

EDUCATION AND THE NARRATIVE OF LIFE: WHY DO WE HAVE TO REMEMBER THE EXPERIENCES OF THE PANDEMIC?

A EDUCAÇÃO E A NARRAÇÃO DA VIDA: POR QUE TEMOS QUE REMEMORAR AS EXPERIÊNCIAS DA PANDEMIA?

LA EDUCACIÓN Y LA NARRACIÓN DE LA VIDA: POR QUÉ TENEMOS QUE RECORDAR LAS EXPERIENCIAS DA LA PANDEMIA?

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ABSTRACT: This article is the result of different experiences in the field of education, among them, a *Stricto sensu* research that made approximations of some benjaminian concepts to education. Based, therefore, on the work of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin, the article discusses education and the narration of life, looking to show that rememoration is an educational act that needs to be improved. The goal of this article is to understand how, in times of pandemic, the education and the narration of life articulate and remembered in and through human experiences.

KEYWORDS: Education. Experience. Memory. Pandemic.

RESUMO: *Esse artigo é fruto de diferentes experiências no campo da educação, entre elas, uma pesquisa Stricto sensu que fez aproximações de alguns conceitos benjaminianos para com a educação. Fundamentado, portanto, na obra do filósofo alemão Walter Benjamin, o artigo discute sobre a educação e a narração da vida, procurando mostrar que a rememoração é um ato educativo que precisa ser aprimorado. O objetivo do artigo é perceber como, em tempos de pandemia, a educação e a narração da vida se articulam e são rememoradas nas e através das experiências humanas.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Educação. Experiência. Memória. Pandemia.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo es el resultado de diferentes experiencias en el campo de la educación, entre ellas, una investigación Stricto sensu que hizo aproximaciones de algunos conceptos benjaminianos a la educación. Basándose, por lo tanto, en el trabajo del filósofo alemán Walter Benjamin, el artículo discute sobre la educación y la narración de la vida, tratando de mostrar que la rememoración es un acto educativo que necessita ser mejorado. El objetivo del artículo es comprender como, en tiempos de pandemia, la educación y la narración de la vida se articulan y se recuerdan en y a través de las experiencias humanas.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Educación. Experiencia. Memoria. Pandemia.*

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Introduction

When dealing with the theme in question, the article takes as a central reference the work of the German philosopher Walter Benjamin ², or, at least, some concepts problematized by him. That is, the basis of the discussions that this theme proposes finds support, to a great extent, in Benjamin's writings on memory, experience, narration and language. As a curiosity, but also for information purposes, it is important to say in this beginning that the question present in the second part of the title is inspired by an observation of another Critical Theory author, Herbert Marcuse.

In his book *Eros and Civilization*, retrieving passages from Freud's work, Marcuse speaks of the various implications that mark the trajectory and human relations in the world, stating that: *people would die without terror when they know that what they love is protected from misery and oblivion*. We will return to this statement later, for now, it is important to say that when we realize that "covid-19, a disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, identified almost two years ago in Wuhan, central China, has already killed more than 5.1 million people. The number of infections worldwide has risen in 23 months to 252 million"³, Then we realize the impact of statements like this one by Marcuse. That is, covid-19 exposed human frailties and showed that thousands of human beings left without the certainty that what they loved was protected from misery and oblivion.

In situations like this, the narration of life tends to conjugate different times to be able to justify the experiences lived, and it is in this context that memory starts to play an important role in the structuring of experiences. It is exactly at this point that Benjamin's ideas about experience and memory gain strength, because his main questioning about this is in the fragility of this remembrance, that is, the experiences of the present are, to a great extent, related to the perception that individuals of the present have of the past. If this perception is flawed, mistaken or naive, the experience will be compromised. Hence a first reflection that we could already make about the perceptions that future generations will have of those who experienced the covid-19 pandemic.

²Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), a Jewish/German thinker, was one of the representatives of the so-called Frankfurt School, one of the authors of Critical Theory. According to one of his scholars, when we appropriate the work of this author, we notice that Benjamin was, on the one hand, a writer "distant from all currents." (LÖWY, 1989, p.85) and on the other, even though he was "unclassifiable, irreducible to established models, he is at the same time at the crossroads of all roads" (LÖWY, 1989, p.85). With this stance, Benjamin developed a philosophy of history with interpretative reaches that deserve to be revisited in moments of peril. We are in one of those moments, hence the reason to bring Benjamin into the debate.

³Available at: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/internacional/noticia/2021-11/oms-acende-sinal-de-alerta-mortalidade-por-covid-19-sobe-na-europa>. Accessed on: 10 Nov. 2021.

Here we already have some elements that help answer the question: why do we have to remember the experiences of the pandemic? But we will try to explain throughout the text that this remembrance is an educational act that needs to be improved. The goal of the article, therefore, is to understand how, in times of pandemic, education and the narration of life are articulated and remembered in human experiences.

The article is organized in three sections: 1) The dangers of forgetting in the relationship between language and memory; 2) Communicating an experience and remembering as an educational work; and, 3) Education and the narration of life. Answering the question: why do we have to remember the experiences of the pandemic? In these three sections we intend to discuss the general objective and answer the central questions exposed in the title and abstract of this article. In the final considerations, rescuing the concepts of experience and memory, the article highlights the importance of an educational process that expresses the political dimension of memory, with all its conditions of possibilities.

The dangers of forgetting in the relationship between language and memory

Are we not touched by a breath of the air that was breathed before? Are there not, in the voices we hear, echoes of voices that have been muted? If so, is there a secret, scheduled meeting between the preceding generations and ours? (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 223).

Walter Benjamin did not write, specifically, a theory of memory, but certainly made an interesting reflection about the activity of rememory, also read as the loss of memory and forgetfulness. It is in the texts *Image of Proust* and *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, especially, that we find Benjamin's most fruitful reflections on memory and remembrance.

The loss of experience, a consequence in large part of the development of the capitalist mode of production, leads the modern individual to a loss of historical-social memory. Benjamin exemplifies this loss in the essay *The Image of Proust*, saying that Proust did not describe in his work a life as it actually was but rather a life remembered by those who lived it. However, Benjamin writes, "this comment is diffuse, and too crude. For what is important for the author who remembers is not what he lived, but the fabric of his remembrance, the Penelope's work of reminiscence" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 37)⁴.

⁴ In the myth, Penelope is the wife of Ulysses, who has been away for twenty years, engaged in the Trojan War. Forced by the suitors to choose a new husband among them, she resisted as long as she could, successively postponing the unwanted election. When it was no longer possible for her to escape the decision, she devised a strategy that became famous: she promised she would choose one of them as her husband as soon as she finished weaving the shroud of her father-in-law Laerte, but every night she undid what she had done during the day. The RIAEE – Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação, Araraquara, v. 17, n. esp. 2, p. 1200-1215, June 2022. e-ISSN: 1982-5587 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riace.v17iesp.2.15905> 1202

The myth of Penelope serves to emphasize that reminiscing is linked to the development of history, but it is also part of and makes sense in the present. The doing and the undoing assist reminiscence in relation to what has already been, or has already been done. However, Benjamin says: "a lived event is finite, or at least closed in the sphere of the lived, while the remembered event is boundless, because it is only a key to all that came before and after" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 37). This second condition, that of the remembered event, is fundamental for us to overcome forgetfulness. However, for the act of remembering to exist, it is fundamental that remembering/forgetting is constant.

In an article about the metaphorization of memory, or the dialectics of remembering, Martha Lourenço Vieira explains why Benjamin's conception of memory is the opposite of Penelope's work.

Penelope weaves by day and undoes the fabric at night, she weaves and "unweaves. In Benjamin's work of remembrance, there is the inverse movement, that is, the movement of unweaving. In other words, remembering is the act of unweaving the forgotten impressions, woven in the unconscious, it is dreaming, it is imagining. [...] To remember in Benjamin is to feel again, is to revive the lost, forgotten sensibility (VIEIRA; VIEIRA, 2007, p. 22).

The metaphor of weaving is, without a doubt, an important parameter found by Benjamin to expose his conception of memory. This conception needs to be carefully analyzed in order not to fall in the traps of mistaken interpretations. The danger: the traps are in a possible confusion between the conception of memory that Benjamin developed and the criticism he made about the conception developed by other authors; it is always necessary to be clear about this difference. In the essay *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, for example, Benjamin quotes some of Proust's ideas, sometimes to explain what Proust thought about memory, sometimes to differentiate and develop his own conception.

As for the conception that Benjamin develops and defends, it is possible to notice that among the ways to explain how this process of remembering happens, Benjamin emphasizes the existing relations between the work of remembering and the possibility of the reproduction of experiences through the image of the conscious. Experience, Benjamin says, is the stuff of tradition, both in private and collective life. "It becomes less with isolated and rigorously fixed data in memory, than with accumulated, and often unconscious, data that flock to memory" (BENJAMIN, 1992, p. 103).

deception lasted three years, but, denounced by some of her servants, she began to defend herself in other ways (VIEIRA; SILVA, 2007, p. 21).

It is known that the integration and disintegration of the human self from the world takes place in and with language through the articulations between past and future that are possible through the representations of memory. Guided by a discursive representation, the individual memory of a human being is activated when he needs to locate himself in time and space. However, this form of representation is not only the result of an individual exercise, it is part of a complex exercise that includes collective and even non-linguistic manifestations.

The production of these manifestations takes place between individuals in direct relations with each other and through institutions. Because of this, getting closer to the truth of the facts is, more than an arduous task, an experience that has led many people throughout history to fall under the spell of convenience and partiality.

Within this context, the thought, the written and the spoken can serve interests that distance themselves from the common good, from the possibility of human, political and social emancipation. It is not uncommon to find reflections on this thought that point to the dominant classes as the holders of control over memory, with the intention of guaranteeing domination and exploitation over the other subordinate classes.

When memory is activated in order to start an exercise, be it individual, from personal reflections about one's life history, or collective and social, from the performance of institutions and the development of cultural, legal, and political aspects in the construction of a society, it starts the unleashing of a process that, in itself, may not be long, but the consequences (of this process) may go beyond generations. In other words, by combining past and present, the exercise of memory conjugates a social past and a social present, therefore, this exercise is understood as a social construction.

It is in the dependent relationship of the representations of memory with the masked manifestations of power that we can perceive the political aspects of the use of language through memory. Control over memory is one of the tasks very well architected by those who wish to hold on to some form of power. Creating categories, through language, for the organization of thought, speech and writing, is one of the ways to prostitute logic, relativize knowledge and guide reasoning in favor of a predetermined conclusion. This is one of the practices that explains what it means to be at the mercy of an instrumentalization of language. Walter Benjamin had this concern. For him, a totally instrumentalized language, reduced to codes and symbols, instead of contributing to the liberation of the human being, impoverished it, because it stops being all that it is to manifest itself only through codes and symbols created by those who consider themselves "owners" of the language.

The relationship between the manifestation of memory and the manifestations of power are extremely close. To be in power and to be the power requires having dominion over others' time, others' knowledge, and even others' wills. All these forms of domination are important in order to maintain power and stay in power. This power increases astronomically when there is control over the memory of the dominated.

The condition of control over the memory of others is the best condition for maintaining power, although this is certainly not a simple task to perform. What goes on in people's minds, be they dominators or dominated, however open the individual's life may be, remains a mystery. It is because of this reality that language is used to create conditions and situations, where the construction, circulation and internalization of knowledge are conditioned.

The rescue or reestablishment of the dignity of memory is a consequence of the rescue, or reestablishment of the dignity of language. Not forgetting is a result of the ability to turn around and get closer to the historical moment of the events. The more this happens, the closer to the truth of the facts it is possible to be. To achieve this, one cannot renounce an active memory. Maintaining an active memory is possible by having knowledge about the mechanisms and motivations of language development. In this sense, it is of fundamental importance to know that language is a historical construction and, for this reason, influences the production of knowledge and non-knowledge.

It is the political aspects surrounding language that determine, or suggest, what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. It is in them and with them that memory manifests itself, therefore, more than suggesting the maintenance or reactivation of memory, it will be necessary to be attentive to the development of language and the political implications inserted in the core of this development. For Benjamin, "the true image of the past pervades, swiftly. The past allows itself to be fixed, as an image that flashes irreversibly, the moment it is known" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 224).

Reencountering the past in the present is, for Benjamin, one of the most fertile possibilities for understanding it, but this does not mean that he wished to return to the past and live there. In his understanding, "to articulate the past historically does not mean to know it as it really was. It means appropriating a reminiscence, just as it flashes at the moment of danger" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 224). For him, the past has a deep relationship with the present, and from the present one tries to interrogate the past in search of experiences that help clarify reality.

For Benjamin, memory is a device enriched by liberating elements with rememorative capacities, but this condition does not guarantee by itself a rescue or understanding of the past in its entirety. In fact, Benjamin does not even pretend that, his belief is that only manifestations in the form of flashes, fragments, are recovered from the past. Because of this, writes Gagnebin, "it is necessary to displace, so to speak, the core of the past from a wrapping of prefabricated images that prevent us from perceiving it in its truth" (GAGNEBIN, 1993, p. 52).

Fulfilling the theoretical and practical demands that memory is capable of establishing with those who make use of it is certainly not a simple task, mainly because it requires effort and the ability to understand the potentialities and dangers that memory constantly runs. Hence the importance of understanding the effects of the political dimension of memory and the desire of some to control the memory of others. To live in a place where some people or groups keep under their control the devices to manage social memories is to live under all kinds of threats and blackmail.

It is in this context that we understand it is necessary, in the narration of life, to remember the experiences of the pandemic, but we need to remember much more than the pandemic itself, that is, we need to remember the causes and meanings of a pandemic; the coping conditions (economic, sanitary...) in each country; the reasons for scientific denialism in the 21st century, etc. This can be done in different ways and in different spaces, but it would be a historical mistake if educational spaces gave up this task.

The danger of forgetfulness is most worrying when it is "pedagogically" thought out and put into practice. Under these conditions, in a disguised and masked way, fake narratives can be spread and gradually reach collective memories. Thus, the experiences of tomorrow may repeat themselves with the same mistakes of today and yesterday. Therefore, if we want the present generation and future generations to enrich their experiences, we need to question them in their entirety. We need to remember them, creating conditions not to repeat what has caused and still causes deaths. In this sense, if the spaces of formal education, especially schools and universities, as spaces of production of knowledge based on scientific bases, do not assume the commitment of leading the problematization and interpretation of the history and experiences of the pandemic, other people and institutions will do it. Obviously, many of them will be able to develop a serious work, with significant contributions to the future of humanity, but, at the same time, there will be so many that what they will do is obscure the history of the pandemic.

Therefore, let it be clear, the defense of this article is for educational spaces not to give up the responsibility to make clear what happened with and during the pandemic (Covid-19). Formal education has responsibilities with the narration of life, so we have to remember the experiences of the pandemic, but this action cannot be an isolated event, it has to be part of an educational process. This is what we discuss in the next section.

The communication of an experience and the remembrance as an educational work

Historically articulating the past does not mean 'knowing it as it really was'. It means appropriating a reminiscence, just as it flashes in a moment of danger (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 224).

Constructing and understanding history are tasks of the subjects that act in it. But these subjects, when becoming protagonists of history, need to pay attention to the contexts in which they are inserted while building and interpreting history, because, according to Benjamin, "history is the object of a construction whose place is not homogeneous and empty time, but time saturated with nows" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 229). This is to say that the construction of history that Benjamin proposes should pronounce a language that provides confidence in the reestablishment of the nows instants of the past. Only then will it be possible to perceive the countless nows of the present that will determine the directions of the future.

It is in this context that the collective experience gains relevance. But, considering that the concept has already been "presented" in the introduction of this article, we will now use an example described by Benjamin to better understand this relevance. It is the parable of the old man who at the moment of death reveals to his sons the existence of a treasure contained in his vineyards. After the news is given to his sons, they dig and make holes, but find no treasure. With the arrival of autumn, however, the vines produce more than the others in the region.⁵

This parable that is not history, but a resource for teaching history, reported in the essay *Experience and Poverty*, is told by Benjamin to clarify, initially, what an experience is, because it was only after the good harvest of the grapes, the result of stirred soil, that the sons understood what their father had passed on to them. "Only then did they understand that their

⁵ We highlight here the central idea of this parable, but the full account and the ensuing observations about it can be found at the beginning of Benjamin's text *Experience and Poverty*. Some Benjamin scholars, such as philosopher Jeanne Marie Gagnebin, interpret this parable by stating that it explains to us "how to become rich" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 65). This is elucidated, in the case of this parable, when the sons themselves recognized that wealth does not come from any treasure, but from the experience that their dying father transmitted to them.

father had transmitted to them a certain experience: happiness is not in gold, but in work" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 114).

For a better understanding, however, of the concept of experience (Erfahrung) in Benjamin, it seems necessary to read it in parallel with the essay Experience and Poverty. It is from the poverty of experiences and the difficulty, in some cases the impossibility, of recounting them that we get a broader understanding of the Benjaminian concept of experience. Jeanne Marie Gagnebin says that experience, for Benjamin, firstly, "is inscribed in a temporality common to several generations. It supposes, therefore, a tradition shared and taken up again in the continuity of a word transmitted from father to son" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 66).

In this transmission, narration becomes one of the main devices for sharing experiences. In the book, *History and Narration in Walter Benjamin*, philosopher Jeanne-Marie Gagnebin deals with some issues related to narration to explain how it impacts the constitution of the subject. According to the author, "this importance has always been recognized as that of remembrance, of the saving resumption by the word of a past that would otherwise disappear in silence and oblivion" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 3). In this sense, the role played by narration becomes fundamental for the development of a subject who knows things and himself.

To better justify the claim that narrative serves as a contributing medium to the search for identity, Gagnebin presents the example of the Odyssey, the first great narrative. The Odyssey, the author reminds us, is the "founding model of the search for identity" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 4). She describes the return of Ulysses, the protagonist of the story, to his home country⁶.

During this journey, Ulysses faces various setbacks, fights monsters, and wins thanks to his cunning. And so, between comings and goings, getting lost in the various paths, he continues on his journey. However, as Gagnebin points out, "we must state that Ulysses' journey, if it is explicitly a return trip, only becomes an odyssey thanks to the obstacles that prevent this return" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 4). Narrative and memory are part of this return journey of Ulysses and are present in the essence of the obstacles that Ulysses faces.

⁶Gagnebin makes an interesting observation regarding the contributions of Adorno and Horkheimer, in *Dialectics of Enlightenment*, on this subject: "In their remarkable interpretation, Horkheimer and Adorno transform the stages of this journey into as many stages of the constitution of the rational subject, in struggle against the forces of myth that represent, in a privileged way, the developed forces of forgetfulness. Western reason would thus constitute itself in the same gesture of recovery through memory and narration against the regressive temptations to which Ulysses' companions succumb" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 4).

According to Gagnebin, "the obstacles are not simply, the signs of divine hatred, but also come from Ulysses' active neglect and forgetfulness" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 4). In this case, the lack of memory is because the work of remembrance did not happen, and if it did not happen, it is because there were no narratives that would provide teachings.

The Odyssey, because it is characterized as a journey full of extraordinary adventures, is the greatest example of the use, relationships, and employment of the concepts studied here. It is not only narrative that appears in The Odyssey. Memory, experience, and language also make up the scenario of this journey. For Gagnebin, "everything happens in the Odyssey as if there were implicitly a force of narration that makes one forget and, explicitly, a force of remembrance, which combine to constitute narration" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 5). All this development, sometimes of forgetting, sometimes of recovering from forgetting, is part of the subject's life. In the words of the author, it is all this "back and forth movement that Penelope's cunning configures, the daytime making and nighttime unmaking of the weaving, the double weft of remembering and forgetting that constitutes the subject" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 5).

The account of the Odyssey is one example, among many others, of Benjamin's recurrence to tradition to explain what he perceived in his time. But he knew the complexity of this task, so he had many concerns with narration. According to Gagnebin, if the problematic of narration "has preoccupied Benjamin for so long and will continue to do so until his death, it is because this problematic concentrates in itself, in an exemplary way, the paradoxes of our modernity and, more specifically, of his entire thought" (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 65).

An example of these paradoxes that modernity presents is the loss of authority when telling an experience. This authority is not the privilege of those who possess privileged formal knowledge. This authority, "even the poor devil possesses when he dies, for the living around him. At the origin of narrative is this authority" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 208-209). In *The Storyteller*, especially when he talks about the connection between death and narration, Benjamin discusses this loss of authority.

At the beginning of Benjamin's observations on the relationship between death and narrative, it highlights the fact that the weakening of the idea of eternity is influencing, or at least coinciding with, a growing aversion to prolonged work. This conclusion is not exactly Benjamin's. He quotes an author named Valéye, then states that "the idea of eternity has

always had in death its richest source. If this idea is atrophying, we must conclude that the face of death must have assumed another aspect" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 207).

This new aspect given to death needs, of course, to be better analyzed, but for now we can say that it is not about religious, mystical or superstitious issues, which only talk about death, the end of the world or things like that to scare and frighten people. It is about a change in the way death comes to be seen. More than that, what Benjamin intends is to rescue the notion that "it is at the moment of death that man's knowledge and wisdom, and above all his lived existence - it is of this substance that stories are made - first assume a transmissible form" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 207). It is this condition that no longer exists in modernity. This other and new aspect that death assumed in bourgeois society, says Benjamin, "caused the idea of death to lose, in objective consciousness, its omnipresence and its force of evocation" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 207). The consequence of this posture is the loss of authority, since, according to Benjamin, "death is the sanction of all that the narrator can tell. It is from death that he derives his authority. In other words: his words refer back to natural history" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 208).

Benjamin's reflection on the idea of death has, therefore, a dimension that goes beyond the biological or religious issues surrounding it, and more than that, what we can notice is that the moment of death reveals another dimension that is also ethical and political. It is at this moment that the experiences that result from human relationships present themselves with greater clarity. According to Gagnebin, in paragraph X of *The Narrator*, Benjamin talks about death, highlighting this new relationship that needs to be established with it.

It is about nothing less than establishing a new relationship with death, therefore, with negativity and with infinity, which, by the way, seems to guide numerous philosophical questions today. The end of narration and the decline of experience are inseparable from the profound transformations that death, as a social process, underwent during the 19th century, transformations that correspond to the disappearance of the antithesis time-eternity in everyday perception and, as the essays on Baudelaire indicate, to the replacement of this antithesis by the incessant pursuit of the new, to a drastic reduction of the experience of time, therefore (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 73).

The idea that everyone dies someday, with the banality of death seen in the last centuries, can be understood as a result of this disappearance of the antithesis time-eternity from everyday perception. With banalization, the fear of death, which could result in learning, has neither the strength nor the time to reveal this learning. Charles Feitosa writes that in the face of certain death, even if this possibility is uncertain, "all problems have relative

importance, all projects have absolute urgency. Deep fear is, to some extent, a knowledge of finitude. This wisdom of fear has the power to transform oneself and the world" (FEITOSA, 2004, p. 171).

This transformation may not happen if the wisdom of fear is not revealed. And how can it be revealed without the possibility of narrating it? Gagnebin helps us think about this with the following reflection:

Now, if dying and narration have essential links between them, because the authority of narration has its most authentic origin in the authority of the dying person who opens and closes behind us the door to the true unknown, then the historical decline of narration and the social repression of dying go together. One can no longer tell and, like Kafka's hunter Gracchus, it also happens that one can no longer die. Following Benjamin's guidelines, we can then venture the hypothesis that the construction of a new kind of narrativity necessarily involves the establishment of another relationship, as social as well as individual, with death and dying (GAGNEBIN, 1994, p. 74).

In this "other relatedness", what needs to be reestablished is the ability to tell (narrate), which was slowly lost until it reached its most critical moment in modernity. We find some notes that could lead to this other relationship with death in Herbert Marcuse (1898-1979), in his book *Eros and Civilization* (1955). Charles Feitosa, intelligently, appropriates Marcuse's observations to make his points. According to Feitosa, what Marcuse states is that "in a society where people could live in non-repressive conditions, enjoying freedom to work and to have pleasure, everyone could accept to die in peace" (FEITOSA, 2004, p. 181). Marcuse's thesis on this theme, which helps us think about the problematic of death in its relation to narration, is: "people can die without terror when they know that what they love is protected from misery and oblivion" (MARCUSE, apud FEITOSA, 2004, p. 181).⁷ Protecting from oblivion is the function of memory that will remain active as long as it continues to be fed by narratives resulting from a collective experience, recognized by the sharing of ideas.

Many questions arise from what has been problematized in this section, but when we relate these reflections to the pandemic and realize that "covid-19, the disease caused by SARS-CoV-2, has already killed more than 5.1 million people and the number of infections worldwide has risen, in 23 months, to 252 million"⁸, being that many of these thousands of people, due to poor sanitary conditions in many countries, among other adversities, did not

⁷ In Marcuse's observations there are important contributions that can be used to enrich the analyses about the concept of narration, however, in order not to mix many ideas, from different authors, we will not deepen here the conceptions of Marcuse.

⁸ Available at: <https://agenciabrasil.ebc.com.br/internacional/noticia/2021-11/oms-acende-sinal-de-alerta-mortalidade-por-covid-19-sobe-na-europa>. Access on: 10 Nov. 2021.

even have the opportunity to try to fight against the virus, then we wonder if Marcuse's conclusion is finding possible ways to be lived.

This is why we understand that the collective experience and the remembrance as an educational work can be beneficial to humanity, not only to overcome a difficult moment, but mainly to avoid making mistakes that cause deaths. We know that this is not an easy exercise, because we will probably never know everything that is involved in the events that caused the pandemic and the events that resulted from it, but as Benjamin says "To articulate the past historically does not mean 'to know it as it really was'. It means appropriating a reminiscence, just as it flashes up in a moment of danger" (BENJAMIN, 1994, p.224). Moments of danger can be avoided and overcome with education, but education needs to reflect experiences that signal human evolution and not human misery.

Education and the narration of life. Answering the question: why do we have to remember the experiences of the pandemic?

In an article entitled "*Pandemia e falácias do discurso do homo economicus*", the Spanish/Brazilian philosopher Castor Ruiz (2020) points out that the pandemic (covid-19) is putting in crisis the current model of civilization by demonstrating that "the other is not an appendix of the self, as individualism thinks. Individualistic attitudes are sterile as a self-centered solution to a global problem of great dimensions" (RUIZ, 2020). That is, the other is the condition for "my" existence and survival.

As Castor Ruiz (2020) states, this is "a time to recycle the old wineskins that deny the value of life and think collective responsibility for new ways of living. We cannot waste such an opportunity, but we need to join forces in the elaboration and implementation of educational processes that correspond to these emancipating yearnings.

The pandemic (Covid-19) has "shaken" humanity, but the emergence of consciousness for this "shake" needs to remain attentive to the maxim bequeathed by the Coronavirus pandemic: take care of yourself to better take care of others. Otherwise, as the philosopher points out, "if we are not able to modify this thanatopolitical utilitarian model of life, new and great crises will come, this time of an ecological nature, to which we may not even be able to give such an efficient response" (RUIZ, 2020). For all these reasons, we cannot remain reticent in the face of what the pandemic has caused.

The *Coronavirus experience* has shown us that the ethical and anthropological dimensions that feed the ideals of humanity need to be revived. And this action will not

happen without solidarity being experienced. But how to be solidary disconnected from a collective experience that manages to transmit knowledge that generates new learning?

Knowledge and learning are presuppositions of the collective experience described by Walter Benjamin. Therefore, what is contrary to them has implications for the impoverishment of experiences. And what would better exemplify, at this moment in history, what is presented as contrary to these assumptions if not the so-called Fake News? In other words, it will be difficult for us to take up a solidary struggle for life if we allow ourselves to be won by fake news (Fake News), *scientific denialism*, flat earth, etc. And how do we face it? The answer should be unique, with education. Yes, with education, there is no doubt about it, but this education needs to be up to the challenges posed. In this sense, we need to think about an educational process. Such a process needs to be qualified to the point of creating conditions to improve people's lives and avoid deaths.

That's why we have to remember the experiences of the pandemic. But this remembrance cannot be in the light of someone else's desire, it needs to make room for a living memory of what happened from 2019 onwards with the emergence of the pandemic. Our understanding is that the generations that experienced the pandemic caused by covid-19 have a responsibility to transmit to new generations the meaning of this experience. In this case, the wish is that the knowledge transmitted will be able to sensitize the new generations to the point of preventing the mistakes made by the previous generation from being repeated. We have expectations that this is possible, therefore, there is an urgent need for an educational process that experiences collective experiences open to the development of science, the defense of democracy and the exaltation of life.

Final remarks

This article sought to draw attention to one fact: the consequences of the pandemic. These consequences could be drastic if we do not care to identify the context of the experiences of this pandemic time. If we do not pay attention to the meanings of the experiences lived in this period, we will repeat and express what Benjamin calls impoverished experiences. In the impoverishment of experiences, the absence of the common word prevails and the sharing of ideas does not happen, because, in the absence of collective experience, "there is nothing to tell.

In his reflections on the form and conditions in which each human being leads his or her own life, Walter Benjamin points out that this condition, from childhood to old age, is

marked by experiences. Touching on some specific points, such as those that analyze the living of an experience, the author highlights: "to live without spirit is comfortable though funereal" (BENJAMIN, 1984, p. 25). This observation serves as support and helps to understand another remark about experience made by Benjamin: "each of our experiences actually has a content, a content that it receives from our own spirit" (BENJAMIN, 1984, p. 25). In this sense, no matter how painful an experience can be, according to Benjamin, it "hardly leads the one who pursues it to despair" (BENJAMIN, 1984, p. 25), but for that it is necessary that this experience aspires to collectivity. An "openly collective" experience can become a quest for human emancipation, because, thanks to it, the past, the present and the future can be moved through the remembrance of such experiences.

The collective experience, therefore, is a possibility of resistance and confrontation against the reproduction of individualized experiences (*Erlebnis*), which, after all, are the expression of a fragmented world. The reproduction of individualized experiences induces many human beings to consider that this is the way things are, and that each person should think only of himself. Because of this mentality, many people can no longer see other and new possibilities, but they not only exist, they are possible. However, they require that our enthusiasm for life be greater than human miseries and death plans.

In summary, what the article has tried to say is that we need to remember the experience of the pandemic in order to transmit an experience to the new generations that has in its essence the basic assumptions to not allow mistakes to be repeated. To do so, it is necessary that we remain attentive to the ways in which meetings between generations are set up. Not infrequently, as the winds of change blow, the experiences that marked the trajectory of a generation fall asleep, but remain alive, waiting for opportunities to come to life in the discourses and practices of new generations. Hence the importance of triggering the memory in search of a critical interpretation of reality. The success of this action, however, is linked to an educational process that expresses the political dimension of memory with all its possible conditions, including those that promote the concealment of experiences and events. The *emergence of an awakened consciousness*, as Benjamin suggested, seems to be imbricated to an educational process that does not ignore these warnings and possibilities.

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How to reference this article

SANTOS, C. Education and the narrative of life: Why do we have to remember the experiences of the pandemic? **Revista Ibero-Americana de Estudos em Educação**, Araraquara, v. 17, n. esp. 2, p. 1200-1215, June 2022. e-ISSN: 1982-5587. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21723/riaee.v17iesp.2.15905>

Submitted: 29/11/2021

Revisions required: 21/01/2022

Approved: 19/03/2022

Published: 30/06/2022

Processing and editing: Editora Ibero-Americana de Educação.

Proofreading, formatting, normalization and translation