

ON THE POSSIBILITY OF A CRITICAL PEDAGOGY FOR CONTEMPORARY PUBLIC SCHOOL

SOBRE A POSSIBILIDADE DE UMA PEDAGOGIA CRÍTICA PARA A ESCOLA PÚBLICA CONTEMPORÂNEA

SOBRE LA POSIBILIDAD DE UNA PEDAGOGÍA CRÍTICA PARA LA ESCUELA PÚBLICA CONTEMPORÁNEA

Michel LINS¹
José Luis DERISSO²
Edemir Jose PULITA³

ABSTRACT: The article takes as a starting point critical theories - particularly those developed by French sociologists in the 1970s - that conceive the public school in bourgeois society as essentially reproducing ideology and capitalist social relations. In order to argue that such criticism does not take into account the historical and dialectical character of the school institution by not seeing its contradictions, thus becoming unilateral, this article aims to make a counterpoint from the theoretical and methodological foundations of Critical Historical Pedagogy idealized by Demerval Saviani, with respect to the conception of human formation present in the Marxist tradition and the contradictory character of public school in class society. Authors such as Marx, Engels, Gramsci, and György Márkus are used to support such foundations

KEYWORDS: Critical-reproductive theories of education. Critical-historical pedagogy. Human formation. School education.

RESUMO: *O artigo toma como ponto de partida teorias críticas – particularmente as elaboradas por sociólogos franceses na década de 1970 – que concebem a escola pública na sociedade burguesa como essencialmente reprodutora da ideologia e das relações sociais capitalistas. Com o objetivo de sustentar que tais críticas não levam em conta o caráter histórico e dialético da instituição escolar ao não enxergar suas contradições, tornando-se, assim, unilateral, esse artigo se propõe a fazer o contraponto a partir dos fundamentos teórico-metodológicos da Pedagogia Histórico-Crítica idealizada por Demerval Saviani, no que diz respeito à concepção de formação humana presente na tradição marxista e do caráter contraditório da escola pública na sociedade de classes. Autores como Marx, Engels, Gramsci e György Márkus são utilizados para sustentar tais fundamentos*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Teorias crítico-reprodutivistas da educação. Pedagogia histórico-crítica. Formação humana. Educação escolar.*

¹ State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE), Cascavel – PR – Brazil. Master's student in the Postgraduate Program in Education. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6940-4236>. E-mail: mixelzera@gmail.com

² State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE), Cascavel – PR – Brazil. Professor at the Collegiate of Pedagogy and at the Postgraduate Program in Education. Doctorate in School Education (UNESP). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4044-4493>. E-mail: jose Luisderisso@yahoo.com.br

³ State University of Western Paraná (UNIOESTE), Cascavel – PR – Brazil. Collaborating Professor. Doctorate in Education (UNB). ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2834-2331>. E-mail: edemirjose@hotmail.com

RESUMEN: *El artículo toma como punto de partida las teorías críticas -en particular las desarrolladas por los sociólogos franceses en los años 70- que conciben la escuela pública en la sociedad burguesa como reproductora esencial de la ideología y de las relaciones sociales capitalistas. Para argumentar que dicha crítica no tiene en cuenta el carácter histórico y dialéctico de la institución escolar al no ver sus contradicciones, convirtiéndose así en unilateral, este artículo pretende hacer un contrapunto desde los fundamentos teóricos y metodológicos de la Pedagogía Histórica Crítica idealizada por Demerval Saviani, respecto a la concepción de la formación humana presente en la tradición marxista y el carácter contradictorio de la escuela pública en la sociedad de clases. Autores como Marx, Engels, Gramsci y György Márkus sirven de apoyo a estos fundamentos*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Teorías crítico-reproductivas de la educación. Pedagogía histórica crítica. Formación humana. Educación escolar.*

Introduction

In the history of education, we find extremes in understanding the possibilities of contemporary school, which range from taking it as an instrument to maintain the current social order (ALTHUSSER, 1974; 1983; 1985; BOURDIEU, 1974) to the belief that it can operate transformations in society, as if they were not socially determined. This would be the case, according to Saviani (2013), for both traditional and new pedagogy.

In the context of Enlightenment thought, there was a very honest yearning that, through progress in knowledge, humanity would break through the limits imposed by nature. Reason was seen as the privileged instrument for the construction of a world free from the prejudices that hampered the development of science and fueled social disharmony. Remembering that in the context of the Old Regime, the European States were, as a rule, governed by absolute monarchies, legitimized by a supposed divine origin that guaranteed, in a way, the political balance between the two privileged orders (nobility and clergy) and the called the third state (bourgeoisie).

In the process of the French Revolution, which began in 1789, the state school was created and its curricula were structured from the perspective of knowledge dissemination, especially scientific. However, a set of factors frustrate this project, ending up imposing an exclusionary education model that guaranteed access to higher, more elaborate knowledge, only to a minority of children and young people from the wealthy classes, while to the children of workers, the possible access was through a lowered education, designed to respond to the needs of capital, above all, the formation of labor for the industry, thus evidencing the distinction made by Manacorda (2010), in his work “*História da Educação: da antiguidade até os dias*

atuais” (History of Education: from antiquity to the present day), between acculturation and learning, according to which:

Acculturation means socialization, insertion of each teenager into the living group of adult society; learning means a relationship with work and with all development, not only of the productive forces, but also with the social relations in which they are inserted (p. 17, our translation).

Among the factors behind this deviation from the school institution's purpose is the intensification of the social division of labor, with the resulting specialization and fragmentation of elaborated knowledge, and the entry of the proletariat into the European political scene, especially in the context of the bourgeois revolutions of 1848. In this new context, the bourgeoisie no longer needs the revolution and much less the support of the popular classes to exercise its domination, as it needed in the preceding period, to fight the remaining orders of feudal society, the nobility and the clergy. The bourgeois class, after fulfilling its historical revolutionary role, becomes a reactionary class that constitutes an obstacle to historical development (LUKÁCS, 1992).

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, within the so-called New School Movement, extremely optimistic pedagogical theories emerged regarding the role of the school in building a democratic society and overcoming the flagrant inequalities existing in the new industrial society. The basis for the construction of the proclaimed democratic and progressive society should be the formation of autonomous individuals, who know how to think for themselves. However, teaching objects based on superior knowledge (above all, those given by science, philosophy and art) were neglected in favor of teaching based on students' interest and curiosity. The movement called the new school gains projection in Brazil after the Revolution of the Thirties of the 20th century, and becomes an official orientation during the Vargas era, particularly in the Estado Novo dictatorship (1937-1945), losing strength in the 1960s.

The establishment of the Military Dictatorship imposes educational reforms – in basic and higher education – and the adoption of a technicist orientation, which, according to its creators, aimed at the formation of human capital for the development of the nation. In elementary school, this orientation was translated, among other things, in the creation of professional courses in the former model of High School and in the suppression of school subjects such as Philosophy, Sociology and Psychology, thus accentuating the process of mischaracterization of the role of the school institution.

Criticism of the educational orientation of the Military Dictatorship was fueled by criticism of the French school (and in a broader sense of the capitalist school), operated by

sociologists who gained great academic projection in the field of sociology of education in the 1970s. These criticisms were called by Dermeval Saviani “critical-reproductive theories of education”, based on the understanding that even if, on the one hand, they contributed to strengthening the criticism of the orientation that the ruling class, through the State, imposes on public education in Brazil, on the other hand, they were sterile regarding the instrumentalization of resistance within schools.

Aiming to sustain that the criticisms of the contemporary capitalist school that developed in the context of sociology, particularly in France in the 1970s, are unilateral in that they do not take into account the historical and contradictory character and to problematize the possibility of existence from an effective resistance through pedagogy to the capitalist orientation of schools, we structured our exposition in two moments: first, the critique of the capitalist school based on the theories of Louis Althusser and Pierre Bourdieu and Brazilian authors who, more or less roughly, reproduce this criticism; second, Dermeval Saviani's critique of these theories and his pedagogical proposition supported by historical and dialectical materialism based on the Marxist anthropological conception that we present here in a synthetic way from György Márkus (2015).

The research that originates this article is essentially bibliographical and theoretically anchored in historical and dialectical materialism, which conceives reality as a synthesis of multiple determinations, and which rejects paths proposed by other methodologies that glimpse dichotomies, false from our point of view, as a subject/object, individual/social, particular/universal and quantity/quality, among others, as well as the illusion of the possibility of neutrality or total distance of the subject of knowledge in relation to the object to be known.

Critical-reproductive theories of education and the critique of the capitalist school in Brazil

For Althusser (1983), the capitalist school presents itself and organizes itself according to a minimum qualification for presenting a school ideology, which is the

[...] cement that links the various elements of society, however the State works for the Ideological Apparatuses to maintain a bourgeois ideological unity, that is, the school is one of the ideological apparatuses that build a single bourgeois thought, being incapable to break with society. So, this ideology is material, thus it is materialized in human relations of social life (p. 81, our translation).

In “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus”, Althusser (1985) describes and analyzes the reproduction mechanisms used by capitalist society as a whole and in schools in particular.

For this author, there is a distinction in the State between two types of apparatus: the Repressive State Apparatus (the government, administration, army, police, courts, prisons etc.) and the Ideological State Apparatus (ISA), among which are the churches, schools, family, legal, political, union, press and culture. “As the dominant ISA, it is worth saying that school is the most finished instrument for reproducing capitalist-type production relations” (SAVIANI, 2012, p. 23, our translation).

For Althusser (1985), teachers are agents, even if unconscious, of such reproduction:

[...] and many (the majority) do not even have the slightest suspicion of the 'work' that the system (which surpasses and crushes them) forces them to do, or, what is worse, they put all their effort and ingenuity in doing it according to the latest guidance (the famous new methods!). They question so little, that they contribute, by their very devotion, to maintain and nourish this ideological representation of the school, which makes the School today something so 'natural' and indispensable, and beneficial to our contemporaries as the Church was 'natural', indispensable and generous to our ancestors of centuries ago (p. 80-81, our translation).

Following this thought regarding the reproductive school of capitalist social life through culture and, therefore, non-revolutionary, Bourdieu (1974) also shows that the capitalist school is thought/designed to perpetuate a social order/conservation based on heritage cultural:

Transposing to the case of societies divided into classes the representation of culture and cultural transmission generally accepted by ethnologists, such theories are based on the tacit postulate of different pedagogical actions that operate in a social formation, that is, both those that the families of different social classes exercise, like the one that the school does, they harmoniously collaborate in the transmission of a cultural heritage conceived as an undivided property of the set of "society" (p. 297, our translation).

This transposition of the social class division and the hierarchical issues of cultural heritage presented by Bourdieu demonstrates that access to knowledge, within the framework of capitalist social relations, is fragmented and results in an organization that stratifies the subject. The passage above shows that social conservation through culture takes place in a relationship between families and school, that is, access to culture limits the subject's instruction as he is unable to access cultural heritage in family life and school it also denies him that access.

Bourdieu (1974) points out that power relations are built from a set of symbols (beliefs, knowledge, rules, culture), disguising the forces of domination and/or reinforcing domination itself – reproducing social values through symbolic violence. One of the consequences of this is that the victims (in and out of school) are unaware of the relationship of domination. The

student, in this case, does not realize that the school reinforces and reproduces the inequality models existing in the capitalist structure (BORDIEU, 1974).

In the same perspective as Bourdieu, Nogueira (2002) states that the school legitimizes a power that comes from three fundamental capitals that are interrelated: (i) economic capital linked to the means of production and income (salary); (ii) social capital: in the set of relationships available to an individual, with all knowledge accumulated in the construction of the habitus, functioning, in fact, in most cases, only as auxiliary means in the accumulation of such cultural capital; and (iii) cultural capital: everything that becomes incorporated by the agent. In this sense, Nogueira (2002, p. 22, our translation) highlights:

[...] the importance of a specific component of cultural capital, information about the structure and functioning of the education system. This is not just about the greater or lesser knowledge that one may have of the formal organization of the school system (schools, courses, establishments), but, above all, the understanding that one has of the more or less subtle hierarchies that distinguish the school ramifications from the point of view of its academic quality, social prestige and financial return.

Bourdieu (1974, p. 312-316, our translation) explains that “the dominant classes have a much more important cultural capital than the other classes, including their most disadvantaged fractions in relative terms”. According to the author, what limits this cultural appropriation - a limitation that the school tends to reproduce - is that “most cultural consumption also implies the economic cost, that is, attendance at the theater does not depend only on the level of education”.

Regarding the reproduction of society and conservative school education, Althusser (1983) presents the school as a matrix. In his field, the subject is ideological and also acts through ideology. In this condition, there are two types of subjects: (i) the Subject who presents himself with a capital “S”. This is a Subject with knowledge beyond the immediate and understands how to act with the Theory, presented with a capital “T” because it represents a conscience capable of understanding the material/infrastructural bases and thus interfering in reality. The other subject, on the other hand, is (ii) the subject presented with a lowercase “s” and his theoretical knowledge also with a lowercase “t”. Such a subject who does not understand the phenomena and is not aware of his ideology tends to become subordinate both to the Subjects and to any other Ideological State Apparatus. Thus, such subject only describes, reproduces and conserves, without the ability to understand, transform or revolutionize society.

For Althusser (1974 *apud* DORE, 2006, p. 332, our translation),

[...] ideology has no history, it constitutes an imaginary representation of individuals with their real conditions of existence, as it is a distortion of real relationships; ideology has a material existence and challenges individuals as subjects. The ideological apparatuses of the State, through their practices and rituals, carry out ideologies and, thus, contribute to the reproduction of production relations: they guarantee class oppression and its conditions of exploitation and reproduction.

In this sense, as the State's Ideological Apparatus, the school reproduces the bourgeois ideology in order to preserve the current social order. Through school rituals, it reproduces a conservation discipline of the bourgeois state. To break with such a mechanism of domination, it is essential to develop a revolutionary consciousness that enables the transformation of the proletariat into a "Subject" capable of assuming state power, replacing the repressive State apparatus with another (proletarian) and, in subsequent phases, completely destroy this same State (ALTHUSSER, 1974).

Bourdieu (1974), in turn, sees a process of domination in society that operates at the cultural level, and in this sense it has small similarities with Althusser. The author indicates that different Symbolic Reproduction Devices – SRD reproduce symbolic violence in daily life. In this context, the school reproduces the class society itself, forms individuals to continue the dominant culture, manipulates content according to the interests brought by superior agents of the school system, reproduces and distributes culture according to different social positions, applies sanctions and it legitimizes differences, order and domination, thus performing the function of an apparatus of symbolic reproduction.

The Bourdieu denunciation points to an unequal human formation process, determined by the unequal appropriation of culture, which reinforces symbolic violence and social hierarchy. Such school directly influences the success (or non-success) of the individual, as his success is determined by his adaptation to the set of rules imposed for the sake of structural maintenance of capitalist society. One of the factors that would contribute to reproduction is the disengagement of students from their original culture. About this, Nogueira (2002, p. 29-30, our translation), states that:

For Bourdieu, this domain would vary according to the greater or lesser distance between the cultural arbitrariness presented by the school as a legitimate culture and the students' family culture of origin. For students from the ruling classes, school culture would be their own culture, re-elaborated and systematized. For the others, it would be a 'foreign' culture.

This would be the reason for the distance between the school reality and the students of public schools. In this sense, society tends to reproduce itself, to the extent that the hegemonic

classes maintain cultural sovereignty and, through the domination of the Cultural Capital, produce forms of symbolic violence that, in turn, act as conservatives of the economic *and* social *status quo*.

The capitalist formation, for the critical line we approach in the present topic, is fragmented and fragments the possibility of humanization, for which corroborates the bourgeois school that "aims at the preparation of partial men, who will be quickly formed in the productive process". From this perspective,

Teachers and students do not need to know much about science and technology. Capital concentrates this knowledge. The knowledge of modern societies is pulverized by partial scientists (specialists), by partial workers, by specialized research institutes and laboratories distributed in the various corners of the world. Capital concentrates and monopolizes the totality of knowledge and increasingly conditions it to the production of goods on an international scale (SÁ, 1986, p. 28, our translation).

In these terms, there is no way for the school not to be a reproductive and conservative of the social order.

Another aspect highlighted by the criticism of the capitalist school is the educational duality that is articulated with the logic of reproducing the division of society into social classes, which prevents equitable access to knowledge for students from different classes, allowing some access to "basic knowledge for their livelihood" and, for others, a preparation "to climb high positions in specific fields of knowledge", allowing some to be "prepared for good rhetoric" while others are "directed to fulfill specific functions, including as future agents of repression" (FERRARO, 2014, p. 14, our translation).

Another characteristic feature of the capitalist school, according to the critics, is the defense of meritocracy and entrepreneurship. Its logic would be the same as the capitalist logic of the free market, according to which competition for the best possible formation will guarantee, to the most hardworking people, the best jobs and the consequent financial success. At the school level, such logic induces the classification of students based on their own merits, regardless of contexts and histories.

Another aspect concerns the homogenization of education which, for Daiyrell (1996), constitutes a capitalist fallacy. According to the author, this ideal of homogenization and universalization of school education removes from this social institution the responsibility for the result of the educational action. He further argues that if the school is universal, everyone should seek to assimilate and appropriate the knowledge described by the teachers, assuming a degree of social, individual, economic and psychological equality. Thus, students become

“things”, whose real diversity is “reduced to differences apprehended from the perspective of cognition (good or bad student, struggling or lazy etc.) or from the point of view of behavior (good or bad student, obedient or rebellious, disciplined or undisciplined etc.)” (DAYRELL, 1996, p. 5, our translation). In this case, the school disregards individual human dimensions and prevents a vision of the totality of human formation and of the human being itself (DAYRELL, 1996).

Thus, according to the criticism, capitalist school education seeks to create in the student an internalization that legitimizes the social hierarchy, transforming him into an active and passive agent: active in social reproduction and small structural changes, and passive towards the possibility of a transforming struggle, which converts this same education into an instrument of social reproduction guided by the ruling class. The reproductive force of school education is, then, a violence that does not need to be applied directly to the body. It is usually symbolic violence, in which the legitimacy of power is done through structures that dominate and subordinate its elements. In the case of the school, this violence is linked to the structural power relations of the school itself and the power applied to it in the classist figure of domination, incorporated in the figure of the State.

Zarakin (2001), based on Bourdieu and Passeron, states that education represents an essential historical instrument for continuity, as it supports the monopoly of the production of “legitimate” symbolic capital, which allows ensuring the legitimacy of its domination through symbolic violence.

The conception of the reproductive school – whether of ideology or relations of social inequality – denies, to a greater or lesser degree, depending on the author, the possibility of a pedagogical action against hegemony within the framework of the school institution and educational systems. This conception is criticized by Demerval Saviani, according to the following topic.

Human formation and possibilities of school education

Thinking about human formation and, consequently, education is an innocuous task without considering the formation of humanity in a concrete and historically given way. As a premise for this reflection, we bring the ideas of Dermeval Saviani (2005, 2007) about the nature and specificity of education that is emblematically expressed in this passage: “[...] educational work is the act of producing, directly and intentionally, in each singular individual,

the humanity that is historically and collectively produced by all men” (SAVIANI, 2005, p. 13, our translation).

In these relationships, Saviani (2005, p. 22, our translation) argues that:

[...] understanding the nature of education as a non-material work, whose product is not separated from the act of production, allows us to situate the specificity of education as referred to knowledge, ideas, concepts, values, attitudes and habits, symbols under the aspect of elements necessary for the formation of humanity in each individual, in the form of a second nature, which is produced, deliberately and intentionally, through historically determined pedagogical relationships that are held between men.

Based on this assumption, the author indicates that pedagogy should "concern with identifying the natural and cultural elements necessary for the constitution of humanity in each human being and with discovering the appropriate ways to achieve this goal" (SAVIANI, 2005, p. 22, our translation).

In allusion to educational dualism, according to the author, the antagonisms of class society tend to impose several obstacles to transformative education, since “the impossibility of effective universalization of the school, the impossibility of all to access knowledge, the impossibility of a unified education [...] leads to proposing one type of education for one class and another type for another class” (SAVIANI, 2007, p. 18, our translation). From this reflection, the author concludes that “the development of education and, specifically, of public school is in contradiction with the inherent requirements of a capitalist class society” (SAVIANI, 2007, p. 20, our translation).

Saviani's (2007) conception of education and his proposition of a Historical-Critical Pedagogy are based, like all pedagogy, on a specific conception of the individual's formation. The studies of György Márkus (2015), exposed in the work “*Marxismo e antropologia: o conceito de 'essência humana' na filosofia de Marx*” (Marxism and anthropology: the concept of 'human essence' in Marx's philosophy) corroborate for this conception, for whom the human essence constitutes "a set of existing social relations, not only in the ephemeral personal contacts between individuals, but also in the objectified production systems, customs, language, institutions and cultures” (MÁRKUS, 2015, p. 17, our translation). In these terms, the formation of the human being takes place in the interrelationships of history with social life. From what we learn that the school would be one of the institutions involved in this formation, with its own nature and specificity, as seen earlier in this article.

This conception of human essence refers to the issue of the specificity of Man⁴, which, therefore, cannot be applied to other animal species. This Man is an integral part of nature, however, it does not result only from the biological formation process, but, above all, from the “social-historical development of man” (MÁRKUS, 2015, p. 22). In this perspective, man is formed ontologically through history, and is built through work. This work does not have the sense of mere effort, as given to us by common sense that tends to equalize the vital activity of all living beings - and which is commonly exemplified by the activity of the spider, ant, bee or beaver - but it constitutes in reality that activity that “makes its objects suitable for human use” (MÁRKUS, 2015, p. 22, our translation), an activity that has planning, intentionality and purpose, as we learn from the passage that follows:

In the work activity, its product is drawn in the worker's mind even before the action takes effect. It is as if the activity were carried out twice, once in a project and another in the effective action. This means that work is a conscious and "teleological" activity, as it has a pre-determined purpose (DERISSO, 2012, p. 25, our translation).

An activity that produces an objectification of life and allows one to contemplate a world created by man himself, that is, the world of culture. An objectification that refers to a process of production and reproduction of human culture, which involves both material and non-material aspects, a production and reproduction of life in society itself (DUARTE, 2004).

The Man conceived here is the one who presents himself in a determined socio-historical condition, which means to say that each new human being is born in a context of pre-existing material and non-material constructions, a legacy of previous generations. Thus, human formation does not start from scratch, as it always starts from the cultural heritage of humanity to integrate the dialectical process of appropriation and objectification. From this it follows that education must be accessible to all individuals of the human species, and the school, as a privileged space for education, must guarantee the knowledge historically accumulated by humanity for the new generations.

Based on Marx's thesis, according to which the essence of man is expressed in the set of social relations produced by the set of men, Márkus (2015) finds that capitalist society prevents this essence from being indistinctly expressed in all individuals, because the Capitalist society removed from man the conditions to form the true “*Human Essence*”, since the division of labor removes from this man the awareness of the meaning of work activity and produces a

⁴ We spell Man (with an initial capital letter) to indicate the social being and man (with a lowercase initial letter) to designate the biological being.

mismatch between the development of consciousness and social self-awareness. Hence, conscience is transformed into false conscience, because it neglects the true and essential meaning of human formation. In this sense and due to the conditions of man's social life, he becomes an alienated subject.

[...] the result of alienation is precisely the 'human essence' which is alienated and taken from the proletariat (in the sense that the proletariat cannot realize it in its own life), so that it can only be recovered through revolutionary transformation of society. [...] alienated work alienates from man his own body, as well as the nature outside of it, as well as its spiritual essence, the human essence (MÁRKUS, 2015, p. 90-91, our translation).

Márkus (2015, p. 99) indicates that “for Marx the 'human essence' resides precisely in the 'essence' or being of the global and evolutionary social process of humanity, and in the internal unity of this process”. Thus, to understand human formation in an ontological sense, it is necessary to understand where and why man ceases to understand himself as a social subject and starts to see himself as an isolated individual in relation to the work activity, its product and objectifications arising from it, so that in this process of estrangement, the individual alienates himself in relation to the human race. The social world becomes for this individual as external as the natural world, leaving only the consciousness of alienated individuality.

The process of alienation in capitalist society develops from a few moments. The first moment is the individual's alienation from the product of his work, leading him to identify work as a strange and adverse activity and no longer as a vital human activity. The intermediary moments of alienation can be identified in the relationship of estrangement of the individual to the work process in which he is forced to insert himself without understanding it and with technical and scientific knowledge, whose identification with the work process also does not is understood by this same individual. The culminating moment of the alienation process is the one in which the individual fails to identify with the human race itself, for not understanding its specificity as a social being (historical-cultural). At this stage, the estrangement is manifested towards the superior expressions of human knowledge (science, philosophy and art) and also towards the set of social relations, that is, with the product of knowledge and the forms of organization that human society has incorporated in the historical process of which work constitutes the first imaginable fact. The result of the alienation process from this culminating moment is the false awareness that society constitutes an adverse environment in which one must survive and that the rules of social interaction, solidarity, human respect and fraternity are external impositions to be tolerated or practiced according to convenience, so much so that idealism presents them as the result of a social contract celebrated by our ancestors or even, sometimes both together, by virtue of religion (DERISSO; DUARTE, 2017, p. 13, our translation).

On separating human formation from the constitution of humanity, Márkus (2015, p. 127, our translation) states that:

[...] understanding the Marxian concept of 'human essence', the Marxian ontology of man as a social-historical being, is not a simple particular 'explanation' of the world, or an interpretation of historical social life, it is, as a theory, a conception on the part of a revolutionary struggle for the transformation of the 'world' and society, where the freedom and universality of man is part of the revolutionary praxis of the proletariat.

Our approach to human formation is based on the conceptions of nature and specificity of education by Saviani (2005; 2007), as well as the concept of formation, valuing the human essence, according to Márkus (2015). Both approaches assume that formation is based on work as a basic element of humanization and the formation of culture.

Understanding that the school should form (from) the human essence, considering the ontological character of human formation, there is an incongruity with the capitalist proposal of school, which bets on a stratified, or better, fractional formation of individual. The typically capitalist school appears as a condition of the industrial society, bringing in its structure the logic contained in the relationship with salaried, alienated and exploited work, the division of labor and the hegemony of the means of production. Thus, the school is consolidated in the relationship between *Homo faber* and *Homo sapiens*, therefore, in the division between those who are formed for manual work and those who are formed for intellectual activity. Here there is a division of man himself, and the public school, from its organization, according to Alves (2001), tends to be closer to this *Homo faber*, as it has cultivated, from its birth to the present moment, the concept of capitalist work as an educational principle.

In this logic, the school is organized for the formation of the workforce, together with the maintenance of its class division, with its welfare character and with the social alienation of the proletariat. In this way, the (public) capitalist school is understood by the bourgeoisie (but also by some intermediary strata) only as “spent”, which by providing access to lightened knowledge corroborates its purposes of maintaining the hegemony of bourgeois ideology.

However, if the logic of industrial capitalist society imposed on the school institution the primary purpose of forming individuals suited to this same logic - the logic of the market and the competitiveness that it entails, the submission to a condition of inequality that is imposed on this individual as a condition of "natural" existence -, the existence of the school derives from the need dictated by social development to raise education to a higher stage, to overcome the diffuse education that refers to forms of social organization that dispensed with writing and knowledge such as mathematics, geometry, physics, astronomy etc. And, as much as it is argued that this institution, this space of education, constituted a privileged space of the aristocracy since its inception, it does not take away from it the merit of being the space of

superior knowledge, of the elaborate knowledge that made it possible for humanity, even if only to a small part of it, to break with the limited knowledge that is produced within the scope of common sense that develops in the alienated daily life, very often fraught with prejudices to which the working classes of unequal societies are limited (and here we do not specifically report to capitalism).

The superiority of the school over other forms of education was understood by the French revolutionaries and is expressed in the Condorcet Report presented to the National Assembly on behalf of the Committee for Public Instruction, in 1792:

Offer all individuals of the human species the means (conditions) to provide for their needs, to ensure their well-being, to know and exercise all their rights, to understand and fulfill their duties.

Assure each of them the facility to improve his ingenuity (ability), to become capable of the social functions to which he has a right to be called, to develop the full range of talents (ability) that he has received from nature; and thus establish, between citizens, a de facto equality, and make real the political equality recognized by law:

This must be the first objective of a national instruction and, from this point of view, it is, for the public authorities, a duty of justice (CONDORCET, 2004, p. 234-235, our translation).

In Marx we find positions on the school that evidence the understanding that state public education is an achievement that needs to be defended by the proletariat through the suppression of the ideological control that the bourgeoisie and the State exert over it. In the *Communist Manifesto*, from 1848, we find a passage on education that says that “[...] the communists do not invent the effect of society on education; they only transform its character, tear education from the influence of the ruling class” (MARX; ENGELS, 2005, p. 55, our translation). Such a formulation could be associated with the new socialist society, if there was no other passage ahead proposing measures to be taken in the "more advanced countries" such as: adoption of a heavy progressive tax, abolition of inheritance rights - both measures that induce to the idea that private property has not yet been abolished – and the following proposition: “Free public education for all children; elimination of child labor in factories as practiced today. Combination of education with material production etc.” (MARX; ENGELS, 2005, p. 58, our translation).

In 1875, in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx criticized a formulation contained in the text of the project to unify the German socialist parties into a single workers' association that defended a “popular education under the responsibility of the State” with the following consideration:

It is one thing to establish, by a general law, the resources of public schools, the qualification of teaching staff, the curricula, etc. and, as in the United States, controlling the execution of these legal requirements through state inspectors, is quite another to give the state the role of educator of the people! The government and the Church must first be excluded from any influence over the school (MARX, 2012, p. 37, our translation).

Such consideration allows us to apprehend that Marx did not hold a negative position in relation to the state public school, but that, on the contrary, he saw its usefulness for the working masses, and the same can be said of Gramsci (DORE, 2006, p. 340, our translation), when he proposed a unitary school that would have as a starting point

[...] the social relations within capitalism since Gramsci does not talk about destroying capitalism first and only after that take care of the education of workers. He does not have a dichotomous view of the relationship between State and society. The unitary school is on the horizon of a construction process that, being dialectical, is simultaneously of destruction.

In Gramsci's understanding, according to Manasta (2010), both school and society should be seen based on their contradictions, the bourgeoisie uses the State to control intellectual and practical hegemony for the sake of conservation and reproduction of the capitalist order. For him, in the struggle for socialism, in addition to the struggle for political power, cultural hegemony in society and in schools must be disputed through a permanent struggle against hegemonic, therefore, against capitalism (MANASTA, 2010).

Although this is not our object, it should be noted that Gramscian thought has become a preferential target, even a workhorse, of the religious and ultra-conservative right against any progressive educational initiative. According to Coutinho (2009, p. 42, our translation), “the Gramscian theory of hegemony has been presented as a subtle form of “brainwashing”, aimed at destroying common sense and preparing for the triumph of communism”. Such theory is accused of being the intellectual mentor of a cultural revolution aimed at the destruction of the family and the “sacred” values of Western Christian civilization.

The dispute within the school, based on the understanding that this is a contradictory institution, enables, and presupposes, the development of a pedagogy. In this sense, Marx, Engels and Gramsci defended the school of work, not as a formation of labor, but from the understanding that work constitutes the human vital activity par excellence, the one from which the entire process of formation of the human race stems, an ontologically defined quality as social being. Saviani (2005), in turn, bases his proposition of a Historical-Critical Pedagogy on the conception of a formation that integrates the Marxist tradition and the claim that historically accumulated and socially produced knowledge – which expresses the most advanced stage of

humanity reached by society – constitute the main reference for the elaboration of teaching programs in public schools.

The name Dermeval Saviani (2005) gave to pedagogy, which launched the theoretical-methodological bases, “Historical-Critical Pedagogy”, expresses his opposition to the prevailing general orientation in Brazilian schools, as well as the understanding that criticisms of this guidance needed and still need to be overcome. The word “critique” refers to the reality of the existing school and the word “historical” to the non-historical and non-dialectical character of the criticism of the capitalist school whose general lines were exposed in the previous topic of this article.

Final considerations

The real divergences between the authors used here – which it is worth considering, are situated in the perspective of criticism of the capitalist model of school implemented by the bourgeoisie – reinforce the need to critically reflect on contemporary public school and the apparently insurmountable limits that capitalist society and bourgeois ideology imposes on them. Based on this reflection, it becomes possible to glimpse the possibility of developing within this same school a pedagogical alternative that, at the same time as criticizing its reproducing character of capitalist ideology and social relations, instrumentalizes the reflection on the means of overcoming the limits imposed by this reproductive character.

From the understanding that the school is a social organization that fits the historical moment, an institution that contains contradictions, we infer that the capitalist school, by itself, will not be able to build the material conditions necessary for a break with and with capital. In this sense, in a dialectical perspective that understands the contradiction between capitalist society and social development - as well as between the bourgeois school and the social production of knowledge - and that every pedagogy presupposes a certain conception of individual formation, the fundamentals of the historical-critical pedagogy regarding the conception of human formation. This conception is based on the Marxist thesis of the centrality of the work activity in the formation of the individual as a social being and on the understanding of the historical conditions in which the individual's alienation process operates through the loss of the meaning of work itself as a vital human activity.

Considering education within the scope of the public school, we highlight the centrality of the teacher's role as a conscious agent of human formation, therefore, as a mediator of the teaching and learning processes and of its constitution, as well as that of the student, as a social

and historically situated. Therefore, we highlight the advance of contributions of Historical-Critical Pedagogy, from the identification of the nature and specificity of education and the prioritization of knowledge developed in the fields of scientific production, philosophy and the arts as a basis for the elaboration of teaching programs and school curricula.

REFERENCES

- ALTHUSSER, L. **Aparelhos ideológicos de Estado**: nota sobre os aparelhos ideológicos de estado (AIE). 2. ed. Trad. Walter José Evangelista e Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro. Rio de Janeiro: Edições Graal, 1985.
- ALTHUSSER, L. **Aparelhos ideológicos do Estado**. 2. ed. Editora Graal, 1983. p. 15-53.
- ALTHUSSER, L. **Ideologia e aparelhos ideológicos do Estado**. Lisboa: Presença, 1974.
- ALVES, G. L. **A produção da escola pública contemporânea**. Campinas: Autores Associados, 2001.
- BOURDIEU, P. **A economia das trocas simbólicas**: cap. reprodução cultural e reprodução social. São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1974. p. 295-336.
- CASSIN, M. Louis Althusser e a sua contribuição para a sociologia da educação. In: BOITO JR., A.; TOLEDO, C. N. (org.). **Marxismo e ciências humanas**. São Paulo: Xamã, 2003, p. 327-337. Available: https://marxismo21.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Louis-Althusser-e-Sociologia-da_Educacao-M-Cassin.pdf. Access: 28 June 2020.
- CONDORCET. Marie-Jean-Antoine Nicolas Caritat. Relatório e projeto de decreto sobre a organização geral da instrução pública, apresentado à primeira assembleia nacional em nome do comitê da instrução pública, nos dias 20 e 21 de abril de 1792. Tradução de Maria Auxiliadora Cavazotti. **Revista Educação em Questão**, Natal, v. 21, n. 7, p. 234-245, set./dez. 2004.
- COUTINHO, C. N. A presença de Gramsci no Brasil. **Revista em Pauta**. Rio de Janeiro: UERJ, n. 22, 2009.
- DAYRELL, J. T. A escola como espaço sociocultural. In: DAYRELL, J. T. (org.). **Múltiplos olhares sobre educação e cultura**. Belo Horizonte: UFMG, 1996. Available: <https://ensinosociologia.milharal.org/files/2010/09/Dayrell-1996-Escola-esp%C3%A7o-socio-cultural.pdf>. Access: 28 June 2020.
- DERISSO, J. L. **O relativismo do pensamento pós-moderno como legitimação para o ensino religioso na escola pública brasileira**. 2012. 228 f. Tese (Doutorado em Educação Escolar) – Faculdade de Ciências e Letras, Universidade Estadual Paulista, Araraquara, 2012.
- DERISSO, J. L.; DUARTE, R. C. Crítica ao ideário neoliberal na educação: precarização e descaracterização da escola pública paulista. **Revista HISTEDBR On-line**, v. 17, n. 4, p. 1169-1185, dez. 2017. Available:

<https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/histedbr/article/view/8651218/17597> Access: 10 Feb. 2021.

DORE, R. Gramsci e o debate sobre a escola pública no Brasil. **Cad. Cedes, Campinas**, vol. 26, n. 70, p. 329-352, set./dez. 2006 Available:

<https://www.scielo.br/pdf/ccedes/v26n70/a04v2670.pdf>. Access: 11 Sep. 2020.

DUARTE, N. Formação do indivíduo, consciência e alienação: o ser humano na psicologia de A. N. Leontiev. **Cad. Cedes**, Campinas, v. 24, n. 62, p. 44-63, abr. 2004.

FERRARO, J. L. S. Althusser, Educação, Estado e (Re) Produção. **Revista Contemporânea de Educação**, v. 9, n. 17, jan./jun. 2014. Available:

<https://revistas.ufrj.br/index.php/rce/article/view/1712>. Access: 28 June 2020.

LUKÁCS, G. A decadência ideológica e as condições gerais da pesquisa científica. *In*: PAULO NETO, J. **Lukács**. São Paulo: Ática, 1992. (Coleção Grandes Cientistas Sociais).

MANACORDA, M. A. **História da Educação**: da antiguidade aos nossos dias. Trad. Gaetano Lo Monaco. Rev. de Paolo Nosella. 13. ed. São Paulo: Cortez, 2010.

MÁRKUS, G. **Marxismo e antropologia**: o conceito de “essência humana” na filosofia de Marx. São Paulo: Expressão Popular, 2015.

MARX, K. **Crítica do Programa de Gotha**. Seleção, tradução e notas de Rubens Enderle. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2012. (Coleção Marx-Engels). Available:

<http://www.afoiceeomartelo.com.br/posfsa/Autores/Marx,%20Karl/Critica%20do%20Programa%20de%20Gotha.pdf>. Access: 09 Mar. 2021.

MARX, K.; ENGELS, F. **Manifesto comunista**. Organização e introdução de Osvaldo Coggiola. 1. ed. 4. reimp. São Paulo: Boitempo, 2005.

MONASTA, A. **Antonio Gramsci**. Tradução e organização de Paolo Nosella. Coleção Educadores. Brasília: Ministério da Educação / Fundação Joaquim Nabuco, 2010.

NOGUEIRA, C. M. M.; NOGUEIRA, M. A. A sociologia da educação de Pierre Bourdieu: limites e contribuições. **Educação & Sociedade**, ano XXIII, n. 78, abr. 2002. Available:

<https://www.scielo.br/pdf/es/v23n78/a03v2378.pdf>. Access: 10 Sep. 2020.

SÁ, N. P. Aprofundamento das relações capitalistas no interior da escola. **Cadernos de pesquisa**, São Paulo, 1986. Available:

<http://publicacoes.fcc.org.br/ojs/index.php/cp/article/view/1334>. Access: 25 June 2020.

SAVIANI, D. Escola e Democracia: para além da “teoria da curvatura da vara”. **Germinal: Marxismo e Educação em Debate**, Salvador, v. 5, n. 2, p. 227-239, dez. 2013.

SAVIANI, D. **Escola e democracia**: teorias da educação, curvatura da vara, onze teses sobre a educação e política. 42. ed. São Paulo: Autores Associados, 2012. (Coleção Polêmicas do Nosso Tempo, v. 5).

SAVIANI, D. Os desafios da educação pública na sociedade de classes. *In*: ORSO, P. J. (org.). **Educação, sociedade de classes e reformas universitárias**. Campinas, SP: Autores Associados, 2007.

SAVIANI, D. **Pedagogia histórico-crítica**: primeiras aproximações. 9. ed. Campinas: Autores Associados, 2005.

VELLOSO, J. Socialização e trabalho: escola e produção capitalista. **Revista em Aberto**, Brasília, v. 3, n. 19, mar. 1984. Available: <http://rbep.inep.gov.br/ojs3/index.php/emaberto/article/view/1858>. Access: 28 June 2020.

How to reference this article

LINS, M.; DERISSO, J. L.; PULITA, E. J. On the possibility of a critical pedagogy for contemporary public school. **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 16, n. 3, p. 2000-2018, July/Sep. 2021. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riace.v16i3.15419>

Submitted: 10/12/2020

Required revisions: 05/01/2021

Approved: 10/02/2021

Published: 01/07/2021