



On Care: the Ontological Form of Education



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**«Everyone has a life need to receive Care and to take Care,
because life, in its essence, is Care to exist»**

L. Mortari, *La pratica dell'aver cura di sé*

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Care is an ontological category in education because it represents the essence of every man's life.

During growth, in moments of learning, in the construction of one's identity, in professional preparation, in building relationships, etc... the first pedagogical action in our life is an action of Care

To define Ontology: ONTOS is the present participle of the Greek verb EINAI, which means TO BE, combined with the term LOGOS intended as LAW.

Generally, Ontology concerns studying the qualities related to the essence of existence and the fundamental qualities of things. It is a tensional process that refers to the "constitution of being", a being that is never metaphysical, but rather immersed in its historical and anthropological dimension (childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age).



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The three dimensions of Care: Self-care, care of others and care of the world

- They are interconnected moments, indispensable in their reciprocity and are linked to the phases of growth and development of the subject and his/her community
- They are dynamic phases and actions that can / must change form in their realisation and in their development
- They are three dimensions strongly linked to time and to the historical context that the subject lives and, consequently, are affected by the epistemic structure linked to the "here" and "now" (Heidegger)
- It is a trinomial that postulates the recognition of Alterity as a categorical imperative of Care (Rita Fadda), because it is not based on the logic of identity but on the logic of difference (we all need care and our needs are different from those of any other individual)
- It is a trio that requires implementation devices: meeting, listening and dialogue
- The approach to action and educational theorising is hermeneutic and critical / reflective according to the principle of shared responsibility



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“Learn the art of existing”, Socrates' Apology, Plato Self-care

- It is a late antique definition: know thyself and - according to Michael Foucault's interpretation - "indicates all those strategies by which man constitutes himself as a "subject"
- Self-care has various forms: dealing with one's body, thoughts, soul, interiority, emotions, behaviours, and actions and trying to interpret them through a critical / hermeneutic approach
- Self-care is giving oneself "rules" and "norms"
- It does not only concern a self-centered ego but is built through the
- relationship with the other and with society through an exchange of
- experiences and educational actions
- If the human being does not approach the Other in an intentional
- manner, the principle of self-care will not be truly activated. Every action would become a "narcissistic celebration" of the self (R. Fadda) because it escapes and rejects human, social and cultural complexity.



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The Marauder, the Barbarian and the Gardener Self-care and Alterity according to Friedrich Nietzsche

- It is a metaphor used by Friedrich Nietzsche to exemplify the principle of self-care:
- The Barbarian: he moves around the world by plundering and destroying goods and resources. He does not recognise alterity as an element of value to tend to
- The Marauder: he is not self-sufficient and continually steals from his neighbour; he repeatedly steals in order to constitute himself as an individual
- The Gardener: he is the man of care and he takes care of himself through actions aimed at growth and improvement. Just as a gardener understands the value of nourishment, good daily practices and the exercise of (critical) thinking because only by doing so will he be able to take care of the other and his individuality, because in the other he will also recognise himself in a game of similarities and appreciation of human peculiarities



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Care of the Other

- It is the cure par excellence, especially in the pedagogical field (think of the parent / child, pupil / teacher relationship)
- Deconstruction of self-centredness and openness to plurality
- It is based on the experience of offering oneself to the other in an exchange of languages, expressions, reciprocal and intentional
- educational and training actions (Husserl).
- It is openness to the need for acceptance and enhancement of
- diversity / alterity. It is hospitality, support and accompaniment.
- The principle of Hospitality is central above all in educational and pedagogical practices because it refers to an ethical and secular
- dimension of Care that is primarily the safeguard of alterity, in its most
- complex and problematic aspects.
- The Other is life, it is history, it is experience, it is everything that
- diverges from us and tending to these specific originalities means not surrendering to the desire to standardise those characteristics with respect to a dominant model
- Some examples are: disability, illness, ethnic and / or linguistic diversity They are forms of alterity that need to be interpreted, understood, and included in the social life process of each individual



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Caring for the World

- It is where we live; it is the world close to us, which surrounds us, but it is also that distant world, that "Macro" dimension, which includes our "Micro" and does so according to natural, cultural and political principles.
- It is the place of our actions and the actions of Others. It becomes a shared responsibility to tend to our space, our community and the places where our collectivity / community lives and develops (even school, with its spaces and its inhabitants).
- It is taking care of nature, of everything that is living and is at risk of extinction because man, perhaps, has behaved, up to now, above all as a Marauder and as a Barbarian towards it. However, nature is part of the inclusive dimension of educational responsibilities which, through good practices and critical reinterpretations, could recover those qualitative and ontological aspects necessary for the harmonious development of Man and the human community.
- "Education is the moment that decides whether we love the world enough to take responsibility for it and thus save it from ruin, which is inevitable without renewal, without the arrival of new beings, of young people", Hannah Arendt



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Care as a principle / tool for inclusion

- Inclusion: inclusio-onis, from the Latin which means to insert a part within a "whole", making the whole homogeneous. The pedagogical challenge is to overcome the omnivorous dimension of the "whole" to arrive at a set of many divergent elements that in their exceptional nature give rise to a single complex which is welcoming and inclusive after each element makes its own original contribution.
- Care as an Ontological/pedagogical principle deals with enhancing - through various tools and methodologies - these "individualities" to include them in a broader cultural and social context, to give greater wealth and value to the reference community / collectivity (for example school).
- Some techniques to facilitate inclusive dynamics using the paradigm of Care as an operational and interpretative category of reference: narration (meeting, listening and dialogue); writing (narration/construction of illustrative and interpretative stories concerning the history of the various subjects); reading (reading to interpret and discover the richness of other cultures and other worlds); psychomotor activity: the encounter between living bodies, between covers that are recognised through shared activities and exercises. These are just some of the Care / Inclusion practices that are useful, especially in schools, to create an educational culture of knowledge and sharing.