

# Critical Thinking and Transilience: Possible Answers to Invisible Poverty

Agnese Rosati  
University of Perugia, Italia  
[agnese.rosati@unipg.it](mailto:agnese.rosati@unipg.it)  
[0000-0001-9398-961X](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9398-961X)

Edoardo Renzi  
University of Perugia, Italia  
[edoardo.renzi@collaboratori.unipg.it](mailto:edoardo.renzi@collaboratori.unipg.it)  
[0000-0002-4501-4292](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4501-4292)

Keren Ponzio  
Vienna Doctoral School of  
Theology and Research on  
Religion, Vienna  
[a12227921@unet.univie.ac.at](mailto:a12227921@unet.univie.ac.at)  
[0009-0005-6414-0031](https://orcid.org/0009-0005-6414-0031)

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## Abstract

The contemporary era is characterised by a plethora of paradoxical phenomena, which are readily discernible through a critical gaze. Although individuals have access to an unlimited quantity of content, the speed at which they are created impairs its effective comprehension. Despite the public intention of digital platforms and social networks to facilitate the democratisation of knowledge among users, they frequently result in the proliferation of disinformation and the fragmentation of content. This has a particularly adverse impact on the most vulnerable social groups, who often lack the requisite interpretative, analytical and contextualising skills. The cultivation of critical thinking and transilience are educational commitments of the present era. They are essential for the assessment of information reliability and the enabling of autonomous and aware participation in democratic processes. The current abundance of information has accentuated cultural poverty, particularly among social groups that are already subject to invisible forms of poverty. This is because the high information flow has deprived these groups of the importance of recognizing the value of information. Through an analysis of the aforementioned issues, the theoretical contribution presents the necessity to equip citizens with cognitive and digital tools to orient themselves in the digital swarm.

**Keywords** *transilience - critical thinking - invisible poverty – digital platform – disinformation*

## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, digital transformation has had a profound impact on the ways in which people access information and construct knowledge. As philosopher Byung-Chul Han notes, the contemporary era is distinguished by the phenomenon of the infocracy, characterised by a constant and overwhelming of data flow that impairs the capacity for critical judgement (Han, 2017). This flood of information has significant implications for pedagogy and social interaction.

The apparent democratisation of information allows for the retrieval of content of all kinds via increasingly sophisticated search engines. The ability to select and discriminate between relevant and objective information is becoming increasingly challenging in the context of the vast amount of data available. The consequence is the navigation of an expansive digital landscape, where the possibility of being overwhelmed by misleading or completely erroneous content is not always readily apparent. This poses a risk to “social freedom and communicative action within the framework of the minimum justice necessary to ensure the honesty of communication” (Honneth, 2015, p. XXVIII). While the

necessity for verification of information placed on the web is clear, the question of how to choose among the information available is a more complex challenge. *“The emergence of a knowledge ecosystem is always tied to the concrete possibility of accessing and spreading information/knowledge (primary needs). In the so-called Knowledge Society, the criteria of hierarchy in accessing information are tested every day, and culturally weakened by the new spirit of the information age”* (Dominici, 2015, p. 93). In the present context, the deficit of comprehension and analysis skills is indicative of a broader crisis that simultaneously affects the educational, economic and social spheres. The acknowledgement of human and cultural capital is crucial for the comprehensive advancement of individual and collective freedoms. In the absence of such recognition, the likelihood of heightened inequality and a diminution of essential critical capabilities increases (Di Bari, 2020; Honnet, 2015). This cultural gap, which frequently manifests as limited linguistic proficiency and interpretative difficulties, also creates a disadvantage in everyday dynamics, resulting in barriers to communication and active participation in community life (Rosati & Renzi, 2024a).

Following on from recent studies that have analysed the relationship between educational poverty and invisible poverty, the article explores the impact of critical thinking and transilience on breaking the spiral of poverty and informational and educational exclusion. The latter is not confined to material circumstances, as in the socio-economic perspective, but rather constitutes a cultural poverty that manifests as an inability to comprehend signs, symbols, words and languages. This distinction becomes a discriminating factor between those who participate in the life of the community and those who remain excluded due to their lack of the intellectual capabilities to discern information. The article therefore discusses the risk of a vicious circle being created that will feed, through multifactorial poverty, the exclusion of people from society. The metamorphosis and faces of poverty, the importance of transilience and critical thinking in the active participation of citizens in society, with a reference to the European framework in the context of the crisis, will be discussed.

In this context, it becomes crucial to question which critical and cognitive skills should be developed in order to enable citizens to navigate the contemporary digital context with awareness, but not only. As Nussbaum (2010) suggests, an education that merely transmits information without fostering critical thinking may result in the production of emotional and democratic illiteracy. The lack of critical thinking tools, according to a 2018 study by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), encourages an increased speed in the spread of fake news thanks to the cascades of digital influence networks (Dizikes, 2018). If language is homothetic to reality (Wittgenstein, 2009), then it is necessary to consider what kind of reality is being produced and, above all, what implications this double binary linked to the looming cultural poverty will have. In particular, it is important to reflect on what episteme, and therefore what power (Foucault, 2014, 2016), is being constituted?

## **2. Metamorphosis or faces of poverty?**

A combination of factors, including a lack of investment, inadequate measures, social inattention, and indifference, contribute to the perpetuation of processes of generalised and widespread

impoverishment that have a detrimental impact on individuals across the lifespan and in diverse geographical locations. According to the World Bank Group (2024), 692 million individuals worldwide are living in extreme poverty. In countries such as Italy, absolute poverty affects approximately 9% of the population, representing a slight increase compared to previous years. This increase is primarily concentrated in the southern regions of the country, with a notable presence also observed in the northern regions. The phenomenon is becoming increasingly prevalent, with the highest levels of poverty currently observed since 2014. The most recent reports from Istat (2024a), Caritas (2023) and Save the Children (2023) describe a situation that contributes to the socio-economic, family and personal disadvantage of individuals - of different ages - exposed to marginality and precariousness. The fragility of living conditions is becoming increasingly prevalent among minors, and is not primarily characterised by a lack of employment opportunities for parents, but rather by the general inadequacy of family income in comparison to the costs of living. The phenomenon of the working poor, defined as an income below the threshold calculated with reference to the national income (Istat, 2024b; Caritas, 2023), represents an aspect that should be taken into account above all in terms of social and welfare policies. However, poverty is not solely contingent on income; it is not confined to material deprivation, job loss, or precariousness, and conditions of disadvantage. Rather, it also pertains to educational pathways that can, to some extent, shield individuals from the risk of poverty (Caritas, 2023). Indeed, there appears to be a markedly strong correlation between those with low educational qualifications and those who have benefited from educational opportunities. To overcome social exclusion, it is necessary to increase and support individuals in their educational pathways. In this regard, European policies have identified the low level of schooling as a key factor contributing to social exclusion. The cultural background, along with the study and work experience of parents, appears to be a significant determinant of social success or failure (Caritas, 2022). This is also confirmed by quantitative studies carried out in countries that we often consider to be advanced, such as Italy, where 33.9% of children under 16 whose parents have at most a secondary school qualification are in a state of social and material deprivation: more than ten times more than their peers (3%) with at least one parent with a university degree (ISTAT, 2023). In other words, the educational level of the family of origin determines the educational and inclusive path of the children, and the intergenerational chain appears to be unbroken and uninterrupted. Furthermore, it can be argued that the interconnection between material and educational poverty gives rise to a vicious circle that is challenging to break. However, there is a possibility that this is not the case and that it would be beneficial to consider alternative perspectives. It would be erroneous to assume that the forms of structural poverty that mark experiences and stories of human life are the sole determining factor. The perspective from which problems are viewed is the foundation for the interpretations that inform subsequent measures and interventions. As Ulrich Beck (2024) suggests, we might also consider a metamorphosis of the poverty phenomenon. While data and statistics provide clear evidence of the reality of poverty, the way in which this problem is perceived allows for further considerations to be outlined. If we understand the meaning of metamorphosis in its nature, we can also identify the “*positive side effects of evils*” (Beck, 2024, p.6). The impact of structural poverty on individuals and their everyday lives is well documented (de Greef, Verté & Segers, 2014). However, in order to fully comprehend the impact

of poverty, it is necessary to consider its underlying effects. But a further step is needed to understand the hidden effects of poverty. This is why the hypothesis of approaching the problem of poverty through the lens of metamorphosis cannot be discarded a priori. Beck makes this clear when he highlights the conceptual difference between change and metamorphosis. The first attests to the persistence of certain elements in transformative processes; the latter, on the other hand, allows us to describe a more radical condition of passage and transformation that, in order to be understood, also requires a new sensitivity, a form of hermeneutic intelligence necessary to grasp what is new and unexpected that may emerge.

In the context of the current, tumultuous era (Beck, 2024) to speak of metamorphosis is to take note of the new visions that are bursting into the present. The objective is to gain perspectives that will facilitate change and the reversal of current trends. This does not entail the negation of the existence of poverty; rather, it entails the adoption of a stance that allows for the emergence of alternative perspectives, particularly from a cultural perspective. In light of the phenomenon of poverty, it is pertinent to inquire whether it is prudent to commence with the concept of cultural poverty in order to ascertain whether this, rather than being a consequence of an economic condition, could serve as a point of departure for a meticulous assessment. Looking at poverty in this way, it could be argued that material poverty is a manifestation of inherent cultural poverty. This, therefore, necessitates an examination of the role of culture in this process, with a subsequent evaluation of the effects at the economic level (structural poverty and relative poverty), rather than vice versa. This is the perspective that we intend to adopt in order to provide an explanation of poverty. To clarify this perspective, it may be useful to reflect on what we call invisible poverty.

### **3. Critical thinking and transilience as responses to social complexity**

In the contemporary era, characterized by a proliferation of information and a concomitant increase in complexity, the capacity for critical thinking and transilience represents a crucial means of safeguarding individual autonomy and the ability to navigate a fractured reality.

Matthew Lipman defines critical thinking as a reflective, reasonable and purposive cognitive process through which the individual arrives at informed decisions about what to believe and how to act (Lipman, 2003). In the view of the American philosopher, critical thinking is an intentional mode of thought, characterized by accuracy and autonomy. This implies a rigorous and conscious evaluation of the available information and arguments, which may be described as a true cognitive responsibility (Lipman, 2005). This process does not conclude with mere problem-solving; rather, it necessitates comprehensive reflection on the rationale and implications of statements and decisions. In this manner, it cultivates an inclination towards open-mindedness and critical analysis, thereby fostering the capacity for individuals to engage actively and responsibly in social and political life.

Critical thinking, especially for a generation immersed in a high flow of information (Paul & Elder, 2006; Floridi, 2017), involves recognising one's own beliefs and prejudices, analysing the implications and consequences of information, and rigorously evaluating sources. For Dominici (2023), this capacity is indispensable to counter the superficiality and manipulation that characterize the hyper-

connected public sphere, where the quality of information is often sacrificed to speed and quantity. In the context of an overwhelming abundance of information, critical thinking enables individuals to navigate the digital landscape and resist the fragmentation and ephemerality that characterize contemporary culture, as described by Byung-Chul Han (2015) as the “digital swarm”. From this perspective, critical thinking is a fundamental aspect of an individual's development as an autonomous and responsible subject, able to cope with the intricacies of real-life scenarios and to make well-informed and ethically sound decisions. The capacity to analyze and evaluate information, content and sources in a reflective and autonomous manner assumes great importance.

The second element of discussion is transilience, as previously stated. The concept of transilience is a relatively recent and still developing one. It can be understood as the ability to continuously adapt and transform in the face of changing and complex contexts (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Lozano Nasi, Jans & Steg, 2023). Transilience is not merely resilience in the face of uncertainty; it encompasses the capacity to learn from uncertainty, to develop new competencies, and to transcend previous constraints in order to adapt to evolving circumstances. In this sense, transilience is not merely about enduring or absorbing difficulties; rather, it is about moving towards innovation and the co-creation of new solutions. In essence, the concept of transilience can be defined as the capacity to apply acquired knowledge or experience in a context that differs from the one in which it was originally acquired. This kind of application of prior knowledge in a new context can facilitate adaptation to new challenges or problem solving in unexpected domains, thus representing a kind of transformation or re-use of skills for different situations. In this case, transilience is not limited to enduring or adapting to difficult circumstances, but also implies the ability to transfer resources, experiences or skills from one domain to another, demonstrating cognitive flexibility. This can be particularly useful in professional or educational contexts, or in situations where one has to deal with rapid or unexpected change. And in the light of this reading of the term, we can reinforce the centrality of continuous education and training as indispensable conditions for personal and societal development.

Thus, if lifelong learning and flexibility become central to dealing with an environment in which emerging dynamics are unpredictable, the creation of contexts that foster collective learning and flexibility (Manca, 2021; Rosati, Renzi & Ponzo, 2024) seems inevitable. Educating for complexity means equipping people not only with technical skills, but also with tools to face and navigate uncertain contexts. Social complexity (Dominici, 2023a), which involves us and at the same time eludes us, requires “a reformulation of thinking and a redefinition of knowledge that should contribute precisely to reducing this complexity”. (Dominici, 2023a, p. 159).

Education must therefore encourage critical thinking, the capacity to collaborate in interconnected environments and adaptability in the face of new challenges. These are essential elements in fostering transilience, or the ability to evolve continuously. In this regard, the contribution of Byung-Chul Han is particularly illuminating. In his 2015 work, “In the Swarm”, Han examines the transformation of the individual into an indistinct network node, devoid of identity and narrative, characterized by compulsive and thoughtless communication. This “mass without coherence”, which is referred to as a digital swarm, fragments perception and reduces the ability to concentrate, thus

limiting the development of a critical consciousness. As Han (2024) observes, the proliferation of information devoid of a coherent narrative structure gives rise to a culture of the ephemeral, in which the pursuit of meaning and depth is continually superseded by the imperative for speed and immediate access. Narrative, understood as the structure that gives meaning and cohesion to knowledge, is gradually being eroded, leaving room for a mere summation of data.

However, the hyperconnectedness and overabundance of information, which theoretically should promote a democratization of knowledge, produce ambivalent effects. Dominici (2023a) highlights that the vast quantity of information, rather than enhancing understanding, may foster confusion and misinformation, particularly among the most vulnerable social groups, who are already susceptible to invisible poverty. While digital platforms and social networks facilitate access to knowledge, they also fragment content and impede the critical capacity of users, thereby exacerbating existing inequalities.

“In the hyper-technological society of knowledge, inequality and asymmetry are paradoxically increasing. We find ourselves in the throes of an ongoing anthropological transformation brought about by the extraordinary scientific discoveries and technological inventions of recent decades, in a desperate need to maintain the human factor, to strengthen rather than weaken social ties, and to preserve democracy in the face of what could easily become a surveillance Panopticon” (Dominici, 2023b, p. 23).

In this context, Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach provides a valuable framework for rethinking education and human development. In her 2011 work, Nussbaum defines capabilities, or capacities, as the concrete possibilities an individual has to live a full and autonomous life, exercising their potential through informed and conscious choices. In her model, which combines ethical and social aspects, the freedom to develop capabilities such as critical thinking and emotional reflection is identified as a fundamental aspect of human fulfilment. Arendt's (2009) description of critical thinking as a form of resistance to passivity and conformity, and as a judgement skill that protects the individual from uncritical acceptance of imposed norms, provides a helpful framework for understanding this concept. For Arendt, critical thinking represents an act of self-preservation and collective protection, preventing the “banal evil” of irresponsibility. In an era of social complexity, this attitude proves to be a valuable resource for navigating fragmentation and uncertainty without becoming mired in ideologies or imposed narratives. Critical thinking and transilience are therefore an urgent response to “cultural poverty, lexical deficiency, difficulties in understanding, [...] elements that create situations of disadvantage even in everyday life, that is, in community life” (Rosati & Renzi, 2024b) and the illusion of total management by technology. Dominici (2023a) argues the necessity of educating on complexity, emphasising the significance of an epistemological re-evaluation of thought processes and an appreciation of error and uncertainty as indispensable instruments for learning. Inhabiting complexity thus implies the adoption of a culture of error and a revised epistemology, since it is only through the acceptance of indeterminacy that it is possible to educate citizens capable of participating consciously and actively in democratic life. The current educational challenge, therefore, is to construct an educational pathway that cultivates critical discernment and enables the development of transilience, which are essential elements for coping with a hypercomplex social reality. Inhabiting complexity entails acknowledging limitations and embracing interdependence, as

well as embracing a non-mechanistic perspective of reality. This necessitates enabling educators and teachers to facilitate critical thinking. As transilience is a deliberate process of adaptation, critical thinking enables individuals to navigate complex situations without succumbing to their inherent contradictions, while simultaneously maintaining an authentic connection with their own identity and the external environment. In conclusion, critical thinking and transilience can be regarded as attractors for personal and collective growth in the context of social complexity. These concepts represent an optimal state of being towards which the individual tends, not as a fixed condition, but as an ongoing process of inquiry, adaptation, and transformation. Such processes facilitate not only a more profound comprehension of reality, but also contribute to the development of a more conscious and just future. The challenge of complexity therefore requires not only the capacity to engage with complex ideas in a critical and informed manner, but also the ability to engage in self-reflection and to interact with reality in a responsible and constructive manner.

#### **4. A European framework on risks and access to society**

In recent years, there has been a notable advancement in the manner in which humans interact with and navigate the flow of information, which serves to facilitate transitions between different life contexts. The advancement of communication and information through digital networks undoubtedly fosters the formation of a more interconnected and relational society. However, the ideal of a virtual society, in which knowledge is a text woven from different threads, presupposes the competence of the many information prosumers and the ethics of their management. The large number of content producers has revolutionised the possibilities of communication, facilitating the instantaneous exchange of information on a global scale. The demand for knowledge drives production itself, while consumer interest directs and steers the focus of information channels (Bentivegna & Boccia Artieri, 2019). The centrality of the digital in today's society is not only connected to the sphere of information; it is also, and above all, indispensable to the maintenance of democracy. The capacity for participants to share ideas and collectively construct knowledge and their society has constituted a revolutionary phenomenon that has engendered changes at multiple levels. The close relationship between technology, the individual and society (Rivoltella, 2019) has resulted in changes to the flow of information within communities, thereby also transforming the way in which communities themselves and their members are formed. In this context, it is becoming increasingly important to implement joint actions that address the software and application structures, the skills of the individual and the norms of society. This is the direction in which the OECD report "Facts not Fakes" (OECD, 2024) is heading, with the objective of achieving transparency and plurality of information sources, resilience of their users and the implementation of improved governance measures. It is imperative to engage in multifaceted actions to safeguard the users of content and their autonomy in producing it, to empower them as active social members capable of advocating for their own causes and intentions. In the contemporary era, it has become increasingly prevalent to encounter a plethora of information, a considerable portion of which is comprised of misinformation and fake news. A Eurobarometer study conducted by the European Commission (2022a) revealed that approximately 70% of the 26,696

respondents encountered news items they deemed to be false or misrepresentative. This phenomenon is not a recent development and it has been subjected to rigorous scrutiny over the past decade. A further survey indicated that approximately one-third (32%) of Europeans do not believe they have access to a reliable digital environment (European Commission, 2023). This, in conjunction with the growing utilisation of online platforms for geopolitical purposes, led the European Council in 2015 to acknowledge the threat posed by online disinformation campaigns (European Commission, 2018), with the objective of fostering awareness and developing more effective strategies for responding to cyber incidents. Furthermore, the proliferation of these phenomena is a cause for concern, particularly in light of the potential risks they pose to the cybersecurity and stability of EU countries. Between July 2022 and June 2023, over 2,500 recorded cyber incidents affected EU countries, as reported by the European Network and Information Security Agency (ENISA, 2023). Such incidents frequently coincide with significant events in democratic systems, eroding public trust and the credibility of established institutions (Schneider, 2020; OECD, 2023; Rosati & Renzi, 2024b). The link between this factor and the aggressive commercial profiling around the data economy, which also aims to discredit reliable sources of information, is now apparent (Carlsson, 2019). In this regard, studies have been conducted with the objective of enhancing comprehension of the phenomenon and impact of fake news, with a view to reducing the vulnerability of public institutions while safeguarding civic space (OECD, 2024). The proliferation of information, whether deliberate or inadvertent (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017), impairs and restricts the avenues for accessing information, engendering growing disparities for those in "*information poverty*" and "*information malnutrition*" (Carlsson, 2019). This shifts the focus of access to knowledge from the digital divide to a deeper level of cultural divide (Dominici, 2017). In this sense, it becomes evident that the promotion of digital literacy and the tackling of misinformation at the earliest possible stage of an individual's education is of paramount importance. This is not merely a matter of acquiring the necessary skills for the future, but rather a necessity of the present, if one is to be able to participate fully in the democratic process. The contemporary digital divide (Van Deursen, Helsper, Eynon & Van Dijk, 2017) is realised in the different ways people navigate the information flows of the web. Just as in education it's not enough to put a book in someone's hands, it's not enough to create online communities and declare that access is equal for all. For access to be real and effective, people need to be equipped with the skills to find and use the resources available in a useful way. (Hargittai, 2002; Maurizio, 2024). It is therefore increasingly important to educate and empower citizens to exercise their rights, thus removing an obstacle to social inclusion. The digital should be considered "an achievement of the mind, an enrichment of the individual's baggage" (Alberti, 2021, p. 54). Schools are among the first institutions to be tasked with promoting change. They are encouraged to develop technical and critical digital literacy skills, thereby fostering greater awareness of the potential influence of the internet. However, teachers often find it difficult to "*create learning spaces in classrooms and schools where students can engage with the topics of digital literacy and disinformation*" (European Commission, 2022b, p. 9). This is due to the paucity of technical resources and a lack of mutual trust when discussing topics on which there is often a significant age-related discrepancy in opinion. Moreover, although the training of teachers is often crucial they are



frequently left to their own devices, thus impeding the spread of better abilities and skills to access information and to evaluate it critically. In this regard, the European Commission recommended in 2023 that digital competences should also be promoted through non-formal and informal learning and youth work, with a focus on critical thinking (European Commission, 2023). This approach not only provides an alternative avenue for learning, but also facilitates the dissemination of the understanding that life experiences are a crucial element in the educational process. It can be reasonably argued that “*are a useful proxy, life-long and life-wide learning beyond formal schooling*” (OECD, 2024, p. 68). This frequently results in the lack of significance and visibility, which consequently deprives a considerable proportion of the population the chance to develop and engage with other contexts (Rosati & Renzi, 2024b).

It is therefore evident that students and citizens must be furnished with the requisite tools to “identify reliable signals in the midst of so much noise. Metacognitive skills include an awareness of one’s own ability and the level of difficulty of the information challenges we face” (OECD, 2024, p. 68). Furthermore, in addition to responding to an explicit request from students, of whom over 40% believe that topics such as critical thinking, the media and democracy should be addressed more frequently in an educational setting (European Commission, 2020), this necessity also arises from a multitude of projects and studies (UNESCO, 2021; OECD, 2023). These studies, conducted across a range of cultural contexts, highlight the importance of promoting media and information literacy, which encourages creativity and critical thinking, and is vital for navigating the challenges of information overload. It is only through this approach that the root of the issue can be addressed, rather than merely treating the symptoms, such as disinformation (Carlsson, 2019), which control bodies are often reluctant to address. It is, therefore, imperative that action is taken at multiple levels to prevent the digital, as a knowledge tool, from creating further asymmetries, which could result in the emergence of a new category of digital oppressed (Ceretti & Ravanelli, 2017). It is of the utmost importance to ensure that social groups are not excluded from the emancipatory opportunities afforded by the network, and that they are not merely participating in a simulation of such opportunities. This is a crucial aspect of the self-determination of individuals whose awareness of their own possibilities is today often limited.

## 5. Invisible and silent poverty

How can full participation in the inclusive and social processes of complex societies be promoted? Many interventions have been made in this direction. With an educational perspective, socio-cultural promotion activities have been promoted through the creation of meeting places and spaces for young people and adolescents. Listening desks and moments of sharing have also been created to allow students, with the support of experts, to network and find opportunities for emancipative confrontation (think of narrative practices, autobiography, focus groups, role plays and read aloud practices). Initiatives aimed at reducing the negative socio-cultural effects of poverty have also been activated by volunteers working in listening centres, such as those of Caritas Italy, who are also active in peer to

peer activities. As the Caritas report notes, the age of the adults who turn to these centres is quite low. In 20.1% of the cases they were between 18 and 34 years old and in 34.5% between 35 and 44 years old (Caritas, 2023). Animation centers, oratories and spaces of associative life are the tiles of an intense movement that aims to give a concrete perspective to the meaning of education (Whitehead, 2022), in the conviction that culture is first and foremost "activity of thinking and receptivity to beauty and human feelings" (Ibidem, p.1). The aim to be pursued, therefore, is to broaden people's involvement and participation in community life. Recognizing this priority means acting to transform society and to be somehow "more aware of what it means to be human" (Savater, 2014, p.64).

In official documents terms such as proximity, gaze, accompaniment, service, protection, listening, participation recur in the documents (Caritas, 2023; World Bank Group, 2023), almost as if to emphasise how the unified perspective that characterizes the relational dimension is the answer to the problem of poverty/social exclusion. What is needed, then, is an intelligent device with which it is possible, not so much to speak on behalf of others, but "to arrive together with others at an understanding of how to preserve the different modes - of existence - [...], to manage to respect each other without trying to overwhelm each other" (Latour, 2024, p.78). This is only possible if people are given the opportunity not only to participate with choices and decisions, but also to express themselves through language. It is the possession and the ability to use the word that creates differences, remember Don Milani and Paulo Freire. But the word, capable of affirming individual identity, tends to be replaced by narratives, which take on value in terms of persistence and continuity, both online and offline (Sisto, 2024). In this "human-biology-artefact hybridization" (Benasayag, 2022, p.18), people are deprived of body, soul and words; the deepest and most suffered dimensions of human existence are also erased: old age and death, characteristics of the uniqueness that emerges in the possibility of conversation. To talk about everything with everyone (Boncinelli, 2022): this is true wealth. A wealth that defies poverty because it uses words, it knows how to converse and makes conversation possible, it constructs representations and makes communication possible through language.

## 6. Conclusion

The paper has tried to highlight the importance of a theoretical key, with strong references to the current Italian and European social context, which analyses poverty as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon, rooted in the interdependence between economic, cultural and social factors. It is clear, however, that any attempt to synthesise the multiple aspects that characterise our times misses the underlying nature of the problem and runs the risk of neglecting certain issues that, because of their importance, deserve greater attention. It is not just a question of analysing material poverty, but of understanding how it is intertwined with an even more pervasive and subtle information poverty. Such poverty, defined for this reason as invisible, hinders access to tools for understanding and transforming reality and has deep cultural roots, of which disinformation is only one aspect.

The dimension in which intellectual forces and resources must be invested is that of education, capable of bringing about a true metamorphosis of the person. A change is therefore required in the educational systems, in the content and methods, involving students and teachers, starting from the possibilities (European Parliament, 2023) of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). Indeed, there is a strong conviction that fostering critical and transient skills is the answer to many problems that highlight the link between cultural and economic factors. Reading the complexity of today's networks and society requires transversal skills that, like transilience, allow the value of knowledge to be extended and applied to unforeseen and unpredictable situations. In this sense, future studies should analyse the transformative and generative value of transilience in school and life contexts.

In a context dominated by speed and fragmentation, this critical capacity seems increasingly threatened by the culture of the ephemeral and the overabundance of information, which create confusion and reduce the time for conscious reflection. In this key, time becomes not only a resource but also a dimension for educational and cultural growth. Developing time literacy means knowing how to slow down, observe and reflect, resisting the temptation of immediacy. It means rethinking traditional learning processes and modes of social interaction in order to bring out an interdisciplinary approach that promotes the encounter between individual and collective dimensions and stimulates an integrated understanding of reality. The mastery and updating of digital skills are essential for the citizens of today and tomorrow (IDMO, 2023), as "we need intelligences refined by science and culture in all their forms and potentials, so that we can interact meaningfully with the mass of information and meanings with which we come into contact on a daily basis, without being overwhelmed and enslaved by them" (Alberti, 2021, pp. 71-72).

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