

The omnilateral life of Mario Alighiero Manacorda (1914-2013)

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ABSTRACT: This paper intends to reconstruct the long and multifaceted intellectual biography of Mario Alighiero Manacorda (1914-2013). The analysis will focus on the four phases of Manacorda's educational research: the Marxism pedagogy (1960s-1970s), the history of education (1970s-1980s), the relationship between laicity and schooling (1980s-1990s) and the history of sport (2000s). The contribution also attempts to show how Manacorda interprets these four themes in the light of the cultural paradigm of Marxism and in particular through the works of Marx, Engels and Gramsci.

EET/TEE KEYWORDS: Mario Alighiero Manacorda; Educational research; Biography; Marxism; XX Century.

Introduction

In his long and multifaceted intellectual biography (1914-2013), Mario Alighiero Manacorda explored multiple fields of knowledge with rigorous scientific method, transcending the boundaries of specialism and giving his research a broad literary, political and cultural perspective.

However, if today one were to identify the thematic nucleus which has interested scholars since his passing, there is no doubt that it must be identified in Marxist pedagogy.

It is certainly exemplifying that the majority of the new editions of Manacorda's works that have flourished since 2013 concern the subject of Marxist pedagogy, only with a few exceptions. This is a fact that emerges when investigating Manacorda's editorial legacy both in Italy¹, where he lived and

¹ M.A. Manacorda, *Perché non posso non dirmi comunista. Una grande utopia che non può morire*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 2014⁴ [1997]; Id., *Il principio educativo in Gramsci. Americanismo e conformismo*, ed. by D. Santarone, Roma, Armando, 2015² [1970], p. 4.

worked throughout his life, and in Brazil², where Manacorda's works had greater success and circulation than in any other foreign country³.

In the same way his studies on Marxist pedagogy were favourably received within the post-2013 Anglo-Saxon critical literature. There were no translations of Manacorda's works in this language area⁴, but his studies on the pedagogy of Antonio Gramsci have had the strength to establish themselves as indispensable terms of comparison in the Anglo-Saxon debate on the subject⁵.

Finally, even in the post-2013 Italian panorama, the most significant critical studies dedicated to Manacorda have been mainly focused on Marxist pedagogy⁶ and on his interpretation of pedagogy in Gramsci in particular⁷.

This concise and schematic *Wirkungsgeschichte* or history of the effects of Manacorda's thought certainly shows how Marxist pedagogy is one of the essential and successful themes of his thinking. However, remaining anchored to the "fortune" of an author means running the risk of confining his image to a single aspect, renouncing to grasp its complexity, which constitutes an equally important element, especially in a long-lived author such as Manacorda (1914-2013).

² Id., *Humanismo de Marx e industrialismo de Gramsci*, tradução de P. Nosella, B. Pucci, E. Buffa, «Revista Eletrônica de Educação», n. 1, 2017, pp. 26-43; Id., *História da educação: da antiguidade aos nossos dias*, tradução de G. Lo Monaco, revisão técnica da tradução e revisão general de P. Nosella, São Paulo, Cortez-Autores Associados, 2018¹⁴ [1988]; Id., *O princípio educativo em Gramsci: americanismo e conformismo*, tradução de Willian Laços, Campinas, Alínea, 2019³ [1990]; Id., *História da educação: da antiguidade aos nossos dias*, São Paulo, Cortez Editoria, 2022, primeira edição digital.

³ Cf. H.C. de Oliveira Vieira, *Mario Alighiero Manacorda: contribuição marxista à formação dos educadores brasileiros*, Tese de doutorado, Departamento de Fundamentos da Educação (Orientador: César de Alencar Arnaut de Toledo), Maringá, Universidade Estadual de Maringá, 2022.

⁴ The only exception is the translation of one of his articles by Eric Canepa and Frank Rosengarten: Id., *The Manifesto and Humanity's Destiny*, «Socialism and Democracy», n. 1, 1998, pp. 47-59.

⁵ P. Mayo, *Hegemony and Education under Neoliberalism. Insight from Gramsci*, New York, Routledge, 2015, p. 19; N. Pizzolato, J.D. Holst, *Gramsci, Politics and Pedagogy: An Interpretative Framework*, in Idd. (edd.), *Antonio Gramsci: A Pedagogy to Change the World*, Cham, Springer, 2017, pp. 18-20; R. Pagano, *Culture, Education and Political Leadership in Gramsci's Thought*, in *ibid.*, p. 54; D. Fusaro, *The Pedagogy of Praxis and the Role of Education in the Prison Notebooks*, in *ibid.*, p. 78; P. Mayo, *Gramsci, Antonio (1891-1937): Culture and Education*, in A. Maisuria (ed.), *Encyclopaedia of Marxism and Education*, Leiden-Boston, Brill, 2022, p. 294.

⁶ C. Covato, C. Meta (edd.), *Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Un intellettuale militante tra storia, pedagogia e politica*, Roma, RomaTrE-Press, 2020.

⁷ M. Baldacci, *Oltre la subalternità. Praxis e educazione in Gramsci*, Roma, Carocci, 2017, pp. 90-127; P. Maltese, *Egemonia e conformismo nel Gramsci di Mario Alighiero Manacorda*, «Materialismo storico», n. 2, 2022, pp. 24-58.

The studies on Manacorda's archive⁸, bibliography⁹ and library¹⁰ have made it possible not only to identify themes different from Marxist pedagogy, but also to establish their chronological succession in Manacorda's intellectual biography. Therefore, the stages of Manacorda's interests and life can be schematically summarised as follows:

- second half of the 1940s and 1950s: political and editorial activity in the Italian Communist Party;
- 1960s and early 1970s: Marxist pedagogy;
- 1970s: history of education;
- late 1970s and early 1980s: literature and linguistics;
- 1980s and 1990s: laicity;
- 1990s and 2000s: sport and education.

This partitioning and periodization has a guiding value, that is it marks the moments of acme of the different angles of Manacorda's research which never proceeds in a linear and progressive manner from one stage to the next. Rather Manacorda's research evolves in a 'spiral' progression, in which each successive stage is already contained *in nuce* in the preceding stages and continues to be reinterpreted in a new way in the light of the successive ones¹¹.

The analysis that will be carried out in the following paragraphs is not intended to cover all the aspects of Manacorda's intellectual biography listed above, but to highlight and deepen the pedagogical themes of his life and thought. Therefore, relating to the proposed outline, *par. 1* will focus on Manacorda's education, his joining the PCI and his studies on Marxist pedagogy. *Par. 2* will deal with how Manacorda changes the historiography of education. *Par. 3* will be devoted to the two themes that characterise Manacorda's last works: his reflection on the concept of laicity and its realization in the school dimension (*par. 3.1.*); his research on the history of physical and sports education (*par. 3.2.*).

In addition to the reconstruction of the various phases of Manacorda's life and research in the field of education, the second aim of this paper is to answer

⁸ C. Covato, C. Meta, *Il Fondo Mario Alighiero Manacorda*, «Il Pepe Verde. Rivista di letture e letterature per ragazzi» [Speciale MuSEd. Il Museo della Scuola e dell'Educazione "Mauro Laeng" dell'Università degli Studi Roma Tre], n. 77, 2018, pp. 32-34; C. Meta, *L'«Archivio Mario Alighiero Manacorda»: una recente acquisizione del Museo della Scuola e dell'Educazione «Mauro Laeng»*, «History of Education & Children's Literature», vol. XIV, n. 1, 2019, pp. 821-841.

⁹ L. Silvestri, *Per una bibliografia di Mario Alighiero Manacorda: monografie, traduzioni e curatele*, in Covato, Meta (edd.), *Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Un intellettuale militante tra storia, pedagogia e politica*, cit., pp. 105-119.

¹⁰ Id., *La biblioteca di Mario Alighiero Manacorda: un ritratto attraverso i libri*, in E. de Pasquale, P. Storari (edd.), *Libri esemplari. Le biblioteche d'autore a Roma Tre*, Roma, RomaTrE-Press, 2022, pp. 83-91.

¹¹ This interpretative structure is inspired by the spiral model of history hypothesised by L. Canfora, *La scopa di don Abbondio. Il moto violento della storia*, Bari-Roma, Laterza, 2018.

the following question: is it possible to identify a specific common thread within the various periods and themes which are listed above?

An attempt will be made here to support the hypothesis that not only Marxist pedagogy, but also the other three themes listed above (history of education, laicity, physical education) are influenced by Manacorda's interpretation of the classics of Marxism, which constitute the inexhaustible and constant hermeneutic nucleus of his thought¹².

Before proceeding further, it is appropriate to clarify the concepts of «classics of Marxism» and «hermeneutic nucleus», which can be interpreted in numerous ways due to their conceptual polysemy.

Regarding the expression «classics of Marxism», Manacorda's frame of reference is predominantly concerned with the writings of Marx, Engels and Gramsci. As will be seen, the works of these authors are in fact continually reread and reinterpreted by Manacorda throughout his pedagogical research.

Regarding the concept of «hermeneutic nucleus», which has been used in relation to Manacorda's methodology, one must first take into account that in his works the philological approach is so central that it preliminarily orients and conditions all his interpretations¹³.

Considering this aspect, one perceives the distance separating Manacorda's hermeneutic interpretation of the classics of Marxism from the attempts to blend Marxism with hermeneutic philosophies (such as the philosophy of Heidegger).

On the other hand, there is a more general meaning of hermeneutics, that is described by Maurizio Ferraris as a practical activity, that is an art of interpretation and transformation, and not a theory as contemplation¹⁴.

As will be demonstrated below, the texts of Marx, Engels and Gramsci represent Manacorda's «hermeneutic nucleus» insofar as they are not adopted by him in a dogmatic and “contemplative” manner, i.e. as ethereal, unalterable essences, but are read and interpreted in a vital manner in the light of the present, albeit within the limits imposed by philological methodology. The aim of the following paragraphs is to highlight the presence of the classics of Marxism and this peculiar hermeneutic approach in all four of Manacorda's fields of interest, from his studies on Marxist pedagogy to his studies on the history of physical education.

¹² An summary elaboration of this thesis was given in L. Silvestri, *Marx e Engels: il filo rosso della biografia intellettuale di Mario Alighiero Manacorda*, in C. Angelini, C. La Rocca (edd.), *La Serie del Dottorato TRES*, Roma, Roma TrE-Press, 2022, pp. 149-159.

¹³ See F. Cambi, *La ricerca storico-educativa in Italia: 1945-1990*, Milano, Mursia, 1992, pp. 30-31.

¹⁴ M. Ferraris, *Storia dell'ermeneutica*, Milano, Bompiani, 2008² [1988], p. 5.

1. *Marxist pedagogy*

Manacorda's studies on Marxist pedagogy are important not only because they have found great favour in publications and critical studies, but also because they occupy a pioneering place in Italian studies on this topic. This primacy was first highlighted by Carmela Covato, according to whom, through the publication of *Marx e la pedagogia moderna* in 1966, Manacorda:

does not propose to respond immediately to the concrete problems of the school world, but expresses the need for serious theoretical reflection, capable of freeing the Marxist orientation from ideological schematism and more general approximations. This qualitative leap represents, in a sense, the very beginning of Marxist research on education, in post-World War II Italy, and documents the attempt to overcome ideological generalisations or vaguely utopian formulations through an analytical and philologically grounded study of the writings of Marx and Engels¹⁵.

It is Manacorda himself who points out this distinction in order to clarify the different approaches that animate the Italian Marxist pedagogical universe: «[...] in Italy in the second half of our century [...] one can perhaps distinguish the pedagogy of the communists, both as educational policy and as didactic practice, and the pedagogical Marxism, i.e. the direct and explicit reckoning with the ideas contained in Marx's 'pedagogical' texts»¹⁶.

1.1 *A paradoxical premise: education without Marxist pedagogy*

Before closely analysing Manacorda's path to the publication of *Marx e la pedagogia moderna* in 1966, it can be said that this path is characterised by a "paradoxical" beginning since, prior to 1943, Manacorda dealt neither with pedagogy, understood as a reflection on pedagogical ideas, nor with Marxism, in terms of both culture and political militancy.

Mario Alighiero Manacorda was born in Rome in 1914 as the third of six children¹⁷. His parents, Lina Romagnoli and Giuseppe Manacorda, were both teachers. Moreover, his father Giuseppe was also a socialist intellectual and writer on the history of literature and school history¹⁸. It is suggestive,

¹⁵ C. Covato, *L'itinerario pedagogico del marxismo italiano. Nuova edizione*, Roma, Edizioni Conoscenza, 2022, pp. 75-76. A similar judgement was also expressed by G. Formizzi, *La pedagogia di Karl Marx*, Brescia, La Scuola, 1973, p. 106.

¹⁶ M.A. Manacorda, *Prefazione alla prima edizione*, in Covato, *L'itinerario pedagogico del marxismo italiano. Nuova edizione*, cit., p. 15.

¹⁷ On the Manacorda family see A. Vittoria, *Per un profilo di Gastone Manacorda*, «Studi Storici», n. 1, 2001, p. 9.

¹⁸ See F. Cambi, *Manacorda, Giuseppe*, in *Dizionario biografico degli italiani*, Roma, Istituto

therefore, to imagine that Manacorda's studies on Marxist pedagogy are due to his parental influence, where all the elements necessary to support this hypothesis seem to be present: teaching, schooling and socialism.

However, a deeper analysis of these elements reveals that his family background is the background for the genesis of many of Manacorda's interests, but not for Marxist pedagogy. Firstly because, as mentioned above, Manacorda's approach for the theme of education in Marxism is theoretical, albeit characterized by a philological method. Therefore, this pedagogical interest cannot be associated either with Lina Romagnoli's exquisitely "professional" activity in schools or with Giuseppe Manacorda's study on *Storia della scuola in Italia*¹⁹, which is characterized by an historical-literary method²⁰ rather than a theoretical approach based on pedagogical ideas²¹.

Secondly, it is difficult to trace Manacorda's interest in Marxist pedagogy back to his family background because Marxism cannot be found among his parent's interests. While there is no information on his mother's political interests, studies on Giuseppe Manacorda show that he joined the Italian Socialist Party²². However, it is significant (though not conclusive) that in none of these studies is there any reference to Marxism²³. Rather, his socialism seems strongly linked to his commitment to laicity and democracy as a member of the FNISM (*Federazione Nazionale Insegnanti Scuola Media*)²⁴ and to the battle for pacifism within the Italian Socialist Party²⁵. It will be shown further on how these premises deeply influenced Manacorda's intellectual biography in areas other than Marxist pedagogy, such as his choice to graduate in Italian literature (see below), his interest in the history of education (see *par. 2.1.*) and his commitment to the battle for the laicity of schools (see *par. 3.1.*).

After attending the nursery school of the French Sisters of the Sacred Heart in Rome²⁶ and the premature death of his father in 1920 due to Spanish flu²⁷,

della Enciclopedia italiana, 2007, Vol. 68, pp. 402-404.

¹⁹ G. Manacorda, *Storia della scuola in Italia. Vol. I: il Medio Evo*, 2 vols., Palermo, Remo Sandron, s.d. [1914].

²⁰ See *L'intervista*, ed. by A. Semeraro, in Id. (ed.), *L'educazione dell'uomo completo. Scritti in onore di Mario Alighiero Manacorda*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 2001, p. 297.

²¹ G. Manacorda, *Storia della scuola in Italia. Il Medio Evo*, 2 vols., *Presentazione* by E. Garin, Firenze, Casa editrice Le Lettere, 1980, Vol. I, p. IX.

²² Cambi, *Manacorda, Giuseppe*, cit., p. 402; M.A. Manacorda, *Nota biografica su Giuseppe Manacorda*, in G. Manacorda, *Storia della scuola in Italia. Il Medio Evo*, Vol. I, p. 20.

²³ Robert Michelis ha parlato di «socialismo [...] senza conoscenza di Marx» (Id., *Storia del marxismo in Italia. Compendio critico con annessa bibliografia*, Roma, Mongini, 1909, p. 73). Furthermore, see F. Antonini, *Le edizioni del partito socialista e del partito comunista (1896-1926)*, in F. Giasi, M. Mustè (edd.), *Marx in Italia*, Roma, Treccani, 2020, p. 72.

²⁴ Manacorda, *Nota biografica su Giuseppe Manacorda*, cit., p. 21.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁶ Id., *La mia scuola sotto il fascismo*, in G. Genovesi (ed.), *C'ero anch'io. A scuola nel Ventennio. Ricordi e riflessioni*, Napoli, Liguori Editore, 2010, p. 27.

²⁷ Id., *Nota biografica su Giuseppe Manacorda*, cit., p. 29.

Manacorda was sent with his other siblings to the “Santa Maria in Aquiro”²⁸ orphanage run by the Somaschi Fathers, but attended the boys’ public primary school “Principe di Piemonte”²⁹. In the meantime, the National Fascist Party came to power and the school reform conceived by Giovanni Gentile was enacted.

After primary school, while continuing to reside at the “Santa Maria in Aquiro” boarding school, Manacorda pursued his studies at the “Ennio Quirino Visconti” secondary school³⁰, where his father Giuseppe had taught Italian literature³¹ and which was an elite school at the time, both because of its classical orientation and because it was the first state classical secondary school in Rome³². In a testimony given many years later, Manacorda affirms that his school education had been characterized by liberal-monarchic values and it had undergone to a lesser extent than other schools the pressure of popular-fascist propaganda thanks to its elitist aspect³³.

There seems to be no trace of Marxism in Manacorda’s schooling years because the texts and ideas of Marx and Engels are not part of the secondary school philosophy syllabus launched by the Gentile reform³⁴. Outside school, Marxist texts intended for the general public or political militancy are burned³⁵ and circulate with great difficulty³⁶.

From 1932 to 1936 Manacorda attended the University of Pisa as a student at the Scuola Normale Superiore³⁷. Even during these years, the fascist ideology remained outside of Manacorda’s political-ideological horizon because the influence of the regime’s ideas on the university was hindered by the liberal-democratic ideology of the Normale professors and senior students³⁸.

During his studies at the Normale, Manacorda specialised in modern literature studies³⁹, graduating in 1936 with a thesis on *Il carattere fondamentale della*

²⁸ A. Vittoria, *Manacorda, Gastone*, in *Dizionario Biografico degli Italiani*, Roma, Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana, 2007, Vol. 68, p. 399.

²⁹ Manacorda, *La mia scuola sotto il fascismo*, cit., p. 27.

³⁰ See: Id., [Interview], in N. Villeggia, *La scuola per la classe dirigente. Vita quotidiana e prassi educative nei licei durante il fascismo*, Presentazione by F. Susi, Milano, Unicopli, 2007, pp. 186-197; Id., *La mia scuola sotto il fascismo*, cit., pp. 29-42.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

³⁴ V. Scalera, *L’insegnamento della filosofia dall’Unità alla riforma Gentile*, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1990, pp. 187-188.

³⁵ G.M. Bravo, *Marx ed Engels in Italia. La fortuna, gli scritti, le relazioni, le polemiche*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1992, p. 222.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

³⁷ M.A. Manacorda, [Witnessing], in *Il contributo dell’Università di Pisa e della Scuola Normale Superiore alla lotta antifascista ed alla guerra di liberazione*. Atti del convegno (Pisa, 24-25 aprile 1985), ed. by F. Frassati, Pisa, Giardini editori e stampatori in Pisa, 1989, pp. 141-150.

³⁸ Manacorda, *La mia scuola sotto il fascismo*, cit., p. 42.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

*poesia e dell'anima del Foscolo*⁴⁰. As Manacorda himself suggests, through this choice one can see the strong bond with the legacy of his father Giuseppe, who had written a volume of Foscolo studies towards the end of his life⁴¹.

After finishing university, Manacorda won a scholarship in Germany, at the University of Frankfurt am Main, where he mastered the German language and literature between 1936 and 1937⁴².

Back in Italy, Manacorda did military service in Pula at the Officer Candidate School for Bersaglieri⁴³, which led him to participate in Italian military expeditions first in Albania and then in Greece from 1939 to 1940⁴⁴. In 1939 he also won the chair of Italian literature and Latin at the Classical secondary school in Siena⁴⁵ and on 18th December 1939 he married Annamaria Bernardini, who was to be his lifelong companion⁴⁶. Nonetheless, his new job as a teacher did not lead him towards genuine pedagogical thought, since – as he would declare many years later – he interpreted his role according to the traditional educational canon that he himself had received⁴⁷.

On the political side, the years in Siena are crucial for the maturation of Manacorda's explicit anti-fascism, due to the exacerbation of the pressure of fascism in daily life and Italy's entry into the war. But he is still far from encountering Marxism: «As an intellectual, I naturally lent toward a liberal democracy that had, however, a social content of justice and freedom»⁴⁸.

For Manacorda the last years of the war were marked by bereavement, economic hardship and political isolation:

27.10.11. This morning I suddenly realized that in 1943, returned back to Rome from Siena, after the “armistice” (and the death of [my brother] Paolo and Mom), I literally “went into depression”. [...] I came out of it little by little by studying Marx and 1848 in France at the Biblioteca di Storia Moderna: this work was then lost while I was riding my bicycle⁴⁹.

This is a memoir written after the fact, but it vibrantly reveals the difficult time Manacorda was going through during the final years of the war and how his studies on Marx were a cure for his depression. At this point, he was

⁴⁰ Id., *Il carattere fondamentale della poesia e dell'anima del Foscolo*, Tesi di laurea, Facoltà di lettere (relatore: Luigi Russo), Pisa, Regia Università di Pisa, a.a. 1935-1936.

⁴¹ G. Manacorda, *Studi foscoliani*, Prefazione by L. Ferrari, Bari, Gius. Laterza e figli, 1921. See *L'intervista*, ed. by Semeraro, cit., p. 306.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 309.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 310.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 305.

⁴⁶ The date was taken from the marriage certificate in the unordered archive of the Fondo Manacorda at MuSEd.

⁴⁷ Manacorda, *La mia scuola sotto il fascismo*, cit., p. 45.

⁴⁸ *L'intervista*, ed. by Semeraro, cit., p. 313.

⁴⁹ Document kept in the unordered archive of the Fondo Manacorda at MuSEd. The underlining is in the original document.

studying the Marx of *The Class Struggles in France: 1848 to 1850*, not yet the pedagogical Marx. However, in the meantime the term «Marxism» of the binomial «Marxist pedagogy» becomes part of Manacorda's cultural and existential heritage.

1.2 *In the Italian Communist Party: between the classics of Marxism and commitment to school politics*

After the PCI's Fifth National Congress (29th December 1945-6th January 1946), Manacorda decided to enrol in the Party⁵⁰. This choice marked the beginning of his long political militancy in the PCI, which would last until the 1980s⁵¹; his progressive approach to Marxist pedagogy; and his renunciation of the world of literature⁵².

The first important project which the PCI assigned to him concerned the foundation and direction of the "Gaiime Pintor" Boarding-School for Partisans and Veterans in Rome⁵³, sponsored by the ANPI (National Association of Italian Partisans) and subsidised by the Ministry of Post-war Assistance, between 1946 and 1947⁵⁴. This Boarding-School experiment was characterised by the combination of school-work and the principle of self-discipline⁵⁵, and it was therefore defined by Manacorda many years later as «a little pedagogical poem»⁵⁶, referring to Makarenko's poem.

Although these aspects certainly reflect an attempt at pedagogical innovation, they were not based on the principles of Marxist pedagogy because Manacorda himself reveals that «[...] none of the initiators [of this project] had read about pedagogy in Marx, nor had Gramsci and Makarenko been published yet»⁵⁷. It can therefore be concluded that the elements of equality, democratic governance and a close relationship between education and work are linked to a generic «desire for socialism in a laic democracy initiative»⁵⁸.

⁵⁰ *L'intervista*, ed. by Semeraro, cit., p. 314.

⁵¹ On the crisis in the relationship between Manacorda and the PCI see, *infra*, par. 3.1.

⁵² *L'intervista*, ed. by Semeraro, cit., p. 325.

⁵³ See M.A. Manacorda, *Un minimo poema pedagogico nel secondo dopoguerra*, «Annali di storia dell'educazione», n. 22, 2015, pp. 253-254.

⁵⁴ See A. Höbel, *Mario Alighiero Manacorda e l'esperienza dei convitti Rinascita*, in Covato, Meta (edd.), *Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Un intellettuale militante tra storia, pedagogia e politica*, cit., pp. 96, 101.

⁵⁵ Manacorda, *Un minimo poema pedagogico nel secondo dopoguerra*, cit., p. 255.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 253.

⁵⁷ *Id.*, *Momenti di storia della pedagogia*, Torino, Loescher, 1977, p. 256.

⁵⁸ *Id.*, *Il marxismo e l'educazione*, in *La pedagogia italiana nel secondo dopoguerra*. Atti del Convegno in onore di Lamberto Borghi (Università di Firenze, Facoltà di magistero, 8-9 novembre 1986), ed. by G. Tassinari, Firenze, Le Monnier, 1987, p. 70.

Leaving the boarding school's direction to Lucio Lombardo Radice in 1947⁵⁹, Manacorda became involved in the PCI's cultural policy through militancy in associationism (particularly in *Associazione Difesa Scuola Nazionale*) and by writing articles for party publications (both for the «Unità» newspaper⁶⁰ and the monthly «Rinascita» magazine⁶¹). In both roles, his most recurring themes are the battles in favour of the laicity of schools, which will be discussed in *par.* 3.1.

In the meantime, Manacorda contributes assiduously to the PCI's editorial policy, which at Palmiro Togliatti's behest was aimed at disseminating in new and more exact translations the classics of Marxism, which scarcely circulated in Italy until then and, moreover, in editions that were scientifically superficial⁶². Between 1948 and 1953 he translated Marx's *Die Klassenkämpfe in Frankreich 1848 bis 1850*⁶³, the first three volumes of the correspondence between Marx and Engels⁶⁴ and *Karl Marx: Geschichte seines Lebens* by Franz Mehring⁶⁵. Finally, in 1954 he was appointed director of Edizioni Rinascita replacing Valentino Gerratana⁶⁶. Through this new role, Manacorda came into direct contact with the international works of the great interpreters of 20th century political Marxism: he contributed to the publication of the first three volumes of Lenin's *Opere complete*⁶⁷ and Mao Zedong's *Scritti scelti*⁶⁸, supervising their translation⁶⁹.

In the meantime, Togliatti strengthened his leadership within the PCI through the removal of Pietro Secchia from the secretariat and appointing Mario Alicata

⁵⁹ See L. Lombardo Radice, *Il Convitto "Giuseppe Pintor" di Roma*, in L. Raimondi, *I convitti scuola della Rinascita*, ed. by N. Augeri, Milano, Editrice Aurora, 2016, pp. 163-165.

⁶⁰ Il primo articolo di Manacorda sul quotidiano fondato da Antonio Gramsci è del 1951 (M.A. Manacorda, *La riforma della scuola*, «l'Unità», 15 novembre 1951), l'ultimo è degli anni Duemila (Id., *Il modesto parere di un laico...*, «l'Unità», 22 aprile 2004).

⁶¹ Sugli scritti di Manacorda per «Rinascita» dal 1944 al 1964, si veda G. Sorgonà, *Mario Alighiero Manacorda e la politica culturale del Pci*, in Covato, Meta (edd.), *Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Un intellettuale militante tra storia, pedagogia e politica*, cit., pp. 55-67.

⁶² A. Donini, *Traduzioni e diffusione dei classici del marxismo*, «Rinascita», n. 11-12, 1954, pp. 757-759.

⁶³ K. Marx, *Le lotte di classe in Francia*, ed. by M.A. Manacorda, [Torino], Giulio Einaudi editore, 1948.

⁶⁴ K. Marx, F. Engels, *Carteggio Marx-Engels. Vol. I: 1844-1851*, Roma, Rinascita, 1950; Idd., *Carteggio Marx-Engels. Vol. II: 1852-1856*, Roma, Rinascita, 1950; Idd., *Carteggio Marx-Engels. Vol. III: 1857-1860*, Roma, Rinascita, 1951.

⁶⁵ F. Mehring, *Vita di Marx, Introduzione* by M.A. Manacorda, Roma, Edizioni Rinascita, 1953.

⁶⁶ E. Rogante, *Un libro per ogni compagno. Il PCI "editore collettivo" (1944-1956)*, Ospedaletto (Pisa), Pacini editore, 2021, p. 123.

⁶⁷ V.I. Lenin, *Opere complete. I. 1893-1894*, Roma, Edizioni Rinascita, 1954; Id., *Opere complete. II. 1895-1897*, Roma, Edizioni Rinascita, 1954; Id., *Opere complete. III. Lo sviluppo del capitalismo in Russia*, Roma, Edizioni Rinascita, 1956.

⁶⁸ Mao Tse-Dun, *Scritti scelti*, 5 voll., Roma, Edizioni Rinascita-Editori Riuniti, 1955-1956.

⁶⁹ Cfr. M.A. Manacorda, *Dall'editoria di partito alle discussioni sui Quaderni*, in E. Forenza, G. Liguori (edd.), *Valentino Gerratana "filosofo democratico"*, Roma, Carocci, 2011, p. 35.

to the leadership of the party's Cultural Commission (1955-1962)⁷⁰. As it is now well established by studies on the subject, the months that followed Alicata's appointment in 1955 marked a decisive turning point for the PCI in the elaboration of its own political programme for the school reform⁷¹.

In 1957 Manacorda left Edizioni Rinascita⁷² (which had in the meantime been incorporated into Editori Riuniti⁷³) because he was called by Alicata to collaborate on his project along with other intellectuals⁷⁴.

Due to the commitments entrusted to him under Alicata's cultural policy, Manacorda repeatedly came hands on with Gramsci's pedagogical ideas, even though this encounter will be "subjected" to the immediate demands of their political realisation. Therefore, one cannot yet speak of Marxist pedagogy as a «pedagogical theory», based philologically on the classics of Marxism, according to the definition formulated at the beginning of the chapter.

The first task assigned to Manacorda directly by Alicata⁷⁵ was to draft a communist bill to implement Article 34 of the Constitution, which states that «lower education, provided for at least eight years, must be compulsory and free». Following the assignment, Manacorda became involved in organising the debates and research that would lead to the writing of Bill n. 359 of 1959 on the *Istituzione della scuola obbligatoria statale dai 6 ai 14 anni*⁷⁶, but he was not directly involved in drafting the introductory report, for which he recommended Alessandro Natta⁷⁷. The bill, which will be presented to the Senate by Ambrogio Donini and Cesare Luporini, will not be approved as a law. However, the Gramscian indications contained therein («a single school and the search for a 'new humanism' to replace Latin and Greek and to elevate technical-work to technical-science and to the historicist conception of life»⁷⁸) will enrich the debate on the reform of the lower secondary school, which

⁷⁰ Cfr. A. Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. La politica culturale dei comunisti italiani (1944-1964)*, Roma, Carocci, 2014, pp. 151-164.

⁷¹ M. Alicata, *La riforma della scuola*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1956.

⁷² Manacorda, *Dall'editoria di partito alle discussioni sui Quaderni*, cit., p. 36.

⁷³ Rogante, *Un libro per ogni compagno. Il PCI "editore collettivo" (1944-1956)*, cit., pp. 203-208.

⁷⁴ Vittoria, *Togliatti e gli intellettuali. La politica culturale dei comunisti italiani (1944-1964)*, cit., pp. 153-154.

⁷⁵ *L'intervista*, ed. by Semeraro, cit., p. 322.

⁷⁶ See *La riforma della Scuola Media al Senato. Testi e documenti*, ed. by Gruppo comunista del Senato, Roma, Aziende tipografiche eredi Dott. G. Bardi, 1962, pp. 5-24, 183-237. The text was recently reproduced in S. Oliviero, *La scuola media unica: un accidentato iter legislativo*, Firenze, Centro Editoriale Toscano, 2007, pp. 123-136, 150-201.

⁷⁷ See C. Covato, L. Silvestri, *Itinerari pedagogici del marxismo italiano e il contributo di Mario Alighiero Manacorda nel secondo dopoguerra*, in C. Covato, C. Meta, M. Ridolfi (edd.), *Educazione e politica nell'Italia repubblicana*, Roma, Roma TrE-Press, 2023, pp. 144-148.

⁷⁸ M.A. Manacorda, *Nascita e crescita della scuola media*, in G. Cives (ed.), *La scuola di base. Continuità e integrazione*, Scandicci, La Nuova Italia, 1986, p. 49.

finally found its legislative outlet in Law no. 1859 of 1962, although it did not include many aspects of the previous Communist proposal⁷⁹.

His second commitment was his work at the journal «Riforma della Scuola»⁸⁰, which had been founded in 1955 at the behest of Mario Alicata and entrusted to the editorship of Lucio Lombardo Radice and Mario Spinella (who were joined by Dina Bertoni Jovine in 1956). This job was initially an occasional collaboration, but then it became more stable over the years as Manacorda became one of the editors of the magazine (1964-1984). Just as the work for Bill 359 even this context became an opportunity for Manacorda to explore the question of Marxist pedagogy from the point of view of school policy, but not yet from a purely theoretical perspective⁸¹.

1.3 *The works on Marx, Engels and Gramsci: the characteristics of Manacorda's Marxist pedagogy*

Active and prominent militancy in the PCI's various areas of school policy will make Manacorda develop the need to move on to a genuine theoretical study of the ideas of the classics of Marxism on education: that is, according to the categories used above, to move from the «pedagogical politics of the communists» to «pedagogical Marxism».

The opportunity to systematise the study of Marxist pedagogy from a philological point of view was given to Manacorda when the publisher Armando Armando of Rome asked him to publish an anthology on Marxism and education⁸². Three volumes were published between 1964 and 1966 under the title *Il marxismo e l'educazione*.

After completing the documentary research, in 1966 Manacorda printed the first Italian post-war text on Marxist pedagogy: *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*⁸³. Through this work, Manacorda explores Marxist pedagogy from its root, «Marxian pedagogy» (i.e. inherent in Marx's works alone and not in those of his epigones), highlighting what distinguishes it from other pedagogies.

In particular, Manacorda argues that in Marx's works it is possible not only to trace various pedagogical issues (such as the problem of child labour⁸⁴; the

⁷⁹ See L. Saragnese, *I comunisti e la scuola. La politica scolastica del Partito comunista italiano, dalla Liberazione al Congresso di Rimini (1945-1991)*, Roma, Red Star Press, 2022, pp. 130-131.

⁸⁰ See P. Cardoni, «Riforma della scuola»: appunti per un difficile bilancio, in Semeraro (ed.), *L'educazione dell'uomo completo. Scritti in onore di Mario Alighiero Manacorda*, cit., pp. 226-260; M. Lichtener, *Riforma della scuola. Il ruolo di una rivista*, in L. Berlinguer (ed.), *Il PCI e la scuola. Riflessioni e testimonianze di alcuni protagonisti*, Roma, Anicia, 2021, pp. 75-110.

⁸¹ See Covato, *L'itinerario pedagogico del marxismo italiano. Nuova edizione*, cit., p. 75.

⁸² M.A. Manacorda, *Al lettore*, in Id., *Marx e l'educazione*, Roma, Armando, 2008, p. 14.

⁸³ Id., *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1966.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 76-79.

relationship of the school with the State, the government and the Church⁸⁵; the content of schooling⁸⁶; the demand for universality and gratuitousness of education⁸⁷), but also a broader pedagogical principle that connects them all together. This principle can be formulated schematically as follows: the union of school education and productive factory work, in order to form the «omnilateral man»⁸⁸ (in German *allseitig*), who is «fully developed» (in German *total entwickelt*) both in terms of intellectual capabilities (thanks to school education) and in terms of productive capabilities (thanks to factory work)⁸⁹.

According to Manacorda, Marx opposes this pedagogical project to the nefarious effects caused by the division of labour and the relative division of education between the dominant classes, who benefit from schooling, and the subaltern classes, who are formed through apprenticeship in the factory. These effects can be summarised as the «one-sided»⁹⁰, i.e. partial, development of the capacities of human beings of all social classes. «In this way – Manacorda writes – pedagogy is the form and the method for the reunification of the human being with labour, in contrast to a labour which divided the human being»⁹¹.

For Manacorda, this recomposition of the divided man and divided humanity marks the distance between Marx and traditional pedagogies, which instead justify the division of education on the basis of the division of labour, in line with Plato⁹². However, what distinguishes Marxian pedagogy from the perspective of combining education and factory work conceived by Robert Owen and criticised by Marx as utopian?

To clarify the difference between the two authors, Manacorda places *Capital* at the centre of his interpretation of Marxian pedagogy. While Owen posits the solution of the education-work union as a «moral» instance⁹³, Marx in *Capital*:

dialectically brings out [...] the objective need for versatility and, hence, omnilaterality from the division of labour: in Marx, therefore, there is no brain contrivance of the individual reformer, but the realisation that “big industry, with its own catastrophes, modern industry, on the other hand, through its catastrophes imposes the necessity of recognising, as a fundamental law of production, variation of work, consequently fitness of the labourer for varied work, consequently the greatest possible development of his varied aptitudes.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 83-85.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 85-94.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸⁸ On the use of this term in Marx's works, see: *Ibid.*, pp. 64-71; Id., *Quel vecchio liberale del comunista Karl Marx*, Roma-Reggio Emilia, Alberti Editore, 2012.

⁸⁹ See Id., *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, cit., p. 97.

⁹⁰ Sull'uso di questo termine nelle opere marxiane, cfr. *ivi*, pp. 54-60.

⁹¹ Id., *Il marxismo e l'educazione. (Testi e documenti: 1843-1964). Primo volume. I classici: Marx, Engels, Lenin*, Roma, Armando Armando, 1964, p. 9.

⁹² Id., *Momenti di storia della pedagogia*, cit., p. 30.

⁹³ Id., *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, cit., p. 151.

It becomes a question of life and death for society to adapt the mode of production to the normal functioning of this law”⁹⁴.

From an educational perspective, according to Manacorda, Marx understands that this new type of industrial development in nineteenth-century England no longer needs workers trained «unilaterally», for a single, specialised function, as in the past. On the contrary, it requires workers trained «omnilaterally» so that they are able to switch from one branch of production to another according to the needs imparted to the production system by technological changes or the demands of the consumer market⁹⁵. To obtain this type of worker, a new type of education must necessarily be given: the «theoretical and practical technological education» aimed at «[...] embracing, *omnilaterally*, the scientific foundations of all production processes and the practical aspects of all trades»⁹⁶.

However, in opposition to the economistic interpretations on Marx, Manacorda proposes a «humanistic interpretation»⁹⁷, according to which in Marx the human being is not totally configured by his own labour⁹⁸. Therefore, according to Manacorda, the Marxian concept of omnilaterality cannot be limited to the sphere of productive labour, defined by Marx as the «realm of necessity», but must also extend to the field of consumption and spiritual enjoyment, i.e. the «realm of freedom»⁹⁹. Thus, Marxian pedagogy, while taking technological education as its foundation, cannot be reduced to this, but it must be «omnilateral», implying – Marx writes – «three things. Firstly: Mental education. Secondly: Bodily education [...]. Thirdly: Technological training»¹⁰⁰.

After 1966, Manacorda’s studies on Marxist pedagogy were characterised by a gradual abandonment of the international perspective in favour of research into the stages of what could be called the «Italian way» to Marxist pedagogy. This is not a declared research programme on Manacorda’s part, but it can be assumed that there is a common thread linking Manacorda’s studies on Marx’s pedagogy in the 1960s with his work on Antonio Gramsci’s pedagogy in the 1970s and with the organisation of the course of ten lectures on *Il Pci e la scuola* between 1979 and 1980 at the Istituto Gramsci in Rome¹⁰¹.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.* In the last part of the text Manacorda quotes Marx’s *Capital*, which has been quoted here following the English translation of K. Marx, *Capital*, in K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected works*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1996, Vol. 35, p. 490.

⁹⁵ Manacorda, *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, cit., p. 18.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁹⁷ *Id.*, *Al lettore*, cit., p. 14.

⁹⁸ *Id.*, *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, cit., p. 136.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 43-52, 66.

¹⁰⁰ K. Marx, *Instructions for the delegates of the provisional general council. The different questions*, in K. Marx, F. Engels, *Collected Works*, London, Lawrence and Wishart, 1985, Vol. 20, p. 189.

¹⁰¹ Only three of the ten lectures delivered at the Gramsci Institute were published: M.A. Manacorda, *Pedagogia e politica scolastica del Pci dalle origini alla Liberazione*, «Critica

The pivot of this «Italian way» is Gramsci's pedagogy, to which Manacorda dedicated two works in the 1970s: *Il principio educativo in Gramsci. Americanismo e conformismo*¹⁰² and the annotated anthology *L'alternativa pedagogica*¹⁰³. Thanks to his meeting with Antonio Gerratana¹⁰⁴ and access to the latter's preparatory work on the new critical edition of the *Quaderni del carcere*¹⁰⁵, Manacorda was able to deepen his knowledge of Gramsci's pedagogy, advancing a diachronic¹⁰⁶ rather than thematic¹⁰⁷ interpretation of it for the first time ever¹⁰⁸.

In 2017 Massimo Baldacci, in *Oltra la subaltermità. Praxis e educazione in Gramsci*, provided an excellent general critical reconstruction of Manacorda's interpretation of Gramsci's pedagogy, devoting a special paragraph to the topic¹⁰⁹. In the following pages the analysis will focus on some specific aspects of this interpretation, relating to its historical genesis, rather than on the value of Manacorda's interpretation, comparing it with the most recent studies on Gramsci's pedagogy. In particular, the thesis to be supported is as follows: Manacorda interprets Gramsci's pedagogy in strong continuity with that of Marx with the aim of (re)constructing the path from the pedagogical texts of Marx and Engels to the school policy of the PCI in the 1960s and 1970s via Gramsci, i.e. with the aim of outlining an «Italian way to Marxist pedagogy».

It is Manacorda himself who reveals the Marxian genealogy of his interpretation of Gramsci:

[...] having already studied Marx's pedagogical thought [...] I shifted all my research [on Gramsci] to the relationship between intellectual and industrial work, which, by bringing pedagogy back to the whole of social life, allowed me to read his pedagogical themes in a new light, as a coherent development of the Marxist tradition¹¹⁰.

marxista», n. 6, 1980, pp. 154-175; G. Bini, *La politica scolastica del Pci dal 1945 al 1947. Gli orientamenti generali*, «Critica marxista», n. 4, 1981, pp. 163-185; A. Semeraro, *Il Pci e la scuola dal dopoguerra al sessantotto*, «Critica marxista», n. 1, 1982, pp. 145-166.

¹⁰² Id., *Il principio educativo in Gramsci. Americanismo e conformismo*, Roma, Armando Armando, 1970.

¹⁰³ A. Gramsci, *L'alternativa pedagogica*, anthology ed. by M.A. Manacorda, Firenze, La Nuova Italia, 1972.

¹⁰⁴ Manacorda, *Dall'editoria di partito alle discussioni sui Quaderni*, cit., p. 36.

¹⁰⁵ A. Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, Istituto Gramsci critical edition, ed. by V. Gerratana, 4 voll., Torino, Giulio Einaudi editore, 1975.

¹⁰⁶ Manacorda, *Il principio educativo in Gramsci. Americanismo e conformismo*, ed. by D. Santarone, Roma, Armando, 2015² [1970], p. 18.

¹⁰⁷ G. Urbani, *Egemonia e pedagogia nel pensiero di Antonio Gramsci*, in A. Gramsci, *La formazione dell'uomo. Scritti di pedagogia*, ed. by G. Urbani, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1967, pp. 13-70.

¹⁰⁸ Baldacci, *Oltre la subaltermità. Praxis e educazione in Gramsci*, cit., p. 90.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 90-127.

¹¹⁰ M.A. Manacorda, *Prefazione 2 giugno 2012*, in A. Gramsci, *L'alternativa pedagogica*, anthology ed. by M.A. Manacorda, Roma, Editori Riuniti university press, 2012² [1972], p. 9.

Furthermore, Gramsci shares with Marx not only the combination of education (intellectual work) and work (industrial work), but also the goal to be achieved: the «omnilateral» man. Although Gramsci does not use this term, according to Manacorda the Sardinian intellectual refers to it several times in his writings through other expressions¹¹¹. Finally, as in Marx, in Gramsci this concept does not risk being idealistic or utopian because it is closely (and Marxistically) linked to «the whole of industrial labour and social relations»¹¹², i.e. to the concept of «industrialism»:

As for Marx, accused of economicism and vulgar materialism, I had to vindicate his strong humanistic inspiration [...], [on the contrary] for Gramsci, often interpreted as a Crocian idealist and embodied in the liberal system of thought, I must make an inverse argument, claiming the concrete, earthly, [...] materialistic and Marxist character of his reflection¹¹³.

2. *The history of education*

2.1 *From theoretical Marxism to the social historiography of education*

After the publication of *Marx e la pedagogia moderna* in 1966, Manacorda began his involvement in the academic world, where he worked for about a decade, from 1967 to 1978, at the universities of Cagliari, Viterbo, Siena, Florence and Rome¹¹⁴.

In a short paper entitled *Perché ho lasciato l'università*, retracing the motivations that had previously led him to academia and especially to the study of the history of pedagogy, Manacorda recounts: «after more than a quarter of a century of political and associative militancy, I felt 'overloaded with contemporaneity', and wanted to dive back into history»¹¹⁵.

This statement, however, should be interpreted neither as a definitive move from the world of Marxist pedagogical theory to that of historiography, nor as a renunciation of militant commitment in the ranks of the PCI in favour of the study of history as an end in itself. On the contrary, throughout the 1970s, Manacorda was engaged in the communist debate for the secondary school

¹¹¹ Id., *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, cit., pp. 121-123.

¹¹² Manacorda, *Prefazione* 2 giugno 2012, cit., p. 10.

¹¹³ Id., *Perché non posso non dirti comunista. Una grande utopia che non può morire*, *Prefazione* by D. Santarone, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 2014⁴ [1997], pp. 81-82.

¹¹⁴ C. Cardoni (ed.), *Nota bio-bibliografica*, in Semeraro (ed.), *L'educazione dell'uomo completo. Scritti in onore di Mario Alighiero Manacorda*, cit., p. 352.

¹¹⁵ M.A. Manacorda, *Perché ho lasciato l'università*, in *Fra le carte di Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Antologia di documenti*, ed. by C. Meta, L. Silvestri, in Covato, Meta (edd.), *Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Un intellettuale militante tra storia, pedagogia e politica*, cit., p. 134.

reform, seeking to implement the principles of Marxist pedagogy conceptualised in the previous decade¹¹⁶.

The presence of Manacorda on the commission chaired by Oddo Biasini in 1971¹¹⁷ and his bibliography production are the proof of his commitment: *Riforma e democrazia nella scuola* (1973)¹¹⁸; *Per la riforma della scuola secondaria* (1976)¹¹⁹; *La scuola degli adolescenti* (1979)¹²⁰, in whose introduction he clearly reaffirms his Marxist approach at a time marked by the beginning of the crisis of theoretical and real Marxism¹²¹.

It is therefore clear that Manacorda, by “diving” into history, does not renounce the present and does not repudiate either his political commitment or his Marxist approach. On the contrary, he enriches all these elements through the cultural richness present in history. This change will allow his own reflection on Marxist pedagogy to experience a new phase of development, no longer just as political militancy and theory, but as an instrument of historiographic research:

I soon discovered that the terms of Marxian and Gramscian discourse were eternal, that they could be found at the very origins of pedagogical reflection [...]. This continuity of the terms of the pedagogical discourse, even in opposing solutions, firmly linked the present to the past, the immediate pedagogical militia to cultural understanding and, *giving historical depth to my commitment as a contemporary*, added the comforting feeling of always remaining on the same ground of research and struggle¹²².

However, Manacorda soon realises that the history of education in Italy is dominated by «pedagogical pedagogy», i.e. by a pedagogical conception that «considers the history of education as the history of ideas, claiming that it stems from the minds of pedagogues or – at most – from the will of governments, rather than from real social relations»¹²³. This method suffers

¹¹⁶ A. Semeraro, *Il sistema scolastico italiano. Un profilo storico*, Roma, Carocci, 1996, pp. 183-184.

¹¹⁷ M.A. Manacorda, *La scuola degli adolescenti. Dieci anni di ricerche e dibattiti sulla riforma dell'istruzione secondaria*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1979, pp. 66-67.

¹¹⁸ G. Chiarante, M.A. Manacorda, G. Napolitano, M. Raicich, M. Rodano, *Riforma e democrazia nella scuola*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1973.

¹¹⁹ M.A. Manacorda, *Per la riforma della scuola secondaria. In appendice il testo della proposta di legge comunista per il riordinamento della scuola secondaria superiore*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1976.

¹²⁰ Id., *La scuola degli adolescenti. Dieci anni di ricerche e dibattiti sulla riforma dell'istruzione secondaria*, cit.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. VII. For a general overview on this topic see G. Vacca (ed.), *La crisi del soggetto. Marxismo e filosofia in Italia negli anni Settanta e Ottanta*, Roma, Carocci, 2015.

¹²² Manacorda, *Per una pedagogia dell'uomo integrale*, «Critica marxista», n. 4-5, 1977, p. 148 (italics are not in the original text).

¹²³ M.A. Manacorda, “Momenti di storia della pedagogia”, *Torino, Loescher* 1977, pp. 274, L. 3.800. *Dialogo con l'autore*, ed. by R. Maragliano, «Riforma della Scuola», n. 10, 1977, p. 33.

from the influence of Giovanni Gentile¹²⁴ and merely reconstructs the history of the ideas of philosophers and pedagogues. In contrast with this idealistic approach, Manacorda sustains that:

[...] the pedagogical matter is always social, as it tends to consider as subjects of education the various figures of those being educated, [...] users and producers, on the one hand, and to investigate the position that all those involved in education occupy in the various societies of history, on the other hand. It is also a political matter, which gives an account [...] of the dominant-dominated relationship. Precisely for this reason, even the everyday, technical and material aspects of the processes of education (the place, the tools, the organization, the pedagogical relationship itself) [...] take on greater importance¹²⁵.

Thanks to this point of view, Manacorda became one of the protagonists of the historiographical battle that would produce a paradigmatic shift from the history of pedagogy to the social history of education in Italy between the late 1970s and the 1980s¹²⁶.

There has been much discussion about the various international contributions that created the conditions for the emergence of this historiographical revolution¹²⁷. Regarding Manacorda's approach to the social history of education, at least three specific factors can be hypothesised which call into question the author's peculiar intellectual biography rather than the international context.

The first factor concerns the *Storia della scuola in Italia* written by Giuseppe Manacorda in 1914¹²⁸. Mario Alighiero particularly cares about this work, so much so that he committed himself to its republication in 1980¹²⁹. Although it cannot be considered as an anticipation of the social historiography of education, it is particularly avant-garde¹³⁰ because it distances itself from an idealistic historiography, which is all about reconstructing the history of schooling from pedagogical ideas¹³¹. In fact, Giuseppe Manacorda dedicates attention to the legal plane of laws and the cultural plane of actual life in the

¹²⁴ A. Santoni Rugiu, *Storia sociale dell'educazione*, Milano, Principato editore, 1979, p. V.

¹²⁵ M.A. Manacorda, *Storia dell'educazione dall'antichità a oggi*, Torino, ERI/Edizioni Rai Radiotelevisione Italiana, 1983, pp. 8-9.

¹²⁶ See F. Cambi, *La ricerca storico-educativa in Italia. 1945-1990*, Milano, Mursia, 1992, pp. 37-38.

¹²⁷ For an attempt to summarise the various influences that contributed to this historiographical turn, see: Id., *La storia sociale dell'educazione: modelli e problemi*, «Studi sulla formazione», n. 1, 2004, p. 16; A. Giallongo, *Paradigmi nella storia sociale dell'educazione oggi in Italia*, «Studi sulla formazione», n. 1, 2004, pp. 53-56.

¹²⁸ Manacorda, *Storia della scuola in Italia. Vol. I: il Medio Evo*, cit.

¹²⁹ Id., *Storia della scuola in Italia. Il Medio Evo*, cit.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. VII. See also: Cambi, *La ricerca storico-educativa in Italia. 1945-1990*, cit., pp. 37-38.

¹³¹ Manacorda, *Storia della scuola in Italia. Il Medio Evo*, cit., Vol. I, p. IX.

school (the «search of the school itself, indeed of the inside of the school, spying on its life, methods, customs»¹³²).

The works of Marx are the second factor which contributes to Manacorda's elaboration of the social history of education. These works are the explicit *ubi consistam* (or even «the hermeneutic nucleus») of Manacorda's historiographical revolution¹³³:

I will only say that in Marx, in a context not strictly pedagogical, I found the first indications for a possible theoretical and historical re-foundation of pedagogy. It was not only a matter of some directly pedagogical cues, although precise and suggestive, – such as the union of education and work, the perspective of omnilaterality –, it was above all a matter of the general approach to anthropological and educational problems¹³⁴.

In virtue of the “spiral” structure that characterises Manacorda's thought, in which past themes are always intertwined with subsequent ones (see *Introduction*), one can understand Manacorda's “general approach” to Marx by examining a passage from *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*. In this work, Manacorda clearly defines Marx's approach as an «anti-ideological research method» in that:

The history of human society, observed above all where there is a possibility of its scientific investigation, i.e. in its basic structures – productive forces and relations of production [...] – is the concrete ground on which he [Marx] always moves¹³⁵.

Just as Marx had opposed his method to the idealistic method of the Hegelians of his time, who claimed to reduce «history to a purely conscientious or ideal becoming»¹³⁶, in the same way Manacorda finds in Marx and in his anti-ideological method the strategy to subvert the Italian historiography of «pedagogical pedagogy», for long substantiated by the neo-idealism of Giovanni Gentile.

Finally, the third factor that affected the elaboration of the social historiography of education in Manacorda is related to the Gramscian idea that the pedagogical relationship «should not be restricted to the field of the strictly ‘scholastic’ relationships [...]. This form of relationship exists throughout society as a whole»¹³⁷. Therefore, if education acts within the whole of society,

¹³² *Ibid.*

¹³³ See L. Silvestri, *Marx e Engels: il filo rosso della biografia intellettuale di Mario Alighiero Manacorda*, in A. Cinzia, C. La Rocca (ed.), *La serie del dottorato TRES*, Roma, Roma TrE-Press, 2022, pp. 151-152.

¹³⁴ Manacorda, *Per una pedagogia dell'uomo integrale*, cit., p. 148.

¹³⁵ *Id.*, *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, cit., p. 98.

¹³⁶ G. Bedeschi, *Introduzione a Marx*, Roma-Bari, Laterza, 1981, pp. 78-79.

¹³⁷ A. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, n. 10, §44, in *Id.*, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Q. Hoare and G. Nowell Smith, New York, International Publisher, 1971, p. 350.

as Gramsci argues, then it follows that one must account for the formation of men not only from the history of pedagogical ideas and schools, but by analysing all the educational elements present in society¹³⁸.

2.2 Sources and works of Manacorda's historiography

Turning now to analysing the specific contributions made by Manacorda in the field of educational history, attention will be focused on his four most systematic works, in which the author set out to reconstruct not a single period and a single theme in the history of education, but its entire development, from antiquity to the contemporary age.

In 1977, Loescher published Manacorda's first work on the entire history of education: *Momenti di storia della pedagogia*. Roberto Maragliano, in an interview with Manacorda, puts forward the hypothesis that the text is not entirely ascribable to the social history of education, since there is a difference between the chapters of the book, some of which are related to «social history» and others to the «history of ideas»¹³⁹. Manacorda's response allows us to understand the peculiar relationship that this perspective has with the history of ideas within his historiographic methodology:

Whether this is a social history or a history of ideas, I just don't know, since ideas are also a product of society: both as 'ideologies' that, illuding themselves about the naturalness and eternity of their society, idealise and justify all its aspects and processes, and when they come to see their historical conditioning and present contradictions, and thus also to glimpse at possible future developments. [...] All my effort is to confront ideas with society¹⁴⁰.

In 1983 Manacorda published for ERI editions *Storia dell'educazione dall'antichità ad oggi*¹⁴¹, in which it is worth highlighting the two most peculiar aspects. The first concerns the title, in which the term «pedagogy», still used in *Momenti di storia della pedagogia*, was replaced a few years later by the term «education». This is a linguistic shift that, according to Angela Giallongo, is common to the entire world of historiography that embraces «the consequent multiple social dimensions» of education¹⁴². However, as in his 1977 work,

¹³⁸ See Silvestri, *Per una bibliografia di Mario Alighiero Manacorda: monografie, traduzioni e curatele*, cit., p. 110.

¹³⁹ M.A. Manacorda, «*Momenti di storia della pedagogia*», Torino, Loescher 1977, pp. 274, L. 3.800. *Dialogo con l'autore*, ed. by Maragliano, cit., p. 33.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ Manacorda, *Storia dell'educazione dall'antichità a oggi*, cit.

¹⁴² Giallongo, *Paradigmi nella storia sociale dell'educazione oggi in Italia*, cit., p. 51.

Manacorda does not shy away from reconstructing pedagogical thought, emphasising the close link between the history of ideas and social history¹⁴³.

The second peculiar character of the work concerns the use of literature as an historical source. As in every radical historiographical revolution, even in the social history of education, the change in method corresponds to a relative change in sources. Manacorda contributes to this source revolution with his background as a scholar of literature:

[...] to understand how, from age to age, the purpose of education and the educational relationship have been conceived as a function of what exists and of its contradictions; to investigate the widespread opinion on school, in order to verify the prestige granted or denied to the figure of the educator and so on. *For these [purposes], literature* (the literature of the literati, I mean) *can revive real relationships and widespread opinions more than the literature of the pedagogues*¹⁴⁴.

After having abandoned the study of literature and linguistics for a long time, in the years following his voluntary exoneration from university in November 1978¹⁴⁵, Manacorda returned to his youthful interests, publishing between 1979 and 1986: *Storia della letteratura italiana per saggi* by Ugo Foscolo¹⁴⁶; *Il linguaggio televisivo, ovvero la folle anadiplosi*¹⁴⁷; *I segreti dell'italiano: testi e giochi linguistici* in the volume *Parola mia* by Luciano Rispoli¹⁴⁸. It is therefore no coincidence that in the same years he published *Storia dell'educazione dall'antichità ad oggi*, in which he finally succeeded in reconciling his old literary passion with the study of education.

In 1992, Manacorda's pioneering work entitled *Storia illustrata dell'educazione. Dall'antico Egitto ai giorni nostri* was published by Giunti¹⁴⁹. Manacorda states that, in order to reconstruct education in all its aspects, it is necessary to place non-written or material evidence, i.e. iconographic sources, alongside traditional written sources¹⁵⁰. However, unlike historians who had used iconographic sources in the past, according to Manacorda:

¹⁴³ Manacorda, *Storia dell'educazione dall'antichità a oggi*, cit., p. 9.

¹⁴⁴ Manacorda, *Storia dell'educazione dall'antichità a oggi*, cit., p. 9 (italics are not in the original text).

¹⁴⁵ Id., *Perché ho lasciato l'università*, cit., p. 136.

¹⁴⁶ U. Foscolo, *Storia della letteratura italiana per saggi*, ed. by M.A. Manacorda, Torino, Einaudi, 1979. On this topic, see D. Santarone, *Il Foscolo critico di Mario Alighiero Manacorda*, in Covato, Meta (edd.), *Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Un intellettuale militante tra storia, pedagogia e politica*, cit., pp. 81-92.

¹⁴⁷ M.A. Manacorda, *Il linguaggio televisivo, ovvero la folle anadiplosi*, Roma, Editore Armando Armando, 1980.

¹⁴⁸ [Id.], *I segreti dell'italiano: testi e giochi linguistici*, in L. Rispoli, *Parola mia*, Torino, Eri-Edizioni Rai, 1986, pp. 31-238.

¹⁴⁹ Id., *Storia illustrata dell'educazione. Dall'antico Egitto ai giorni nostri*, Firenze, Giunti, 1992.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

For an illustrated story to be described as such, it must not only have many illustrations alongside its narrative (and its documents), but these illustrations must also be used as a source of equal value. [...] All this [iconographical] material is used to-date only for illustrative purposes and it has a secondary role in the traditional historical method, [but] it can [...] also to be used as the primary narrative as it speaks mostly of what it represents and not of what is narrated elsewhere¹⁵¹.

Finally, in 1997 Manacorda published *Storia dell'educazione*¹⁵², which was a more agile and updated version of his 1983 history of education, for the TEN series *Il sapere. Enciclopedia tascabile*.

3. *Laicity and Sport*

3.1 *Laicity*

The themes of laicity and of the relationship between laicity and schooling are present from the outset in Manacorda's intellectual biography. Evidence of this can be found in the articles he wrote against Guido Gonella's school policy for the monthly «Rinascita»¹⁵³ and in his commitment to associationism between the late 1940s and the first half of the 1960s in the ADSN (*Associazione Difesa Scuola Nazionale*) e in the ADESSPI (*Associazione Difesa E Sviluppo Scuola Pubblica Italiana*)¹⁵⁴.

1966 is a turning point in Manacorda's biography. The end of the ADESSPI, the publication of *Marx e la pedagogia moderna* and the subsequent entry into the academic world constitute a conjuncture that, as has been shown in the previous chapters, will lead Manacorda towards research paths not strictly linked to the theme of laicity.

As anticipated in the *Introduction*, the spiral structure of Manacorda's intellectual biography clarifies how the theme of laicity expressed *in nuce* between the 1940s and the 1960s was systematically rethought and reworked in the 1980s and the 1990s. The main reason for the return of this interest is to be found in Manacorda's battle against the new 1984 Concordat between Church and State (Law No. 121 of 1985).

For Manacorda these years within the PCI were difficult, so much so that in a private letter to his friend Ignacio Márquez Rodiles he stated: «Since 1968, I had definitively broken with the USSR, and since 1980, I had not renewed my PCI membership, but without saying so, so as not to bring water to the mill

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵² *Id.*, *Storia dell'educazione*, Roma, Tascabili Economici Newton, 1997.

¹⁵³ See Sorgonà, *Mario Alighiero Manacorda e la politica culturale del Pci*, cit., pp. 59-60.

¹⁵⁴ See *L'intervista*, ed. by Semeraro, cit., pp. 323-325.

of the opponents»¹⁵⁵. Laicity was among the reasons for the contrast with the party because Manacorda considered the value of laicity seriously questioned when the PCI majority voted in favour of Law No. 121 of 1985.

Manacorda's political isolation continued even after the dissolution of the PCI in 1991¹⁵⁶. In this political context, Manacorda decided to act outside the party lines as early as 1988, signing and promoting with other intellectuals an anti-conscription appeal, around which the *Carta 89* movement was formed¹⁵⁷. The aim was to demand the abolition of the concordat regime in the name of freedom and democracy, demonstrating the incompatibility of this regime with the Italian Constitution.

During this battle, Manacorda published his most systematic works on laicity: the first two editions of *Lettura laica della Bibbia*¹⁵⁸ and *Stato e chiese*¹⁵⁹, co-edited by Marcello Vigli and Gianni Long.

Meanwhile, the 1984 Concordat was not abolished and the PDS (Partito Democratico della Sinistra, Democratic Left Party), which was the most important left-wing party after the dissolution of the PCI, took the document *Una nuova idea per la scuola*¹⁶⁰ as a theoretical reference point for its school policy. The document marked the overcoming of the historical distinction between «state school» and «private school», subsuming both concepts under the more comprehensive concept of «public school».

The new work *Scuola pubblica o privata? La questione scolastica tra Stato e Chiesa*¹⁶¹, which Manacorda wrote in 1999, is closely linked to the debate described so far. It is clear that through the disjunctive question in the title Manacorda wants to emphasise the clear opposition between the concepts of “public school” and “private school” and that he wants to counter the new semanticisation of the two terms advanced by the supporters of *Una nuova idea di scuola*.

This work is followed by the publications of: *Le ombre di Wojtyla*¹⁶², that Manacorda wrote together with Giovanni Franzoni; *Cristianità o Europa?*

¹⁵⁵ Manacorda, *Lettera a Nacho e Naya, 8 settembre 1989*, in *Fra le carte di Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Antologia di documenti*, ed. by Meta, Silvestri, cit., p. 178.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 179.

¹⁵⁷ *Appello di Carta 89*, «il manifesto», 18 febbraio 1989.

¹⁵⁸ M.A. Manacorda, *Lettura laica della Bibbia*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1989 e 1996².

¹⁵⁹ M.A. Manacorda, M. Vigli, G. Long (edd.), *Stato e chiese: il potere clericale in Italia dopo il “nuovo Concordato” del 1984 tra Craxi e Wojtyla*, Viterbo, Stampa Alternativa, 1995.

¹⁶⁰ *Una nuova idea per la scuola. Un sistema formativo pluralistico e flessibile caratterizzato da efficienza ed equità*, «Il Regno/Attualità», n. 16, 1994, p. 467.

¹⁶¹ Manacorda, *Scuola pubblica o privata? La questione scolastica tra Stato e Chiesa*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1999.

¹⁶² *Id.*, G. Franzoni, *Le ombre di Wojtyla*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1999.

*Come il cristianesimo salì al potere*¹⁶³; the third edition of *Lettura laica della Bibbia*¹⁶⁴.

Until this point the biographical and political course of Manacorda's laicity has been traced, but the issue of the theoretical origins of his approach must still be addressed. Despite the fact that the PCI did not advocate a markedly Marxist position on education and laicity during the Constituent Assembly¹⁶⁵, Manacorda emphasised the relevance of Marx in his reflection on this topic¹⁶⁶.

The first point that Manacorda has in common with Marx is the hostility against all forms of state religion, as well as all forms of state atheism, and the defence of the liberal principle of freedom of conscience¹⁶⁷. The second point in common between the two authors concerns the issue of laicity in schools. It is Manacorda himself who highlights and subscribes to the distinction between State and government that Marx advances to support the autonomy of state education from both the power of government rulers and the power of the church¹⁶⁸. In Manacorda's opinion, this conceptual assumption of Marx is neglected by both liberal-democratic regimes like Italy and socialist regimes like the USSR¹⁶⁹. On the one hand, liberals and clerics in democratic regimes deplore state schools accusing them of repressing the freedom of education; on the other hand, socialist regimes advocate or implement a «proletarian state school as an ideologically qualified school»¹⁷⁰. Although their outcomes differ, both perspectives start from the same (and, according to Manacorda, erroneous) assumption: the state school cannot be autonomous and must necessarily be assimilated into the government's ideology.

Yet, if the connection between Marx and Manacorda on the religious question was limited to these aspects, we would be doing a disservice to both. The result would be a portrait of liberal figures which omits their Marxist approach to religion: the searching for a «greater freedom»¹⁷¹ than the formal freedom advanced by liberal thinkers through the religious concept of «freedom of conscience».

According to Manacorda, the limit of formal freedom of conscience is too often conditioned by political power. This is demonstrated by the fact that even in the 21st century «the majority of humanity's religious consciences follows

¹⁶³ M.A. Manacorda, *Cristianità o Europa? Come il cristianesimo salì al potere*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 2003.

¹⁶⁴ Id., *Lettura laica della Bibbia*, Roma, Editori Riuniti University Press, 2012³ [1989].

¹⁶⁵ Id., *Nascita della laicità*, in A.M. Marengo (ed.), *Laicità: una sfida per il terzo millennio*, Lecce, Argo, 1995, p. 36; Id., *Cattolici, marxisti, laici nella Costituente*, in O. Petrelli (ed.), *Educazione, scuola e Costituzione*, Roma, Euroma-La Goliardica, 1991, p. 65.

¹⁶⁶ Id., *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, Roma, Editori Riuniti, 1966, p. 83.

¹⁶⁷ Id., *Quel vecchio liberale del comunista Karl Marx*, cit., pp. 157-160.

¹⁶⁸ Id., *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, cit., p. 83.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Id., *Quel vecchio liberale del comunista Karl Marx*, cit., p. 159.

religions according to the geo-political situation, so that generally it is true that *Cuius regio eius et religio*, religion is diversified according to states»¹⁷². Consequently, it is legitimate to ask: what remains of freedom of conscience, if it is clear that social and political reality has a decisive (though not deterministic) influence on the religious choice of every human being?

Despite their common quest for substantial freedom of conscience, it is precisely at this point that Manacorda and Marx take different paths. Laicity represents one of the most explicit cases from which to observe Manacorda's hermeneutic interpretation of Marx's texts. On the one hand, he maintains the aspiration for substantial freedom strongly advocated by Marx; but on the other hand, he rejects the Marxian thesis according to which true religious freedom finds fulfilment in the «freedom from religion». In opposition to Marx, Manacorda advances two arguments against freeing consciences from the spectre of religion. The first is expressed as follows:

[...] in our hyper-technological and hyper-scientific civilisation, the scientific illusion typical of 19th century positivism, according to which science would make religion disappear, seems long gone. In reality, the progress of science is infinite in itself, [...] it discovers new fields of investigation, [...] new mysteries to be investigated: and so in human minds the mystery always remains, experienced as reality, that is as a fetish, a convenient and simplifying response of religion¹⁷³.

The second argument presented by Manacorda is also based on anthropological findings: «It is true, on the other hand, that human beings are not pure reason, but also affectivity and feeling, without which reason has no drive, which requires its part even against reason, which cannot know everything»¹⁷⁴.

So how can substantial freedom of religious conscience be achieved? Manacorda best theorised his response to this question in the last paragraph of the essay *Nascita della laicità*, which is dedicated to the pairing of «tolerance and confrontation»¹⁷⁵. In relation to the first of the two terms, Manacorda writes that freedom of conscience can only be free if it is exercised in a State that is not only formally secular (such as Italy) but also substantially, that is in a State that does not financially or legally support any religious denomination or atheistic ideologies¹⁷⁶. In this truly secular State formed by free consciences, absolute tolerance or «peaceful coexistence between different ideologies» would reign¹⁷⁷.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 160.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁵ *Id.*, *Nascita della laicità*, cit., pp. 41-43.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁷⁷ *Id.*, *Lettera a Nacho e Naya*, 8 settembre 1989, cit., p. 179.

Yet, in the letter to his friend Ignacio Márquez Rodiles, Manacorda states that he cannot be satisfied with this peaceful coexistence or simple tolerance, preferring «an ‘agnostic’ coexistence, that is, an open ideal battle, without state support to anyone»¹⁷⁸, that he calls «confrontation». In fact, as Manacorda testifies with his commitment to politics, associations and publishing, tolerance is the necessary but not sufficient condition for substantial freedom of conscience, which must be realised through an active confrontation with the world. Using categories borrowed from political philosophy, it could be said that Manacorda places a «positive liberty», that is a conscience “free to” pour itself into the world and actively operate in it, alongside the «negative liberty», that is a conscience “free from” external interference, guaranteed by the secular state¹⁷⁹.

The goal of this substantially free consciousness will be the realisation of what is common between believers and non-believers, namely the «common human feeling»¹⁸⁰. This human feeling consists in the values «of democracy, solidarity, justice, tolerance, the right to work and health, support for the peoples of the third and fourth worlds, the fight against racism, the defence of peace, the protection of the planet, the humane use of science»¹⁸¹, which are at the same time the presupposition and realisation of the true freedom of conscience.

3.2 *Sport*

3.2.1 *Three thousand years of sport*

The major topic that emerges from the last years of Manacorda’s intellectual biography is sport, that is physical education. However, the climax of Manacorda’s reflection on physical education is not the product of an interest born *ex abrupto* on the threshold of 2000, but it is preceded by significant biographical and theoretical episodes.

Manacorda had always had a passion for physical education and practiced sports from his youth¹⁸² to an advanced age¹⁸³. This passion soon became a reason for theoretical and historical reflection for him, as he noted that physical

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ On the use of the two categories by Marx, see S. Petrucciani, *Marx in dieci parole*, Roma, Carocci, 2020, pp. 65-74.

¹⁸⁰ Manacorda, *Nascita della laicità*, cit., p. 42.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁸² Id., *Minima 36. Una carriera scolastica*, «Riforma della Scuola», n. 12, 1983, p. 17.

¹⁸³ Id., *Lettera a Nacho e Naya*, 8 settembre 1989, cit., p. 179.

education was marginal in relation to intellectual education in contemporary schools:

Already: what is our school today? [...] Is it ever possible that so much care for children is based on an intellectual education [...]? And to train them for what? Of course: to train them to become tomorrow's citizens, increasingly employed in the advanced tertiary sector of a computerised post-industrial society [...] and destined to sit for hours in a white coat in front of an electronic control panel. [...] So, the more you have been in a sedentary school, the more you will have the privilege and comfort of sitting at this sedentary job: oh, beautiful future humanity! Then this human will occasionally try artificial ways of 'sportingly' exercising his body, this strange and superfluous appendage of his brain¹⁸⁴.

Manacorda does not deny that since the nineteenth century an increasing recognition has been given to physical education, both in school and out-of-school facilities. However, in his opinion, not even today is there parity between physical education and intellectual education for at least three reasons.

First, if there was true equality, then the school would (but does not) devote «at least half of the time to leisure and exercises of the body, and the other half to those of the mind»¹⁸⁵. Secondly, to the objection of those who claim that school leaves afternoon time for other extracurricular activities including sports, Manacorda responds through two arguments. First of all, it is precisely the school's necessity to organise adolescents' intellectual time but not their physical time that betrays its conception of physical education as inferior to intellectual education: «for this there are neither the spaces nor the facilities nor the time nor the adults to organise it systematically»¹⁸⁶. Moreover, the increasing care of extracurricular institutions for physical activities produces the risk of reducing physical education to «pure physical or gymnastic performance»¹⁸⁷. On the contrary, the school's aim is not sports competitiveness, but the "disinterested" and basic development of the human person¹⁸⁸. The third and last argument advanced by Manacorda concerns the mentality that still underlies today's society:

the "philosophy" [...] that is behind this improved but still unbalanced situation [regarding physical education] has the pre-eminence of the spirit over the body and intellectuality over physicality as a firm and ancient principle; the corollary of this philosophy is that the spirit or intellect needs education (writing without learning is not possible) while the body can freely grow on its own (no schooling is needed to walk)¹⁸⁹.

¹⁸⁴ Id., *Un sogno appena abbozzato. La scuola come tempo e luogo di vita degli adolescenti*, «Riforma della Scuola», n. 8-9, 1988, p. 8.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

Starting from this political and cultural problem, Manacorda devoted numerous reflections to the topic through essays and articles between the 1980s and 1990s¹⁹⁰, up to the elaboration of a systematic work entitled *Diana e le Muse. Tre millenni di sport nella letteratura*.

To introduce this work, it must be noted that it was published posthumously¹⁹¹ and that only the first two of the four volumes¹⁹² have been published so far compared to the initial publishing plan¹⁹³. A global assessment of the work is therefore impossible, while it may be useful to dwell on the historiographical and methodological aspects that Manacorda had placed at the foundation of the entire project and that are summarised in the note *Al lettore* of the first volume of the work¹⁹⁴.

For this purpose, the title of the work, which Manacorda explains as follows, is already very significant: «Diana and the Muses: the reference to these two emblems, transmitted to us by the ancients and evoked for centuries, signals the unity of physical life and cultural life»¹⁹⁵. Diana, the goddess of hunting and emblem of physical life, and the Muses, deities of the arts and symbol of cultural life, are the terms of an educational ideal elaborated in antiquity and that has animated human history for centuries¹⁹⁶.

Yet this ideal of unity, which is reflected both in the history of education and in literature, that is in the history of culture, has always been forgotten: «The purpose of this research is to testify the inseparability of these two aspects of human history, which are as firmly intertwined in the practice of life as well as in literature as they are separately studied by historiography»¹⁹⁷.

Hence the subtitle of the work, *Tre millenni di sport nella letteratura*, can be considered a veritable historiographical manifesto through which Manacorda

¹⁹⁰ Some of the most important studies include: Id., *La ginnastica di Platone*, «Riforma della Scuola», n. 2, 1984, p. 47; Id., *Un sogno appena abbozzato. La scuola come tempo e luogo di vita degli adolescenti*, cit.; Id., *L'impero dei giochi. Decadenza e caduta dei ludi romani*, «Lancillotto e Nausica», n. 1-3, 1996, pp. 8-17; Id., *L'unità scotomizzata di istruzione e ginnastica*, in A. Semeraro (ed.), *Due secoli di educazione in Italia (XIX-XX). Studi in onore di Antonio Santoni Rugiu*, Scandicci (Firenze), La Nuova Italia, 1998, pp. 97-121; Id., *Le tappe di un'agonia. Ludi imperiali e civiltà cristiana*, «Lancillotto e Nausica», n. 2, 2003, pp. 8-17.

¹⁹¹ R. Frasca, P. Ogliotti, A. Russo, F. Silvestrini, *Prefazione*, in M.A. Manacorda, *Diana e le Muse. Tre millenni di sport nella letteratura. Vol. I: in Grecia e a Roma, Introduzione* by R. Frasca, ed. by di R. Frasca, P. Ogliotti, A. Russo, F. Silvestrini, Roma, Lancillotto e Nausica editrice, 2016, p. XIII.

¹⁹² Manacorda, *Diana e le Muse. Tre millenni di sport nella letteratura. Vol. I: in Grecia e a Roma*, cit.; Id., *Diana e le Muse. Tre millenni di sport nella letteratura. Volume II: Dal Medioevo al Rinascimento*, ed. by R. Frasca, P. Ogliotti, A. Russo, F. Silvestrini, *Introduzione* by F. Silvestrini, Roma, Lancillotto e Nausica editrice, 2019.

¹⁹³ The plan of the work is exposed in Manacorda, *Diana e le Muse. Tre millenni di sport nella letteratura. Vol. I: in Grecia e a Roma*, cit., p. II.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. XIX-XXIX.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. XIX.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. XXIII.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. XIX.

intends to reverse the traditional tendency of historians to deal with either sport (physical life) or literature (cultural life) without ever making the two fields interact. According to Manacorda, this attitude is characteristic not only of traditional historiography, but also of the innovative approaches of the second half of the 20th century such as «Les Annals»¹⁹⁸.

Contrary to what has been done so far, Manacorda proposes to study the history of physical life and its education through literary sources («history, prose, poetry in particular»¹⁹⁹), that is through some of the manifestations par excellence of the cultural and intellectual life of human beings. For Manacorda it would also have been possible to study the history of physical life through other manifestations of human cultural life, such as the history «of philosophy, politics or economics»²⁰⁰. However, the choice of the history of literature sums up the whole essence and existence of Manacorda, who symbolically concludes his research path, that had begun in literature studies in his youth with his dissertation on Foscolo, with this work.

The last aspect to be highlighted is the methodology of research used in this work. *Diana e le Muse* represents the *summa* of what Manacorda had elaborated during his many years of historiographical research. In particular, Manacorda brings together his two major methodological contributions in the field of the history of education: literature (*Storia dell'educazione dall'antichità a oggi*, 1983) and iconography (*Storia illustrata dell'educazione*, 1992) are used again as primary sources, that is they have equal status compared to the sources used by traditional historiography. It is exemplifying that Manacorda reserves only half of each volume of the work for traditional historical accounts, but he dedicates the other half to the anthology of images and literary texts²⁰¹.

3.2.2 *A Marxist appendix on the question of physical education*

According to Manacorda, the unity of Diana and the Muses is the ideal which began in Ancient Greece and has always been an aspiration for humanity. However, this ideal has gone through several periods of oblivion: «[...] this idea of sport as a joint motion of body and soul [...], that was experienced in Greece [...], is an asset that past history has since squandered, but that future history may perhaps revive»²⁰².

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. XXIV.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. XXVII.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. XXIV.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. XXIX (italics are not in the original text).

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 38.

According to Manacorda, Marxist pedagogy should be counted among the moments that anticipate future history and revive the ancient Greek ideal. He points out that physical education in Marxism is a fundamental part of the education of the omnilateral human being, as the following text from Marx demonstrates:

By education we understand three things.

Firstly: Mental education.

Secondly: Bodily education, such as is given in schools of gymnastics, and by military exercise.

Thirdly: Technological training [...] ²⁰³.

For Manacorda, the Greek idea, according to which physical education is a fundamental part of the education of the complete human being, reappears in Marx ²⁰⁴ but in a new light: «The ancient ideal of the complete human being, first thought of as an exclusive possibility for the privileged classes, now reappears as an educational necessity for all, outside of any military destination or gymnastic professionalism» ²⁰⁵.

His interpretation of the text of the Marxist tradition to valorise sport and the mind-body union is in no way neutral or peaceful. As historian Stefano Pivato has well highlighted, both in Italy and in Europe, political parties and human beings inspired by Marxism have often contributed to the determination of an unsportsmanlike culture: in order to valorise the moment of work, they underrated the other formative moments of the omnilateral man ²⁰⁶.

Furthermore, scholar John M. Hoberman denies that Marx had any interest in the concept of game and the related concept of sport, although he had studied the development of sport in the countries of real socialism, as the USSR, the German Democratic Republic and Mao Zedong's China ²⁰⁷.

In *paragraph 1.3*, we have already set out the arguments Manacorda advances against scholars who interpret Marx as advocating the identification of the human being with work. In these pages, instead, it is interesting to consider how Marx's texts are also used by Manacorda as a «hermeneutic nucleus» for the topic of physical education. The first point to clarify is that Marx was certainly among the sources that inspired Manacorda's interest in physical education. In *Marx e la pedagogia moderna* in 1966 Manacorda had already pointed out that «physical education» in Marx is «certainly not secondary in a

²⁰³ Marx, *Instructions for the delegates of the provisional general council. The different questions*, cit., p. 189.

²⁰⁴ Manacorda, *Storia dell'educazione dall'antichità a oggi*, cit., p. 293.

²⁰⁵ Id., *Un sogno appena abbozzato*, cit., pp. 12-13.

²⁰⁶ S. Pivato, *La bicicletta e il sol dell'avvenire. Sport e tempo libero nel socialismo della Belle époque*, Firenze, Ponte alle Grazie, 1992, p. 10.

²⁰⁷ J.M. Hoberman, *Sport and political ideology*, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1984.

system that physically ‘breaks’ and ‘cripples’ the worker, as well as spiritually brutalising him»²⁰⁸.

The second point to highlight is that Marx does not further develop the reflection on physical education. For this reason, Manacorda interprets hermeneutically (that is openly, dynamically) the Marxian concept of physical education. According to him, Marx’s words have no dogmatic value (as in the case of laicity), but they gain meaning in the light of the argumentations and the ideas coming from other cultural systems such as the Greek world of Plato, Giordano Bruno²⁰⁹, the cultural research on *homo ludens* (not only *sapiens*) of Huizinga²¹⁰, and the biological research that «confirms the uniqueness of human nature and the inseparability of the physical and ludic moment from the rational and cultural moment»²¹¹.

Manacorda’s decision to spend the last years of his life writing the history of «three millennia of sport in literature» is linked not only to Marx, but also to other cultural traditions that confirm the importance that Marx gave to physical education.

In this way Mario Alighiero Manacorda’s life ends: with the dream of the omnilateral development of all humanity and the ideal of the «reign of liberty» which is described by Marx with deep perception in the *Capital* (Part III, Chapter X, Section 5): «Time for education, for intellectual development, for the fulfilling of social functions and for social intercourse, for the free-play of his bodily and mental activity, even the rest time of Sunday (and that in a country of Sabbatarians!) – moonshine!»²¹².

²⁰⁸ Manacorda, *Marx e la pedagogia moderna*, cit., p. 16.

²⁰⁹ Id., *Dall’editoria di partito alle discussioni sui Quaderni*, cit., p. 40.

²¹⁰ Id., *Diana e le Muse. Tre millenni di sport nella letteratura. Vol. I: in Grecia e a Roma*, cit., p. XXIV. Manacorda refers to J. Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture*, Abingdon, Routledge, 2009.

²¹¹ Id., *Diana e le Muse. Tre millenni di sport nella letteratura. Vol. I: in Grecia e a Roma*, cit., p. XXV.

²¹² K. Marx, *Capital: Vol. 1*, cit., p. 270.