Contemporary Human Expressions in Educational Communication in Service of the "Human".

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Abstract: This critical examination explores contemporary forms of human expressiveness and mass culture from a phenomenological pedagogical perspective to identify possible interpretative frameworks and define specific pedagogical coordinates. The primary aim is to investigate how diverse human expression in daily life within today's socio-cultural scenario can serve as authentic opportunities for educational communication, in service of full human promotion. In the Foreword to his 1965 work *Apocalittici e integrati*, Umberto Eco already asserted: "We believe that if we must operate in and for a world built on human scale, this scale must be identified not by adapting man to these factual conditions, but rather by starting from them. The universe of mass communications is – whether we recognize it or not – our universe" (p. 8, auth. trans.).

Keywords: Human promotion; Human expressions; Educational practices.

1. Introduction

The Human expressions, as well as human and daily life practices, find full agreement with the definition provided by the philosopher MacIntyre (1988) who understood human practice as "a coherent and complex practice of human activity, cooperative and socially established, through which its immanent goods are realized during the process implemented to achieve the standards of excellence that are specific to it and which define it at the same time. The result of this activity is a systematic expansion of human faculties aimed at achieving these excellences and of human conceptions of the purposes and goods involved (p. 225, auth. trans.)".

In fact, as Pellerey and Grządziel (2014, pp. 44-47) observed in their reflections on this definition, it is relevant to highlight a specific characteristic of human practice, that is, that practices broaden, extend and rise systematically in the various evolutionary levels of excellence. They further argue that professionals in carrying out their practices continually refer to the standards of excellence achieved by their predecessors, seeking to evolve them to higher standards of excellence, so will their successors in the future.

However, if we consider that each practice has its own history which is much more than just the improvement of technical skills, we can also argue that the mere increase of such skills does not imply a systematic extension of practices towards higher standards. In fact, the person who is engaged in multiple practices throughout his life can consider human life in its entirety, considering it as a unitary practice with a view to growth and full personal fulfillment.

Given these assumptions, in a global landscape like today's characterized more than ever by rapid and pervasive changes, a pedagogical reflection that wants to investigate human practices and suggest orientation coordinates for planning interventions with a *lifelong learning* perspective, believes it is necessary to delve deeper into a key concept such as that of educational practice (Pellerey, Grządziel, 2014). It must be understood in its constituent elements and considered as 'the social human practice par excellence'.

To engage in the realities that increasingly tend to evolve into *Smart Cities* and *Smart Factories*, an essential requirement involves knowing how to act actively within cognitive systems that generate new knowledge and skills. This orientation also stimulates broad discussion within training systems and national governance decisions. Thus, the challenge lies in knowing how to implement educational practices capable of fostering the ability to imagine, develop new ideas, and participate in ongoing processes of knowledge creation (Federighi, 2016, pp. 219-225).

But what are the peculiarities of such an education? Throughout the complex socio-cultural transformations that have crossed the various eras, "the extension, the reason for being and the function of what is called education" (Flores D'arcais, 1998, p. 153, auth. trans.) has undergone continuous modifications. Nonetheless, different civilisations have offered a representation of the natural condition of living that consistently requires its own specific critical intentionality.

According to Malavasi (2007) "Education aims [...] to instruct and train, to free individual potential to transmit and produce knowledge; it (however realized) cannot do without agents, objectives and procedures. If planned and conducted in an intentional way it requires continuous critical feedback" (p. 80, auth. trans.). From these observations, it can be inferred that the significance of educational work in contemporary times is subject to conflicting interpretations, influenced by concepts and traditions of the past.

However, today, an educator who intends to carry out educational activities to support students' personal resources must consider the complexity of the educational object, starting from seeing it as an 'open work' or a text or plot to be interpreted within a historically situated context and with a systemic character.

A reflection on education also suggests an analysis of the various areas of diverse areas of human action experience, around which the various knowledge and practices of learning and teaching have been delineated. Specifically, in this examination, we aim to offer some educational interpretative coordinates concerning musical, filmic, theatrical, and ludic practices.

2. Education and musical practices

The questions concerning the relationship between individuals, sound resources, and educational practices outline a realm of reflection that regards the enjoyment of musical production and listening as avenues for personal fulfilment and connection with others, accessible and applicable to everyone. These practices should not be understood and supported solely through technical or professional arguments, although they do hold some significance in educational proposals (Malavasi, 2007). Indeed, the pedagogical discourse aiming to explore the relationships between education and music "cannot overlook the importance of considering the specificity of linguistic structures, technical-acoustic data, and musicological theories. In this context, it is essential to emphasise that a fundamental objective of cultural literacy is the understanding of the languages developed by the human community, with its various levels of reading and interpretation" (p. 83, auth. trans.).

In this regard, V. Jankélévitch (1978) observation is significant: "One should not write 'about music', but with music and remain musically complicit in its mystery" (p. 248, auth. trans.). Similarly, Malavasi (2007) states: "If it is desirable not to reduce music to a mere 'object' of analysis, it is all the more necessary to avoid an education 'to' and 'about music'; [...] instead, it promotes the integral development of the

personality 'with music', that is, between sound and meaning, remaining *musically* complicit in its mystery" (Malavasi, 2007, p. 82, auth. trans.).

To this end, pedagogical reflection intends to carefully examine "musical practices" in close connection with the social relations of plural cultures and think about educational planning in a musical sense. In these cultures, the voice, rhythm, melody, instruments, style, and harmony take on peculiar meanings in relation to different human societies and musical cultures.

In relation to this, many teachers and parents express that they lack sufficient musical skills to develop effective educational projects. Consequently, music is often utilised solely for recreational purposes or improvised proposals. However, beyond evaluations of skills, the primary educational indication regarding musical experience is hermeneutic in nature. This means it encourages educators and learners to *interpret*, *deconstruct*, and *plan* meaningful events, recognising the close relationship between musical communication and other human expressive forms. We emphasise the articulated correlation among various expressive codes, such as the connections between sound and visual education, between musical 'grammar' and mathematical symbols, or between musical practices and those associated with movement and playful-expressive activities (Malavasi, 2007).

According to Gennari (1994), education in aesthetic taste must begin at an early developmental age, first with the encounter with the perception of sound through the various acoustic typologies. Then, gradually and without formalisms, it must continue to try to understand, produce, and/or reproduce the musical text (p. 105). In current Western societies characterized by multi-ethnicity, aesthetic education must initiate dialectical comparisons and the integration of differences, moving from the centrality of the educational relationship, between new needs and renewed resources to educational paths throughout life.

The centrality of the sound experience, which influences the cognitive and emotional development of personality, could also be intentionally utilised in the realm of educational communication. As Malavasi (2007) asserts, "If empathy promotes the transition from the categories of message transmission to those of intersubjective relationships and connects the external aspects of the communicative act to the internal aspects of personal experience, then, within the educational relationship, recognition, openness, and listening can occupy a relevant, almost irreplaceable role in music" (pp. 89-90, auth. trans.).

The ability to communicate through music involves emotions and their recognition which can facilitate the assumption of 'feeling' and 'thinking' according to the other person's point of view. The disposition to listen to music that many students share offers the opportunity to participate in their states of mind and thus initiate a common feeling like the empathetic one.

Acquiring the skill of listening also predisposes individuals to 'shifting attention', fostering curiosity and creating opportunities for a shared empathetic connection. Parents, teachers, and trainers who seek to 'listen' to the music that resonates most with students enhance the potential for a mutual empathetic relationship.

3. Education and film representations

Film text is also widely used in the educational field to address specific themes. Its value as a support tool in educational planning to achieve pre-established goals and objectives is often underlined. Many educational issues find space for reflection in film representations.

As Pati (2007) states, "The existential events narrated, the relational problems examined, the aspects of daily living explored in depth; as well as the interweaving of dialogues, scenes based on non-verbal communication, and the direct or allegorical representation of emotions and feelings; these are some elements that lend themselves well to interpretations and/or insights of a pedagogical-educational nature. All of this

has enabled various observers to discuss 'education with cinema'" (pp. 183-184, auth. trans.).

For the purposes of the examination we are conducting, it is necessary to acknowledge that, owing to the use of a polysemous artistic language, cinema offers the viewer the opportunity to compare various models of life, while also provoking reflexivity regarding personal planning orientations. In just a few hours, cinema can depict the contradictions that define daily life, while also presenting potential interpretative keys to existence. Indeed, "Film production, transforming the word into an image (regardless of whether it is verbal or written, literary or vulgar, aristocratic or popular), gives voice to the life events of different generations and various population groups across multiple experiential spheres" (p. 183, auth. trans.). The filmic representation is never objective nor an end in itself, but is founded on the interpretative processes of the director and the actors, who in turn elicit further interpretations from the spectators. This may well be the very principle from which cinema's greatest educational contribution emerges, namely that "the hermeneutic process stimulated by filmic images 'forces' the spectator to measure himself with the perceived message and therefore to evaluate himself in reference to it" (p. 185, auth. trans.).

Pedagogical reflection must interpret these underlying dynamics and protect the spectator from any conditioning exerted by the film sequence, mainly if it concerns a subject of developmental age.

This is a concern that often affects educators regarding all communication tools, but is particularly relevant to the film sequence due to its high level of involvement. In fact, the images of a film immediately establish a close relationship with the viewer; they envelop and involve him, enchant and fascinate him, to the extent of aligning their life closely with the interpretative model proposed in these sequences. In other words, this educational concern prompts us to reflect on how the relationship between young people and cinema can be appreciated and guided, carefully evaluating the identified proposal.

Iori (2012) also attests to the significance of film representations in educational processes. "Watching a film is a reflection of oneself within the film, as every film speaks about us, our stories (both personal and collective), our cities, our experiences, and the emotions that accompany them. The experience of film viewing, when appropriately guided, can play a significant role in educational processes, as the power of this medium is such that it aids us in discovering our inner world, seen from the external eye, as an 'other' world, but also to know the 'other' worlds, making them become ours" (p. 151, auth. trans.). In the intertwining of fiction and reality, the narratives, images, and sounds of film sequences with the various situations in our lives, giving rise to mirroring and identification, and generating emotions, passions, and engagement that reveal hidden aspects of our interiority.

Such an emotionally engaging and rich experience demonstrates the significant transformative and formative potential of film representation, as it inspires models of attitudes, behaviors, and languages. Indeed, at the conclusion of the cinematic experience, emotions, thoughts, feelings, and reflections linger in a personal internal dialogue, providing us with the opportunity to recognise and reflect upon ourselves. This mimetic identification through cinema also serves as a projection of the unexpected, of what is possible, of potential aimed at the future, and of new transformative perspectives and personal growth, thanks to the internal gaze on one's own experiential encounters (Iori, 2012).

In this regard, it is appropriate to remember the indispensability of intentionality in project creation by education professionals, beginning with the educational questions of the students and consistently attending to personal feedback, considering the life story of each individual. This careful evaluation is essential for the potential use of the 'filmic tool', which should be specifically analysed and selected. "Vision alone is not enough. It is important that it is an adult, a parent or an educator, who fuels or supports the insights, who stimulates questions" (p. 154, auth. trans.).

It is also essential to consider that educational work through cinema cannot be reduced to improvisation; rather, it requires structured guidance provided by educators with solid and rigorous training. Watching the film constitutes merely the first step in a transformative journey that leads to educational engagement with the emotional realm, promoting the expression of emotions, moral beliefs, and the development of intersubjective relationships.

An additional consideration related to the transformative potential of cinema is that, over the years, it has continually introduced fashions, lifestyles, and behaviour models into society. Simultaneously, it has also offered various lexical points concerning emotional experiences and feelings that are still remembered today. Through cinema, educators can reclaim words to propose and suggest to young people, thereby constructing a common lexicon for the diverse emotional tones that, without such vocabulary, would remain unexpressed.

4. Education, theatre, recreational activities

In the context of the human languages present in today's multifaceted society, theatrical practices cannot be reduced solely to entertaining the public; they also carry the responsibility of educating by suggesting possible interpretative readings of events and various themes or issues in the world. In this sense, as Oliva's (2016) reflection urges us, "Theatre [turns out to be a] training process, it is halfway between the intimacy of the individual, his fears, dreams, emotions, and the reality of real life. This middle position allows it to be experienced as a place where one can play, explore one's own interiority and external reality" (p. 1, auth. trans.).

The meeting between pedagogy and theatre occurs when theatrical representations focus on man and his experiences, giving him a voice and reclaiming the individual on a journey of growth. Indeed, both disciplines share the same objective in addressing issues related to the individual, albeit from two different perspectives: pedagogy affords man the opportunity to express himself, while theatre encourages communication and creativity. Moreover, theatre possesses educational value, as it plays a beneficial role in the quest for personal identity; it becomes a means to build relationships and establish a self based on solid foundations. This is theatre, an individual educational journey, yet within a group.

Through their own personal journey through theatre, everyone has the opportunity to pursue their own development of human, social, cultural and artistic growth as well as their personality, utilising increasingly comprehensive means of expression and benefitting from the structuring of both physical and relational environments that foster engagement with interests, desires, and needs.

Furthermore, the theater, precisely because it accommodates ample opportunities for verbal and non-verbal communication, self-expression, and participation, evolves into a project that aims to expand the fullness of human potential, situated between play, fiction, and representation. The use of metaphors in recounting myths, tales, and stories conveys truths in its own distinctive manner, which the viewer can access but in ways that are different from those typical in life. Action, rather than dialogue, characterises his scenic preference, as words already form part of a gesture, within the rhythm of time and in occupying a space.

The theatrical dimension provides access to the direct experience of human relationships, as it not only evokes senses, meanings, or sensations but also possesses the ability to communicate emotions in a unique and unrepeatable manner, conveying their pathos. Furthermore, it stands out for its value as a moment of community life, contributing to socialising and aggregating activities (Oliva, 2016). "Educating in theatricality means operating in anticipation of a global education of the person, by virtue of which the subject has the chance to grow" (p. 2, auth. trans.).

Concerning the pedagogical reflections on the game, it is important to highlight the close connections with the philosophical field regarding this topic. In fact, pedagogy, understood as a philosophy of education, can view "game as a device that

contributes, , either spontaneously and naturally or according to an educational plan, to the formation of the subject" (Farné, 2016, p. 35, auth. trans.).

Within the reflection on play from a pedagogical perspective, Bertolini (1988) explores the themes of the "original intentional directions" of the educational experience, meaning those supporting structures that cannot be classified as laws of a naturalistic order since they lack the objective-formal characteristics, yet provide the educational connotations of specific human experiences in their foundational traits. He was, in fact, interested not only in describing the phenomenon of play but also in how play materialises in its concrete explication. There is an intentionality in the child who plays, as well as that of the adult who imparts educational meaning to play through the arrangement of materials, spaces, times, expectations, relationships, and so forth.

In his discussion of the game, Bertolini attempts to identify the underlying educational needs that can only be discerned through observing the experience in context. He argues that "It is from within every educational context that attempt to provide the game with maximum authenticity, in a pedagogical tension that must necessarily consider the material conditions in which it occurs" (Farnè, 2016, p. 42, auth. trans.).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, Bettelheim also provides insights into educational reflection on the expressive nature of play in childhood. Play is "a source of joy and well-being, the possibility of integrating internal reality with external reality, a means through which the child appropriates the world and manages the challenges of growing up [...]. The involvement of the adult—whether parent or educator—in the child's play, guided by empathy and genuine engagement with the playful spirit, offers a valuable opportunity to establish a trusting relationship with the child that fosters [his] development" (Bondioli, 2018, pp. 262-263, auth. trans.).

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