



Inquiry into the meanings of the educational phenomenon

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Abstract

Different perspectives approach education beyond the dominant instrumental rationality. One of them is dialogue between hermeneutics and education that produces alternative terms to think about the educational phenomenon. What meanings do we want for the educational phenomenon of our time? The objective is to reflect on the contributions of hermeneutics to education. We start from the understanding that hermeneutics allows to unveil the many veiled/crowded meanings present in education. That which is established in the field of school education and educational work requires being taken as a phenomenon to be repeatedly questioned and reflected upon. If today we live immersed in a culture of boredom, then hermeneutics can help us to think a culture of meaning for the educational phenomenon, a context in which the definition of minimum guidelines for the formation of cognitive and moral autonomy seems quite reasonable. This text is an essay that understands that this matrix of rationality has much to contribute to the understanding of the educational phenomenon of our time.

Keywords: Hermeneutics. Education. Culture of boredom. Culture of meaning.

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Indagação acerca dos sentidos do fenômeno educativo

Resumo

Diferentes perspectivas abordam a educação para além da racionalidade instrumental dominante. Uma delas é o diálogo entre a hermenêutica e a educação que produz termos alternativos para pensar o fenômeno educativo. Que sentidos queremos para o fenômeno educativo de nosso tempo? O objetivo aqui é refletir sobre as contribuições da hermenêutica para a educação. Parte-se do entendimento que a hermenêutica permite desvelar os muitos sentidos velados/entulhados presentes na educação. Aquilo que é instituído no âmbito da educação escolar e do trabalho educativo deve ser tomado como um fenômeno a ser reiteradamente questionado e refletido. Se hoje vivemos mergulhados na cultura do tédio, então, a hermenêutica pode ajudar a pensar na cultura do sentido para o fenômeno educativo, um contexto em que a definição de balizas mínimas voltadas à formação de autonomia cognoscitiva e moral parece bastante razoável. Este texto é um ensaio que entende que a matriz de racionalidade tem muito a contribuir à compreensão do fenômeno educativo de nosso tempo.

Palavras-chave: Hermenêutica. Educação. Cultura do tédio. Cultura do sentido.

Indagación sobre los significados del fenómeno educativo

Resumen

Diferentes perspectivas abordan la educación más allá de la racionalidad instrumental dominante. Una de ellas es el diálogo entre hermenéutica y educación que produce términos alternativos para pensar el fenómeno educativo. ¿Qué sentidos queremos para el fenómeno educativo de nuestro tiempo? El objetivo aquí es reflexionar sobre las contribuciones de la hermenéutica a la educación. Partimos del entendimiento de que la hermenéutica permite revelar los múltiples sentidos velados/abarrotados presentes en la educación. Aquello que es instituido en el ámbito de la educación escolar y del trabajo educativo debe ser tomado como un fenómeno a ser reiteradamente cuestionado y reflexionado. Si hoy vivimos inmersos en una cultura del aburrimiento, entonces la hermenéutica puede ayudar a pensar una cultura de sentido para el fenómeno educativo, contexto en que la definición de pautas mínimas orientadas a la formación de la autonomía cognitiva y moral parece bastante razonable. Este texto es un ensayo que entiende que la matriz de racionalidad tiene mucho que aportar a la comprensión del fenómeno educativo de nuestro tiempo.

Palabras-clave: Hermenéutica. Educación. Cultura del aburrimiento. Cultura del sentido.

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Reflecting on the possibilities of dialogue between hermeneutics and education is a challenge for those who venture to think philosophically about the educational phenomenon, however, we face it as those interested in knowing more about the dialogic and reflexive possibilities of hermeneutics concerning education. Taking language as the horizon where human things are inscribed demarcates, by itself, the critique of metaphysical and/or instrumental approaches to the human being and education.

To take the perspective of language means to understand that we are persons thrown into the world, products and producers of ourselves, therefore not destined by an external being or by a reason inherent to nature and/or history. If there are problems, and we have them of all kinds, they are human productions and, thus, need to be understood, since they are also in the condition of a constant revision. In this way, we are temporally projects launched¹. I, you, we, and humanity are thrown into time and space.

It is through language that we take on the education of the new generations and inscribe them in the common world. It is through language that we humanize ourselves, appropriate human things, produce our own existence, and understand the world. It means that we found the human world within the framework of language, so that we are biological and symbolic creatures, constructions of language. We are indelibly marked by language. The recognition



that the educational phenomenon takes on features in time and space implies assuming the finiteness of human things. Differentiation and plurality make us inscribe human things in different perspectives: they can be metaphysical, religious, naturalistic, idealistic, or materialistic, teleological, or deontological, more or less deliberate, but always revisable.

Thus, to situate education in the sphere of human production, in the condition of its finitude, does not mean absence of references. The consensus that the task of education is the transmission of a tradition, aimed at the formation of cognitive and moral autonomy, seems quite reasonable. In this consensus, we could place references such as freedom, democracy, social justice, respect for diversity – ethnic, religious, and gender diversity – responsibility, care, sustainability, and so on, core values for those who share the common world. If today we live a culture of boredom, as La Taille (2009) considers, then, hermeneutics can help us think of a culture of meaning for the educational phenomenon.

The path proposed for this essay visits concepts of hermeneutics and, subsequently, dialogues with education as the production of a culture of meaning. Taking hermeneutics as a reference for this reflection, claims to reaffirm the question: Which senses do we want for the educational phenomenon of our time? This is an essay in close dialogue with the world of educational practices with which we live daily.

Language and the common world

To report some concepts of hermeneutics, even if in a preliminary way, contributes to broaden the understanding of the meanings of the educational phenomenon. Among the relevant concepts, we highlight language, interpretation, understanding, temporariness, truth, conversation, and dialog. The intention is to establish a relationship among the concepts to understand education as a production of men and women in the world. It would be a mistake to approach or discuss these concepts in isolation, since there is a circularity that feeds them (HEIDEGGER, 2005a; 2005b).

It is through language that we name things and assign predicates to them. It is also through language that we pronounce ourselves about things and understand ourselves with others in and about the world. In this sense, the being of things is unveiled (and is veiled) in the horizon of shared language. It is through language that we unveil the world and make possible the unveiling of

the being of things in the different senses by which the word "to be" is present in our speech and actions: to be-the-case-what (veritative sense), "to be" as a linking verb, "to be" as existing, "to be" as connotation of "I am..." (self-implicative sense) etc. (TUGENDHAT, 2013). For Heidegger:

A phenomenon can be kept hidden because it has never been discovered. Of it, then, there is neither knowledge nor ignorance. A phenomenon can be covered up. This means: it was discovered before, but then it was covered up again. This concealment can be total or, as it usually happens, what was discovered before still remains visible, although as an appearance (HEIDEGGER, 2005a, p. 67).

4 The plunge into being-there (*Dasein*) presents us with possibilities of being, or rather, become (zu sein) or could do. The access to being-there occurs through the condition of always being immersed in language. Much more than a means *by* which, language is a means *in* which we can access the being of things. If a phenomenon has not been discovered it is because it has not been touched by language. Once it is inscribed in language, it can cover itself up again, become concealed, veiled, which requires that we ask again about its being. In this way, unveiling the being-there means inscribing or reinscribing it within the horizon of language. If at one time in our tradition the end of education was the salvation of the soul, at another time it was the formation of the gentle man or the formation for autonomy and emancipation. It seems to us that, today, the phenomenon has become obscured, or the term is concealed. If we have meant education in a plural way throughout tradition, what meaning does it take on today? What do we educate for? From educational policies to teaching practices, such concealment is not difficult to visualize.

Thus, to attribute meaning or to unveil the meanings of education is only possible in the horizon of language. That is, as Hermann (2002, p. 64) states, "[...] our access to objects is only realized through language, through the linguisticity of being-in-the-world, which is articulated under the horizon of all our experience." Lawn (2010) states that

[...] we cannot find an Archimedes point outside of culture and language in our search for truth, thus, just like our prejudices, the conditions of understanding are part of what we seek to make comprehensible (LAWN, 2010, p. 14).



Thus, we understand things from our condition of being-there, and it is through language that we interpret and understand them. Thus, we understand education as a cultural phenomenon, which we access through language.

The interpretation of tradition allows us to search for the meanings of education in time. This translation of tradition helps us to read the phenomenon in our time. Cortella's (2015, p. 41) reflection about tradition is pertinent: "that things which comes from the past and which we have to keep, protect, carry forward, we call tradition. That things which comes from the past and must be discarded, that which is surpassed, we call archaic. In the author's view, in education we use the terms tradition, novelty, and new in the wrong way. Thus,

[...] a traditional school protects the old, rather than deluding itself with mere novelty. There is a difference between new and novelty. Novelty is that which comes, makes a little smoke, and goes out. New is that which comes, revolutionizes, and persists (CORTELLA, 2015, p. 41).

It seems to us that we have made tradition a scorched earth in the name of novelty, of fads in education. Or, as Stein (1996, p. 28) ponders, "[...] we no longer have bonds of commitment to facts, to things, to the events that surround us". He adds that "there is a kind of erosion of the elements of tradition that largely sustained human life until the middle of the century"².

Heidegger (2006, p. 52) understands that "[...] only if we turn to the already thought, we will be summoned to what is yet to be thought". We have a growing movement scorched earth of "tradition, confusing it with the archaic, in the name of an always sterile and utilitarian novelty". Today, this novelty, the mystification, as Charlot (2013) would say, is disguised as "neuro-education" and "computerization", as if it were possible to solve the problems of education by these means. In Charlot's (2013) view, these are new ways of concealment and veiling education. Thus, those who live in the horizon of constant novelty, of fads, need to dismiss tradition, making it outdated, to make its defenses legitimate, marks present in contemporary education. Looking at tradition does not mean denying the movement of the world, but learning from those who came before us, in order to understand the present and assume the commitment and responsibility for our continuity.

Therefore, taking up again the questioning about what has already been thought allows us to set ourselves on a path. Visiting the tradition of education is a condition for unveiling its meaning(s), which is only possible through

language. Thus, we agree with Waddington (2002, p. 171) that “[...] there is no knowing, thinking or being outside language”. It is language that allows us not only to negotiate the meanings, but also to unmask those hidden meanings. We reiterate Lawn’s (2010, p. 112) understanding that “[...] without language there would be no world [...] and that [...] language is about the negotiation and sense-making act of a human world of our own making.” The search for meaning, or meanings, today, more than ever, is indispensable. Educating for a common world requires references that mark the educational task of the school and of the educators.

Establishing common, legitimate references requires negotiation, which is only possible in the context of a communicative encounter. References, in essence, are deliberations – reasons and justifications – that we accept as reasonable. Tugendhat (2007) states that when we deliberate about things,

[...] we ask ourselves for the reasons in favor or against what one is saying or thinking [...], in which context our actions are no longer directed [...] simply by desires, but also by what one thinks is good or true, that is, by the results of deliberation. This in turn presupposes the capacity to suspend desires, the capacity that is called freedom and responsibility (TUGENDHAT, 2007, p. 190).

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From this point of view, educational action is always a task collectively thought and there is only one way to do it: by talking and establishing minimum consensuses. Stein (1996, p. 70) suggests that these minimal consensuses could be founded on the struggle against “[...] social injustices”, affirming “human solidarity”, “human dignity” and the “affirmation of human life”.

Therefore, the human formation that takes place in the face-to-face of the school participants should, before it happens, be questioned about its meaning. Unfortunately, what we see in our walks around the schools and in the continuing education of teachers is that *the question of the meaning of education is hidden, if not openly rejected*. Many things are said, such as formation for work, for the university entrance exams, for entrepreneurship, for the mastery of cultural contents, for citizenship, for responsibility, for happiness etc. These are often empty expressions that do not interrogate the fundamental questions of education³. As Heidegger (2005a) points out, it is a concealed phenomenon. Taylor (1997) attributes this lack of meaning to individualism, the prevalence of instrumental reason, and the decline of people’s aspiration to participate in the government of their societies.



In this sense, it is through words, through dialogue, that a reflection about what we understand by education, even if it is always provisional, is made possible. As Lawn (2010) states,

[...] language clarifies aspects of being [...], making them comprehensible to human consciousness. It manifests the said and the unsaid. In this sense, he adds that a proposition, or even [...] a statement about the world, contains both the said and the unsaid. The said is obviously what the proposition presents, but the unsaid is what motivates it, what questions what the proposition itself answers (LAWN, 2010, p. 113).

Perceived like that, the educational phenomenon, or any human phenomenon, always remains between the unsaid and the said. Once this proposition is accepted, it can be stated that “[...] the human discourse is necessarily unfinished, which requires saying and rewriting the meanings of the meanings experienced, without the idea that everything has been said” (BUENO, 2003, p. 29). It is the understanding that the ultimate meaning has not been found, nor will it ever be definitively found. This understanding motivates us to investigate, always and again, a phenomenon and the questions that are always posed again, because the possibility of new meanings is inherent to the very questioning of the meaning of being.

In this sense, when we return to tradition, we allow it to deliver messages that may have been buried by everyday life, including school life. Waddington (2002, p. 174) understands that “[...] interpreting harbors a constitutive and invigorating tension between openness and closure.” Such understanding recognizes that it is the

[...] knowledge that will effectively allow the reinvention of existence beyond collective alienation, the globalization of misery, inequality and injustice, the logic of volatile capital, without homeland, without law, without ethics, will need to realize its rootedness critically and radically in time and in the world, which will only be possible if knowing is reinvigorated by interpreting (WADDINGTON, 2002, p. 183).

Thinking about another human existence will only be possible if we interpret the meanings handed down by tradition to keen and attentive ears. What rationality has been predominant in the contemporary world? Dardot

and Laval (2016, p. 30) understand that there is a new reason guiding human existence. They define it as a “[...] set of discourses, practices and devices that determine a new mode of government of men”, guided by the principle of competition and “[...] producing an ‘accounting’ subjectivity by creating systematic competition between individuals”.

This rationality announced by the authors is expressed in our entrepreneurial language, in our public policies, in educational policies, in teachers’ educational practices, in evaluation processes etc.

For Teixeira (2005, p. 53), “[...] the condition of possibility is fundamentally associated with the historical context where the Dasein is ‘inserted - launched’”. Thus, the context in which we are immersed “[...] provides us with certain conceptual instruments that constitute this very opening. In other words, there is a pre-understanding that man does not choose, but that constitutes him as *being-there*”. As Heidegger (2005a, p. 45) would say “[...] time as the horizon of all understanding and interpretation of being”. Certainly, it is only possible to question the meanings for education in our time to the extent that we talk with tradition. Nothing that is put into phenomena is free from the noises of language and is, therefore, manifest in our interpretation.

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It is through language that we understand ourselves as historical persons. We are, each one of us and humanity itself, temporal projects without the guarantee of effectiveness. According to Gadamer (1997, p. 493), human experience is the experience of finitude. Man “[...] knows that he owns neither time nor the future, since he knows the limits of every prediction and the insecurity of every plan”. Human things are human productions in the condition of a circumstantial project, therefore, they are devoid of any teleology or previously established truth.

Recognizing our historicity also implies admitting the temporariness of human things. If historicity recognizes finitude, the temporariness recognizes that the saying about the things of this world situate itself between the said and the unsaid. Therefore, the understanding of an absolute and definitive truth falls to the ground. In this sense, hermeneutics, according to Stein (1986, p. 32), “[...] seeks to cautiously penetrate its time” and “seeks to become aware of the conditioning that determines its position within the historical constellation”. Thus, truth claims need to be understood in their historicity, which makes them provisional. Thus, what we say about things is precarious, which allows us to always revisit the understandings we produce. Hermann (2002, p. 24) reiterates that “[...] by



inserting itself in the world of language, hermeneutics renounces the pretension of absolute truth and recognizes that we belong to the things said, to the discourses, opening an infinity of possible interpretations”.

Thus, what we understand as tradition, or evaluate as legitimate, remains on the horizon of the provisional. Heidegger (2005a, p. 49), wrote that “[...] tradition thus predominantly tends to make so little accessible what it ‘bequeaths’ that, most of the time and in the first approximation, it veils and hides it.” For Kandinsky apud Almeida (2003):

Everything that seems dead palpitates. Not only the things of poetry, stars, struggle, woods, flowers, but also a bud shining in a mud puddle of a moon [...]. Everything has a secret soul, which keeps silence more often than it speaks. [...]. A street can be observed through the glass of a window, so that its noises reach us muffled, its movements turn ghostly, and the whole of it, despite the transparency of the cold, rigid glass, appears as a being on the other side. Or one can open the door, leave the isolation, go deeper into the being-outside, become part of it, and the pulsations of the street are experienced with full meaning. [...]. Man is not a spectator through a window, but penetrates the street. Sight and attentive ears transform minimal commotions into great experiences. From everywhere voices flow, and the whole world resonates. Like an explorer venturing into unknown territories, we make our discoveries in everyday life. The almost always mute environment begins to express itself in an increasingly meaningful language. Thus, dead signs become symbols, and what was dead resurrect (KANDINSKY apud ALMEIDA, 2003, p. 47-48).

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Thus, Kandinsky presents his readers with a rare clarification of the understanding of temporality and temporariness. Things are cast in time, as is the temporariness of our understandings. What we understand as truth is therefore language. Gadamer Lawn (2010) states that

[...] truth, as a product of infallible method, ignores the truths of experience contained within a common cultural tradition [...]; and still that truth [...] is never something we finally reach and obtain. All our activities in the social world are “in the way of” truth, but never finally reach it (GADAMER LAWN, 2010, p. 61-62).

If we agree with the understanding that truth is in the realm of language, we must keep in mind its finitude, therefore, its precariousness.

To explain the hermeneutic understanding of truth, Teixeira (2005) proposes the metaphor of inhabiting.

Inhabiting, as a metaphor to speak of hermeneutic truth, should be understood as live in a *library*, while the idea of truth as conformity represents true knowledge as the certain possession of an "object"; the truth of inhabiting is more the competence of the librarian, who does not entirely possess the totality of the books among which he lives, and not even the first principles on which such contents depend (TEIXEIRA, 2005, p. 102).

10 The belief in truth as totality, which could be apprehended, is therefore illusory. It is partial and provisional, as is the librarian's mastery of the library works and their contents. The tradition that we take as reference in education, for example, is not synonymous with truth, in its absolute sense. We live among a set of references and we take some of them as "truths", as legitimate, even if we understand them as provisional. This is what we ponder as legitimate for the new generations. Tugendhat (2007, p. 194) understands that "[...] although human life is not possible outside of traditions, the mere fact that a conception is justified by tradition cannot be a reason to accept it." He adds that "[...] in relation to tradition, we find ourselves in the same situation as in relation to any opinion: we can accept it, but we can also criticize it, that is, ask for its reasons, for its justification. In this sense, the choice between this or that reference is made in a plural universe of possibilities⁴.

Thus, the basic question that arises cannot be reduced to a Manichean position of choosing between only two possibilities, one right and the other wrong. It is important to understand as clearly as possible that, at this moment, these are our references and we consider them to be legitimate. In the case of education, what would be legitimate propositions? If we conceal the meanings of education with superficialities and lose the fundamental dimensions of what is human, hermeneutics, while listening and questioning, can help us interpret what is said and what is not said. As Teixeira (2005, p. 109) states, "[...] such an attitude allows and reveals the being of things in its 'veiled' 'unveiling'. This accent on listening is an invitation to man to abandon the closed structure of propositions". In this sense, we can question the legitimacy of education or teacher training that is guided by guidelines, for example, of an economic and instrumental rationality, as Flickinger (2010) alerts us.



Hermeneutics is not only a form of understanding based on language, it is a critique of the objectifying rationality. For Flickinger (2010, p. 172), hermeneutics is also an alternative to the causal-explanatory method of objectifying science⁵. The author states that, as a doctrine of understanding, hermeneutics “[...] presupposes the insertion of man in his history and language, horizons before which he should seek the meaning, both of the facts and of his own action and the interrelationship between both”. Hermeneutics broadens the horizon of understanding and allows other things to be said beyond experimentation and replication⁶, which also extends to the educational phenomenon.

In his critique of objectifying and totalizing science, Waddington (2002, p. 179) considers that “[...] alterity is not a category of science, since science does not know what to do with any other form of knowledge but to depreciate, reject, or exclude it”. Such a way of understanding ceases the dialogue and inhibits the emergence of the diverse. To say the last word speaks against science itself. The interpretative experience present in the social sciences and humanities has made it abundantly reasonable that something unsaid – in logical, conceptual and methodological terms – is also implied, even in the experimental sciences⁷. Governed by the technical-instrumental interest, the experimental sciences discard what does not seem pertinent and promising for the control of some scope of objects. Recognizing the limits of objectifying science does not make it less valid, but inscribes it in the horizon of historicity and finitude of any human production.

In this sense, if we understand science as a human, linguistic, and historical production, the possible meanings attributed by interpretation, taken as true, come close to the targeted entities from the understanding of the being⁸. It is in this way that hermeneutics distinguishes itself from the metaphysical, rationalist and positivist perspectives. For Hermann (2002, p. 24), “[...] by inserting itself in the world of language, hermeneutics renounces the pretension of absolute truth and recognizes that we belong to the things said, to the discourses, opening an infinity of possible interpretations”. In this sense, as Gamboa (2007, p. 137) considers in the theoretical-methodological framework of hermeneutics, “[...] to know is to understand the phenomena in their various manifestations and in the contexts where they are expressed” and, therefore, there is no ultimate truth. Thus, dialog is the possibility of validating some meaning among other possible meanings.

As far as the educational phenomenon is concerned, dialog is the opening, it is the privileged space for the production of meaning, and it is also the distinguishing mark of the educational act. Thus, more than transmitting truths, the dialog with tradition for pedagogical purposes realizes the possibility of reinterpretation and construction of the new. According to Lawn (2010, p. 82), “[...] all understanding is necessarily a dialogue.” Thus, more than faithfully transmitting tradition, the educational task of the school is to inscribe the new generations in human productions through the narrative of our tradition.

In this sense, it is important to remember that, “[...] although we cannot escape from the coordinates of ‘historical life,’ we are not the puppets of history, controlled by inherited prejudices” (LAWN, 2010, p. 90). Such an understanding allows new people to recognize themselves “[...] as identities socially constructed and culturally ascribed. And these identities extend to a past to which they are intimately connected.” Ultimately, it is up to us “[...] to conduct our lives. We are left to ourselves. We are what we become” (HERMANN, 2002, p. 33). It is through this way that we build what we understand as the meaning of education and human formation. It is fundamental to make this understanding a common sense.

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Education for a culture of meaning

Hermeneutics has much to say about the educational phenomenon, as a rationality that leads to the truth through the human conditions of discourse and language. Besides helping in the understanding of the possible meanings of education, hermeneutics “[...] allows education to clarify for itself its own bases of justification, through the debate about the rationalities that act in the pedagogical process” (HERMANN, 2002, p. 83).

The understanding of the process of human formation is the prerogative for those who deal with the educational task. To unveil the meaning of what is understood as education today is only possible if we dive into tradition. Thus, for Marques (1990, p. 18), it is up to pedagogy as hermeneutics “[...] to penetrate the time of education to unveil its historical meaning”. In his understanding, “[...] it is about a ‘redo backwards’ of the process by which were sedimented the meanings that act in the present subjectivity and in the material conditions that sustain them.” Excavating the sediments that have accumulated throughout our



history of education and have been covered up over time provides an opportunity to understand our educational reality⁹.

If it is up to education, through teaching and other educational practices, to present the world of men to new generations, the question of the meaning of education remains pertinent and becomes even more pertinent in a context of ephemeral references. It is through education that children and adolescents learn the tradition, the universe of references that we consider legitimate, opening the possibility for them to participate in the common world. Thus, telling the story of the human being as creature and creator opens the possibility of breaking away from the established, from the not-yet, in a creative sense. Introducing the world to the young people means welcoming them into humanity, introducing them to the common world (making them human) and, finally, individualizing them, as Rorty (2000) wrote. An education that is restricted only to socialization and adaptation would be mutilating to the human being in face of the multiple possibilities that can be opened to him as a being of freedom.

Thus, a first contribution of hermeneutics to education is the understanding that the education is fundamentally a linguistic act and that it cannot happen outside the horizon of the experience of the dialogical encounter of human formation. In this sense, Marques (1989, p. 29) suggests that education as a purposeful action, “[...] as a pedagogical intervention, imposes itself as emancipation of the human being in opposition to this spontaneous insertion to which the human being is passively submitted”. Education assumes itself as a socializing task, but also as a creative one.

From the educator, is expected the understanding that education is a temporal production, in the same way that knowledge is a temporal production and, as such, needs to be understood. Marques (1993, p. 110) considers that the things (concepts) that are taught or learned at school are historical constructions “[...] never given once and for all, but always taken up again by persons in interaction and driven by practical interests in the world in which they live”. In this way, the temporariness of knowledge inhabits the educational task of the teacher and the school. Therefore, there are no absolute truths to be taught.

Although constituted in space and time of tradition transmission, or in what we consider legitimate for the new generations, it is up to the school and the teacher to understand that what the school environment presents to the new generations is marked by what has been said and what has not yet been said.

Thus, the task of the school in its socializing dimension is to present to the new generations what men have done before them. Therefore, the teacher is the one who dialogues with the new people about tradition. Even when it is taken as "truth", it is imperative to recognize it in its temporariness, which can always be visited and questioned. But it is not only about socializing, but also about taking a critical and reflective stance before the world.

Thus, education understood from hermeneutics constitutes a critique of any epistemic and ethical fundamentalism and dogmatism. An epistemic criticism that can be addressed to the traditional school is related to its static content that its knowledge, its truths, and its intellectualism have assumed. The rationalist and positivist epistemological dogmatism, materialized in instrumental rationality, widely present in our educational tradition, aborts any form of dialogue about tradition as openness. In this sense, dialogue, conversation, is undoubtedly the distinctive contribution of hermeneutics to education. Learning presupposes the communicative act, that is, it is necessary that communication occurs between teacher and student about something. If communication does not establish an understanding relationship, there will be neither communication nor learning. Thus, conversation is an indispensable condition for learning. The inter-subjective passivity attributed to the traditional school is a limit to saying, and to letting the other say the word.

According to Gadamer (1997), understanding is the result of engagement in the community, in the world, and all engagement is only affected through linguistic acquisition of all that represent the community. Nothing is more correct than seeing the world as linguistically constituted and its appropriation is only possible through language. Since language, as the author understands it, is only communication and understanding. School, understood as the construction of knowledge about the world, nature, and people, is a privileged space and time for intersubjective dialog, for the engagement of people in language to apprehend the world.

Thus, language is only realized in the communication process, in the construction/negotiation of meanings. Learning means sharing with others the understanding about the world. As long as language does not become "common", a communication in the classroom, the student will hardly learn and expand his universe of relations, even if he memorizes, memorizes and even passes grades. Thus, the objects to be taught and learned in the school context are the ever-changing concepts of the sciences,



[...] reconstructed by active reason, reflexive, diligent and normative. We do not teach things or ready-made knowledge, but conceptual relations in which social practices are articulated with the reasons that drive them and derive from them (MARQUES, 1995, p. 115).

Thus, the construction process that creates understanding about the world, men, and phenomena, in this case, is dialogue. The linguistic sign forges the possibility of communication and, therefore, the understanding that allows us to access the world that is presented to us. In this sense, Brayner (2008, p. 14) understands that, besides reading, writing, and counting, school should provide “[...] the access to knowledge, the ability to think, to argue and to judge, and to be able to make choices that provide a conscious insertion in social and political processes and participation in the public sphere”. For Young (2007), in turn, the school’s task is to “empower people”, so that they freely participate in public life, which is only possible through their insertion in the world of language.

The process of understanding is constituted in a continuous conversation. It means to enroll in a linguistic community, a community of speakers, according to Marques (1995). In this way, intersubjective learning takes place in the space of dialog, of asking and answering, of saying and letting others say, of building meanings and relationships. Thus, an educational context focused on learning, on the appropriation of knowledge, on reflection, and on the construction of concepts should encourage the question, which leads to investigation. When the teacher places himself as the authentic transmitter of knowledge, education gets stuck to monological reasoning and the educational experience that feeds on language, dialogue, and conversation dies. According to Hermann (2002, p. 58), “[...] dialogue enables conditions for reflection on an understanding not yet available; that is, it grants participants the opportunity to make a self-reflection on their points of view”. It is in/through conversation that we produce our agreements and understandings.

Setbacks to the pretension of intelligibility raised by speech acts produce deformed communication, the rectification of which requires conversation. In the case of formal learning, teacher and student, mediated by language, produce understanding about the world, about reality or about the field of knowledge in question. Overcoming noise in communication requires the participation of those involved, exposing their positions, their preconceptions, and concepts. In this frank and open process, teacher and student build the space for learning, for understanding. Or, as Freire (1992) would say, the elaboration

of any cognitive process is only realized in the intersubjective practice of dialog between persons mediated by the world.

In Marques (1989, p. 28) understanding, school education, in its systematicity and intentionality, is constituted “[...] as a place, time and resources reserved to the mediation of others socially and qualified in the social facilitation of acquisition/construction of knowledge”, so that occurs the “[...] progressive insertion/domination in and of the social conditions of human existence and in the social models that are configured in the human-social world historically transformed and in transformation” of persons. Thus, due to the formality that the educational practice assumes, it is up to pedagogy to think it in a systematic way in the collective scope, once it is a public institution, destined to the formation of persons for the world. Regarding the hermeneutic understanding of the classroom, it is up to the teacher “[...] to read the world of the classroom, so that in it are revealed the many meanings that act and perceive themselves in the unity in which they are constituted” (MARQUES, 1990, p. 21-22). The author adds that it is the task of hermeneutics to deconstruct the reification of the classroom, to read the various meanings “[...] that act, hidden in the subjectivity of the persons, and in the apparent objectivity of the material conditions that sustain them.”

The hermeneutic look, as a possibility of dialoguing with the world, with tradition, with the established, allows the unveiling of the many veiled meanings present in the educational practices. In this sense, everything that is established in the educational phenomenon needs to be questioned. For Marques (1990),

[...] phenomena which appears as given things, natural forms, the only real and the only possible, needs to be dismantled backwards, in order to reveal itself in its origins and motivations, in the historical process that generated it and in the interests that maintain it (MARQUES, 1990, p. 23).

If today we live a culture of boredom, as La Taille (2009) considers, then, hermeneutics can help us to think possible meaning(s) for the educational phenomenon.

The culture of boredom “[...] translates into a ‘small life’, because it is a life without meaning, without learning, without knowledge, without creation, without project, without flow, without energy, without power” (LE TAILLE, 2009 apud FÁVERO, 2018, p. 416). For Le Taille (2009), we experience boredom



"[...] when we have nothing to do, or when we are doing something that, for us, lacks meaning." As a result of this "[...] lack of meaning," our time can be characterized as the "culture of boredom" (FÁVERO, 2018, p. 416). The everyday life as high school teachers manifests the insistent presence of this culture of boredom in school. The encounter with problems of student indiscipline, existential conflicts, anguish, crying students for no apparent reason, families who ask what to do with their children, a high rate of medicalized students due to panic syndrome, anxiety attacks, depression, suicide, students who mutilate themselves at home and at school, among other conflicts.

Le Taille (2009) and Fávero (2018) list some symptoms produced by this culture of boredom: we live

[...] a climate of existential malaise [...] high incidence of depression and the high frequency of suicides; 121 million people diagnosed as depressed [...]; [...] the suicide rate among 14 to 25-year-olds tripled in the second half of the 20th century; [...] two types of boredom: situational or superficial boredom and existential or deep boredom (FÁVERO, 2018, p. 420-421).

The author also considers that "in other times, such signs had other names (tiredness of living, melancholy, sadness, acedia, despair, pessimism, nihilism, nausea, grief)" (FÁVERO, 2018, p. 420). Thus, it can be seen that the culture of boredom, in its multiple forms of expression, interferes in the daily school life of students and in the processes of teaching and learning.

According to Fávero (2018, p. 419), "[...] the absence of a hierarchy of values is much more perverse and dangerous than the indication of certain values that will serve as indicators to mark our life projects. More than that, we live in a time without stable values or references, a context that Stein (2011, p. 181) calls dereferentialization. At any moment and at any time, "[...] we can change references, enter a different game." This does not mean absence of values, "[...] but rather (to live) in a world without stable values, in a world of values that are equivalent and that take turns" (LE TAILLE, 2009 apud FÁVERO, 2018, p. 419). Therefore, it is quite reasonable to ask: What senses do we want for the educational phenomenon of our time?

Admitting the imposing force of a contemporary culture of boredom, it is up to school education to critically read this culture, aiming to "[...] establish a culture of meaning" and to neutralize what Han (2016, p. 60) calls the

“violence of positivity” (FÁVERO, 2018, p. 425). Remarkably, such a critical interpretation would require much more than “[...] the simple introduction of isolated activities into everyday school life.” Fávero (2018, p. 425) highlights that the hermeneutics of the culture of boredom, as a permanent critical-pedagogical exercise, carried out with trained teachers committed to promoting and implementing the “culture of meaning”, could become an “[...] important vehicle to face the educational dilemmas of contemporaneity.” Education, in this sense, constitutes a possibility for the construction of a culture of meaning, that is, a space for sharing common references for the human formation of new generations.

By the way, Fávero (2018) proposes some directives that we consider relevant to the construction of this culture of meaning in school: to provide intellectual tools to examine life; create spaces for the practice of virtues that enable the construction of meanings for life; thematize reflexively the crisis of time that produces the culture of boredom; make the time of formation a space for appropriation of cultural values; compose the intellectual baggage of students, giving prominent place to the richest thing that humanity has created. In this way, making the memory of the past an important reference to perceive the flow of time, which pays homage to humanity and makes admiration explicit in the sense of awe that generates curiosity and overcoming, making education a process that gives meaning to life.

Final considerations

In this sense, it is appropriate to conclude, focusing on the theoretical analysis about the meanings of the educational phenomenon, that schools, before being instruments at the service of ephemeral market interests and values, are linked to life values, which are much broader than the materiality of the consumer world. Knowing the material basis of life and its challenges means the possibility of thinking about education beyond the strictly economic dimension. We understand that it is not the school’s role to actively conform subjectivities to the hegemonic logic of being of the pragmatic man and of contemporary individualism. Thus, Stein’s (1993, p. 42) ponderation is pertinent: “[...]in learning there is always the transmission of an ethical element, a relational element, an element of commitment [...]” to others, to the common world.



We maintain that the school space is a privileged place for dialogue in the sense of building new horizons of understanding and comprehension of the common world. Schools are important environments for the construction of communicative subjectivities, based on dialog, communication, and the construction of a culture of meaning. It is through the encounter of multiple voices that the participants of this process qualify the meaning and significance of their activities and of the world itself.

It seems legitimate to us the ponderation of Dardot and Laval (2016, p. 402): "it is up to us to allow a new sense of the possible opens the way. The government of men can align itself to other horizons, beyond those of performance maximization, of unlimited production, of generalized control." We can reinvent our world from the principles of sufficiency (I have more than I lack) and transcendence (thinking of future generations). From this perspective, it is possible to think of a world for all human beings, in which everyone has the right to savor the achievements of humanity. Responsibility and care for the common world could be two basic principles for an education aimed at a culture of meaning in a society at risk, as ours present itself.

Notes

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- 1 Ontologically determined by care (Sorge; healing), each of us exists as a launched project: while it "projects itself into possibilities", it is already "given over to the world of occupation" (HEIDEGGER, 2005a, p. 265).
- 2 The fragment refers to the passage to postmodernity as a loss of references that ensured a certain stability to human existence. Or, as Stein (1996, p. 29) states, "[...] there is no longer a perspective of continuity beyond certain important facts or beyond individual lives."
- 3 We might suppose, with Taylor (1997, p. 33-34), that these underlying issues are buried by a culture of "meaninglessness," that is, by a pervasive fear of "[...] terrifying emptiness, with a kind of vertigo, or even a fracturing of our world and our body-space."
- 4 According to Heidegger (2005a), possibility has ontological priority over reality.
- 5 It is worth emphasizing the formal distinction between, on the one hand, hermeneutics as reflection (and criticism) about the conditions of production of meaning and knowledge possibility and, on the other hand, hermeneutics as a theoretical-methodological approach of scientific investigation, governed by the practical-dialogical interest of consensus. This elucidative exposition is found in ARENHART, Livio O.; HAHN, Noli B.; ARENHART, Amabilia B. P.; ROTT, Edemar, 2022, p. 62-66.
- 6 Regarding the assumptions of hermeneutics as a theoretical-methodological approach, see ARENHART, Livio O.; HAHN, Noli B.; ARENHART, Amabilia B. P.; ROTT, Edemar, 2021, p. 95-98 and 107-109. On the possible articulations of hermeneutics with other theoretical-methodological

- approaches, see ARENHART, Livio O.; HAHN, Noli B.; ARENHART, Amabilia B. P.; ROTTA, Edemar, 2022.
- 7 On the assumptions of the empirical-analytical approach as a theoretical-methodological approach, read ARENHART, Livio O.; HAHN, Noli B.; ARENHART, Amabilia B. P.; ROTTA, Edemar, 2021, p. 91-95 and 107-109.
 - 8 Heidegger's entire vast work, especially *Being and Time*, published in 1927, seeks to make plausible the hypothesis that knowledge of entity presupposes an understanding of being. The distinction between "being" and "entity" was designated by him by the term "ontological difference".
 - 9 Note that, in a hermeneutic conception, the term "reality" is much closer to "intersubjectivity" than to "objectivity". On the problem of objectivity versus intersubjectivity, see Rorty (1996, p. 41).

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