



Mario Alighiero Manacorda and working-class education in public school

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Abstract

This article aims to analyze three contributions of Mario Alighiero Manacorda to the field of Brazilian education published in the 1980s. The author's writings, translated in Brazil, strengthened the discussion on the formation of the working-class and contributed to the defense of public, universal, free, and secular schools. For this purpose, we examined two interviews, one published in 1986 and the other in 1987, and a lecture given in 1987. As for the theoretical basis, the analyses are anchored in historical materialism, specifically in the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, and Antonio Gramsci. We conclude that the public school is a historical gain for the working-class, and that it should be maintained by the State, but without its interference with respect to the dissemination of ideologies. In this context, the role of education is to provide the student with the appropriation of what is most advanced and developed in science, technology, sports, and art with a view to the complete formation of man.

Keywords: Education. History of Education. Manacorda. Marxism.

Mario Alighiero Manacorda e a educação da classe trabalhadora na escola pública

Resumo

Este artigo tem como objetivo analisar três contribuições de Mario Alighiero Manacorda ao campo da educação brasileira publicados na década de 1980. Os escritos do autor traduzidos no Brasil fortaleceram a discussão sobre a formação da classe trabalhadora e corroboraram com a defesa da escola pública, universal, gratuita e laica. Para tanto, foram examinadas duas entrevistas, uma publicada em 1986 e outra em 1987, e uma palestra proferida em 1987. No que se refere à fundamentação teórica, as análises estão ancoradas no materialismo histórico, especificamente nos escritos de Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels e Antonio Gramsci. Conclui-se que a escola pública é um ganho histórico da classe trabalhadora, deve ser mantida pelo Estado, mas, sem a sua interferência no que diz respeito à disseminação de ideologias. Nesse contexto, o papel da educação é proporcionar ao estudante a apropriação do que há de mais avançado e desenvolvido na ciência, tecnologia, esporte e arte com vistas à formação completa do homem.

Palavras-chave: Educação. História da Educação. Manacorda. Marxismo.



Mario Alighiero Manacorda y la educación de la clase obrera en la escuela pública

Resumen

Este artículo tiene como objetivo analizar tres contribuciones de Mario Alighiero Manacorda al campo de la educación brasileña publicadas en la década de 1980. Los escritos del autor, traducidos en Brasil, fortalecieron la discusión sobre la formación de la clase obrera y contribuyeron a la defensa de la educación pública, universal, libre y laica. Para ello, se examinaron dos entrevistas, una publicada en 1986 y otra en 1987. En cuanto a la base teórica, los análisis están anclados en el materialismo histórico, específicamente en los escritos de Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels y Antonio Gramsci. Se concluye que la escuela pública es una conquista histórica de la clase obrera, debe ser mantenida por el Estado, pero sin su injerencia en cuanto a la difusión de ideologías. En este contexto, el papel de la educación es proporcionar al alumno la apropiación de lo que hay de más avanzado y desarrollado en la ciencia, en la tecnología, en el deporte y en el arte con vistas a una completa formación ciudadana.

Palabras clave: Educación. Historia de la Educación. Manacorda. Marxismo.

Introduction

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Mario Alighiero Manacorda (1914-2013) proposed to analyze educational issues in the light of the writings of Marx, Engels, and Gramsci and is a 20th century Marxist intellectual. The socialization of his writings in Brazil took place amid the struggle against the civil-military dictatorship experienced in the early 1980s, a time when researchers, organized in graduate courses in education, sought a theoretical reference that would overcome the non-critical and critical-reproductive conceptions of education. They found in the theoretical frameworks of historical materialism – Marx, Gramsci and their interpreters, among them, Manacorda – the necessary support to their analysis and research. During this period, some of his works published in Spain and Portugal were circulating among Brazilian researchers: *Marx y la pedagogía moderna*, 1969; *Marx e a Pedagogia Moderna*, 1975; *El principio educativo en Gramsci*, 1977 (ANDE, 1981, 1986).

In October 1987, Manacorda came to Brazil at the invitation of Paolo Nosella to give the opening lecture at the event that celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Graduate Program in Education (PPGE) of the Federal University of São Carlos – São Paulo, which was coordinated by Professor Ester Buffa. After



this event, Brazilian researchers became interested in his writings that had been translated into Portuguese and published in Brazil: *História da Educação: da antiguidade aos nossos dias; O princípio Educativo em Gramsci; and Marx e a Pedagogia Moderna* (NOSELLA, 2013a; SAVIANI, 2010).

Nosella relates his involvement in this invitation:

In October 1987, at the invitation of the São Carlos PPGC Coordination Office, which was celebrating the program's 10th anniversary, I arranged for this illustrious history of education professor to give a lecture, still unpublished, on the theme "humanism in Marx and industrialism in Gramsci". On that occasion, he held a cycle of lectures in several Brazilian universities, establishing contacts. Some academics from here, passing through Italy, visited Manacorda, even to interview him (NOSELLA, 2013b, p. 212).

In Brazil, Manacorda gave a lecture entitled *Marx's Humanism and Gramsci's Industrialism*, which was later translated and published in the book *Trabalho, Educação e Prática Social*, organized by Tomaz Tadeu da Silva, in 1991, and recently republished in *Revista Eletrônica de Educação*, in 2017. On this occasion, Manacorda traveled to other Brazilian states giving lectures and granting interviews, from which we highlight the one published in *Educação em Questão* journal, in 1989, by Jandira Araújo Teixeira and Zuleide Araújo Teixeira, which dealt with the theme *Work and Education*.

It is important to point out that Paolo Nosella's first face-to-face contact with Manacorda took place two years before the PPGEd event at UFSCar. Nosella mentions that, upon learning about Manacorda's texts published in Spain, he wanted to talk to the author about education in the Marxist context and, to do so, he visited him at his home in Bolsena, Italy in 1985. On that occasion he received from the hands of the Marxist educator a copy of the work *Storia dell'educazione: dall'antichità a oggi*. The copy, marked with a dedication and signed, Nosella emphasizes that he keeps "with affection" (NOSELLA, 2013b), because it recalls his international exchange experience and the first face-to-face contact with Manacorda.

The most remarkable contact was, and is, with the Italian historian and educator Mario Alighiero Manacorda. Certainly, there is in our personal relationship something that transcends professional interest, something that touches the existential sphere. Every time we say



goodbye, emotion chokes our voices. Mario is for me an important intellectual reference, a deep inspiration that I cannot even define. His classical culture, his discipline and dedication to his studies, his love for independence and politics fascinate me. In December he turned 96 years old. In a very recent e-mail dated February 1, 2011, he writes: Caro Paolo, eccoti il testo 'definitivo', butta l'altro. Um abbraccio. Mario. (Dear Paolo, here is the 'definitive' text, throw away the other one. A hug. Mario). He refers to his latest essay of more than one hundred pages, 'definitive' in quotation marks, whose provocative title is Karl Marx, that old communist liberal [...] (NOSELLA, 2013b, p. 211).

4 After the first personal contact between Nosella and Manacorda, excerpts of an interview granted to the researcher Maria de Lourdes Stamato de Camillis, in 1986, were published by ANDE – Revista da Associação Nacional de Educação which we will discuss next. We will also present the interview granted to Jandira Araújo Teixeira and Zuleide Araújo Teixeira and the opening speech of the Seminar celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Graduate Program in Education at UFSCar. We understand that these are the first Manacordian writings translated into Portuguese and published in Brazil. They contributed to the studies on Marxism and education and to the discussion on the defense of public, free, secular, and universal schools, widespread in the 1980s.

Interview: ANDE Magazine – 1986

Manacorda's interview, published in the TESTIMONY section of the Revista da Associação Nacional de Educação (ANDE, 1986), can be considered one of the first, if not the first, text of the author's ideas translated into Portuguese and published in our country, given the contact of Brazilian educators with the work Marx and Pedagogia Moderna (modern pedagogy) book, published in Portuguese in Lisbon, Portugal. The interview was conducted by Maria de Lourdes Stamato de Camillis, with the collaboration of Marcos Salles de Oliveira for transcription and translation from Italian, and the final revision of the text was the responsibility of Maristela Debenest.

Among the questions addressed, we selected the ones that call attention for containing burning reflections on the historical moment lived in Brazil,



that is, the more than twenty years of civil military dictatorship and the role of education in the face of the democratic opening that was in process. Let us see the first one.

Under the premise that the formation of man is directly related to his emancipation as a social individual, how does one pose the educational problem in countries like Brazil, which lived under military dictatorship for over twenty years? (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 60).

Based on the Marxist theoretical framework of Marx and Engels, the author analyzes the development of science, the production of knowledge and the advance of the productive forces worldwide. Manacorda identifies Brazil as being included in the list of countries that compose the third world group, deprived of the production of science, given its situation as a consumer in the world scenario, and therefore subordinated to the central countries.

Currently, we live a contradictory situation. Science is not only concentrated in the big factories, but also in a specific part of the world, in the capitalist or socialist north. The rest of the world, the so-called Third World, is devoid of all knowledge: it receives it from the developed world in the form of products, for which it pays dearly, and which increase its indebtedness. But knowledge embodied in products, and not as the capacity to produce, does not contribute to the development of these countries. In this spiral of seemingly total contradictions, I see the Third World as the wage worker of the 19th century, from Marx's point of view. There is a possibility of breaking the system: these populations, negatively involved in modern development, although they receive the leftovers and do not participate as producers of knowledge in the first place, they participate in this modern world and become increasingly aware of these contradictions (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 60).

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The second selected question deepens the discussion starting from the consequences that the civil-military dictatorship imposed on the training of people in that period.

Currently, one can feel the consequences of twenty years of dictatorship in Brazil more keenly, at the level of thought, intellectual production, quality of life etc., in an entire generation. In this context,



what role do you reserve for education? (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 60).

In the answer, the interviewee highlights that education only directed to the affirmation of the principles of democracy, freedom and cultural participation is insufficient, it needs to be more objective, therefore, without denying these principles, he considers that men must be armed with knowledge "[...] in such a way that they can participate concretely in the creation of a richer life, a greater productive capacity, with greater democratic participation [...]" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 60), therefore, they need more instruction and more culture. The author emphasizes that it is necessary to problematize what culture is.

Culture, today, is not only about reading, writing, and doing math. It goes through theoretical and practical knowledge, and use of new instruments of production and communication among men [...]. Education must be given, yes, but as a concrete instrument of knowledge, of operative and productive capacities, and of cognitive capacity (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 60).

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His considerations regarding what should be taught go further in exemplifying the mystifying character found in the idea of progress. There is nothing mystical about progress or the advancement of science and technology. What exists is the lack of access to science and technology as a producer, and, in some cases, not even as a consumer. Therefore, it is necessary to fight the mystification of this aspect, that is, to fight the "[...] magical cult generated by progress [...]" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 61) that occurs when we do not know the functioning or how it is produced what we consume, such as electricity. It is not by magic that we trigger a switch and artificial lighting comes on.

In reality, we must have the knowledge of all these techniques that make up our lives, in countries where such knowledge and techniques are widespread, as in Brazil (although not in the entire territory, but in certain areas of great cultural and technological development, such as São Paulo). The question then becomes: Can everyone be taught the same thing? It is evident that where such knowledge and techniques have not yet arrived, they cannot be taught. But gradually all these things arrive, and the new ABC is the use and scientific understanding of these new techniques. Not only writing but writing



with a computer; not only the handling of a machine or the tractor (to serve as a manual laborer in a job done with tractors), but the knowledge of the principles of mechanics. In other words, the basic culture today must be that which means a modern translation of the old formal, instrumental preparation such as reading, writing, doing math – which should serve as instruments for knowledge, for concrete instruction (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 61, our emphasis).

For the author, the formation of young people should involve the available scientific and technical knowledge – socialized in each historical moment. But it is not, in this case, only about training for a particular profession, because, the author believes "[...] that one cannot prepare a man to act only in a particular profession because, after the school period, one does not know if there will be social demand for that type of professional" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 61). The productive development that took place in the 18th and 19th centuries, that is, the change from handicraft production to factory production, which replaced human labor with machines, to which we are still witnessing today in a more accelerated form. Therefore, it is necessary to consider that "[...] in a modern form of instruction, things are connected and related, they cannot be disconnected from the surrounding world" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 62).

Determining what to teach is a difficult problem to be solved, however, the author found a north to follow to solve it.

I believe, however, that if the instruction given makes men as contemporary as possible with their own times (I use a Gramsci's expression), this instruction will also be education. They will be men capable of claiming their own rights, capable of participating in the common democratic life, both in their own small environment and in the larger society in which they live (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 62).

When urged to take a stand in defense of the school institution as an educational/formative space for youth, he does it in a critical way and does not present solutions for its limits, on the contrary, he elaborates instigating problematizing questions about it.

The problem is this: how to unite, at school, organization, scientific theories, presence of the highest levels of science and world productivity, with an individuality? With the child and his needs for participation, joy, intellectual and sporting entertainment, play,



mistakes, affection, socialization etc.? It seems to me that the modern state is in a position to give a space to the adolescent that is not only the space of study, and not even only the space of the modern ABC, but also the place of mistakes, of joy etc.? On the one hand, we do not do without science and technology, and, on the other, we want to attend to the individual. It is necessary to ally these two things (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 63).

Still thinking about the great problems of education in the countries that make up the Third World, follows the last question of the interview: "In your opinion, what are the great educational problems of the Third World?" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 63).

8 His answer considers that they are complex problems, since it is a matter of "[...] reconciling the education of an elite with mass education" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 63). He explains that the Third World appeared on the international scene right after the war and inaugurated a process of working in the face of illiteracy, mass literacy was attempted in order to quickly educate that entire generation. It was realized that it was an onerous and tense task, so some evaluated that it was better to start by forming a cultural, scientific, and technical elite "[...] at the level of productive capacity and also of educational capacity" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 63). In this case, we find the counterpoint between the diffusion of education to a large population contingent on the one hand, and, on the other, the formation of a restricted qualified elite. From the interviewee's point of view "[...] it is necessary to seek jointly the raising of the minimum level of literacy and the creation of a qualified elite" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 63). This brings us back to the problem of what to teach, "[...] it is a matter of deciding what today is basic mass culture and what formal preparation should make possible the appropriation of a concrete instruction" (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 63).

The challenge, then, lies in how to materialize this premise. One path that has been taken and is already known is the determined professional instruction, that is, the diffusion of culture through professionalization. But in his view, this is not an adequate path since such training would come late for rapidly changing professions.

Since the need for labor in each sector can never be statistically predicted, it is necessary to have a preparation for the formation of



engineers, technicians or cultural staff in general directed as much as possible to the formation of a man with the ability to perform any cultural activity, whether disinterested (arts, history, philosophy) or engaged (science, technology, and others). A man with a formal, instrumental, preparation, of a modern type, can conquer professional specialization while working, transforming himself when the conditions of work change – as they are changing rapidly in these years (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 63).

Such elaborations should, therefore, start from the principle that “[...] each country should consider its concrete reality [...]” (MANACORDA, 1986, p. 63) and, based on that, position the school as close as possible to the real, contemporary world, and arm it with the most advanced levels of knowledge of science and technology. This would result, then, in a better school, enabling students not only to consume, but also to produce science and technology.

From reading this interview, it is possible to see that the Marxist intellectual was in tune with the changes presented by the contemporary world. He was attentive to the educational needs of the so-called Third World countries, understanding them as members of the trenches in the world sphere and, therefore, the school should provide the effective appropriation of science, art, sports, and technology, in a movement in line with its time of advances in all sectors of human life. Understood in this way, such an education can provide the student not only a technical education or instruction, but also the ability to claim his rights, to participate in democracy at the micro and macrosocial levels in society as a whole.

This same level of sobriety and critical analysis can be verified in the content of the interview given to Jandira Araújo Teixeira and Zuleide Araújo Teixeira in the following year.

Interview: Educação Em Questão jornal – 1987

The interview was given to Jandira Araújo Teixeira and Zuleide Araújo Teixeira when Manacorda came to Brazil in 1987 and was published by Educação Em Questão journal, in 1989. The theme education and work guided the questions asked on that occasion.



The content of the first question is about the role of labor in capitalist and socialist society. The interviewers referred to work in capitalism as being the “[...] form of materialization of capital [...]” (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 103) and, in socialist society, as a construction from a condition of non-work, a social space, “[...] where man works to have more leisure, to develop artistically, in short, to enjoy a higher level of culture” (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 103).

The author, dedicated to the meaning and context of the words, clarifies that there is no socialist project without labor or non-work for Marx, Gramsci and himself, but, rather, more-labor not appropriated or not exploited by the capital as surplus value, which generates profit for the capitalist. This more-labor would be the advancing aspect of society, which would allow the complete development of man through the development of the productive forces, that is, it would provide him with conditions for the appropriation of art, culture, and leisure. In his words:

In Marx's and Gramsci's socialism (if one is allowed to 'magnis componere parva', compare small things to big things) and also in mine, I don't see non-work, but above all more-work. That is it. There cannot be the possibility of entertainment, art, culture, in short, the “higher pleasures” (höhere gewüsse) that Marx talked about, if besides the labor that is “necessary” for the mere subsistence of the worker, there is no “superfluous” labor, or more-labor. The point is that this surplus labor should not produce surplus value or profit for a capitalist but should be a social “surplus value” which therefore produces that universal wealth that is leisure and so on that you speak of in your question (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 103).

The stimulating answer shows that the appropriation of art, culture, and leisure, of superior goods, by the worker, does not occur from non-work, but the key is, or should be, in the non-exploitation of the productive force of the worker, whether in a capitalist society or any other. Therefore, work will always exist, because it is inherent to man and to the development of humanity (MANACORDA, 1989).

This debate opens the discussion about the school in contemporary times. The authors seek from the interviewee an answer concerning “[...] how the school should absorb and develop a teaching that unites the theoretical and the practical within the modern state” (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 106). In order to elaborate a direct answer, Manacorda establishes that it is necessary to



resume the discussion about the union, instruction and work, and lists a series of conditions of what should not guide the teaching that aims at this union.

No to simple moralism (love for work and respect for work); no to simple didactic methodology (doing as a stimulus and verification of knowledge); no to work as a game, and no to work as professional preparation for professions that, however, either disappear or change radically etc. And neither Marx's factory work, nor the "5 + 1" attempted by the countries of "real socialism" deserve a yes. However, I am sure that the separation of education from work, and, before that, school as a place separate from adults and from work, is the implied curse of this great civil event that was mass schooling. I think, then, of two questions. The first is to open as much as possible the school to society and society to the school. That is, the school must be open also to adults in addition to adolescents, in their free time; and social institutions must find ways not improvised or disruptive of opening to the school. Difficult! The second issue is to make school the place "full time" for adolescents, associating to the curricular subjects all the optional activities that teenagers (with or without adults) want to organize: to go deeper into subjects, to rescue the culture that is more or less excluded by school (music, theater, figurative arts, craft, productive and experimental activities), sports etc. Young people should have the idea of having a "capacity to dominate" school (as people should have of the State). In short, school as a time of necessity and freedom (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 106-107).

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Deepening the questions about the role of school for the working class, another question follows: "Do you agree with the idea that the school can be an instrument of the proletariat in the struggle against the bourgeoisie?" (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 107).

The word "instrument" gives me the idea, negatively, of "instrumental" use. It is precisely the use of the school for propagandistic purposes that are not its own.

It is clear that the school, like all institutions of civil society, has characteristics of the dominant classes, whose ideas are dominant through the instrumental use of these institutions: the spirit does not act, as far as I know, without matter.

The Catholic church indoctrinated, the liberal-bourgeois school taught its principles of freedom of exploitation, of property etc. And Lenin was right to denounce its implicit and long-lasting politicization.



But I do not like a school that, besides the other problems it has, continues to have that of being the seat of ideological propaganda, even if it is that of the proletariat.

I think, with Marx, that the school is the place for teaching notions that do not admit different conclusions, no matter who teaches them; and that the teachings of a social type can be given and experienced in other places. [...] In the school, the proletariat "fights the bourgeoisie" if, and insofar as, it makes its cultural heritage. Lenin claimed that he needed to build the future culture with the bricks of bourgeois culture. And in this case, the school can and must be conquered by the proletariat like all the institutions of civil society, the layers of bourgeois power, to be conquered in a war of position, as Gramsci said. And to free it from the tasks of propaganda and make it a seat of true and free culture, without domination (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 107-108).

12 The answer is a genuine history of education lesson in a few lines. The prospect of ideological inculcation of any kind (both bourgeois and proletarian) is rejected and definitively denied by the interviewee. In his view, the proletarian school should focus on democratizing culture, the highest and most developed culture produced by humanity. In this aspect, it will be playing its role as the proletariat's school, therefore, making itself also revolutionary. We must consider that, in modern society, scientific knowledge has become a means of production, so the acquisition of this knowledge by the proletariat means, to some extent, the socialization of the means of production.

The authors address the issue of the democratization of public schooling in a direct way. Let us observe, then, the question followed by their answer: "Within the context of a sociopolitical organization such as that of Brazil, what is your comment on our struggle for a public and free school at all levels?" (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 109).

I agree with everything. The task of the most complete formation possible, of the totality of the new generations, is so vast and complex that it cannot require the total commitment of the whole society, organized in the State. And this must happen without the ideology of this or that government dominating the school, but on the contrary, with the maximum unfolding of liberties (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 109).



The author is clear when he takes a stand against the dissemination of any kind of ideology in the school space. He returns to the affirmation of a complete education for all.

The interview ends with an inquiry in line with the historical moment experienced by Brazilians in the 1980s, namely, the re-democratization of the country and the elaboration of its new Federal Constitution: “we defend at this moment that the new Constitution should state as a principle that it is the State’s duty to assume the citizen’s education since zero years of age. What is your comment on this?” (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 109).

The State must establish by law its own duty to provide education-instruction for all citizens (and also the obligation of citizens to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the State); provide precisely the material conditions (funds, structures, personnel etc.) for the accomplishment of this task, and finally control the execution and respect of its laws. Among them, the freedom of teachers and also – I would say – of students not to be indoctrinated etc. (MANACORDA, 1989, p. 109).

It can be seen, then, that Manacorda shows himself to be an advocate of public school, free, secular, for all, and financed by the State, however, without its interference, as Marx advocates in the Critique of the Gotha Programme, which the Marxist educator analyzes in his book *Marx e a Pedagogia Moderna* (MANACORDA, 2017a).

13

Lecture: Marx’s Humanism and Gramsci’s Industrialism – 1987

About the basic text of the 1987 lecture, Marx’s Humanism and Gramsci’s Industrialism, we can state that it is a writing whose historical marks are well defined. That is, it was written at a time when the questioning of Marx’s thesis on the overcoming of capitalism was in vogue, since the end of the Soviet Union was already under way, materialized in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

Besides, there was a proliferation of productions known as “history in crumbs”, or “in bits and pieces”, a term that is the title of François Dosse’s book, originally published in 1987 (DOSSE, 1992). Such productions insinuated that Marx was outdated because he did not deal with themes proper of the

superstructure, that is, themes widely addressed by the third generation of the Annales School – the New History, or the New Cultural History.

Manacorda was already over 70 years old when he gave the lecture, therefore, he accumulated considerable experience in relation to the analysis and study of Marxist and Gramscian texts. Right at the beginning of his speech, he launched an astute provocation, saying: “Marx was not a Marxist. And Gramsci, was he a Marxist?” (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 26). From this problematization, he develops his arguments in order to counter the tendency to dissociate Gramsci from Marx, which reduces Marx to economism and attributes to Gramsci the study restricted to the humanistic aspects arising from the superstructure.

In this presentation, we are interested in focusing on what the author worked on in relation to Marx, since this aspect insists on persisting in the first decades of the 21st century.

The author begins his talk by introducing his Italian countrymen Croce and Bobbio. He states that after “Croce renewed in the post-war period the customary accusation of economism, even the most recent celebration of Marx’s centenary was for many an occasion to put Marx back once again, and for the same reason, in the attic” (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 27). About Bobbio, he states that the author “relegated the epiphenomenon, in Marxist texts, the terms freedom and dignity” (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 27). Regarding these two interconnected aspects he concludes that “[...] the deviation produced by them in Marx’s thought seems to me evident and total, because they have left aside the origin, the substance and ultimate object of his economy” (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 27).

Similarly, he cites the work of the Frankfurtians Adorno and Horkheimer, who felt “[...] the need to counter the relevance of Marxist economic categories with a stronger presence of political categories, reducing the Marxian production of life to a simple component, secondary among others, of historical development” (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 27-28). However, he considers the context in which the Frankfurtian theorizations were produced, that is, “[...] after the monstrous political domination of Nazism” (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 28).



He mentions relevant names, such as Habermas, Offe, Agnes Heller, Hannah Arendt, Negri, Bowles, and Ginits, and concludes this introduction by stating:

[...] but why go on? From Popper to Foucault, or at the lowest cultural levels, from the Pope to the new philosophers, the citations could be endless. But, I know well, it would be a grave injustice to the authors cited, since isolated citations always risk betraying or at least reducing their thought, and, moreover, making them responsible for the bad use that common sense can make of their thoughts. And I did not, in fact, want to do to them what has often been done to Marx, by them (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 28).

In the same line of reasoning, he adds:

Personally, I consider the body of research of the authors cited, and of others, a determinant contribution to the enrichment of the Marxist tradition, a happy flowering of contemporary thought. And their sensitivity to the superstructural themes of politics, culture, literature, the arts, education, in a word, consciousness, and the development of new fields of knowledge such as cultural anthropology, sociology, psychology of the person and society, psychoanalysis etc., and in general those fields that remain marginal (et pour cause!) or still ignored in the incredibly determined research on Marx, is of no small merit. No doubt all these observations on Marx, and even more on "orthodox" Marxism, may be legitimate and worthy of consideration, but because they all converge in denouncing Marx's exclusive economism and insensitivity to the problems of the person, they confirm in common sense not only an image of Marx that seems to me very reductive, but also a schematic consideration of what political economy can be humanly conceived. Isolating it from all other human interests, they end up reducing it, precisely, to that materialist and mechanistic image that they believe they can attribute to Marx, and that, they wanted, perhaps, to exorcise (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 28).

By listing his arguments, Manacorda takes up the text of the *The German Ideology* and the criticism that Marx made in relation to the Hegelian conception – which dealt with subjective or spiritual human activity by ignoring material work – and the materialist thesis of Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872), and accused him "of conceiving matter as an object, and not subjectively, as



activity" (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 29). In this way, by addressing the two critiques, materialism, and idealism, he evidenced his conception of materialism, "which is, if not, the immediate expression of the struggle against ideologism and the dominant false consciousness" (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 29), in order to free human consciousness from the conditions of its falsity or false consciousness, therefore, these are themes alluding to the superstructure.

The conditioning of false consciousness is directly related to "[...] human intersubjective relations as objects or things, and therefore as fetishes [...] and [...] the liberation of consciousness from fetishes, from relations taken as things, is a question of consciousness?" (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 30), inquires and answers: "This liberation is the substance of the good critique of political economy that is the title of *The Capital*" (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 30).

Still on false consciousness, the author states:

[...] to discover this world of false consciousness, Marx speaks of fetishes, secrets, mysteries, distorted forms, contortions, fictions without fantasy, mystifications, follies, rectifications, and people as marketable objects, irrational and contentless separate figures, transubstantiations and religious discord such as to make one's hair stand on end etc. (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 31).

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In fact, the themes listed are specific to the superstructure, without leaving aside their close relationship with the structure – political economy. The timeliness and relevance of the Marxian theses can be seen not only in the treatment of themes related to the superstructure, but also in his analyses of the evolution of the productive forces in the organization of capitalist production that Manacorda takes up.

It may then be represented as true, tremendously true, and not something to be exorcised, Marx's indication of the fact that the productive forces, enormously developed under capitalist hegemony, manifest themselves at the same time as destructive forces (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 34).

To demonstrate this statement, the author presents some examples of the tragic contradictions experienced at that time, remembering that for him the category of contradiction is the key to interpreting capitalist relations.



[... the great and ever-growing imbalance between the north and south of the planet, with the indebtedness of the Third World and the hunger of entire populations; the destructive assimilation of ancient "primitive" cultures and the imbalance of wealth and misery within the emerging societies themselves; the impoverishment of nature, the pollution of the air, the waters, the land, and even space; the progressive "desertification" of the African tropics and the irreversible deforestation of the equatorial zones; the pollution of the Antarctic; the extinction of entire human populations (the Amazonian Indians reduced in a few decades from many millions to a few hundred thousand); the daily disappearance of countless living species; the plundering of energy reserves; local wars, the arms race; the threat of a possible nuclear catastrophe, which no longer only in war but also in peace threatens us; and, finally, if one truly wants to be sensitive to the facts of consciousness, the impalpable but obsessive submission of consciences to the media, and the mass psychological maladjustment in developed societies (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 34).

If we start from the fact that this is an elaboration from 1987, we can see that such contradictions have been exacerbated in the first decades of the 21st century, reaffirming that the productive forces become destructive forces in the context of capitalism and, therefore, we can reaffirm the current relevance of Marx's theoretical contribution as a basis for analysis of the current historical context.

In view of the arguments exposed, the author concludes by saying that "[...] it is not for nothing that Marx has been, par excellence, the critic of the real unilateralism and the theoretician of the possible omnilateralism of man" (MANACORDA, 2017b, p. 35). This is Marx's humanism.

Final Considerations

The three texts highlight the directions and the role of education in the 1980s. In them, we find analyses of the educational reality based on the historical materialism of Marx, Engels, and Gramsci, without dogmatism or ready-made prescriptions to be applied. These are analyses that lead the reader to critically interpret the educational situation and, thus, justify concrete



interventions towards the realization of a public, free, secular, and universal school that is contemporary with the advances of its time.

From this study, it is possible to affirm that public schools are a historical gain for the working class and must be maintained or financed by the State, from the structures (construction and maintenance of buildings), remuneration of personnel (teachers and employees), acquisition of equipment, pedagogical material, among others. However, this should occur without its interference in what concerns the dissemination of ideologies of any kind, in other words, the school should not be an apparatus of ideological reproduction of the State. In this context, the goal of the school institution is to provide the effective appropriation of science, art, sports, and technology in a movement that takes place in line with all sectors of human life with a view to the complete formation of man.

In view of this, we affirm that to take up again the classics of Marxism and the content of the Manacordian writings today is necessary and urgent for the justification of the fight for a more just society. This is a horizon of hope and social transformation in times of privatization of the public service and the school, of productive restructuring, of flexibilization, of the precariousness of the teaching work, of the obscurantism and conservatism that we witness today.

It is, therefore, a current theoretical reference, since the problems unleashed by the continuous crises of capital deepen as time goes by. The problems of capitalist society have not been overcome, on the contrary, they are more aggravated in the phase of financial capitalism. For this reason, Manacorda's writings continue to be essential to help us understand society and the challenges of education at the beginning of this century. It is unfortunate that the writings of Mario Alighiero Manacorda are increasingly distant from teacher education courses.

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