

PAULO FREIRE AND ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: REFLECTIONS ON A CRITICAL FORMATION

PAULO FREIRE E O ENSINO FUNDAMENTAL: REFLEXÕES SOBRE UMA FORMAÇÃO CRÍTICA

PAULO FREIRE Y LA EDUCACIÓN PRIMARIA: REFLEXIONES SOBRE UNA FORMACIÓN CRÍTICA

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ABSTRACT: The student's formation, in any level of schooling, always entails the need and expectation that they become critical subjects. This text aims to provoke, from Paulo Freire's perspective, what this formation and the criticality practice can be, not occupying with a corollary of definitions, even of renowned researchers, about what will become a critical subject, a basic need to be able to think in a schooling process that makes this desired critical formation viable. For this, the text presents and discusses some actions that, throughout history, marked the creators due to their positions, ideas and questioning actions in their historical time and that demarcate, for this analysis, a critical thinking and acting that can be reflected by all those involved directly and indirectly with the educational process.

KEYWORDS: Paulo Freire. Critical formation. Education. Critical subject.

RESUMO: *A formação de estudantes, em qualquer que seja o nível de escolarização, enseja sempre a necessidade e a expectativa de que esses sejam sujeitos críticos. Esse texto, com uma abordagem qualitativa, se ocupa em provocar, a partir de uma perspectiva freireana, o que pode ser essa formação e esse exercitar da criticidade, não se ocupando com um corolário de definições, mesmo que de renomados pesquisadores, sobre o que venha a ser um sujeito crítico, uma necessidade básica para se poder pensar em um processo de escolarização que viabilize essa almejada formação crítica. Para isso, o texto apresenta e discute algumas ações que, no transcorrer da história, marcaram seus idealizadores por*

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conta de posicionamentos, ideias e ações questionadoras em seu tempo histórico e que demarcam, para essa análise, um pensar e agir crítico e que pode ser refletido por todos os envolvidos direta e indiretamente com o processo educativo.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Paulo Freire. Formação crítica. Educação. Sujeito crítico.

RESUMEN: *La formación de los estudiantes, cualquiera que sea el nivel educativo, siempre suscita la necesidad y la expectativa de que sean sujetos críticos. Este texto se preocupa de provocar, desde una perspectiva freireana, lo que puede ser esta formación y este ejercicio de la criticidad, no tratando un corolario de definiciones, aunque sean de reconocidos investigadores, sobre lo que será un sujeto crítico, una necesidad básica de poder pensar en un proceso de escolarización que haga posible esta deseada formación crítica. Para ello, el texto presenta y discute algunas acciones que, en el transcurso de la historia, marcaron a sus creadores al cuestionar posiciones, ideas y acciones en su tiempo histórico y que demarcan, para este análisis, un pensamiento y un actuar críticos que pueden reflejarse por todos los involucrados directa e indirectamente en el proceso educativo.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: Paulo Freire. Formación crítica. Educación. Sujeto crítico

Introduction

To seriously study a text is to study the study of who, studying it, wrote it. It is to understand the historical-sociological conditioning of knowledge. It is to seek the relationships between the content under study and other related dimensions of knowledge. Studying is a way to claim, to recreate, to rewrite - the task of the subject, not of the object. [...] Understanding a text is not something that is given as a gift. It requires patient work by those who feel problematized by it.

Paulo Freire

In Latin America, one of the speeches that recognized the need for a school education that would provide a critical formation is that of the Conference of Ministers of Education. This event, which took place in Caracas, December 6-15, 1971, was marked by the statement that "the idea of a liberating education that contributes to critical consciousness" and that this training would "stimulate the responsible participation of the individual in cultural, social, political and economic processes" (FREIRE, 1980, p. 7).

The Brazilian State, in turn, defends the formation of critical subjects through the schooling process. The discourse that expresses this intention can be observed in the text of the Education Directives and Bases Law - LDB No. 9.394/1996 (BRAZIL, 1996), in its Article 35, item III: "the enhancement of the student as a human being, including ethical training and the development of intellectual autonomy and critical thinking. It should be noted, however, that the indication of a critical formation, at all three levels, appears only in

the section that deals with high school. As for the education in the early years of education, i.e., early childhood education and elementary school, the purpose of education is stated thus:

Art. 29 - Early childhood education, the first stage of basic education, *is aimed at the integral development of children up to six years of age, in their physical, psychological, intellectual and social aspects*, complementing the action of the family and the community.

Art. 32. Elementary school, which lasts at least eight years, is compulsory and free of charge, and its objective is the basic formation of the citizen, by means of: I - *the development of the ability to learn, with full command of reading, writing and arithmetic as the basic means*. (BRAZIL, 1999, our emphasis)

It is noticeable that, in addition to making no mention of critical training in early childhood education or in elementary school, the learning of reading and writing appears in the text of the law as a mechanistic acquisition in which learning to read and write is enough by itself, that is, the learning of reading and writing is not linked to a potential tool or critical instrument for reading the world. A very distant formation from that which can show the student that, for example, language is, above all, a social practice and, as such, not devoid of ideological character and permeated by power relations.

As for higher education, the text of LDB No. 9.394/1996 (BRAZIL, 1996), in its Article 43, states that its purpose is to "stimulate cultural creation and the development of scientific spirit and reflective thinking. In this excerpt, we can observe a discourse that evokes a critical formation of the student, if we consider that developing a scientific spirit and a reflective thinking is a task that cannot be imagined without a critical posture. Finally, the school should form active subjects, participative and transformers of society, as stated in the LDB n° 9.394/1996 (BRAZIL, 1996).

In view of this discourse, which evokes a critical education, we can say that the body of Paulo Freire's work and, obviously, much of what has already been produced about him and his work, point clearly to an education in the school field that is marked by criticality, that is, that men and women exercise their ability to think and, above all, to think critically, not only by using the knowledge that they are taught during the schooling process, but also by the knowledge that is transmitted to them.

Thus, we understand that this provocation is opportune, in the sense of theorizing what would be a critical formation starting in elementary school, that is, that school stage that can give foundation, fundamentals for a better reflection of the contents worked in relation to the students' most immediate social practices, an action that seems to us, nowadays, to have

become a jargon, that is, starting from the students' reality. But let's ask ourselves: Does the teacher who includes this objective in his/her work plan really know this reality? Is he/she critical enough to perceive it and, therefore, to mediate the knowledge of his/her area with this reality, that is, with the knowledge that permeates the world of his/her students' experiences? These questions culminate in two basic questions: can we, as educators in basic education, really form critical subjects? What concept do we have of a critical subject?

In order to discuss these basic questions, it is important, first of all, to refer that, in fact, for Freire (1992), school education should have its starting point centered on the most immediate experiences that the student has in his experiences. In this regard, Freire (1992, p. 86, emphasis added), when commenting on the need to respect the knowledge that the student brings to school, says that "the place of the students is the starting point for the knowledge that they will create about the world.

Therefore, to know the dynamics of these immediate social relations of the students is a necessity so that the contents that will be dynamized by the school work gain a dimension beyond its merely informative character, that is, the constant search for overcoming repetitive pedagogical practices, marked by a memoristic theoretical teaching, fragmented and, most of the times, dissociated from the students' social reality.

Working from this perspective implies, minimally, from all social actors involved, the desire and the search for a critical education. However, resuming the basic issues, we must now ask: After all, what does it mean to be critical?

Conceptualizing the critical being - from a religious perspective

The word criticism comes from the Greek word *crinein*, which means to separate and to judge. By this definition, it would be enough to say that a critic is one who separates the object to be appreciated and passes a certain value judgment on it, i.e., a judgment. Thus, socially we have created the function of the critic by profession, since we have, nowadays, the art critic, the movie critic, the soccer critic, the political critic, the literary critic, among others. It is important to point out that, although we have created the critic by profession and the political critic, just like the literary critic, these are not functions created nowadays. Aristotle already exercised his critical analysis on politics. After all, for him, "the human being is fundamentally political".

The use of this word can already be observed in the biblical text. In Genesis, the word criticism is used with the same meaning as a judgment against a certain practice. Note that the

first book of the Bible, whose writing in Hebrew is attributed to the prophet Moses, is dated approximately more than 1,500 years before Christ. In Genesis, in its twenty-first chapter, verse 25, there is the reference that "Abraham severely criticized Abimelech" (BIBLE, 2006, p. 39). This reference, present in the Biblical context, exemplifies the use of criticism to question what is already established or what has been done outside the pre-established.

Thus, in an attempt to dissertate on what it is to be critical and, for this, to avoid an unrolling of definitions, even if they are from renowned researchers, we seek to define being critical from the actions, postures that, it is understood, are from a critical subject. This subject, or better, these subjects, whose names have been marked in history in different areas of knowledge, are identified by demonstrating questioning positions, ideas, and actions in their historical time and that mark, therefore, a critical thinking and acting.

This critical posture of critical subjects is extremely noticeable in the history of one of the great religions. In the history of Catholicism, it is possible to see how the critical posture of some of the active Catholics was decisive in promoting changes in the Church's posture and directions. The criticism that the Augustinian monk Martin Luther directed at certain dogmas of Catholicism led the Church of Rome not only to face severe losses in its contingent, but also to restructure itself in many of its actions because of the movement that historically became known as the Reformation. Among these actions taken by the Church is the effective involvement with school education.

In the reformist movement promoted by Martin Luther, who counted on the adhesion of many other followers, the criticism against certain dogmas of the Church was punctual and culminated with the well-known Luther's 95 theses. However, it was with the vehement criticism against the concession of indulgences in exchange for financial contributions to Saint Peter's Cathedral, in Rome, that Luther started a fight against the authoritarian power of Catholicism under Pope Leo X - Giovanni de Medici. Thus, a fight was established, not only against liturgical practices and ideological positions of the Church, but against power, i.e., against what the reformists considered as abuse of the Church's power that, at the time, produced a plastering on man's ability to think and express himself. On this, Chassot's (1994, p. 89) comment is important: "the reformers wished to diminish the dogmatic control exercised by the church and thus ensure greater freedom of thought".

Luther's criticism of the Catholic Church encourages us to reflect about the importance of a critical posture capable of questioning the hegemony of those who use power aiming to manipulate the ways of thinking, feeling, and acting of others. With Luther's blunt criticism of the unshakable dogmas and the unquestionable power of the Church, men were able to

awaken to the understanding of the fetters that hinder their freedom of thought, expression and action. In this sense, Chassot (1994, p. 89) comments that the reformists' critical stance was decisive "for the conquests of humanism and for new attitudes towards science, undoubtedly facilitating the emergence of new mentalities.

This struggle, which did not end with the reform, since there was the counter-reform movement, is nothing more than one of the many examples of the potential of critical thinking in driving movements that, in the limit, can become broad reforms, that is, in more humanized and humanizing social relations. In his novel *The Name of the Rose*, Umberto Eco (1983) develops a plot in which he describes the determinist power of the Church and the clashes that occurred in its internal sphere. Among other reasons, these clashes occurred precisely because of the critical posture aroused by events that took place outside the gates of the Church: the advance of science and the arts, and the spread of other ideologies. These events produced not only dissident postures, but also postures that were fiercely opposed to the dogmatic dictates of the Church, thus shaking its powerful hegemony in the late Middle Ages.

It is important to emphasize that the reform movement was not the work of a single visionary. In reality, it was a movement that gradually took shape in the most varied localities and in the most varied convents, many times overcoming the walls that isolated the Church from the other social practices that occurred outside its walls. In other words, the reformist movement was a clash between different ideological conceptions that were in the process of formation and that counted on the critical stance of different people, who, even though carrying different ideologies, had in common the fact of standing against a certain hegemony, i.e., the hegemony of the Church. This critical and fighting attitude of the reformists culminated with the burning of the Papal Bull on October 31, 1517, with the publication of Luther's 95 theses on the door of the Wittenberg Chapel, and with the inevitable consequences that followed, such as, for example, the peasants' war that took place from 1524 to 1525.

This reflection, in the historical and religious field, which shows how different ideologies produce critical postures, reminds us that, in the educational field, Freire emphasizes the importance of critical pedagogies to identify and combat deterministic ideologies. For Freire (2004, p. 19), it is fundamental to "work against the dominant fatalistic ideology and its power to encourage immobility on the part of the oppressed and their adaptation to an unjust reality. This also implies that, in the educational field, these dominant ideologies, which are almost always veiled, aim to annul and extinguish critical pedagogies that contribute to students reading and re-reading the world.

Thus, the purpose of this narrative, about how the critical posture of some of its members inside the Church was determinant to the emergence of new ideas, was to show that this episode is in line with Gruppi's (1978) statement that the hegemonic struggle is also manifested by the clash of one ideology over another, in order to supplant it or, to coexist in the same space of struggles. In fact, what can be observed in this account was the emergence of an ideology, the Protestant one, which, at a given moment, opposed the Catholic ideology, and gradually gained space. However, in this specific episode, it is worth mentioning that one of the possible factors of the ideological struggle waged by Protestantism is directly linked to reading, that is, to being a reader: the reading of biblical texts that used to be done only out loud, now, with an alternative way of reading, provided the emergence of a new reader.

This statement is based on the reflections proposed in the works of Roger Chartier (1999) and Manguel (1997), who, by dedicating themselves to the study of reading, state that the advent of the invention of alphabetic writing originated reading aloud. As Alberto Manguel (1997, p. 61) records: "Written words, since the time of the first Sumerian tablets, were intended to be pronounced aloud, since the signs carried implicitly, as if it were their soul, a particular sound." However, based on other needs, Chartier (1999) and Manguel (1997) reveal that reading also became silent, that is, the figure of the silent reader emerged.

To characterize this silent reader, we can use the same analogy employed by Manguel (1997) when he stated that reading aloud had a "particular sound", audible and unmistakable. However, in the case of silent reading, the reader begins to hear other sounds, the sound of his reflections, of the reflections on what he is reading. In turn, since this new way of reading and of being a reader takes place mainly in the cloisters of medieval monasteries, it is significant to mention that Manguel (1997) refers to how silent reading contributed to the birth of the Protestant ideology and, until today, silent reading has produced other looks, other interpretations, other ideas, other struggles, in the most different contexts. When referring to a graphic representation of St. Augustine observing the silent reading of St. Ambrose, Manguel (1997, p. 71) reveals that:

Watching St. Ambrose reading that afternoon in 384, Augustine could hardly have known what was before him. He thought he was seeing a reader trying to avoid intruding visitors by saving his voice for teaching. In fact, he was seeing a multitude of silent readers who over the following centuries would include Luther, Calvin, Emerson, and us who read him today.

Arguing that silent reading was influential in the reform movement, Simone Borges also points out the significant importance of this reading modality in the formation of the reader and the consequences for society:

[...]Silent reading transformed the social order, as it created new functions for writing, reformulated and introduced behaviors, and destabilized old concepts such as the library. It was at the base of Luther's Reformation and of the Holy Inquisition. It sparked new literacy practices that fostered, in turn, the formation of new readers and writers, the creation of new genres and new text carriers [...] (BORGES, 2010, p. 04).

The issue of reading, whether silent or not, is shown by the researched interlocutors as a fundamental means of promoting and developing a critical attitude towards the object of reading. Freire sees reading and also writing as a fundamental element of the necessary interpretation and interaction with the world. In order to demonstrate this importance, Freire publishes *A importância do ato de ler: em três artigos que se completam* (1982) and, throughout his works, the theme of reading and critical reading will always be treated with relevance because it will be the foundation for understanding what he calls the "plots" present in the world. Thus, he dedicated himself to proposing a literacy process based on the necessary critical posture before the text to be read, thought, dialogued. Commenting on this process, Freire (2001b, p. 21, emphasis added) states that "deep down, this set of representations of concrete situations enabled popular groups to "read" the previous "reading" of the world, before reading the word".

Conceptualizing the critical being - from a philosophical perspective

Leaving the religious field, it can be seen that the term criticism is also used in philosophy. Nicolla Abbagnano (2000, p. 223) refers to the modernist philosopher Emanuel Kant as the philosopher who introduced the term criticism "to designate the process by which reason undertakes the knowledge of itself". For Kant, influenced by John Locke's enlightenment, the function of criticism is to provide man with the possibility of knowing his real intellectual capacity and the various ways of perceiving, knowing and apprehending the world in which he lives. So much so that his best known work, Critique of Pure Reason, was initially conceived under the title: The limits of sensibility and reason. Kant was strongly influenced by the assumptions of the initiator of the liberalism theory, Locke, for whom man's most important action is to dedicate himself to analyze each of our ways of knowing the

knowable object, that is, to know the origin of our ideas and of our discourses, totally rejecting the Cartesian current that defended the theory that ideas are innate.

However, many centuries before Kant exercised his critical stance, philosophy, which, at its birth, was founded on the aegis of analyzing, reflecting on and criticizing man's ability and purpose to know and act on the object to be known, was already facing issues that put men in constant questioning and clashes. These conflicts can be identified from the different philosophical currents that followed in the middle of the division between ancient philosophy, also known as Greek philosophy, and Western philosophy. Already in ancient philosophy, the critical stance of its most prominent thinkers is noticeable in its four periods, namely, the cosmological or pre-Socratic, the anthropological, also known as Socratic, the systematic, and the Greco-Roman, also known as Hellenistic.

While pre-Socratic philosophy employed all the senses, i.e., sensory perceptions, to seek to understand the very existence and origin of the universe and its transformations, Socrates and Plato, the leading representatives of the anthropological period, asserted that the senses could never lead to knowledge, to the full truth, since sensory perceptions led to error and were susceptible to the influence of lies and falsehood. Thus, for Socratic philosophy, knowledge was something aprioristically given to man, the fruit of his pure ideas, free of opinions and false perceptions of the world of the senses. Thus, the conception is created that knowledge is given by the rationalist way, that is, by the use of reason.

One who opposed this way of conceiving knowledge was precisely a follower of Plato: Aristotle. This philosopher postulates that knowledge is only possible if taken by the experimental way. By criticizing his master's approach, Aristotle created a new philosophical conception that became known as systemic. He formulates, thus, three actions that should be the basis of the critical action of the man who seeks knowledge: the faithful observation of nature, the rigor of the method, and empiricism. In the first action, experience must always be taken as the starting point. The second action consisted in elaborating a set of actions to reach knowledge, which implied the organization of clear and defined procedures to carry out a systemic study of the object to be known. This theoretical formulation by Aristotle in idealizing a possible way to reach knowledge became known as empiricism, transcending his time. Aristotle was named as the creator of logic, that is, the possible instrument to reach knowledge in any area of knowledge. His logic was later recognized by important icons of modern philosophical thought, such as, for example, George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel and Karl Marx, who extended his logic by proposing a dialectical and non-linear way of thinking.

Although there are many other philosophers who stood out between Aristotle and Marx, the initial emphasis given to Kant is precisely because he figures among those philosophers who initiated a critical discussion about the possibilities and limits of knowledge, thus opposing rationalism and empiricism in their original propositions. However, it is Kant who processes a synthesis that seeks to integrate the postulates of rationalism and empiricism in a dialectical relationship. His critical posture in analyzing these two philosophical ways of conceiving knowledge will provide the basis for the creation of a new theory: interactionism.

This incursion into history, the religious field, and the field of philosophy is to highlight how the critical attitude was determinant for both the negation and the affirmation of the great theories of knowledge, namely: rationalism, empiricism, and interactionism. These three great theories subsidized other philosophical strands, such as structuralism, phenomenology, and critical theory. The researcher Marilena Chauí (1995), when dealing with philosophical attitudes capable of submitting to criticism the sayings and actions about the world and of promoting the reformulation and creation of new theoretical conceptions and worldviews, makes the following argument:

The first characteristic of the philosophical attitude is **negative**, that is, a saying no to common sense, to preconceptions, to pre-judgments, to the facts and ideas of everyday experience, to what "everybody says and thinks," to the established.

The second characteristic of the philosophical attitude is **positive**, that is, an interrogation of what things, ideas, facts, situations, behaviors, values, ourselves, are. It is also an interrogation of why all this is so and why we are so, and an interrogation of how all this is so and not otherwise. What? Why is it? How is it? These are the fundamental questions of the philosophical attitude.

The negative and the positive sides of the philosophical attitude constitute what we call the **critical attitude** and **critical thinking** (CHAUÍ, 1995, p. 12, author's emphasis).

It is extremely relevant to highlight the importance of a critical stance for social life. It is the critical stances that provoke the birth and evolution of different conceptions of the world and of mankind throughout human history, conceptions that, in turn, have a direct impact on the relationships that men establish with each other and with nature. These different conceptions of the philosophical field, such as, for example, humanism, skepticism, structuralism, formalism, phenomenology, and critical theory, which broke away from the basic conceptions of rationalism, empiricism, and interactionism, were established from the

critical reading that men made about the philosophical theory that, until then, had served to answer their existential questions. In this process of questioning, the critical subjects not only question the ideas of their time, but also contribute decisively so that new ideas can give new contours to the world and establish new relations among men.

About this possibility of critical stances to promote different conceptions of understanding the world through a philosophical approach that has been discussed, it is worth mentioning that this concept, the possibility of change, in the field of education, is also evidenced in Freire's work. For Freire, the term "possibility" is closely related to a critical stance which is, by its nature, transformative. In other words, education can only exercise this process of promoting change when its different actors act in a critical manner, understanding themselves in time and space. To this end, Freire (2001a, p. 84) teaches us about this potentiality by saying that "because I am historical, I live history as a time of possibility and not of determination".

The man who takes a critical stance is the subject that contributes both to the development of knowledge and to the unveiling of relations of domination present in the most different facets of human activity. Jean-Jacques Rousseau was one of these great men of sharp critical thinking. One can see, in his works, how he questioned certain established truths and how these questionings influenced his generation and the generations that succeeded him. To demonstrate the influence of Rousseau's critical thinking on contemporary man's way of thinking, it is appropriate to quote João Carlos Brum Torres (2011) who, when writing the introduction of the book *Discourse on the Origin and Basis of Inequality Among Men*, one of Rousseau's classic works, comments on the extent of his ideas. In this introduction, Torres (2011, p. 9, emphasis added) makes the following comment about the Swiss thinker:

The recognition of the decisive role of the Second Discourse and, in general, of the Rousseau's work, in the conformation of the critical imaginary of modernity can be expressed more directly if we say that Rousseau is the founder of the two main lineages of critical thought that characterize this historical epoch.

To demonstrate how critical thinking is a determining factor in the process of transforming men's way of thinking and acting socially, Hans Joachim Störing (2008, p. 330), while going through the history of philosophy, makes the following statement:

The philosophers' demands for the application of reason (also with regard to all that has been traditionally handed down, the watchword "criticism", for freedom, tolerance, humanity have become widespread in the long run. [...]) To these ideals we owe fundamental achievements such as the elimination of

torture, the end of the persecution of witches, the humane treatment of the mentally ill, the elimination of hideous corporal punishment such as the wheel or quartering, the end of slavery, the recognition of the division of powers in state constitutions, [. ...] in short: the gradual imposition of human rights as they are formulated in the American Declaration of Independence of 1776, and then in the "Déclaration des droits de l'homme", of the National Assembly of 1789, and that now appear in the statute of the United Nations.

The observation that critical thinking has been and continues to be determinant for changes that alter the most different social relations can also be perceived in the educational field. This implies recognizing that, just like in the religious and philosophical fields, critical individuals have thought about the education of their time and questioned conceptions, values, and methodologies used in the educational process, and, even without such pretension, have contributed to the creation of educational models and practices that have lasted for centuries. What can also be noted is that the critical stance, which can be identified in different social fields, ends up, in general, influencing the process of human education as well.

To take a hook from the statement made earlier about the critical stance within the Church of Rome, it is worth commenting on one of the developments that occurred during the Reformation period that had a significant impact on education. For the reformist Martin Luther, education was something of fundamental importance for the cultural and spiritual formation of the child. This observation can be seen in one of his speeches, entitled A Sermon on keeping children in school, from 1530, and also in the letter he wrote, in 1524, to the mayors and councilors of all German cities, in which he called for the creation of Christian schools. One of the passages of this letter is quoted by Gadotti (1999, p. 72), and in it, Luther states that "there is no other visible offense which, in the eyes of God, is so heavy a burden to the world and deserves such a severe punishment as the neglect of the education of children". This concern with the education of the people evoked by Luther initiates a process of creation of educational structures with their own cultural contents, elaborated mainly by Philip Melanchton, who later became known as the preceptor of Germany. About the creation of these schools within the reform movement, Cambi (1999, p. 250) says that Melanchton was

Very active in promoting and organizing schools in various locations in Germany, his educational aim is first expressed in the *De corrigendis adolescentiaestudiis* of 1518, in which he advocates the importance of instruction and the validity of ancient culture for penetrating the truth of Scripture.

The frank involvement of this new and growing religious doctrine, the Protestant, in the educational process, forced the Catholic Church to elaborate and develop a great project in

the field of education. Mario Alighiero Manacorda (2000) says that the Church made an uncompromising defense of its prerogative to act in the education of men. This educational orientation of the Catholic Church, as a response to Protestantism, according to Manacorda (2000, p. 200) "was fixed in the Council of Trent (1545-1564)".

Commenting on the importance of the Council of Trent for the directions of education, which was intended not for the population in general, but for a certain group, Franco Gambi (1999, p. 256) states:

With the Council of Trent, in fact, the Church of Rome acquires a greater awareness of its own educational function and gives life to a significant flowering of religious congregations specifically destined for formation activities not only for ecclesiastics, but also for young people descended from the ruling groups.

A very important fact that determined guidelines in the field of education that occurred during the Council of Trent is described by Manacorda (2000, p. 201):

It is enough to recall, among the voices that echoed in the council halls, that of Beccatelli, Bishop of Ragusa, who, without mincing his words and in a very harsh tone, had said: "There is no need for books; the world, especially after the invention of the press, has too many books; it is better to forbid a thousand books without reason, than to allow one deserving punishment".

This is one of the records of the history of education in the West in which the use of power can be observed through the imposition of censorship, an official imposition that affected, especially, the educational field. Many books were classified as heretical, among which, obviously, the writings of Luther, Calvin and other reformers that figured in the *index librorum proibitorum*⁵. Although, at that time, books were used only by teachers, since it was rare for a student to have a book at his disposal, the idea here is to highlight the antagonism present in the educational process, since, while the Church was against the use of books that did not have its approval, the other educational model proposed just the opposite.

In a world that was already boiling in terms of discoveries and development in the most different areas of knowledge, such as, for example, the invention of the printing press and the great navigations, which enabled the development of commercial capitalism, the theories that opposed the dogmas supported by the Church, as was the case of the heliocentric theory, initially proposed by Nicolau Copernicus, were not included in the syllabus created by the Church between 1586 and 1599, the so-called *Ratio Atque Institutio Studiorum Societatis Jesu*, or simply *Ratio Studiorum*. Manacorda (2000, p. 202) when commenting on the plan,

⁵ Index of Forbidden Books.

states that it "strictly regulated the whole Jesuit scholastic system: the organization in classes, the timetables, the programs, and the discipline".

However, although the Catholic education plan regulated by the *Ratio Studiorum* influenced almost the whole world in its time, as Gadotti (1999) states, it can be observed that in the other way, i.e., in Protestantism, education, due to the critical posture of some, which, in this scenario of open conflict, became a political posture, also exerted a strong influence. One of these critics, perhaps one of the greatest exponents of education in his time, is the Moravian Jan Amos Seges, or John Amos Comenius. Comenius proposed in his magnum opus, *Didacticus Magna*, the exact opposite of what was being advocated in the reform movement regarding the use of books. Although he also questioned the use of books, whose authors Comenius called pagan, his critical vision of education, in tune with the development of his time, made him propose the creation of books that could aggregate the knowledge of all areas and the use of books as tools, which he analogously called score, for the conductor in the classroom, in this case, the teacher.

On the distinction between the educational proposal of Comenius and that of the Church of Rome, synthesized in the *Ratio Studiorum*, João Luiz Gasparin (1994, p. 14) wrote:

Didactics has always existed in human history, because it has always been taught and always learned. In Comenius, however, it acquires peculiar dimensions that differentiate it from all other previous or contemporary formulations, such as, for example, those of Ratke or the *Ratio Studiorum* of the Jesuits.

Still, to highlight the central point of difference between the educational proposal of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, Cambi (1999, p. 256) makes the following statement:

This is the most significant difference between the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation movements on the educational level. The former privileged the instruction of bourgeois and popular groups in order to create the minimum conditions for a personal reading of the sacred texts, while the latter, especially with the work of the Jesuits, repropose a traditional cultural and formative model in close connection with the political and social model expressed by the ruling class.

Regarding the use of books and the creation of textbooks that is attributed to him, Comenius (2002, p. 365) makes the following analogy:

The perfect printer has characters of all kinds, so that he never lacks any that he may need. In the same way, our books must contain everything that pertains to the complete education of the minds, so that, with these aids, no one can fail to learn everything that needs to be learned.

It is worth pointing out that the above pointed reading, that in the educational field it is also perfectly possible to theorize how the critical posture of certain subjects was decisive for profound changes to occur in the approaches to education of their time, was not based on a linear reading only of the religious clash between the Church of Rome and Protestantism. In a totality view, the issues, mainly economic and philosophical, are social conditioning factors that, as a whole, contributed to the idealization and development of the educational proposal of Comenius, which is, therefore, a subject of discussion until our days.

Final remarks

The aforementioned reports sought to demonstrate what can be called a critical posture, therefore, the action of critical subjects. These examples, and, of course, could be others, were selected since the unfolding of the action of Aristotle, Luther, Comenius, Rousseau and Kant had a direct influence on the education of their time and, much more, on the organization and educational practices in schools. that followed, some, including that we practice until today in our school educational model.

It remains for us, once the critical posture that can idealize a critical subject is presented, to provoke the reader to think about how this can influence professionals who work in elementary education to form critical subjects. Firstly, by saying that this is exactly what is expected of them, either by the content of the text of the Law presented at the beginning of this article, or by the common consensus of the whole society, even though it is not known how to define what a critical subject is.

Including the thinker Paulo Freire in the dialogue means, in principle, the recognition that, in his vast legacy, especially in the area of education, the critical training of those directly involved in the process, that is, students in training, teachers and managers in action, imperatively needs that their positions are marked by criticality, because only in this way could we idealize a critical formation, which can and must have its birth right in the beginnings of school education.

In the set of Paulo Freire's works, it is observed how this critical posture is fundamental for the formation of our students throughout their path in the schooling process, so that they understand and even react to the condition of possible oppressed in the face of the oppressor's action. Obviously, this conceptual understanding, by itself, has already been and continues to be the object of theses, written to study and discuss not only the concept of the oppressed, but how, from it, we can advance to other reflections on the educational, historical,

sociological level, philosophical among others. For this reason, we reaffirm at the end of this reflection that the necessary critical training is one of the possible understandings to define the concept of oppressed in Paulo Freire, which, in a more objective way, implies recognizing that there are antagonistic poles, namely, the oppressor and the oppressed. of the oppressor and, because of that, the critical formation is fundamental for this understanding, after all, Freire (1979, p. 48, author's emphasis) teaches us that “the critical conscience of the oppressed means, therefore, conscience of the self”.

Thus, for this simple reasoning, this text refers to the importance of Freire's writings as a possible source of reflections, not only on the importance of working with a critical education since the early years of schooling, but also on the necessary profile for the teacher to aim and seek to work with this perspective of critical education since the early years. Regarding these two important reflections, we can mention Freire's warning about the need for the teacher to seek coherence between his discourse and his actions. This implies that the teacher who aims to work towards a critical formation of his students should at least reflect on how he performs his self-evaluation as a critical subject.

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