

# The biographical approach of Duccio Demetrio: Two fundamental aspects<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

The article examines the narrative thinking of Duccio Demetrio, founder of the *Libera università dell'autobiografia*, based in Anghiari, Italy. The paradoxical nature of autobiographical writing is studied as a cure for oneself, highlighting the theoretical affiliations that this narrative exercise involves. Then pedagogical reasons arise for which, according to Duccio Demetrio, autobiography especially is convenient as a pedagogical way in adult education. So two essential aspects of the narrative proposal of this intellectual and Italian pedagogue are highlighted: epistemological and pedagogical.

**Keywords:** narration, biography, education, pedagogy, adults' education.

## El enfoque biográfico de Duccio Demetrio: dos aspectos fundamentales

### Resumen

El artículo estudia el pensamiento narrativo de Duccio Demetrio, fundador de la *Libera università dell'autobiografia*, con sede en Anghiari, Italia. Se estudia la naturaleza paradójica de la escritura autobiográfica como cura de sí, subrayando las filiaciones teóricas que este ejercicio narrativo implica. Luego se muestran las razones pedagógicas por las cuales, según Duccio Demetrio, la autobiografía conviene especialmente como camino pedagógico en la educación de adultos. Así, dos aspectos esenciales de la propuesta narrativa

1 This essay is related to their search entitled "Didáctica de las Humanidades en la educación Superior mediadas por la Narrativa: Fase 2: Propuesta académica". This project was conducted in the Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Bogotá, Faculty of Education and Humanities, during year 2015. It was made by the group "Cultura y Desarrollo Humano", which nourishes the line of research "Humanidades, Cultura y Universidad". This project was financially supported by Universidad Militar Nueva Granada, Bogotá, Colombia.

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de este intelectual y pedagogo italiano son resaltadas: el epistemológico y el pedagógico.

**Palabras clave:** narración, biografía, educación, pedagogía, educación de adultos

## A abordagem biográfica de Duccio Demetrio: dos aspectos fundamentais

### Resumo

O artigo estuda o pensamento narrativo de Duccio Demetrio, fundador da Libera universita

dell'autobiografia, com sede em Anghiari, Itália. Estuda-se a natureza paradoxal da escrita autobiográfica como auto-cura, enfatizando as afiliações teóricas que esse exercício narrativo implica. Em seguida, são as razões pedagógicas pelas quais, segundo Duccio Demetrio, a autobiografia é especialmente adequada como um caminho pedagógico na educação de adultos. Assim, destacam-se dois aspectos essenciais da proposta narrativa desse intelectual e pedagogo italiano: o epistemológico e o pedagógico.

**Palavras-chave:** narração, biografia, educação, pedagogia, educação para adultos

### Introduction

Duccio Demetrio is today considered one of the most authoritative researchers in Italy, and in the international academic world, particularly on issues regarding autobiographical writing and adult education; leading journalists such as Andrea Ciantar (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 18) or significant academic studies on autobiography and adult education in Italy as those by Caterina Benelli (2014, p. 100) have so acknowledged. Under the assumption that his approaches and initiatives summarize the major trends in use concerning the narrative approach in Italy, some of the most outstanding epistemological and pedagogical approaches of his proposal are thus identified and described below. In this respect, and in order to tackle the first major trend in the thinking of this author, perhaps it is firstly appropriate to point out what is already indicated in the title of one of his best-known books: *Raccontarsi. L'autobiografia como cura di sé* (Demetrio, 1999). While it can be paraphrased as “the taking care of yourself through autobiographical writing,” the “taking care” part should be clarified for several reasons.

### The autobiography as “cura di sé”

D. Demetrio himself has actually said he has started to dislike the expression *cura di sé*, even though he had used it at the beginning of his research journey (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 44), and that displeasure was caused by different, erroneous assumptions that the author constantly rejects. One of them is equating “self-healing” to a self-indulgent, narcissistic and isolationist state that would make autobiographical writing a pure personal pleasure without openness to the world. “If we interpret this concept in a negative and aestheticize curable and consolatory sense, as an attitude that seeks to love myself well, it’s not enough for me.” (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 44) Another erroneous understanding of autobiography as *cura di sé* is reducing it to a nostalgic return to the past. By contrast, autobiography writing is, Demetrio emphasizes, not an act turned to the past but rather installed in the present, largely driven by questions of life today, and especially with a very strong impulse towards the future.

Naturally, writing about one's self is a struggle against forgetting, against "nadaicización" (nientificazione) i.e., to which the homogenizing contemporary culture subjects people.<sup>5</sup> Commenting on autobiography circles, which are proliferating in Italy, Demetrio stresses the importance of spreading the culture of memory:

Poichéessa mira a qualcosa ben più complesso della promozione di racconti e storie scritte in prima persona per il piacere della propria, privata, persona. Per la cerchia de pochiamici e sodali. Potrebbe diventare questa folla, e potenzialmente lo è già, un comportamento collettivo riconosciuto, una linea di tendenza esemplare – e quindi un'entità culturale e sociale – in aperta polémica nei confronti di ogni atto, abuso, gesto implicito di cancelazione della nostra individualità et della stessa libertà di ricordare e di generare memorie. Un segno tangibile, inoltre, della volontà di opporsi alle molteplici strategie incivili, inumane, disumane volte esplicitamente a sopprimere e a rimuovere le culture del ricordo." (Demetrio, 2006, pp. 167-168)

Certainly, autobiography has an inevitable retrospective dimension.<sup>6</sup> However, Demetrio prefers to speak of "retrospective teleology" (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 65) "in the sense that the autobiography allows us, in this exploration, in this work with the images, to find the meaning of our life, our *telos*, our itinerary, only posteriori and never in the present." (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 65)

Autobiography, as an interpretive act, allows for establishing links, unifying the plot of life, synthesizing, rebuilding ties and overcoming the fragmentation of life; nevertheless, the biography does so by projecting to new possibilities towards *a telos* as a future perspective that gives meaning to the present, reconciled with the past.<sup>7</sup> Thus, autobiography as *cura di sé* has that deep sense of interpretive reconstruction of the meaning of life by writing the vital path.

In addition to this interpretative and prospective reconstruction, autobiography as *cura di sé* has a Heideggerian background, strongly emphasized by D. Demetrio; in this philosophical sense, *cura di sé* alludes to a profound paradox (1999).<sup>8</sup> On the one hand, autobiographical *cura di sé* stresses the importance of "not forgetting to exist" (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 44) and, as is known in Heidegger's existential horizon, hermeneutics is neither an interpretation of texts nor a methodology of the science of the spirit, but a concern for existence itself. Consequently, autobiography is conceived as a privileged way of being attentive to one's self and to one's own existence in the world. Along the same line of thought, the issue of Heidegger's radical concern is also taken up by Demetrio, using the same terminology but varying the adjective accompanying the noun "concern". D. Demetrio speaks of "inquietudine appagante" (comforting restlessness) (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 47) instead of "radical concern", as Heidegger did.

5 "Parlando invece di memorie social, c'è una lotta da sempre tra un potere che vuole dimenticare, per autoconservarsi il più possibile, e le memorie individuali invece, che cercano di reagire, di rispondere a questo tentativo di fondo di omologazione, di nientificazione delle storie pesonali." (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 41)

6 "(...) la autobiografia diventa uno strumento prezioso di carattere introspettivo, dove ti reclinii su di te, cerchi un tuo spazio privato di scrittura, fai in modo di poter rivendicare questa tua solitudine, anche rispetto alle relazioni quotidiane, affettive, che hai." (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 42-43)

7 "Penelope e Ulisse (...) ci insegnano, nell'eternità del loro mito, che il tempo adulto è fatto di pazienza (di pathos rimemorante e ascolto del possibile)" (Demetrio, 1996, 25).

8 In my view, peace and unrest can coexist in the autobiographical journey, "because my vision of existence resorts to an old philosophical antinomy, i.e. the coincidence of opposites as existential phenomenology." (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 46).

A blunt aspect underlined by Demetrio can be placed next to this “disturbing” dimension of autobiography: the absolute necessity of interrogating one-self, asking questions about the most important existential issues such as pain, love, death, courage to live, etc. Autobiography, in that sense, is not an invitation to overcome the “concern” but to cross it, to accept it, to learn to live with limitations and failures, to be reconciled with the past, without voiding one’s own story.<sup>9</sup> Such questioning is done with the lucid humility to know that there are no definitive answers.<sup>10</sup> So, adopting autobiography as a lifestyle leads to regarding human life as a journey,<sup>11</sup> as an ongoing search. D. Demetrio’s book *Elogio dell’immaturità*<sup>12</sup> underlines that condition in autobiographical writing: an immaturity understood as exploration, as relentless pursuit of self, as restlessness, precisely, to grow and move towards the unpredictability of life.<sup>13</sup>

However, the other side of the paradox that *la cura di sé* conveys is that the deepening of one’s existence leads ultimately to the discovery of the illusory nature of one’s own subjectivity. Two books by Demetrio reveal that other aspect of the paradox: first, the *Album di famiglia, scrivere i ricordi di casa* (Demetrio, 2002) shows the family dimension of autobiography, an inescapable dimension<sup>14</sup> which autobiographical work should take up in order to perceive one’s individuality:

Scrivere di ricordi famigliari, soprattutto di quelli primari, ci rende più consapevoli della nostra individualità. In innumerevoli

casi, è stata proprio la scrittura delle storie di famiglia ad aiutarci a guardare, con più distacco, vicende e figure dalle quali sembrava loro di non potersi più liberare. (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 30)

Given the inevitability of family history, the only thing you can do is this narrative reconciliation process, this “autobiographical truce” which fosters “understanding” and owning family history:

Il nostro Album di famiglia è un invito a capire chi siamo e chi siamo stati per quella parte di noi che ha contratto debiti di riconoscenza o crediti di ogni natura rispetto a un micromondo al quale non si può sfuggire, ma che si può certamente tentare di comprendere e di capire di più, soltanto scrivendone. (Demetrio, 1999)

If it is impossible to break free from family to the extent that no one can think or think about themselves out of it (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 67); we must live a rupture we must expand the family world and have the courage to seek wider spaces:

Non ci bastano, e quindi c’è bisogno di cercare spazi importanti, significativi a questo proposito, dove puoi cercare di darti, di raccontarti ad altri, inventando relazioni diverse. Il dirsi, in fondo, ad uno sconosciuto (come quando si va in analisi), è atto di coraggio in questi momenti, entrando in questi circuiti narrativi in cui ci si narra non tanto e non solo come cura di sé. (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 44)

9 To that effect, ioavverso, e con certa enfasi, quelle posizioni meditative che cercano il superamento dell’inquietudine e il raggimento de uno statocossidetto felice, oppure sereno o di tranquillizzazione assoluta.” (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 46)

10 Biographical thought is thus defined by D. Demetrio as “Una ricerca, questa, destinata a restare incompiuta perché, a quanto sembra, la nostra mente no è stata programmata por trovare una risposta convincente se non nella Fede” (Demetrio, 1996, 14).

11 See the author’s work where the history of philosophy is argued from the perspective of attention to the self as a condition for living profoundly. (Demetrio, 2005a)

12 “Vuol el’immaturato per sempre andaré oltre e incamminarse, attrato da figure dell’immaginario: dal deserto, dal mare, dall’isola.” (Demetrio, 1998, 85)

13 “Per questo è necesario resistere ad ogni tentativo di riduzione della de-problematizzazione del mondo” (Demetrio, 2000a, 222)

14 “Se ce l’hai la sconti, nevivi la sofferenza, e alla fine ti accorgi che comunque ti ha segnato profondamente; ritrovi le tracce di familia dentro di te basta una vita a liberarti e a depurarti di tutte le sue incrostazioni.” (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 65-66)

Wider spaces, other than personal and family ones, are represented by the “garden” metaphor in another book by D. Demetrio titled *Di che giardino sei? Conoscersi attraverso un simbolo*. (Demetrio, 2000b)

On the garden metaphor, D. Demetrio hence writes:

Non c'è narrazione autobiografica che possa dimenticare l'esperienza con il giardino. Puoi trovare una narrazione autobiografica che si dimentica magari del paesaggio marini, o montani, della propria vita, degli orizzonti, dei viaggi; mac'è, in tutte le autobiografie, traccia della dimensione del giardino, perché la dimensione del giardino rappresenta il nostro primo movimento d'esplorazione nei confronti del mondo. (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 66)

Autobiography then leads one to be open to the world, to hear the stories of others and not just one's own, to become aware of inhabiting the Earth and not only being aware of oneself. It is primarily the consciousness of being and belonging to the world, so autobiography can be defined as a mirror of an ontological dimension of our being in the world (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 60). Demetrio, for example, discusses a “universal consciousness” (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 53), very important for understanding autobiography as a way of being cured: “se no sei abitato più da questa consapevolezza universalistica, la tua cura rischia anche di essere una miseria umana” (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 53).

In the end, the paradox held by autobiographical thought, and whose opposite

poles are under analysis, is summarized as follows: “do not forget to exist”, and simultaneously, “forget to exist”<sup>15</sup>.

According to D. Demetrio, this paradox may be stated as well:

Il paradosso di essere nella storia, di rivendicare la propria storicizzazione attraverso la cura autobiografica, accanto all'altro elemento paradossale, per cui per entrare nel senso della cura—in chiave Heideggeriana—devi talvolta tentare di destoricizzarti completamente per appartenere all'umanità, per vivere del sentimento profondo dell'umano. (Demetrio, 2000, pp. 52-23)

*La cura di sé*, through which one of the strongest senses of autobiographical reason in Demetrio can be expressed, appears clearly affiliated with a philosophical understanding seeing life as an integration of opposites that must be recomposed and readjusted incessantly. The same Demetrio recognizes that the pre-Socratic philosophers and their centrality of becoming and of paradox who inspired much of his existential and plural understanding of autobiography<sup>16</sup>.

Finally, to fully grasp autobiography as a *cura di sé*, it should be emphasized that D. Demetrius, in his investigative journey, has come to the conviction that autobiographical dynamism has a path that begins with the individual and ends in the social domain. Returning to M. Foucault's discussion about *cura di sé* of (Demetrio, 2000), D. Demetrio gladly welcomes the observation made by the French thinker noting the role of *la cura di sé* in first and second century philosophy,

15 “Non dimenticarsi di esistere significa risvegliare una coscienza <radicale> di inserimento-attaccamento alla vita... significa, appunto, enfatizzare soprattutto la dimensione conscienziale... perché la scrittura autonaltica è, nello stesso tempo, dimenticarsi di esistere? Lo è perché, in essa, ci abituiamo anche all'astinenza della coscienza; dove astenersi dal <vivere sempre di coscienza>, significa dar spazio al mondo nelle sue manifestazioni più diverse, molteplici, innanzitutto a partire dal rapporto con la natura” (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 96-97).

16 “Il pensiero filosofico più autentico nasce come paradosso”. (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 58).

where practices of self-care –and even physical practices and day-time planning– were not only a form of mental and reflective exercise, but also a way of cultivating citizenship. Such idea is a strong component of his autobiographical reflection on autobiographical training.

In that sense, D. Demetrio’s criticism of Marxism and Structuralism means recognizing these currents of thought “hid the question of the subject” (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 79); therefore, his defense of autobiographical thought is based on the current revival of the subjective dimension.

However, the importance of the subject never stays locked within themselves in selfish enjoyment: it always transcends into the social, toward the others. Undoubtedly, it should start within the individual, in the subjective,

Ma per arrivare a tutto questo hai bisogno di percorrere una strada di totale radicalismo solipsistico e, direi, monologico soprattutto. La monologia è il dialogo con se stessi, per riscoprire l’illusorietà della tua soggettività rispetto la storia, rispetto al cosmo. (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 79)<sup>17</sup>

Demetrio radicalizes the work on oneself as a condition for going into the world: without awareness of one’s own dignity or reconciliation with oneself, there is no way to effectively intervene in history and in the world. We must first dare to be alone to then be with others in an authentic way. There must have been dialogue with oneself in order for dialogue with others to exist; one must listen to oneself in order to be listened by others. Note that the subjectivity defended here leads to otherness; moreover, otherness has already been incorporated into his biographical work: “Perché l’alterità è presente sempre,

nel discorso autobiografico; fosse anche un’alterità interna, non fosse altro che el nostro alter ego che ci chiede di ritrovare un dialogo interiore, una conversazione con se stessi” (Demetrio, 2000, 93).

## Autobiography as an “educational trip” (Demetrio, 2000)

Autobiography is not thought by Demetrio as a personal self-indulgent pleasure; nor is it intended as a nostalgic return, full of longing for the past. His interest in autobiography is as a transformative practice in the education of adults; that is the central theme of his research journey: “the most important seam of my research, devoted to deciphering the adult condition”, he remarks. (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p.78) There is then room to ask: what links has Demetrio found between biography and adult education? How did he come to articulate autobiographical writing with adult learning processes? How does he find the pedagogical dimension of autobiography?

A first element of response is in direct connection with the tension aroused by the *inquietudine* discussed above. Indeed, As previously mentioned, autobiography springs from an impulse that leads who write his autobiography to re-interrogate his own life trajectory, to question himself about his own identity: Who am I? What role did my family play in the making of what I have become so far? How has the culture in which I live affected me? What garden I am from? Well, that curiosity, *inquietudine*, is one of the fundamental dimensions of knowledge to Demetrio. In other words, without *inquietudine* there would be no learning or knowledge: “Perché non ci può essere, credo, sviluppo di conoscenza

17 “Quello che mi preme di dire è che occorre radicalizzare il lavoro su di sé e sul proprio io per poi temperarlo, di una specie, di gruppo umano, però dopo aver acquisito una maggiore dignità di sé” (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 87).

e quindi dimensione esoneri educative che cancelli da sé il motive dell'inquietudine" (Demetrio, 2005, p. 47).

A second element deals with the transforming power present in autobiographical writing. This aspect is perhaps the central point of this articulation between autobiography and education (Demetrio, Biffi, Castiglioni & Mancino, 2012), because Demetrio understands education primarily as a transformative process, and autobiography also has that power; moreover, autobiography helps to understand how transformative processes occur in adult learning. Autobiography writing is a meditative exercise that fulfills the etymological sense of the word meditation, "something that exercises us" (Demetrio, 2005). Autobiographical writing sets in motion a dynamic, a transformation exercise: it activates cognitive faculties as well as emotional and physical ones<sup>18</sup>.

Furthermore, getting started on writing one's own biography is doing something new, something that has never been done before, and such act triggers a process of transformative learning. Then autobiographical writing casts a vision of life under the sign of movement, of becoming; in addition, the autobiography launches an affective, cognitive process that "can touch the deepest chords and so sets out." (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 61) Finally, after having done some writing, you get the sense that you could have written the opposite, that there are still things left to say, that what you really thought has not been expressed, that the script somehow fails to fully reflect deep intuition.

Thus, the practice leading to autobiographical writing holds a greater awareness of the self and the self in the world. This dual role of autobiographical awareness is thought by D. Demetrio as education interiority, and his perspective is backed by a key reason: it is especially existential awareness of being in life rather than on the acquisition of awareness of being in the world where the educational dimension is inserted<sup>19</sup>. And here lies a very interesting understanding of education in D. Demetrio's work: acquiring self-awareness, developing it. "Vivere profondamente gli esistenziali della vita che sonno le esperienze più marcatrici, legate ai confini tra il propio essere al mundo e il nulla" (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 57) is a job pertaining to personal decision, not to social imposition.

These approaches lead to a reflection on adult education centered on learning autonomy, although in D Demetrio's thought educational autonomy becomes *Educazioneinteriore* (2010, 2012, 2000a) since autobiography, as a return to oneself –as an appropriation of the profound meaning of life with its complexity and richness–, is definitely a pedagogy of interiority. So autobiography has to do with self-analysis, creativity, with the "auto-poiesis". An autobiography is a journey through one's own existential problems yet it is also concerned with the lack of a mentor, the absence of models to follow or canons to achieve: "Perché forse anchel'autobiografia è lo specchio di una dimensione ontológica del nostro essere al mundo. In fondo l'essere non è dato una volta per tutte, ne costruiamo di nuovi." (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 69)

18 According D. Demetrio, meditation can have four senses: the first is practice, the second refers to its object: life as a story; the third is its transformative power; and the fourth is its ability to open to otherness. On the third sense, Demetrio explains that: "... l'autobiografia diventa una esperienza educativa, perché o t'innalza, oppure ti migliora in senso laico ottemperando a questoterzo principio de la meditazione". (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 57). See also Demetrio 2005a.

19 Demetrio takes Heidegger's distinction between "esistenzialità" (existentiality) and "esistentività" (existentiality), the first understood as profound awareness of being in life and the second as social responsibility, often enforced by practice and responsibility imposed by life with others. In this context, on the educational dimension, Demetrio argues strongly: "Quindi le cose ti accadono nelle due direzioni di ricerca, esistenzialità ed esistentività; ma nell'esistenzialità è implícita enormemente la dimensione educativa, nell'esistentività non è data (...)". (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, 57).

Besides, how does this pedagogical perspective promote said autonomy? The answer lies at the heart of what the subject of autobiography is: life itself. In fact, Mr. Demetrio remarks as follows:

Uno dei presupposti dell'educazione degli adulti, da sempre, è quello di partire dall'esperienza dell'adulto per avviare con lui quella mesa a fuoco di quelli che sono i suoi bisogni le sue aspettative, e per cercare di ricostruire con lui la sua storia e ritrovare in esa poi dei fili conduttori. (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, pp. 76-77)<sup>20</sup>

That is already a way to recognize and respect the richness of the apprentice who has a history, who has an experiential and conceptual baggage that cannot be avoided.

But if Demetrio used life stories as a teaching tool for actively involving members-in-training, this didactic stage about the sense of autobiography was soon superseded. Then, it even exceeds a sociological view that considers the autobiography as a methodological source of data collection and makes the leap towards an understanding of autobiography that emphasizes the subjective dimension<sup>21</sup>. The reason was the following: "la prospettiva autobiográfica si faceva sempre più significativa perché si trattava anche di cogliere gli aspetti cognitivi, intrinseci e latenti all'interno della narrazione" (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 80).

D. Demetrio's proposal presents here a nuance distinguishing between autobiographical writing and self-analytical writing. In the first, the self-biographer still turns back to their

history very often, to the chronology of their life journey; yet when it comes to self-analytical writing, their work focuses on self-realization, on the perspective raised by Karl Rogers and Abraham Maslow (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003)<sup>22</sup>. At this stage of the process, the writer themselves becomes a "mayeuta" not dependent on others, "non in un delirio solipsistico, ma in un riconoscimento profondamente filosofico ed esistenziale, della nostra unicità, considerate più dal punto di vista ovviamente culturale o –a seconda degli accenti– spirituale, dal punto di vista della nostra corporeità." (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, p. 82)

D. Demetrio's approach in these pedagogical horizons leads back to the paradox. Because of his "radicalism of the subject", that emphasis on the subjective dimension of the educational process should ultimately lead to actually eliminating subjectivity, to annihilating it, Demetrio argues. And that annihilation is nothing but the discovery of otherness, of the ability to hear other stories, to deal with them with a supportive attitude. He who has seen this process through will be led to reading the classics, and to listening to different stories other than theirs, with an awareness of being in the world on a kind of "narrative solidarity" which makes their membership to the world be experienced as lively.

## Conclusions

In the context of biographical research in Italy, Professor Duccio Demetrio's narrative thought is known for its educational and humanist quality. His proposal is structured

20 Also see Demetrio, 2003, 2005b.

21 In this respect, D. Demetrio also speaks of "Pedagogy of subjectivity": "... la micropedagogia diventa sempre più una pedagogia della soggettività: è racconto di sé, narrazione, ricostruzione delle proprie storie di educazione, delle proprie storie di formazione come riproposizione del motivo classico umanistico del *billdungroman*, del romanzo quindi di prima formazione." (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, pp. 80-81)

22 Demetrio openly acknowledged this influence in his pedagogy, as well as that of cognitive constructivism (Demetrio & Ciantar, 2003, pp. 80-82).



around autobiography, essentially understood as a paradoxical human act. Inasmuch as the autobiographical exercise involves, on the one hand, paying attention to one's life or existence, it becomes the privileged way human beings have within their reach to pay attention to the self. Autobiography exercise requires its host's radical concern, which emerges from life and its great, epiphanic moments: when there is pain, joy, emptiness, death, love or any other existential outburst in the vital trajectory of a human being. It is not a question of assuming an agonizing concern, but a comforting concern, because it allows to live life with autonomy and more meaningfully, given that life becomes an ever unfinished and untold path, always under construction.

On the other hand, if the autobiographical exercise leads to the discovery of one's dignity and self-worth, then it also leads to an awareness of "illusory personal subjectivity" to the extent it appears linked to a story, a family, and a world in which it is embedded. The subject ends up expanding their own garden to discover that they are part of a wider one where there are other human beings. The awareness of belonging to the world makes the first time looking to oneself be combined with other self-forgetfulness. Thereby the autobiography begins with an obligatory subject enhancement and paradoxically flows into the openness to others, into listening to the stories of others. You could say that otherness narrative comes to dispel any misleading temptation of autobiographical satisfaction.

The autobiographical exercise then appears in Demetrio's narrative proposal as a transformative act, and that is its radical connection with education. In fact, on an educational basis, the curiosity that stimulates the care of the self is present. Educating is to set the individual on their way so that they may take responsibility for their own life and find in it the cognitive elements provided by their own

narration. However, the educational act through narrative, insofar as it is equated with the culture of interiority, also leads to openness to others, to the joyful discovery of the effective capacity and desire to listen to other stories and to engage with them. Educating through autobiography can then be understood as a process resulting in a dynamic interweaving and engaging personal story with the stories of others.

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