality – understood by Bertin as the philosophical solution of Problematicism – offers all the choices that lean towards a situation of precariousness and imperfection. In this perspective, it is therefore rationality itself that takes on the features of Problematicism by imposing concrete choices, it is aware of their unavoidable limits, even in the best situations. The rational solution avoids the deadlocks imposed on a choice to be made between radical polarities defining the field of a specific problematic. On the contrary, the rationalist concept is strongly marked by the awareness of the ethical horizon of our own intervention, which implies the need for a choice, unavoidably and in any case limited in its scope and outcomes.

These however are the same limits which, narrowing the space for absolute hypothetical solutions, makes the action possible by acting as “rules of the game” which offer different spaces for movement and attempts at plural solutions. In any case, the horizon of choice refers to «a rigor which, even harder to obtain, demands constant effort and commitment» (Fabbri, 2019, p. 46). A rigor which, if it refers to the possibility of losses, also alludes to possibilities of further enrichment. Within the intentionality of the project, the category of the possible plays an absolutely central role. On one hand, it offers access to an opportunity for a truly personal project, and on the other avoids blocking horizons and limiting the route to beaten tracks.

In *Disordine Esistenziale e Stanza della Ragione* (1981), Bertin offers us insight into the situation of crisis in which contemporary civilisation lies, through the investigation conducted, with partly different perspectives, on four central themes (tragic, comic, violence and eros) which bear witness to the existential disorder, defined in terms of a «refusal, mostly unconscious, of that desire for self-understanding and self-organisation, construction and reconstruction - organic, dynamic and progressive – that we recognise in the request for ‘Reason’»

(Bertin, 1981, p. 49). Bertin underlines how the features on which he exercises his analytical efforts confirm the uncertain and divisive nature of human beings, considered in the current stage of their evolution in which they appear both *sapiens* and *demens* at the same time. Analyzing Bertin forty years on, he still seems very current and very similar to the perspective of the “epistemology of complexity” that even recently Edgar Morin re-proposed as a paradigm of thought useful for interpreting (and correcting) the degeneration of our time (see Tolomelli, 2007). Not only, but Bertin’s criticism of the negative aspects characterizing disorder goes hand in hand with the attempt to also understand the potentially positive aspects imprisoned within them, in the - courageous - consideration of their ambivalence and, therefore, complexity. In other words, the Problematicist filter to obtain those “implicit educational possibilities” without denying the “tragedy” of experience, but in which to find, once more, through the “mixing and reconstruction of pieces”, higher possibilities of existence.

In Bertin’s philosophical perspective, the action of contrasting disorder incarnated by the request for reason can make “reason” a concept not characterized by the rigidity and absoluteness characteristic of reason understood according to its classic meaning and according to more reductive, trivialized approaches typical of the binary thought of our time. From this point of view, I think it is possible to state that it is not a matter of replacing disorder with order, at least if this latter term is understood as a regulatory request strictly used to block, cover and deny disorder, and with this also the possibilities which could be triggered by it. For Bertin, “reason” is an image of reference which helps us to “regulate” our thoughts without demanding that our experience and our viewpoint rest on this. Problematicist rationality holds within in the consciousness of its own limits (first and foremost historical, cultural and hermeneutic), but continues to seek a perspective that is as broad as possible, while knowing that it remains in any case limited, partial, singular, open to changes. Echoes of Heidegger’s *Verwindung* (see Vattimo, 1989) can be noted, through which we can see the aspects imposed on the present with their apparent and banal dramatic evidence in a new light, discovering their vital and existential energies (projected onto the future) which are still unexpressed and potentially enriching.

Recognising the constitutive problematicism of the real, its not being stably defined and definable, whatever the unique situations characterising it (its complex constitution, given by the simultaneous presence of different aspects and meanings, also contrary to each other), Rationalist Problematicism becomes a philosophical horizon with all that it takes to investigate a territory that has become increasingly elusive, confused, uneven.

In other words, the founding features of Problematicism are better tuned to this extremely intricate reality. Equally, we cannot escape the need to choose and construct meaningful configurations of reality, yet with the awareness of their relativity. This change in perspective offers a fundamental hermeneutic opening that tunes the load-bearing structure of Giovanni Maria Bertin’s philosophy of education to the complex context of the modern age. In our time, the subject «has discovered the loss of the future, its unpredictability» (Morin, 2001, p. 45) and the demise of traditional values has fostered the emergence of new directives that promote the individualization of experience. Individualization offers the subject greater possibilities of realization compared to the past, but at the same time produces a series of negative effects: it increases individual responsibility and, with this, a feeling of inadequacy in coping with it; it deprives the subject of guiding reference values, procuring

existential insecurity, relegating the subject to solitude due to competitive mechanisms, the fragmentation of the social fabric, insecurity itself, which becomes mistrust of others, while the weakening of the institutions has undermined the social guarantees for citizens.

In this context of solitude and uncertainty, the subject that has to build his own identity with none of the cultural references required for this task, risks conforming acritically to the models proposed by the mass-media, which seem to be the only agencies able to produce meanings, given the lack of public spaces where other models can be developed. The emancipation from traditional values which should have promised greater freedoms may therefore become a boomerang, able to destroy the very possibilities of freedom it had generated. Indeed, while in modern, democratic societies, individuals see fewer restrictions on their possibility to act, they are seduced by the persuasive powers of the media, losing their freedom by identifying, as a manifestation of their own will, the adaptation to pre-constructed models and the satisfaction of induced needs. These models promote a lifestyle oriented to well-being to be satisfied through the pleasures offered by consumption, thus transforming the political citizen into a consumer and reducing his freedom to choose from the range offered by the market (see Bauman, and others.).

In the post-modern society, the consumer is not however led to possess durable goods, but rather to experiment the sensations linked to consumption itself, fuelling a mechanism that strengthens the power of the agencies of persuasion, as each time these can promise new and more intense pleasures to individuals who need to feel continuous excitement. In addition to the loss of freedom, the most worrying aspect concerning the consumer of sensations relates to his relationship with others, as he risks acquiring value only due to the sensations they can procure, and losing it, on a par with consumer objects, once the excitement they arouse has faded. These relational methods cancel the enriching potential of human relations, turning them into instruments of mutual alienation.

Humanity in contemporary society, summed up all too briefly here, cannot be understood in normative terms, but as a trend, in order to avoid apocalyptic interpretations which would nullify all pedagogical proposals. This trend cannot however leave us indifferent, as solitude, insecurity, conformism, the incapacity for authentic human relations must necessarily be a cause for concern for the human condition of our time.

Freedom of the subject, as outlined by Nietzsche and recalled by Bertin (1983), is essentially intellectual freedom from the beliefs of one's own time, the subject's critical ability in relation to metaphysically established values accepted unconditionally by the majority of individuals belonging to the same culture. It can only be realized following the awareness of the “death of God”, understood as the demise of false certainties in favor of an opening to the interpretative possibilities of the subject, who must be the creator of values, choosing his own sense of the world and of life. Freedom, therefore, starting from the subject's refusal to accept the certainties established by others (God, tradition, the family...), lies necessarily on the horizon of existential uncertainty, as, returning to the declaration of Fromm mentioned above, «the free man is necessarily insecure, the thinking man is necessarily uncertain» (Fromm, 1996, p. 67).

In this context, the perspective of uncertainty as a limiting idea of the existential design of the subject in the globalized world takes on an important dimension. Like Fromm, various authors deem freedom and uncertainty to be inseparable: Bauman states that uncertainty has the basic characteristic of the possibility for the subject to develop independent (and therefore free) thought; thus individuals are unavoidably placed before the choice between autonomy and security.

«The kingdom of autonomy begins where the kingdom of certainty ends. Human beings can be either autonomous or secure: rarely the two things together [...]. Uncertainty, and even worse, boundless uncertainty, the uncertainty of both projects and foundations, is a permanent condition of autonomous reason [...] Autonomous reason despises the desperate human need for reassurance» (Bauman, 2000, pp. 85-90).

The kingdom of certainty is not the kingdom of truth, far from it; as Morin states, «it is in doctrinal, dogmatic and intolerant certainties that the worst illusions lie» (Morin, 2001, p. 87): this does not however mean that the choice of uncertainty is more popular than the choice of illusion, as the individual's desire for freedom rarely prevails over his need for reassurance, which can be obtained by adhering to arbitrary truths that provide an interpretative code of reality and a behavioural guide.

Taking refuge in illusory certainties may perhaps relieve people from the implicit worry of having to tackle uncertainty, but relinquishing freedom is a sentence to an inauthentic life. It is therefore indispensable for anyone who wants to live authentically to cultivate their own critical abilities towards everything that is presented as a truth set in stone, defined once and for all, developing an autonomous reason that moves unsteadily as it gets to know the outside world, wary of its own learning mechanisms. Uncertainty is therefore a fundamental principle of freedom, and freedom an assumption for authenticity. Freedom and uncertainty do not exhaust their potential merely on an individual plane, as a subject's critical ability. On the contrary, they acquire huge ethical and political value, clarifying the criteria of knowledge and the characteristics of existential design. Stating that freedom can only be obtained starting from uncertainty may in fact seem in contradiction with the statement that uncertainty represents one of the main causes of the adaptation of individuals to the lifestyles proposed by the mass-media. The uncertainty that pervades people's experience in contemporary society does not come from a choice made by the subject who, driven by the desire for freedom, questions traditional values. Far from it, it is precisely the demise of these values, combined with the lack of social guarantees, that makes the subject insecure and deprived of interpretative points of reference, and therefore extremely vulnerable to the seductions of the media.

In the time of globalization, metaphysical values have collapsed, and uncertainty has taken over from old certainties, but not for this reason individuals can be considered free, as this type of uncertainty is presented as conditioning rather than choice. Furthermore, the individual will is manipulated no longer through obligations and prohibitions, but rather through the invitation to a life style that promises an infinite amount of pleasure. Today, security is no longer assured to the subject by his acritical adherence of a system of values, but rather this is sought in the conformism of behavioral attitudes, consisting in the pursuit of a happiness that can be bought

and consumed, provided it follows the laws of the market. Thus, the individual moves towards that which Bauman (2000) defines as the new heteronomy.

While in our time, certainty consists in conforming to the pursuit of happiness for sale, the uncertainty of the free individual must aim to overturn this stereotyped concept of happiness, acting as a possibility to experiment different paths from those induced by the media with its seductive power. It would however be naïve to think that people, aside from specific exceptions, could be able to accept the invitation to live their freedom through the development of an autonomous reason exclusively using their own forces. For this reason, fostering the development of individual freedom, the role of politics is of fundamental importance. As at the same time, consensus, diversity and conflict are required, democracy is a complex system of political organization and civilization: «it feeds, and feeds off, the intellectual autonomy of individuals, their freedom of expression and opinion, their civic sense; it feeds, and feeds off the ideal Liberty-Equality-Fraternity which leads to a creative conflictuality between three inseparable terms» (Morin, 2001, p. 115). Until now, above all the aspects relating to the separation of the subject from the dominant thought have been underlined. Re-reading Nietzsche, Bertin underlines how the detachment from our own environment is a necessary condition, but it is not sufficient to ensure freedom, as this would also undermine our own path to liberation if we want to avoid falling into unilateral interpretations. Not questioning our own interpretation of the world would mean returning to the illusion of certainty, compromising the Nietzschean demise that symbolizes the invitation to the subject to always go beyond himself, driven by the desire for knowledge, unsatisfied by the goals achieved as each one of them is seen as the “penultimate before the last” (Bertin, 1981). Given that Nietzschean freedom is characterized especially as intellectual freedom, individuals must challenge their own mechanisms of knowledge through self-criticism. Morin identifies the subject’s ability for self-criticism as a fundamental assumption for relevant knowledge, as knowledge is presented as a «navigation in a sea of uncertainty» with the «permanent risk of illusion and error» (Morin, 2001, pp. 87-88). There are many permanent possibilities for error and illusion: cultural and social that come from outside, inhibiting the autonomy of the mind and preventing the search for truth; those that come from inside, at times hidden amongst our best instruments of knowledge, which make the mind trick itself by itself (*Ibidem*, p. 31).

Beliefs, dominant ideas, the stereotypes of a culture or a society, represent external causes that hinder the knowledge of individuals as, generating intellectual conformism, they prevent people from opening to different viewpoints from those contained in their own parameters. The internal causes are more complex, as they involve the psychology of the subject; they concern the possibility of error found in the translation and reconstruction of information, the projection of fears and desires of the knower onto the object to be known, the refusal of information which could destabilize the subject’s system of ideas, the convenience of lying to oneself due to the need for self-justification, up to rationalisation, a perversion of rationality that leads to the construction of a perfect logic system but which becomes irrational as it ignores the subject’s sphere of affections.

Knowledge is therefore uncertain, as the possibilities of error and illusion lie everywhere, even inside the mechanisms that make knowledge possible. According to Morin, education has the task of seeking to reduce the

implicit flaws of knowledge, promoting a rationality that is not offered in its infallibility, but which is above all self-critical, i.e., aware of its own limits. Rationality must recognize the importance of affection, love, repentance. True rationality knows the limits of logic, determinism, mechanical philosophy; it knows that the human mind could not be omniscient, that reality brings mystery. It negotiates with the irrationalised, the obscure, the irrationalisable. It is not only critical but also self-critical. True rationality is recognized by its ability to recognize its own insufficiencies.

While it is true that Nietzschean freedom is characterized above all by its intellectual dominant position, it is also true that reducing it to this would limit the existential meaning: intellectual freedom must be the starting point for the autonomous choice of a life project aiming to broaden the horizon of the *possibilities* of the subject, promoting its *difference* from itself and from others. The category of the possible in the Problematicist perspective is marked by the dual positive-negative polarity, which means that every life project is uncertain, because the set goals may be realized but there is no guarantee that this will happen. If we want to make plans in order to pursue our own possibilities of realization, we must be aware of the uncertainty we face. Thought must be armed and fierce in order to tackle uncertainty. All that implies possibility also implies risk, and thought must recognize the possibility of risks as the risk of possibilities.

Uncertainty in life projects derives from the impossibility of eliminating the objective conditions of experience, from the possibility that unplanned events may compromise the possibility of success, from the interpretative error of the subject who may overestimate his own abilities. The risk of failure must not however be understood as an element that removes value from the existential project, as adopting an existential attitude marked by passiveness, refusing to plan in order to defend oneself from the potential disappointment of failure, means precluding all possibility of success right from the outset.

Furthermore, we have to consider that the failures the subject may meet along his life path should not necessarily be assessed negatively; on the contrary, they may also be found to be enriching experiences as they can offer greater awareness of their own limits, becoming the starting point for new goals which contain new possibilities for success or failure. Every individual who consciously chooses a project must therefore be open to the possibility to review it and change direction and objectives, through experimentation which, as Morin suggests, must privilege a programming strategy.

«The strategy must prevail over the programme. The programme sets a sequence of actions that must be performed without variation in a stable environment, but, whenever there is a change in the external conditions, the programme is blocked. The strategy, on the other hand, elaborates a scenario of action, examining the certainties and uncertainties of the situation, the probabilities and improbabilities. The scenario may and must be changed according to the information gathered, the cases, the setbacks and favourable fortunes met along the way [...]. The strategy must at some time privilege prudence, at others bravery, and, if possible, both together. The strategy can and must make compromises» (Morin, 2001, p. 1993).

Programming escapes uncertainty by adopting an operational method that does not take into account the external causes, it is therefore in a condition of impotence whenever it comes across a problem that has not been considered. On the contrary, strategy seeks to reduce uncertainty considering that it is inevitably part of human experience, in this way it is always ready to review the situation created, and act accordingly. It is not possible therefore the plan one's own life authentically without accepting its nature - uncertain and adventurous, but precisely for this reason rich in possibilities - of the path traced by this project; denying uncertainty means being destined to failure, escaping uncertainty means relinquishing the possible.

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Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica – Journal of Theories and Research in Education 17, 2 (2022). Special Issue. *The challenge of “rationality” and “commitment” within Emancipatory Education: Studies in “Pedagogical Problematicism”*. Edited by Massimo Baldacci, Maurizio Fabbri and Alessandro Tolomelli. ISSN 1970-2221.

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Massimo Baldacci, Maurizio Fabbri, Alessandro Tolomelli – *The challenge of “rationality” and “commitment” within “Pedagogical Problematicism” paradigm*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1970-2221/15019>



Ricerche di Pedagogia e Didattica – Journal of Theories and Research in Education 17, 2 (2022). Special Issue. *The challenge of “rationality” and “commitment” within Emancipatory Education: Studies in “Pedagogical Problematicism”*. Edited by Massimo Baldacci, Maurizio Fabbri and Alessandro Tolomelli. ISSN 1970-2221.

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Massimo Baldacci, Maurizio Fabbri, Alessandro Tolomelli – *The challenge of “rationality” and “commitment” within “Pedagogical Problematicism” paradigm*

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1970-2221/15019>

