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# **Decision in the pedagogical professional practice and the abduction's function**

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Decision Support Systems  
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## **Introduction: pedagogy as a social profession**

Pedagogy is a field for reflection, application and commitment or engagement to education. The plurality of terms used to name or denote it, in Western languages, is an evidence of its composite nature and of the multiplicity of its aspects and problems which it deals with.

During the nineteenth and the twentieth century, in Italy, Pedagogy had for a long time a dominant interest in the school with particular regard to some of the ages of development (childhood, late childhood), with possible developments in minor history and philosophy reductionism, and with some variations in the so-called "special pedagogy", i.e. pedagogy of special needs. In the nineteenth century the last neo-idealist philosophy considered pedagogy as a philosophical reductionism.

These reductive visions are being overrun by some decades. It is acknowledged that pedagogy covers all the social aggregation and relations and all the ages of the human person lifetime, without the need to distinguish it from andragogy and geragogy as we do in other European languages, for instance in German and in Slavic languages. It also covers all branches of social, political and human relationship. Moreover, pedagogy is establishing itself as a profession, the profession of the pedagogue (not of the educator, who is a different figure), in the

socio-health, intellectual, cultural and aid profession area, even in spite of comprehensive heavy delays and failures of the Italian laws and the resistance of professional groups related but already recognized both by law and by society.

It is a profession with an ancient history as medicine and surgery or as jurisprudence, but recently resurfaced. It's right and necessary to bring us back to these ancient roots because several important conceptual and operational pedagogical tools, with obvious actuality, date back to them.

We can begin exemplification with Protagoras from Abdera (ca. 490 – 420 BC) πάντων χρημάτων μέτρον ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος, τῶν μὲν ὄντων ὡς ἔστιν, τῶν δὲ οὐκ ὄντων ὡς οὐκ ἔστιν; Gorgias from Leontini (ca. 485 - c.380 BC) οὐδέν ἐστίν, εἰ δ' ἐστὶν οὐ νοητόν, εἰ δὲ νοητόν, ἀλλ' οὐ γνωστόν, εἰδὲ καὶ γνωστόν, ἀλλ' οὐ δηλωτόν ἄλλους; Aristoteles (384 - 322 BC) φύσει μὲν ἐστὶν ἄνθρωπος ζῶον πολιτικόν; ῥητορεία role and importance; Socrates διάλογος; πολιτεία as socialization and active participation in political life; classical *logic* and its rules; γνῶθι σεαυτόν (*nosce te ipsum*), with the full awareness of his own potential and limits, and the ὕβρις condemnation; and so on.

We have been committed for nearly twenty years in preparing the necessary equipment for launching the profession: i.e. the methodological context, the techniques, the procedures, the scientific vocabulary, clinical case studies and everything that is necessary for any profession, and for any other ones which need the contribution of pedagogy.

The aim of this short contribution is to present a summary of the decision problem within the profession of the pedagogist, and the role of the abduction process or *ἀπαγωγή* in its proper context.

### **The decision process in the *pedagogical interlocution* context**

The so-called "*pedagogical interlocution*" is a paradigmatic form of the professional pedagogical practice. It is the legitimate heir of the socratic dialogue. We can still speak of *ἑρωονεία* and *μαιευτική τέχνη*, but not of *ἀλήθεια*, with reference to this second phase.

The pedagogist practices a form of aid to one or more interlocutors, only on request, by promoting the transition from problematic situation to a strict and full problem posing, by employing the *Einfühlung* (not exactly Empathy), comparing advices, opinions, viewpoints, and enforcing the rules of the scientific research and discovery methodology, as the logical consistency, the theoretical controllability (or check) with the future experience and the resulting asymmetric feedback. The aim is to support interlocutors in the research of their own problem(s) solutions, and allow them to submit this (these) solution(s) to logical and empirical evidences.

Decision in professional pedagogy, properly speaking, must be reached by the interlocutor(s), who must debate and develop it, with the aid of the professional pedagogist. It is always a conjectural, hypothetical, controversial decision, and on the other hand fallible, falsifiable, capable of contradictions. Where and when a falsification occurs, the idea of possible solution should be spelled out, made explicit, in any case.

### **Abduction in pedagogical practice**

The aid of the professional pedagogist, as in this particular regard, as in all professional practice involves the use of old *'απαγωγή* known by Aristotle (384-322 BC), used as a figure of speech in particular in the field of philosophy, logic and legal or juridical, approachable to *reductio ad absurdum* of Zeno from Elea (489-430 BC). This is used to justify the falsity of a statement underlining the absurdity of the consequences of its application.

The whole theoretical framework of reference for the profession of the pedagogist refers to the classic Pragmatism or to a Neopragmatism current perspective. Coherently, the concept of abduction is taken as it was formulated by Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914) (*Collected papers*, 7.218), as inference and not as an argument or a demonstration; it represents an alternative to induction and deduction, which provides an opportunity and a chance that we would call "corroboration" in accordance with the concept of the Critical Rationalism by Popper, with some similarity to the concept of "educated guess", but without any effect on the probability as shown by

the well-known theorem of Pavel Tichý (*On Popper's definition of verisimilitude*, "British journal for the philosophy of science", 25, 1974, pp. 155-160; *Verisimilitude redefined*, "British journal for the philosophy of science", 27, 1976, pp. 25-42).

In substance, and taking the topic of this contribution into account, we can describe synthetically the abduction as follows:

<b>Rule</b>	the general case A presents (or
can	present) the B phenomenology
<b>Data</b>	the evidences B of a particular
case	repeat aspects that can be
considered	professionally experienced to
include	reference into the A general case,
	and no other reasonable
hypothesis	explains these evidences as well
<hr/>	
<b>Clinical diagnosis</b>	the case we are studying, the B
evidences,	constitutes
a particular case of A	

Abduction is not a valid syllogism: it concerns a possible example of a general case or of a rule, whose the actual pertinence to this general case or this rule is mediated by the professional or expert assumptions.

It is suitable to increase our knowledge, to advance new hypotheses, make predictions, which can find their substance in the past experiences, particularly thanks to some professional skills. But it is also the operative way of reasoning to be more subject to the risk of error. It, like the induction, doesn't contain its logical validity in itself, therefore it must be assessed through empirical tests, the previous mentioned *future experience*, following a fundamental taught (or principle) of the classical Pragmatism.

## **The casuistic-situational (case based), or clinical, approach**

The professional approach of the pedagogist, from methodological point of view, is casuistic (case based) and situational as a form of aid given to the person, alternative and other than to the statistical-operational methodology that addresses rather to populations composed of individuals.

For this particular approach we use the term "clinical" (κλινικός, the adjective, not to be used as a noun) in methodological terms (κλίνη, κλίνω). The analogy is with the practice of clinicians and surgeons who cures patients and not diseases, but the same analogy is to be applied to the professional training: there should not be therapeutic profession if the therapist did not know to inscribe the clinical symptoms of each individual sickness, with its unique singularity, into more general cases or categories of illness or disease that they know how to be dealt with, being aware of the treatment strategies, used from subject to subject, transferable inter-subjectively in their general way. till to be generalized.

The only difference, however substantial, is that the relationship with the pedagogist is an aid's relation, exclusive alternative to the therapeutic relationship, thus being something very different from. In this way, the pedagogist takes care of the interlocutor(s), and he doesn't cure him or them. Cases of general interest in professional pedagogy can be labeled as "casuistries" or "case study" categories.

## **Some examples of clinical casuistries categories interesting professional pedagogy**

A good collection of casuistries - case study categories is provided by Erich Fromm (1900-1980). They concern the problems of family education: problems we have faced working professionally with a wide prevalence in recent years. It is well known the distinction he proposed between paternal love (i.e. conditional) and maternal love (unconditional), whose full integration brings to mature and accomplished love. The possible combinations of some lack of balance between a form of love and the other, addressed to a child male or female, taking into account love they feel for themselves and the selfish

love<sub>2</sub> lead to a series of general case study categories. We have already proposed to draw the attention of professional pedagogy, obviously far away from Fromm suggestion : to deal them with psychotherapy, rather we suggested to everything relate to family education and treat them specifically by a pedagogical approach .

Other good examples of casuistic - case study categories are offered to us by Viktor E. Frankl (1905-1997), in his search for sense, the meaning of life, Sinn, Lebenssinn or λόγος, that we cannot call "logotherapy" because the pedagogical relationship excludes the therapeutic relationship, but neither "logoanalysis" or "existential analysis" because it is rather a synthetic approach. Both the search for sense and for sense in life (someone improperly translates "Sinn" as "meaning"), as the conceptual tools proposed by Frankl namely "dereflection" and "paradoxical intention", can be used with full legitimacy by the professional pedagogue, because they are not tools whose use is exclusive by MD or psychotherapist.

A further range of examples of categories based on case studies which can be dealt with a pedagogical professional methodology orientation, a pedagogical skill, which is first of all pivotal in life and then in school and university. Even the access to a secondary school course or degree course and post-graduate students are case studies, where each case to be guided and oriented, often together with his/her own family, is to be dealt abductively through the pedagogical practitioner's ability of mediation and culture.

A fourth class of examples, applicable differently but methodologically similar, offers to us the autogenic training, which we don't consider only, or even mainly, a relaxation technique. The sequence of six stages (heaviness. heat, breath, solar plexus, heart, fresh forehead) cannot be changed by a pedagogue, at least this is our well-founded opinion, but the propositional formula, called and eventually repeated both in the opening and in the closure, must be adapted to the particular case of each single person, given the general claims that the literature shows, and this can be considered a specific pedagogical competence as the gradual training to the technique proposed by Johannes Heinrich Schultz (1884-1970) reveals to be.

## **The supportive, professional aid's relationship, and the decision outcoming by the interlocutor(s)**

Among the conditions indicated by the research and the professional experience, in order the pedagogist can the interlocutor(s) to make decisions and manage them, we can point out, without any pretence of completeness and being comprehensive, the following ones:

- a) the «opening», willingness to question themselves, both as partners and the professional;
- b) the position of the problem, starting from the problematic situation;
- c) the staunch mastery by the professional of the rules of methodology of the scientific research;
- d) the professional use of the *Einfühlung*, in order to take the problematic situation into himself and return it to the interlocutor so that it is better solvable;
- e) the ability to detect social and relational evidences in their problematic significance, similarly to what happens as for the doctor's «clinical eye»;
- f) the ability to proceed by abduction from cases to casuistries studies or case study categories, to offer the interlocutors the specific contribution of pedagogy.

The speech is complex (Blezza 2010, 2010/11), and perhaps this is neither the place, nor the time for a detailed description of the outlined profession and its practice (AA.VV. 1998, 1999, Crispiani 2001, Blezza 2001, Trisciuzzi 2003, Crispiani 2008). Specifically regarding the theme of this convention, it is essential that the decision in relation to the professional pedagogist is always taken by the person involved in such a relation with the aid of the pedagogical practitioner who works by abduction in the search for possible solution strategies that are just opportunities and proposals.

The decision is, furthermore always hypothetical, *ad interim*, that is provisional. On the other hand, such a decision is fallible, weak, sick, can be forged, with obvious limitations and drawbacks. In the pedagogical interlocution the decisions are shaped according to double

hypothetical imperatives (if ... then ...), meaning that besides being hypothetical just the protasis («if ... ») even the apodosis is alike («... then ... »).

This is the reason why it should be feasible to recognize even in word clusters that this very particular kind of decision ("if ... then maybe ....").

Professional pedagogy, by this way, can make an important and an authentic and specific contribution to general discussion about decision in the social, human and cultural sciences (or *human- sozial- geistes- Wissenschaften*).

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