ME, US AND OTHERS: TEACHING CHALLENGES FOR TEACHING

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Abstract

The reflexive-discursive confrontation of the pedagogical aporias is a possibility of thinking about students' learning and not learning. The guiding question was formulated as follows: considering our own experiences of difficulties as students, what style of teaching enabled our teachers to succeed in our learning? It reflects on the pertinence of thinking about facing pedagogical aporias in the learning/not learning processes of school students. The reflection is organized in six steps, with the intention of sustaining that the pedagogical success of teachers with students with unique learning rhythms involves recognizing and facing the aporias inherent to the educational process.

TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS • TEACHING • LEARNING DIFFICULTY

EU, NÓS E OS OUTROS: DESAFIOS DOCENTES PARA ENSINAR

Resumo

O enfrentamento reflexivo-discursivo das aporias pedagógicas é uma possibilidade de pensar o aprender e o não aprender de estudantes. A pergunta que guia este trabalho é a seguinte: considerando nossas próprias experiências de dificuldades como alunos, que estilo de docência possibilitou que nossos professores obtivessem sucesso em nossas aprendizagens? Reflete-se acerca da pertinência do enfrentamento pensante das aporias pedagógicas nos processos de aprender/não aprender de estudantes escolares. Organiza-se a reflexão em seis passos, com a intenção de sustentar que o sucesso pedagógico dos professores com alunos com ritmos singulares de aprendizagem passa pelo reconhecimento e enfrentamento das aporias inerentes ao processo educativo.

PROCESSO DE ENSINO-APRENDIZAGEM • DOCÊNCIA • DIFICULDADES DE APRENDIZAGEM

YO, NOSOTROS Y LOS OTROS: DESAFÍOS DOCENTES PARA ENSEÑAR

Resumen

La confrontación reflexivo-discursiva de las aporías pedagógicas es una posibilidad para pensar el aprender y el no aprender de los estudiantes. Así pues, se formuló la pregunta orientadora: Teniendo en cuenta nuestras propias experiencias de dificultades con los estudiantes, ¿qué estilo de enseñanza ha permitido a nuestros profesores tuviesen éxito en nuestro aprendizaje? Se refleja sobre la pertinencia de la confrontación pensante de aporías pedagógicas en los procesos de aprendizaje/no aprendizaje de los escolares. La reflexión se organiza en seis pasos, con la intención de sostener que el éxito pedagógico de los profesores con alumnos con ritmos de aprendizaje únicos implica el reconocimiento y enfrentamiento de las aporías inherentes al proceso educativo.

PROCESO DE ENSEÑANZA-APRENDIZAJE • ENSEÑANZA • DIFICULTADES DE APRENDIZAJE

MOI, NOUS ET LES AUTRES: LES DÉFIS DE L'ENSEIGNEMENT

Résumé

L'affrontement réflexif-discursif des apories pédagogiques se présente comme une possibilité de penser l'apprentissage et le non-apprentissage des élèves. Notre question-guide a été formulée: en tenant compte de nos expériences des difficultés en tant qu'élèves, quel style d'enseignement a le mieux permis à nos enseignants de réussir notre apprentissage? On réflechit sur l'à-propos de l'affrontement rationnel des apories pédagogiques dans les processus d'apprentissage/de non-apprentissage des élèves à l'école. La réflexion est structurée en six étapes, dans le but de soutenir que la réussite pédagogique des enseignants concernant des élèves ayant des rythmes d'apprentissages singuliers demande la reconnaissance et l'affrontement des apories inhérentes au processus d'enseignement.

PROCESSUS D'ENSEIGNEMENT-APPRENTISSAGE • ENSEIGNEMENT • DIFFICULTÉ D'APPRENTISSAGE

I N OUR SCHOOL PATH, EXCEPT IN A FEW RARE SITUATIONS, SOMETIMES MORE, SOMETIMES less, we felt "sluggish". We shared the impression that our schoolmates learned easily and quickly. Perhaps it was this feeling of slowness that motivated us to continue studying. Interestingly, some teachers claimed we were smart students. In our (retrospective) view, we weren't the smart ones, but they, for having managed to capture the attention of the "sluggish" like us (and others, probably). The didactic-pedagogical question that guides the reflection is: how did these teachers achieve this? Taking the experience of "sluggish" students seriously, how do you position yourself in relation to the pedagogical problem? What kind of language would be most suitable? What style of teaching? Based on the announced problem, we aim to reflect on the validity of the aporias as relevant pedagogical knowledge for the learning/not learning processes of school students.

We understand that these questions refer to a fundamental issue, the question of the aporias that manifest themselves in the pedagogical relation, which can be circumvented by the sciences of educational facts, but not by pedagogy in its essential task of thinking prospectively about the action of teachers, managers and other education professionals. Let us provisionally admit that the term "aporia" means difficulty in continuing a reasoning (Castro, 2017, p. 290). The term refers to cognitive situations in which two poles are opposed and seem irreconcilable, situations that need to be explicitly thematized in order for thought to be carried forward (Sobrino, 1982, pp. 42ss.). We recognize, therefore, that the action of teaching "sluggish" students goes beyond the knowledge constructed by simplifying thinking, according to the deductive-identity logic, and requires teachers to creatively elaborate knowledge based on the challenges of the practical world and, certainly from the academic multiverse.

Thus, answers to the previously raised questions, and below developed, converge to the argumentative legitimacy of the thesis that pedagogical success with students with unique learning rhythms involves recognizing and facing the aporias inherent to the educational process. Thus, in effect, we recognize that the pedagogical work, both of veterans and novices, is crossed by multiple aporias (Castro, 2017), the confrontation of which requires, in each case, to take into account the irrepressible otherness of each of the students, because, without taking it seriously, the pedagogical dialogue does not happen.

In methodological-procedural terms, we set in motion Flávio Brayner's proposal (2015, own translation) of thinking about some pedagogical questions "based on the experience of reading"; specifically, through a hermeneutic immersion in the symbolic world constructed by Daniel Pennac in *Mágoas da escola* [*School Blues*] (2009, own translation). Furthermore, looking at the aporias of the pedagogical phenomenon of teaching/learning/not learning broadens and incorporates some contributions, also, from psychoanalytic thought and Morin's complexity. Announcing these horizons opens the dialogue to divergence, uncertainty, negotiation, etc. It means making room for what has not yet been institutionalized, for what demands reorganization, for what escapes simplifying thinking, but which can contribute to addressing the daily challenges of school teaching.

We maintain that the pedagogical success of teachers with students with unique learning rhythms involves recognizing and facing the aporias inherent to the educational process. The construction of arguments for our statement is made considering six movements: the first movement questions the otherness in the pedagogical relation. The second addresses education as an act of love. The third movement addresses the student clients who are now at school. The fourth discusses knowledge *versus* ignorance as a pedagogical aporia, with primary recognition of teaching with students who learn/not learn. In the fifth movement, we looked at the teachers who taught us (good teachers) and what they had in common. Finally, in the sixth movement, we enter into the aporias of education as theoretical-methodological knowledge to think about the pedagogical challenges of teachers in the school routine.

Otherness in the pedagogical relation

The pedagogical relation in the "here and now" is constituted by multiple and heterogeneous dimensions, which must be understood as inscribed "in a story, itself open to the eventualities of a becoming" (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 550, own translation). It should be noted that as we refine the look directed at phenomena, we perceive messy dimensions of our world and we come face to face with the complexity. Properly thinking about the complexity of phenomena requires "admitting their constitutive heterogeneity and their plural nature. It organizes itself simultaneously in several contradictory perspectives. Therefore, it is necessary to talk about plural readings" (Ardoino, 2012a, pp. 551-552, own translation).

Complex thinking rehabilitates plurality and heterogeneity, it pays attention to the fecundity of conflict and alteration, and recognizes the importance of time and history for understanding phenomena (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 552; Morin, 2005a, pp. 332-333). The languages used to describe the phenomena corresponding to divergent and competing logics "mobilize perspectives and representation systems that are totally irreducible to one another" (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 552, own translation). This is equivalent to the epistemological discrediting of unitary and totalizing thinking and legitimizes *uncertainty* as a relevant category in research and pedagogical practice (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 553; Demo, 2000). But, so that uncertainty does not immobilize us, we are obliged to operate with complexity reducers: on the practical social level, trust in intradisciplinary, interdisciplinary and intercultural dialogue with researchers from other theoretical-methodological approaches, allied the commitment to reciprocal translation of concepts and principles of intelligibility; at the theoretical level, the formulation and efforts to resolve the aporias that emerge from the professional field; we assume that these aporias must be made explicit and theoretically elaborated in search of the best possible connections, even if the desired synthesis by dialectical reason is not achieved, precisely so that the best possibilities of action are removed from obscurity.

A philosophical assumption of contemporary pedagogy concerns what is the experience of heterogeneity "the most extreme, sometimes the most cruel, but probably the most enriching" possible. This experience is only possible in the relation with the other, in the encounter with the other, but, strictly speaking, it is not moved by our desire or the pretense of freedom. It is, on the contrary, the experience of "the limit of our desire, our power and our ambition to dominate" (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 553, own translation). Jacques Ardoino points out that the deepest meaning – difficult for many to tolerate – of plurality consists in recognizing and accepting the other, the other as absolutely other, that is, who does not admit to being dissolved by or framed in my system of beliefs and desires. No other human being, even though his or her subjectivity has already been modeled by institutions of training, disciplining and control, is likely to be captured by the meshes of representation schemes. Wrote Jacques Ardoino (2012b, p. 90, own translation):

> Whatever the determinisms that condition and can explain its modes of functioning, human beings have within themselves (self) a power of negation, of counterstrategy that gives them, at least in part, the intelligence of these determinisms and a certain capacity to react the them, to adapt to them and even to face or transform them (negatricity).

Ardoino focuses not simply on the ideas of difference and otherness, but on the concrete experience of the encounter with the other, an experience in and through which I am *altered*, if I do not shrink under the protective-deceptive crust of my egoic beliefs. Throughout the duration of the experience of the encounter with the other, recognized and accepted as other, my person may *change* "as a dynamic and dialectical game in the other" (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 553). Hans-Georg Gadamer (1999, p. 532), one of the classics of hermeneutics, wrote that openness to the other implies "the

recognition that I must be willing to *let something count in me against myself*, even if there is no other who will enforce it against myself".

In this sense, in the unfolding of the alteration, in the duration of the encounter with the other, heterogeneity is constituted "mainly by desires, interests and intentions, and even by antagonistic strategies" (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 553, own translation). "With heterogeneity, the other is experienced as a source of alteration and frustration (because he or she resists us), much more than a source of alterity, which transforms our field of references" (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 554, own translation). The experience that the other resists, goes against, in short, frustrates the realization of my desires and limits my freedom, is named by Jacques Ardoino as *negatricity*. Negatricity is the "capacity that human beings 'always possess to be able to dismantle, with their counter-strategies, those of which they feel the object', the ability to 'escape', to establish 'counter-strategies', different from those expected of them; of betraying the placed expectations" (as cited in Macedo, 2012, p. 39, own translation).

In this perspective, Abrantes (2011, pp. 131-132, own translation) points out that there is a close relationship between socialization and identifications, since "each individual internalizes dispositions, competences and values, insofar as he associates them with a specific identity, resulting from a negotiation between assigned roles and own intentions"; he adds, on the other hand, that there is an intentional and reflexive dimension in the construction of identifications. That is, it is not a strictly mechanical process, in which the subject is only put as an object, but fundamentally as resistance. Roberto Sidnei Macedo (2012, p. 39, own translation) complements:

> Considering the different is not necessarily considering the other and his action . . . . "It's very easy to sleep with the idea of the other, it doesn't snore", but on the other hand, "it's much more difficult to live with the alteration, I mean with the action of the other, who has negatricity, who opposes us, therefore, and whose desire does not necessarily respond to ours".

In this dialectical and multi-referential path of reasoning, negatricity is a condition for alteration and makes training experiences possible through encounters with others. Jorge Larrosa (2006, p. 184, own translation) emphasizes the alterity of childhood: "always beyond any attempt to capture, it disturbs the security of our knowledge, questions the power of our practices and opens up a void in which the building of our institutions sinks host". Thus, resistance to the colonization of institutions and the other is the possibility for subjects to constitute themselves as autonomous and emancipated singularities.

In this thought vein, social coexistence and knowledge do not give up the "recognition of the irreducibility of optics to each other" (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 554, own translation). The "plurality of views, both competing and eventually held together by a game of articulations" specifies the multi-referential approach to complexity (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 554, own translation). In this approach, "the different systems of reference, reciprocally, mutually others, interrogate the object from their perspectives and their respective logics", but also "question each other, if necessary contradictorily between them, change and elaborate mixed meanings, in favor of a story" (Ardoino, 2012a, p. 554, own translation). With this, the reader is referred to the principles of intelligibility of complex thought, formulated and ethically-epistemologically justified by Edgar Morin (2003, pp. 93-97; 2005a, pp. 332-334). But you can also think that this is a type of love that is not restricted to the scope of interpersonal relationships.

Education as the act of political love

Without developing the subject, we would like to remember that Martin Heidegger insisted on phenomenologically destroying the notion of empathy, which emerged in the cultural-philosophical paradigm of subjectivity to explain the relationship with others based on the absurd idea of an encapsulated subject. Recently, in a literary and pedagogical work at the same time, Daniel Pennac (2009, p. 246, own translation) refused to call "empathy" the subjective disposition of the teacher who is dedicated to saving students with unique learning rhythms. It is true that, to "free up cheating, it is good to know how they feel". But this knowledge has nothing to do with impersonating another person, in this case, the student with a unique learning pace. In order to carry out his task of fishing for the "sluggish", says Pennac (2009, p. 246, own translation), the teacher must add to his/her knowledge "the intuition of ignorance",[1] subject to be returned to later. This is the condition without which the bad student cannot reach the top, something he/she can only achieve if the educators bet on him, invest in him. The aforementioned author calls this subjective willingness to help "sluggish" students, in addition to non-"sluggish" students, "love".

We believe that the love to which Daniel Pennac refers fits under the definition formulated by Humberto Maturana and Sima Nisis de Resepka (2008). These emphasize that, from the point of view of human phylogenesis, the emotion that constitutes the social relationship is the acceptance of the other as a legitimate other in coexistence with someone (Maturana & Resepka, 2008). They believe that the act of refusing the other's human being is an act of refusing him/her "as a legitimate other" in coexistence with someone (Maturana & Resepka, 2008, p. 15, own translation). Still, in the opinion of these researchers, "at any age, we become sick when we are denied love; in children, this illness has serious consequences for their growth. Learning difficulties and relational behavior arise from the denial of love" (Maturana & Resepka, 2008, p. 15, own translation). Most suffering comes from the denial of love. Almost 100% of human illnesses have to do with the denial of love (Maturana & Resepka, 2008, p. 61; Maturana, 2009, p. 25). The pedagogical implication of this is that "the biology of love consists precisely in that the teacher accepts the legitimacy of his/her students as valid beings in the present, *correcting only their doing and not their being*" (Maturana & Resepka, 2008, p. 21, own translation). It should be noted that the loveliness referred to here has an internal connection with the concept of universal human dignity and with actions that correspond to it in each social context.

There is no lack of didactic methods to "save" students with difficulties in the teaching process aimed at all students. Pennac denounces that there are teachers who take refuge in methods. And he points out that, deep down, teachers know that the method is not enough and that they lack love. It is a question of looking at the student's saying/doing, in order to recognize his being, his condition of otherness. Political pedagogical love. To tell how he understands this love, he tells the parable of the swallows that, crossing the room, misaligned, on the way out, deceived by the transparency, collide against the glass of the fixed/closed panes of the open, double-leaf window:

> Between the two fixed windows, a vast space, capable of giving passage to all the birds of the sky. Still, it never fails, there are always three or four idiots (*sic*) who choose the closed windows! . . . *Poof!* Thrown to the mat. Then one of us gets up, hold the suicide swallow in the palm of our hand. . . , and wait for it to wake up, and launch it to meet its companions. The resurrected one flies, still somewhat disoriented, zigzagging in the rediscovered

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1 In the typologies of knowledge recognized for teaching, this is not announced. The aporias that challenge teaching, named to some extent by knowledge arising from practice, are not thematized by the research. They seem to escape it. Life stories, teachers' narratives can be possibilities to bring up these daily aporias of teaching/learning/not learning.

space, and then heads south and disappears into the future (Pennac, 2009, pp. 249-250, own translation).

Daniel Pennac concludes the book with the thesis that saving a "sluggish" student is like reviving one of those stunned swallows! "The issues of sympathy or dislike for some of them . . . do not come into account" (Pennac, 2009, p. 250, own translation). Far from empathy, the teacher's love is donation love, *political love*, which presupposes the subjective disposition, of ethical and theoretical supports, to save "sluggish" students. It translates into commitment and responsibility towards the being of the other. Welcoming with a sense of investing, of empowering this subject.

Educators who strive to save "sluggish" ones while teaching all students do not allow "people outside the pedagogical *métier* to show them the way out of the impasses and setbacks of the profession, or even to 'help' them in this task. Something similar to doctors inviting economists to discuss health issues" (Aquino, 2002, p. 109, own translation). Just as it is honorable for the health professional to save sick people, it is honorable for the teacher to recapture "sluggish" students, without demanding that an external specialist come "to save the pedagogical work" (Aquino, 2002, p. 26, own translation) and without prejudging the "sluggish" students based on social class, skin color, ethnicity, sexual orientation and/or other prejudices. The author instigates the teachers, stating that the minority of students considered problematic "is the core part of the profession, what in other professions is the disputed one – the greater the challenge, the greater the professional satisfaction" (Aquino, 2002, pp. 148-149, own translation).

With regard to love, it is pertinent to problematize the commonplace of "love your neighbor" or "love your fellow man". In a society of classes and multiple cultures, "affinity", "empathy" and "love of your neighbor" (or, of the "your fellow man") are ideological terms that legitimize the unscrupulous *expulsion* of children from the popular classes from school (Freire, 1999, 2004). It is, to say the least, problematic to speak of "empathy" when the unchosen interlocutor, as is the case of the student, is someone from another social class and/or from another ethnic community. Think of the parable of the good Samaritan (Lk 10, 25-37): ethical teachers will have *to be* close to those who are distant, those who are unequal, different and disconnected! This is not done out of empathy! Just for the act of love! Here, politics is linked with love! And this is especially so because, by the classic ethical principle of non-reciprocity, adult educators must fulfill their pedagogical duties even when/where the students do not correspond to their expectations (Jonas, 2006, pp. 196ss.). And, as is public and notorious, the expectations of teachers suffer setbacks arising from the conduct of students of the most different types.

The school as such and the "student clients"

Returning to the issue of negatricity, without losing sight of the fact that each student is unique, it is convenient to think about different types of students. It should be noted that not all students are "sluggish". But of the latter, most live under conditions of instrumentalization. Among other types of instrumentalized children, there are child workers, child soldiers, child prostitutes, dying children (from hunger and abandonment) and child clients (Pennac, 2009, p. 236). In the aforementioned book, the author dwells on children client and their respective school torpor.

Since the republican school crisis in the 1970's, students' negatricity has been significantly correlated with student clients. Today, children clients form the predominant version of "sluggish" students. They are children "trained in the same aspiration for consumption", affected "by the only and involving request: to consume. That is, changing products, wanting a new one, more than new, the latest. The brand!" (Pennac, 2009, pp. 196-197, own translation). There are sluggish clients who, sucked by smartphone screens, diluted in them to "surf in space-time, without constraints or limits,

without schedules or horizons", limit their intelligence so much that they manifest difficulties to "distinguish brand from object" (Pennac, 2009, pp. 193-194, 241, own translation). This, so much that brands fill their heads, take their money, their vocabulary and even their bodies, as uniforms, transforming them into living advertising, like plastic mannequins in stores (Pennac, 2009, p. 194). The school works with tradition, with what society deems necessary to preserve. How to charm these students who are guided by the constant immediacy of novelty?

In a set of consumption fields identical to those of parents and teachers, these children play the same economic role as the adults responsible for their education and instruction. Clients "with all rights. Like adults"; autonomous consumerists (Pennac, 2009, p. 237, own translation). Children are elevated to the status of commercial maturity because their parents' proof of love for them "goes through the purchase of objects" (Pennac, 2009, pp. 238-239, own translation). But also because today it is "grandmother marketing" who "dresses, feeds, drinks, wears, combs, equips everyone, she is the one who overloads the electronics student, puts them on roller skates, bicycles, electric scooters, motorbikes, scooters, it is what distracts them, informs them, makes them fashionable..." (Pennac, 2009, p. 233, own translation). Full-time, the *marketing grandmother* monitors the child, so much so that, when he/she sits down in the classroom, this grandmother "flutters deep in her pocket to reassure them: I'm here, don't be afraid, on your phone, you're not hostage to the school ghetto!" (Pennac, 2009, p. 233, own translation).

The awareness that children of today have of themselves has been subverted by their access to the adult world, through the electronic means of hyperreality. The way in which children understand themselves does not fit with institutions "founded on a view of children as incapable of making decisions for themselves" (Steinberg, 1997, p. 125, own translation). Today, "precocious children come into conflict with their parents over adult privileges and material goods" (Steinberg, 1997, p. 130, own translation). In order to understand the resistance that children and teenagers raise against teaching, it is necessary to inquire about the *references* according to which child and teenager subjectivity is produced. Henry A. Giroux (1995, p. 50, own translation) explains that the identities of children and young people "are largely molded, politically and pedagogically, in the popular visual culture of videogames, television, cinema and even in places of leisure such as shopping malls and amusement parks". In particular, cartoons function as new "teaching machines", inspiring "at least as much cultural authority and legitimacy to teach specific roles, values and ideals as more traditional places of learning, such as public schools, religious institutions and the family" (Giroux, 1995, pp. 51-79, own translation). When they arrive at school, children already bring with them a mental operating system, installed in their bodies by employees of large business corporations that produce the culture addressed to children (kinderculture). It should be noted that today's children's access to commercial kinderculture "motivates them to become hedonistic consumers" (Steinberg, 1997, p. 124, own translation).

For Dufour (2005, p. 76, own translation), "in the narrative of the commodity, each desire must find its object . . . . The commodity narrative presents objects as a guarantee of our happiness and, moreover, of a happiness achieved here and now". In this movement, it is understood that the Market presents itself as the new true and ultimate rationality, appears as the new great subject that directs human desires. Thus, if we consider the stands announced, it seems that the school is "the last redoubt of mercantile society in which the child client has to *pay with his/her own person*, an exchange of favours" (Pennac, 2009, p. 240, own translation). The school demands from the child knowledge through their own effort, access to the universality of knowledge through the solitary and proper exercise of reflection, full presence at school in exchange for a vague promise of the future (Pennac, 2009, p. 241). The first difficulty of student clients is that they do not understand why they would have to accept this situation, why exchange their commercial adult status for an obedient

student position.2 Why would he have to pay the school, with effort and with no immediate return, if the keyboard "allows them to access all the knowledge requested by their desires"? Why would he have to endure the humiliation of teachers and fathers/mothers poring over their school records "when, shut up in his room, isolated from their family and school, they reign?" (Pennac, 2009, p. 241, own translation). In a society of immediate pleasure, the school presents itself as an outlier. What would be the reason to support an institution that bends on tradition, when the ever newness drives its desires?

Predictably, teaching contains increased difficulties when one is face to face with a group of student clients. The school is not a shopping mall where superficial desires are satisfied by gifts. In school, the fundamental needs for obligations are fulfilled. And, as every experienced teacher knows, instructional needs, to be met, must first be provoked. "Rude task for the teacher, this conflict between wants and needs!" (Pennac, 2009, p. 240, own translation). On the other hand, "a painful prospect for the young client, having to worry about needs to the detriment of desires: emptying the head to form the spirit, disconnecting to connect to knowledge" (Pennac, 2009, p. 240, own translation). Obliged to the almost impossible to forget the brilliance of trinkets to assimilate school knowledge, with no immediate use, and still have to pay for them with their own effort! A wonderful aporia that modernity has invented! But this is not the only aporia of education.

It is important for teachers to realize that, in the contemporary world, the way student clients behave encourages us to think about the complexity of our relationships with children and teenagers. The way of being of children in the modern era has ceased to exist since the means of social communication have made them informed about many fields of social life that could previously be hidden. From the impossibility of concealing derives the inability to simply prohibit. Secrets and taboos, interrelated, characterized the children of modernity. But contemporary children receive information that is no longer and cannot be filtered by parents. As a result, in the classroom, before being invited to speak, some of them are already "giving a hunch" and retelling the stories that the teacher started to tell.

In the contemporary world, in general, children tend to play an "active role in the constitution of the social relationships in which they engage, not being, therefore, passive in the incorporation of social roles and behaviors" (Cohn, 2005, pp. 27-28, own translation). Clarice Cohn further states that "children are not only produced by cultures, but also producers of culture. They elaborate meanings for the world and their experiences, fully sharing a culture", naturally, the elaboration of these meanings is part of the "symbolic system shared with adults" (Cohn, 2005, p. 35, own translation). Even as student clients, as consumers in contemporary society, we cannot forget the child's role as an actor, producer and protagonist in social life. Reducing them solely to clients/objects would be to reaffirm the structuralist and functionalist maintenance of socialization processes. Next, the background pedagogical problem is elucidated, which is not very dependent on the type of difficult student with whom the teacher has to work.

Knowledge *versus* ignorance as a pedagogical aporia

Distant from the condition of the current student clients, as sluggish ex-students and as veteran teachers, we understand that there is an underlying pedagogical problem. And it is a problem for which young teachers, despite mastering their area of knowledge, do not feel prepared;

2 It should be noted that there are recalcitrant students for different reasons. Not all resist supported by market references. The contemporary subjectivations of children's bodies make them active and reactive to the conditions of school confinement for varying reasons, as will be seen below.

and, therefore, this makes them suffer (Pennac, 2009). What is this problem?

To elaborate the answer to this question, we turn once more to Daniel Pennac (2009). He considers the "stories of loss of references, violence, consumption", among others, conjuncturally valid explanations. However, before accepting the understanding of the loss of references, an observation seems necessary. The transformations of postmodernity, liquid modernity, neomodernity,[3] among other names, point to a new configuration of reality. Among the transformations are, according to Hall (2006, pp. 15-16, own translation), those of "time and space", which he calls "displacement of the social system – the extraction of social relations from the local contexts of interaction and their restructuring along across indefinite space-time scales". Thus, the intended stability proposed by the metanarratives of modernity gradually collapses. This new configuration inevitably affects identity references.

In this sense, in late modernity what actually happens is not the loss of references, but the emergence of a plurality of possibilities. If in the pre-modern context world systems are characterized by a fragmented set of isolated communities, in modernity time and space are compressed in view of the new relationships that are established, but nothing compares to post-modernity in which "humanity becomes a we, facing problems and opportunities where there are no 'others'" (Giddens, 2002, p. 32, own translation). Which, according to Hall (2006, p. 17, own translation), "points to a very different conception of identity and much more disturbing and provisional than the previous ones".

When addressing the beacons for the construction of our identities in post-modernity, ephemeral and transitory, Dufour (2005, p. 83, own translation) suggests the market as the great reference. In his words, "if the Market, as true and ultimate rationality, appears as the new great Subject, perhaps it is only because the preceding great Subjects have thrown in the towel, bowing down to the new master". Thus, the more tradition loses ground, the more lifestyles centered on individuals gain in breadth. The "loss of references", expressed by de-symbolization and de-referentialization, marks late modernity and directly affects the construction of other selves. Regardless of the nomenclatures we adopt to refer to our time, we recognize in them that there is a growing process of de-referentialization or loss of the Other and the more or less stable beacons are shattered. In this way, it is not so much a question of "loss", but of the emergence of new parameters, new references.

But even the sum of these explanations does not account for the problem, for which other answers will soon come. *The background pedagogical problem is the violent clash "of knowledge against ignorance"* (Pennac, 2009, p. 243, own translation). In the subject they teach, the teachers were good students and, as a result, are "incapable of understanding the state of ignorance in which" the "sluggish" live (Pennac, 2009, p. 244, own translation). Even if they have had difficulties in acquiring the knowledge of the discipline they teach, as soon as they are in possession of it, they begin to understand it as evident and, thus, lose the ability "to imagine themselves not knowing what they know", to imagine how much such knowledge is strange to those who ignore it (Pennac, 2009, p. 244, own translation). This is how we have the aporia: the knowledge that makes someone a teacher, by making one lose the sense of ignorance, disables that someone from being a teacher as a savior of sluggish. Hence Pennac's proposal (2009, p. 244) for the initial and continuing education of teachers: becoming capable of conceiving the state of someone who ignores what the teacher knows. This ability should become the "main quality" of teachers. Thus, there is a proposal of knowledge that enriches the teaching practice. Teaching aporias are not elaborated

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3   The nomenclature will not be discussed here, however it is pertinent to point out that they are linked to different conceptions about the transformations that affect the current moment, which may vary from author to author.

in the typologies of Shulman (1987, 1989, 2005), Tardif (2004) and Pimenta (2009) as teaching knowledge, or knowledge for teaching.

Recurrently, teacher candidates and teachers in practice should remember their experiences of school failure and, based on these (respective) memories, seek to understand what happened to them in that period of their school path, seek to know the internal and external reasons that led them to fall apart and, above all, remember the way and the means by which they ended up extricating themselves and the reasons that led them to dedicate themselves to this or that subject and not to others (Pennac, 2009, p. 245). According to Daniel Pennac's proposal, when challenged by students with learning difficulties, each teacher would have to remember their respective weaknesses in certain curricular components, at certain moments of their student trajectory, and relive a little "the state of ignorance" (Pennac, 2009, p. 245, own translation).

In this way, we understand that it is not a matter of knowledge arising solely from the teacher's teaching experience, although it is in everyday life that this materializes. If we understand this aporia in the learning/not learning processes of teenagers with unique learning rhythms as promising, this could be a teacher's knowledge to be included among the knowledge of the foundations of education, the knowledge of pedagogy, the curricular and epistemic knowledge/instruments of pedagogical practice. If the school, in fact, so criticized, managed to teach us a lot, so much so that we came to know that the more we know,[4] the more we know that we know too little, it is worth asking: how did the teachers achieve this?

What our good teachers had in common

Admitting as reasonable what was discussed along this route, we questioned what the teaching styles of those teachers had in common who, at different times, managed to orient our (stunned) "heads" towards the subjects they were teaching. How did they manage to rid us of magical thinking and, with that, put us on the path of understanding their respective areas of knowledge?

About this, Daniel Pennac (2009, pp. 148ss.) provides exquisite clarifications. He draws attention to a necessary condition for the existence of pedagogical dialogue: *distinguishing between absurd and wrong answers* by students. If the teacher classifies the student's absurd answer as wrong, they assign the minimum grade and do not release the student from magical thinking. The absurd response is limited to a reflex act. It results less from the student's reasoning than from his guessing. It simply responds to the act of being asked a question. The student, by automatically answering anything, and the teacher, assigning them a minimum score for that, *symbolically eliminate each other, not managing to consider each other in their reciprocal functions* (Pennac, 2009, pp. 149-150). In this way, at the end of the day, the teacher annuls himself as a teacher, as *he/she give up on entering into a dialogue* with the student, to be done, of course, about the specific learning difficulties of the latter, at the exact moment in which they manifest themselves. Consequently, in the case of the student, what should be a matter of instruction becomes "a case of susceptibility", like "the teacher doesn't like me" (Pennac, 2009, p. 150, own translation).

The pedagogical dialogue is about responses to be improved. The teachers who awakened us to break the vicious circle of magical thinking showed us the difference between success and error and, without humiliating us, installed us in the dynamics of "making mistakes you learn" *when you are well conducted*. It is this "leading" that is at the etymological origin of the word "pedagogy". Opening up to dialogue is the possibility of building and rebuilding learning. Thus, in the school

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4 This seems to be one of the conditions for the possibility of dialogue with the students, understanding their learning difficulties and the effort to help them pedagogically in their search for knowledge.

trajectory of sluggish students, as was our case, this applies especially to learning writing and mathematical calculation.

There is another common point among the teachers who put us on the path of "making mistakes you learn". It is possible to recall that these professors were able to guide us – as we left them – for having known how to cross and combine two unmistakable types of thinking: on one hand, narrative-descriptive thinking and, on the other, conceptual, logical-scientific and argumentative (Bruner, 1988, pp. 23-53). Through the first modality of thought we give meaning to experience; through the second, we seek knowledge of the truth. The first type of thinking is universal, common to all cultures, and does not depend on schooling. The second type is the characteristic thinking of educated epistemic subjects. Being educated implies learning to think conceptually (Vóvio, 1999; Young, 2007, 2011), either through logical-conceptual reasoning or through argumentative reasoning. But schooling cannot occur without seams being made between the type of thinking to be learned and the thinking that was learned from the cradle, which is narrative-descriptive. Without intersections and intersections with this one, it would be difficult to learn conceptual thinking, which means that the specifically school pedagogical dialogue would not happen, through which situations in the world of life come to be (re)known through procedures and conceptual apparatuses of the academic world.

Through narrative-descriptive language, associated with the timbre and musicality of the voice, our best teachers hooked us by the ears, eyes and fingers to the markedly conceptual school contents. Looking at it well, the teachers who conveyed the contents in a narrative, including autobiographical form, were good. Narrative-descriptive thinking allows exchanging beliefs and experiences with people from other sociocultural worlds, which is why educators should pay attention to the syntax of students' verbal thinking, corresponding to their respective sociocultural worlds.

Indeed, languages and dialects determine the *way of thinking*, in its limits and possibilities. Repeatedly, Paulo Freire (2003, pp. 56-58, own translation) draws attention to the difference between the "syntax or popular organization of thought" and the intellectual way of thinking of educators: their training leads them to describe/characterize more concept of the object, whereas, in popular syntax, "the object is described and not its concept". In school education, therefore, the contrast between narrative-descriptive and conceptual (logical-mathematical and argumentative) modes of thinking should not be suppressed. Neither term manages to absorb the other and both are necessary for the pedagogical dialogue. This is, among many others, one of the classic aporias of education. If, despite our slowness, we managed to learn, this was possible because our teachers set in motion the aporia of knowledge against ignorance, articulating the conceptual modality of thought with the narrative modality. But they went further. They knew how to work with other pedagogical aporias, making use of theoretical, argumentative, rhetorical, stylistic tools, etc., each one, according to their way of exercising teaching. It is worth mentioning some of these pedagogical aporias and making reasonable the idea that they are adequately faced through the cognitive operators proposed by Edgar Morin (2005a, pp. 331-334), in particular, the dialogic principle.

Aporias of education: Knowledge to think about pedagogical work

Reflection on the aporias of education is usually not relevant in scientific research on educational *facts*. However, it must be rigorously embraced by pedagogical thinking, always multireferential and propositional. The aporias emerge from the pedagogical *action* itself as it needs to be designed and directed. In this symbolic field of play (of power), every little bit, we are faced with situations in which the setbacks, real and apparent, make sense.

It should be noted that, in explaining the aforementioned aporias, we tried to be reasonable

in terms of the arguments used. One of the aforementioned thinkers, Jacques Ardoino (2012a, p. 556, own translation), says that "education is always miscegenation", aiming to help the subject to invent its own itinerary, while fulfilling a socializing function. He recalls that Sigmund Freud would have realized the "contradictory nature of education: desire for transgression and respect for the law".

José M. Quintana Cabanas (1988, pp. 219-253, own translation) systematically dealt with the classic aporias of education, even though he referred to them with the term "antinomies".[5] Jean-Pierre Pourtois and Huguette Desmet (1999, pp. 31-33, own translation) also propose that one seek or restore "the intermediary between the terms" of the aporias. As these authors rely on Edgar Morin, they do not consider a dialectical synthesis, but speak of "reengendering", "reorganization", "recursion" and "exploitation of randomness instead of fighting it". Indeed, according to Morin himself (2005a, p. 332; 2005b, p. 110), the ethical-epistemological imperative of *distinguishing-and-linking* unfolds in recursive principles (the effects are necessary for the production of oneself and the causes are, in turn, affected by the effects), dialogical (connection of antagonistic terms) and hologramic (the part is in the whole and vice versa) of thinking, among others.

With regard to the dialogic principle, according to Morin (1997, p. 59, own translation), "the game of antagonisms, without necessarily giving rise to synthesis, is in itself productive" and fundamental contradictions cannot be overcome by thought. In his centennial biography, after a long enthusiasm for the Hegelian idea of "synthesis" (which exceeds and integrates contradictions), Morin came to consider it a "magical idea" (Morin, 1997, p. 56, own translation). And, abandoning the "euphoric synthesis", in *O método* [*The Method*], Morin irrevocably replaced the (Hegelian-Marxist) dialectic with *dialogic*, the latter considered "association of simultaneously complementary and antagonistic instances" (Morin, 1997, p. 59, own translation). In the conception of the Hegelian-Marxist dialectic, contradictions are overcome and suppressed in superior units. Dialogic, on the other hand, "does not overcome radical contradictions, considers them as insurmountable and vital, faces them or integrates them into thought" (Morin, 2005b, p. 240, own translation). The author adds that this "dialogic of life" obeys the "complexity of living reality", not being governed by a superior principle (Morin, 2005b, p. 240, own translation).

Thus, in line with Blaise Pascal (2000, art. XVI, § 13), Edgar Morin (1997, p. 60) guides us to take as "the opposite of a profound truth" not the error, but "another profound truth". Consistent with this epistemological principle, the actualization of something potentiates its antagonist and, conversely, every virtualization counterbalances an actualization; thus, the physical notions of wave and particle, like many others in different areas of knowledge, maintain a relationship of "complementary contradiction" (Morin, 1997, p. 60, own translation).[6]

Within the framework of this theoretical-methodological approach, Jean-Pierre Pourtois and Huguette Desmet (1999) propose a multi-referential model of pedagogical thinking.[7] These authors stress that the opposing terms of pedagogy must be combined. Such a duty-principle is at the base of all thought, which is "rational" precisely because it seeks, as far as possible, to avoid and resolve contradictions. But complex thinking does not allow us to close ourselves within a self-

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5   For the subject in question, we consider the term "antinomies" inappropriate, because in antinomies there is a movement in which the truth of a proposition implies its falsity, and vice versa, which is not the case in the oppositions in question here (Arenhart et al., 2022, pp. 36-61).

6   Edgar Morin wants to maintain and understand, without dissolving, paradoxes such as that the most cultured nation in the world, Germany, with the backing of science, produced one of the worst barbarities in universal history, the holocaust (Morin, 1997).

7   Pourtois and Desmet (1999) explain several aporias, such as attachment *versus* detachment, being welcomed *versus* differentiate yourself, paternal investment *versus* singularization of the child, independence *versus* affiliation, autonomy *versus* submission to social norms, consideration *versus* self-esteem, freedom *versus* directivity, regularity *versus* disturbances, what-is-already-done *versus* the "do better".

sufficient logical (deductive-identity) system, and guides us to think about the concrete situations of pedagogical work, in dialogue with others, confronting and crossing multiple theoretical-conceptual frameworks, even if they are not synthesized.

Along this path we are sent to the epistemological problem of the relations between analytical logic and the principles of complex thinking (Morin, 2005c, p. 211; Arenhart et al., 2022). In some writings, defending facing the challenge of complexity, Edgar Morin (2005b, p. 110) favored dialogic, recursive and hologramic principles of thinking. Guided by these and other principles, complex thinking operates according to a "rotating dialectic" (in a spiral) between opposing and uniting terms. Through this dialectic, which is neither Hegelian nor Marxist, one is led to recognize that "complexity is not only the problem of the object of knowledge; it is also the problem of the method of knowledge necessary for this object" (Morin & Le Moigne, 2000, p. 65, own translation); other reflections corroborate this view (Morin, 2005b; Demo, 2002). In our view, the directives of intelligibility of the Morinian dialog allow us to lucidly and effectively face the pedagogical aporias.

Final considerations

The strategy of recognizing and facing the aporias inherent to the educational process appears to be a necessary condition for good pedagogical work with students of different learning rhythms, and, by extension, with all students with their respective specific learning difficulties. The answers to the questions presented in the introduction converge to this statement. The incursion into complex pedagogical thinking was made through a hermeneutic dive into a work of contemporary literature, *Mágoas da escola* by Daniel Pennac (2009). The methodological-procedural proposal of Flávio Brayner (2015, p. 123, own translation) of rethinking the fundamentals of education "based on the experience of reading" was tested. Effectively, to think about pedagogical work, literature makes available to us an "instrument for the meaning of our experiences" that is less ambitious and "more polysemous and decentered" than the principle of calculating reason (Brayner, 2015, p. 119, own translation).

In a subsequent study, adding to these epistemological considerations Diane Ravitch's (2011) criticism of the 2002 North American education reform, arguments could be adduced in favor of the hypothesis that the instructional technology presented by Doug Lemov (2011), with the dogmatic certainty of someone who has the seal of approval from the education entrepreneurs for whom he works, is based on misconceptions pertinent to his object of study and knowledge of this object: first, it is suspected that the 49 teaching techniques of the "champion teacher audience" are effective with children and teenagers we meet in our schools; second, the way in which he focuses on teaching issues seems to follow a deductive-identity logic that ignores the complexity and, particularly, the otherness of the people of the students of our time and their respective sociocultural worlds. Or, what would you call the logic according to which those who can enter a school, class or course are selected? And, even with those selected, using techniques from the "A+ class", rigorously guided by the deductive-identity logic, will graduates be well prepared for the democratic exercise of citizenship? Why, as Diane Ravitch (2011) denounces, would corporate education reform in the United States have "run down the drain"?

All contemporary pedagogical problems are complex. Therefore, they demand to be faced, in theory, in research and in practice, in/by the epistemological framework of complex thinking. Also, the continuing education of teachers, in order to advance in understanding the educational problems of our time, needs to be aligned with the epistemological approach that dares to face complexity. In this sense, the dialogue between the non-learning/learning aporias does not find resolution in the logical/rational scope, but in the practical movement, in the daily practice of

teaching. Recognizing that there are students with difficulties, with unique learning rhythms, does not seem to be the biggest problem faced by educators, but the complete absence of any expectations on the part of students regarding school and life, this indeed makes teaching inoperative. What to do in this scenario?

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