

THE NON-PLACE OF EDUCATION FACING THE PARADOXES OF THE SOCIETY
OF CONTROL

*O NÃO-LUGAR DA EDUCAÇÃO DIANTE DOS PARADOXOS DA SOCIEDADE DE
CONTROLE*

*EL NO LUGAR DE LA EDUCACIÓN ANTE LAS PARADOJAS DE LA SOCIEDAD DE
CONTROL*



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ABSTRACT: Thus, this essay aims to question education in a society of control in order to reflect on the paradox between an idea of freedom and innovation – based on the “democratization” of access to information and the insertion of technology in the school context – and the non-place that education acquires – as a result of its inability to reflect on the problems of post-modernity. Faced with the impasses of the control society, the relationship between education and technological innovations remains open. It is up to education to put tension between neutrality and technological determinism in order to break with naive and salvationist visions.

KEYWORDS: Society of control. Surveillance. Networks. Education.

RESUMO: O ensaio objetiva interpelar a educação na sociedade de controle para refletir acerca do paradoxo entre uma ideia de liberdade e inovação – pautada na “democratização” do acesso à informação e na inserção da tecnologia no contexto escolar – e o não-lugar que a educação adquire – fruto da sua incapacidade de reflexão das problemáticas da pós-modernidade. Diante dos impasses da Sociedade de controle, percebe-se que a relação entre educação e as inovações tecnológicas permanece em aberto. À educação, cabe tensionar a neutralidade e o determinismo tecnológico, a fim de romper com visões ingênuas e salvacionistas.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Sociedade de controle. Vigilância. Redes. Educação.

RESUMEN: El ensayo pretende cuestionar la educación en la sociedad de control para reflexionar sobre la paradoja entre una idea de libertad e innovación – a partir de la “democratización” del acceso a la información y la inserción de la tecnología en el contexto escolar – y el no lugar que adquiere la educación – resultado de su incapacidad para reflexionar sobre los problemas de la posmodernidad. Ante los impasses de la Sociedad de Control, está claro que la relación entre educación e innovaciones tecnológicas sigue abierta. La educación debe enfatizar la neutralidad y el determinismo tecnológico para romper con visiones ingenuas y salvacionistas.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Sociedad de control. Vigilancia. Redes. Educación.

Introduction

Modernity is deeply rooted in the ideals of the Enlightenment. Culture, politics, social organization, legal principles, and educational thought all drew from a source that seemed to offer infinite possibilities for change. This was a dreamlike realm, paradoxically crafted as a product of reason, which fueled the pursuit of progress and the formation of a citizenry that fit models of civility aligned with supposed equality.

At the outset, it is important to note that the concept of education to which we refer is a legacy of this “enlightenment” period. It is worth recalling what Kant (1985) attempted to answer in his essay titled “*Answering the Question: What is Enlightenment?*” According to Kant (1985), “enlightenment” should be the process by which man emerges from a state of immaturity through the proper use of reason. What does this mean? This means that by correctly using his rational faculties, man would be able to gather the necessary conditions to think autonomously and act on his own without being subject to the direction of others. Therefore, emerging from immaturity through Enlightenment requires “the courage to use your understanding” (Kant, 1985, p. 100, our translation).

According to Kant (1985), man cannot renounce his mission toward Enlightenment, as doing so would mean “violating and trampling upon the sacred rights of humanity” (Kant, 1985, p. 110, our translation). Kant (1985) asserts this because, for him, renouncing Enlightenment—renouncing the proper use of reason—entails compromising the ideals of individual freedom and autonomy. Simultaneously, it also jeopardizes the possibility of building a peaceful and just life in society. Thus, to renounce the use of reason is to accept living in a complete state of brutality and barbarism, from which man ought to emerge.

In his writings on pedagogy, Kant (1999) reinforces this idea by stating that man is “naturally inclined to freedom” (Kant, 1999, p. 13, our translation). Thus, education fulfills a fundamental role in the care, discipline, and instruction of individuals. Education would serve to facilitate the process by which the individual attains his own humanity through the proper use of reason. This implies that, for Kant (1999), education was viewed as a fundamental instrument for individuals to achieve autonomy and live freely and peacefully in society.

Despite transformations, paradigm shifts, the emergence of new pedagogical concepts, and new practices such as the integration and use of technology in education, we believe that the ideals underpinning what could be called the foundation of an educational project are still

based on the notion that education, like knowledge and the proper use of reason, is the great instrument for promoting autonomy, freedom, social peace, and human emancipation.

However, even though the legacy of the "Enlightenment"—which conceives the modern rational project as something external to barbarism, that is, as something untouched by forms of violence and domination—still persists among us today, it must be said that the modern project was not constituted, as many prefer to believe, in a peaceful manner, detached from the struggles within the realm of power and the political and historical entanglements of its time.

As Foucault (2014, p. 31, our translation) aptly states: “It might be necessary to renounce the belief that power drives one mad and that, conversely, renouncing power is one of the conditions for becoming wise.” The belief, therefore, that knowledge, reason, and science exist outside the sphere of power, would be the result of a naive and purist view of these fields of knowledge production and the production of modern man himself.

This naivety, or perhaps cynicism, would not withstand a quick exhumation of the bodies buried by the various scientific statutes that were forged and recognized as such during this period. Medicine, psychiatry, juridical forms of punishment, pedagogy, and the modern educational project (the focus of our reflection) are some of the battlefields where the construction of the modern world took place. Thus, we could mention that: “it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that would produce knowledge, either useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traversed and constituted it, that determine the forms and possible fields of knowledge” (Foucault, 2014, p.31, our translation).

As Foucault (2014) argues, it is not about thinking of the fields of knowledge as a kind of divine light that, in its purity, would dispel the stormy and brutal clouds and cast its rays of light and warmth upon the enclosure of mythologies and irrational beliefs that until then had imprisoned a gagged and subjected individual. No, it is about the conditions of possibility for the production of knowledge, of an individual, and of a type of man and society. If we are speaking of production, then the “man of whom we are told and whom we are invited to liberate is already in himself the effect of a far deeper subjection than he” (Foucault, 2014, p. 33, our translation).

As modernity advanced from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century, the organization and production of fields of knowledge, of a society, of an individual, and of a subject would be subjected to a regime of power named by Foucault (2014) as disciplinary power. In the French philosopher’s view, disciplinary power is “a power that, instead of appropriating and taking

away, has as its primary function ‘training’; or perhaps training to take away and appropriate even more and better” (Foucault, 2014, p. 167, our translation).

It is important to note that we are discussing a historical period marked by the maturation and expansion of industrial capitalism and the formation of mass societies. Thus, perhaps the central issue at hand was how to create an environment and forms of regulation in which the population could coexist and circulate in parallel with the circulation and production of commodities. In other words, the challenge was how to create a large population body that, within a specific space (nation, city, institution, house, church, prison, school) and a determined time, could operate, produce, and circulate in harmony and with a certain degree of "normalcy."

In this context, disciplinary power acts directly on the atom of this large population body, the individual. Through a process of surveillance involving space, time, and the living body, this disciplinary power⁴, in its power-knowledge relations, creates a kind of "anatomopolitics." This is the result of the production of politically docile and economically more productive bodies (Foucault, 2014). In this way, it becomes evident that the notion of the individual is not the result of an essence, of a final instance that cannot be altered or transformed. On the contrary, the disciplined body is the result of the production of the modern individual and the objective need to "adjust the accumulation of men to that of capital" (Foucault, 1988, p. 133, our translation).

It is in this connection that knowledge establishes its scientific statutes as it justifies its importance in the maintenance and "defense of society," by monitoring and correcting potential deviations. In this process, the school plays a central role as a disseminator of knowledge that shapes subjectivities in accordance with the project of modernity. It is responsible for caring for the bodies of children and young people, equipping them with the values and techniques necessary for their integration into the social fabric and the production/reproduction of commodity society. After all, as Kant (1999, p. 11, our translation) stated long before: "Man is the only creature that needs to be educated. By education is meant the care of his childhood (conservation, treatment), discipline, and instruction as formation."

We continue our reflections inspired by the lyrics of Zé Ramalho: "Out there, the weather is comfortable, the surveillance takes care of the normal." In this sense, we dare to

⁴ For Foucault (2014), discipline is a device supported by techniques and technologies “that allow for the meticulous control of the body’s operations, which ensure the constant subjection of its forces and impose on them a relationship of docility-utility” (Foucault, 2001, p. XXII). This disciplinary power does not act from the outside; it works inside bodies, generating behaviors appropriate to the functioning and maintenance of capitalist industrial society.

assert that what ensures the full functioning of a surveillance apparatus is, in fact, the sense of efficacy it provides, much more than its actual efficiency. Therefore, more than autonomy and emancipation, what was at stake in the educational project of modernity was surveillance and correction. Disciplinary power and its mechanisms of surveillance, it must be said, are fundamental to the articulation of the entire subjective, social, and productive machinery (Foucault, 2014).

In modes of governance, surveillance is central. In Foucault's disciplinary society, the panopticon was the device that ensured the automatic and machinelike functioning of power. The panopticon represents a surveillance power that intervenes in the political and aesthetic management of a body, shaping its social uses. The panopticon "is polyvalent in its applications: it serves to reform prisoners, but also to care for the sick, educate schoolchildren, guard the insane, supervise workers, and make beggars and idlers work" (Foucault, 1987, p. 170, our translation).

However, in the last decade of the 20th century, Fordism entered a crisis, and the capitalist system underwent reformulations. In "The Birth of Biopolitics (1978-1979)," Foucault (2008), addressing the emergence of neoliberalism and the concept of the entrepreneur of the self, pointed out that this development was the result of a historical cycle characterized by a general crisis of society and disciplinary apparatuses. Similarly, Deleuze (1992), when discussing the emergence of a controlled society, also acknowledged the deterioration of disciplines and the ramifications of emerging post-Fordism.

Ironically, or perhaps not, many of the demands of the 1960s-1970s generations against the Fordist regime, against institutions, against disciplines, and against an administered and bureaucratic life, have now turned against us in the post-Fordist era (Sennett, 2019). The previous political wager on freedom, creativity, and flexibility has today become the source of the most brutal, continuous, and uninterrupted exploitation. When the disciplinary society fell into crisis, what followed was not necessarily what was anticipated, as Richard Sennett (2019, p. 12, our translation) observes: "The dismantling of disciplinary institutions did not generate a greater sense of community."

With technological advancements, the 20th century provided, through analog artifacts and systems, the conditions for the virtuality of the body, which ultimately generated a new mode of surveillance: the synopticon. The synopticon (from the Greek prefix "*sin*," meaning

together and at the same time) is a form of omnipresent surveillance⁵. With the explosion of the internet, an enormous quantity of mobile devices emerged, resulting in a more democratic form of surveillance than the panopticon.

To a large extent, this statement leads us to understand that we are facing new models of control, a synoptic model conceived from the perspective of new information and communication systems and how these spheres relate to everyday life, in which everyone can see each other mutually, interacting according to the allure that networks provide us. According to Rodríguez (2019), this context reveals a new model that moves away from panopticism and disciplinary societies—described by Michel Foucault (1987)—towards the self-surveillance of control societies—conceptualized by Gilles Deleuze (1992)—without the need for someone to occupy a central position.

Deleuze (1992) states that in control societies, "Individuals have become 'dividuals,' divisible, and the masses have become samples, data, markets, or 'banks'" (Deleuze, 1992, p. 222, our translation). All of this is currently happening in "real-time," in a much more refined, subtle, and elaborate manner within a contemporary surveillance context to which we have become accustomed and, as a result, have become complacent and normalized the "diligent" presence of devices used as watchers to contain social disorder.

The simplistic and superficial view that currently surrounds educational thought focuses on the use of technological resources in teaching, demonstrating that the mere presence of Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs) is insufficient to denote the quality of education. These reflections have intensified significantly since the COVID-19 pandemic, a time when teachers and students were forcibly pushed into the virtual learning environment (VLE).

In a journalistic piece by Roberta Jansen (2021), based on data from the IBGE, it is evident that "The percentage of students who were unable to study five days a week reached 35% among the most vulnerable [...] The pandemic was a challenge for everyone, but it profoundly affected the most vulnerable, mainly due to digital exclusion." These data demonstrate that when we speak of students' inclusion in the digital universe, the prerogative

⁵ Allied and intrinsic to synoptic surveillance, we have data surveillance based on the algorithm that originated what Rouvroy and Berns (2015) called algorithmic governability. Rouvroy and Berns (2015, p. 42) define algorithmic governability as being "a type of (a)normative or (a)political rationality that rests on the automated collection, aggregation and analysis of data in massive quantities in order to model, anticipate and affect, in advance, possible behaviors".

of overcoming the apparent and simple access to technology does not align with the disparate socioeconomic reality of Brazil⁶.

It is important to note that this terrain is fraught with nuances that society does not always absorb smoothly. An emblematic example is the way we handle the excessive screen time to which children and young people are currently exposed. In a journalistic report, Ingrid Oliveira (2023) discusses the various criticisms received by the São Paulo Department of Education when it attempted to replace physical textbooks with digital books for fifth-grade students in the 2024 academic year. Experts questioned the move, citing potential risks to students' mental health and brain development. As a result of these concerns, the decision was reviewed by the relevant authorities.

Another crucial element is the assertion that the pandemic also spurred debates about the gamification of education—a phenomenon that represents a form of "pedagogical trend," based on active methodologies that encourage students to solve problem-based scenarios. This area also requires reflections beyond the mere technological aspect.

In a journalistic piece by CNN Brazil (2023), gamification is portrayed as divisive, highlighting that while it offers various interactive benefits to the classroom, it may also reveal challenges, such as the dominance of the game over other forms of learning opportunities. Games may work well for some students while failing to meet the learning needs of others. The report also emphasizes that "the need for resources and technology can be a hindrance: it may require additional resources and technology, such as specialized software and computing equipment, which may not be available to all schools and students" (CNN, 2023, s/p, our translation).

We observe that the disparity exposed by the unequal distribution of income in the Brazilian population directly impacts the processes of knowledge production and learning. Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic reveals that the issues surrounding technology and education extend far beyond the continuous teacher training that focuses on methodologies supposedly innovative, which are based on the stimulus-response approach of gamification.

Following the line of contemporary executive vision, and paradoxically with reflective limitations—since it sees ICTs as the new savior of educational processes—teachers may soon

⁶ "The simultaneous presence of internet and computer in the homes of students aged 15 to 17 was found in 54% of homes, but the distribution is extremely unequal. Among students in private schools, this percentage is 90.5%; among those in public schools, it is less than half (48.6%). When the breakdown is made by race, another layer of inequality emerges. The vast majority of whites (67.3%) had both a computer and internet, compared to 46.8% of blacks and browns (Jansen, 2021, s/p, our translation).

find themselves overshadowed by Artificial Intelligence (AI), which could easily implement teaching plans based on behaviorist learning theories. In this context, we agree with Leticia Cesarino (2022), who states that "Our societies have heard similar promises countless times, and things always revert to the way they were. This happens because complex problems do not disappear with simple solutions" (Cesarino, 2022, p. 11, our translation).

Given the above, this essay aims to interrogate education in the control society to reflect on the current paradox between an alleged idea of freedom and innovation in education—based on the "democratization" of access to information and the integration of technology into the educational context—and the non-place that education acquires due to its failure to address the issues of post-modernity.

The Operation of Networks in Delimiting the Non-Place of Education

In "*A Novidade*" (1986), Gilberto Gil and Herbert Vianna explore a paradoxical idea through their musical composition, poetically illustrating that "The novelty was the maximum, the paradox stretched on the sand, some desiring its goddess kisses, others desiring its tail for the feast," suggesting to the uninformed that the novelty, although near, was inaccessible. Just as poets create a critique of social inequality through figurative language, we also reflect here that poetry allows us to critique the understanding that modernization would bring novelty to the educational field, yet in contemporary times, it has reproduced the same old patterns.

The primary invitation of this text is to reflect on the intersectional processes emerging from networks, which are currently displaced from the educational environment and are therefore responsible for delineating a non-place for education.

In the context of offering and demanding instant needs in imbalance, we locate the debate of networks here. We understand that these have been constituted from the branches of telecommunications, evolving to algorithmic mediation in a rhizomatic movement, inviting us to think about the socio-historical and political phenomenon of new forms of relating and expressing oneself through the use of the internet, which intercross and inevitably influence education.

Social networks—understood here as rhizomes—pervade interaction; the influence of algorithmic surveillance; the power of big techs; neural connections, which shape human

intelligence; and artificial intelligence (AI)⁷. None of these aspects are isolated, as they all relate in some way and effectively to various ways of life and how they belong to this world. As a mechanism operating on the concept of multiplatform, networks have organized themselves as a stage for social interactions amidst information and communication technologies, reacting through a strategy of ubiquitous communication, both synchronous and asynchronous. Their functionalities and possibilities have rapidly expanded, incorporating text, photo, video posts, stories, reels; advertising space, sales; and live broadcasting through streams. However, Cesarino (2022) states that:

“New media seem to be facilitating a transversal bifurcation in which the ‘populist’ communicative layer oriented by an affective politics coexists with less visible layers of control and governance through algorithmic and technocratic means” (Cesarino, 2022, p. 271, our translation).

The metaphor of networks is drawn from Raquel Recuero's writings (2009) to grasp the possibilities within this universe for addressing individual, collective, and technological issues of human groupings in cyberspace. "Studying social networks, therefore, involves examining the patterns of connections expressed in cyberspace. It is exploring a structural metaphor to understand the dynamic elements and composition of social groups" (Recuero, 2009, p. 22). According to this author, networks function based on a multiplex system, encompassing various social relationships. "There is a multiplicity of tools that support this interaction and allow it to persist even after the actor is disconnected from cyberspace" (Recuero, 2009, p. 32, our translation).

Whether in social networks or in technical and biological networks, with the brain being the best example of connections, the concept of network is broadly applied to matters of circulation, mobility, energy, exchange of services and information, transfer of goods, monetary transactions, etc, in other words, to the interconnection of pathways and means. The network signifies, in essence, both circulation and interconnection, but also retention, in its primitive sense, where the fabric that binds also entraps and confines (Babo, 2017, p. 78, our translation).

In this rhizomatic conception, there is a perspective of affectation, as we are in a constant process of interactivity, causing changes among the various actors that make up this universe.

⁷ Han (2022) states that “Artificial intelligence does not substantiate, but calculates. Instead of arguments, algorithms emerge. Arguments can be improved in the discursive process. Algorithms, in turn, are continuously optimized in the machine process.” (Han, 2022, p. 66, our translation).

According to Di Felice (2020), we are part of a living organism that intercrosses with other organisms. "The diffusion of digital platforms and networks of interaction between humans, software, data, surfaces, and connected objects has contributed to the creation of a new type of ecology, which is no longer subject-centered, but reticular and interactive" (Di Felice, 2020, p. 10, our translation). For this author, we are governed by data and algorithms that control our actions and interactions, and our actions today are connected.

The process of digitization produces an ontological alteration of matter and the status of reality; a world and reality that are no longer given and objective, but that exist as events and in eternal becoming; above all, a world and reality to be constructed through dialogue with data, with interactive digital architectures, and through connections to larger intelligent networks, by extension and efficiency, than human networks (Di Felice, 2020, p. 20)

Di Felice (2020) argues that we are faced with a new ecology, one of whose pillars is the questioning of popular participation under the "votocentric" aegis, asserting that there is a shift in epistemes that needs to be considered. For him, there is a contradiction between the forms of social participation and political action of citizens and the new forms of relationships that are currently interwoven in networks, which encompass other possibilities for relationships and participation.

In this sense, education promoted by educational institutions today occupies a non-place for us, being unable to function reflectively in the face of the demands of a society deterritorialized from real spaces and transitioning to the virtual. Without understanding that we live in a duality, we do not advance in effective teaching strategies and reflections on the social function of education. There is a paradox between what we believe we are disrupting through the incorporation of Digital Information and Communication Technologies (DICTs) in education and what is actually emerging as a minefield for us as implementers of a project destined for failure.

The idea of the human, the idea of technique, and the conception of nature, understood as external realities produced over the last millennia and disseminated globally, are no longer adequate for understanding the world we inhabit. 5G, quantum computers, augmented and extended realities, global warming, climate change, and the pandemic have forever eliminated the idea of the world that first centered on God, and then on man and his reason. The European conception of the world ends, but perhaps this is good news, because for the new to be born, the old must recede and die (Di Felice, 2020, p. 15, our translation).

According to Rodríguez (2019), the current distribution of information, somehow more horizontalized through media logic, also provides new forms of sociability capable of generating unforeseen political processes. Thus, he asserts that this does not mean the Arab Spring, for example, emerged solely because of Facebook, but that it is possible to consider how these power spaces can showcase struggles and produce political subjects in contention. Therefore, we currently identify networks as a crucial space for the reverberation of discourses and positions projected as a field for political confrontation. Following a similar line of thought, Henrique Antoun (2010) states that the transformations that permeate politics, driven by communication networks, are undeniable.

It is important to highlight the potential for democratizing access to information as a strategy for knowledge formation and the decentralization of power in the provision and dissemination of data by mainstream media. This factor also requires a critical-reflective capacity from individuals who "navigate" these networks regarding information consumption, profile engagement, and clashes with algorithms, which today have become the greatest thief of our time—and thus of our lives.

[...] ubiquitous and invisible surveillance, now sustained by algorithms, represents nothing more than an enhancement—a sophistication and refinement—of the political economy in digital capitalism. Thus, biopolitics, which today encounters algorithms in big data as its greatest allies, relates to the power that, regulated by scientific, medical, and legal policies, is exercised over biology and the lives of populations, which are increasingly expanding to occupy all available spaces on the globe (Santaella, 2016, p. 94, our translation).

According to Di Felice (2020), in our society, everything is quantifiable and measurable; we are faced with a society of calculation. “The performances of our bodies, our musical preferences, our friendships, our comments, our financial transactions, and all kinds of activity: everything has become data” (Di Felice, 2020, p. 92). Clive Humby, a London mathematician, succinctly captured the significance of data today with the famous phrase, “Data is the new oil.” With this statement, we understand that data mining has indeed become a major generator of wealth and control in the contemporary configuration of our existence. Our discourses, behaviors, decisions, and even ourselves have become data. For Byung-Chul Han (2022), “Decisive for the gain of power is, then, the possession of information” (Han, 2022, p. 24, our translation).

We work and live at the service of data, under the influence of algorithms that have silently directed our lives, significantly shaping the information we have access to on networks. “[...] our social relationships, every area of the world has progressively assumed an algorithmic form” (Di Felice, 2020, p. 90, out translation). According to this author, “Algorithms are sequences of calculations that allow us to access large amounts of information from databases and, therefore, the complexity of our world” (Di Felice, 2020, p. 91, out translation).

Pablo Manolo Rodríguez (2019) asserts that algorithms have always existed in mathematics, defined in this context as a finite sequence of instructions to perform a task or solve a problem. However, this author claims that in the computational environment, algorithms take on the necessary form for manipulating symbols and the metaphors of thought and its meanings. In the context of networks and multiplatforms, “Each ‘Like’ is an act of algorithmic governmentality” (Rodríguez, 2019, p. 360). Our preferences revolve around a small hand with a thumb raised, a symbol that denotes the “like,” which, while including us in access to content, also excludes us based on the viral demand of the moment. In this context, Rodríguez (2019) mentions that information machines become communication machines, as they somehow communicate.

To say that machines communicate implies that they not only manage data but also transform it into complex processes of signification. This undoubtedly relates to the way the very notion of information expands far beyond mere data (Rodríguez, 2019, p. 98, our translation).

Surveillance and discipline may be more or less explicit in this context of communication and information, but this does not prevent a comprehensive view. According to this author, this premise constitutes a condition for the varied possibilities of distributed and participatory surveillance proposed by the use of technologies in recent decades. Such a structure operates through forms of power that shape our time and lives, escaping institutions and states but remaining at the service of capital. Therefore, it is possible to reflect that the line between staying and leaving networks today is no longer in the realm of privacy and individual freedoms, but rather in the domain of control, which is continuously adjusted.

According to Gilles Deleuze (1992, our translation), “control societies” are operated by information machines and computers, with a language made up of codes that allow access to or rejection of information. In this regime of continuous control, nothing ever truly ends. “Enclosures are molds, distinct moldings, but controls are a modulation, like a self-deforming mold that changes continuously, at every moment, or like a sieve whose mesh changes from

one point to another” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 221, our translation). These points are considered here as references for understanding the codes and data in contemporary capitalism.

We are no longer talking, as Deleuze (1992) would say, about capitalism for production. We are indeed talking about capitalism focused on the product. Capitalism is oriented “toward the sale and the market” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 228, our translation). By product, this refers not only to the specificities and values of commodities but also to the workers, who now see themselves as both a force of production and consumption.

In this way, it will not only be cell phones, computers, automobiles, televisions, and, in general, goods that will need to keep pace with the growing demands for innovation in the face of market competition. People, workers, will also be included in this flexible and plastic dynamic that characterizes current capitalism. Thus, control devices need to be “short-term and rapidly rotating” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 228, our translation).

For individuals in this control society, the only option is to adapt to this relentless race for optimal performance in a time that seems increasingly short for achieving practically impossible demands. That is why, in society, the person of performance, simultaneity, and instantaneity is simultaneously the person of lack and emptiness. He is, so to speak, “the indebted man” (Deleuze, 1992, p. 228, our translation), consumed by himself.

Based on this assumption, Maurizio Lazzarato (2014, p. 66) asserts that “Debt constitutes a new technique of power. The power of control and coercion over the debtor does not come from the outside, as in disciplinary societies, but from the debtor himself.” For this author, the issue of time and the duration of debt, which links the present to the future, is central. In this sense, a current configuration emerges of a person who is a child of lack and who, even in the future, will continue to be characterized by what he owes rather than what he possesses.

Byung-Chul Han (2022) states that “Information capitalism, based on communication and connection, renders disciplinary techniques such as spatial isolation, strict work regulation, or bodily training obsolete” (Han, 2022, p. 08, our translation). In this new phase of capitalism—also referred to by this author as surveillance capitalism—forms of domination occur through algorithmic processing and artificial intelligence machinery. “It is, therefore, not the possession of means of production that is decisive for gaining power, but access to data used for surveillance, control, and forecasting of psychopolitical behavior” (Han, 2022, p. 07, our translation).

Within the framework of digital surveillance, Fernanda Bruno (2008) identifies the following public and private devices, which have been uniquely updated as determinants: “[...]”

mechanisms for collecting, monitoring, and archiving information; data classification and knowledge systems; procedures for individualization and identity production; and forms of control over the actions and choices of individuals” (Bruno, 2008, p. 11, our translation). According to this author, digital surveillance classification systems generate a kind of taxonomy of their own, distinct from other forms of individualization found in databases and computational profiling⁸) – which do not represent either the norm or the average of a population.

According to Han (2020), all these procedures of control, surveillance, and prevention are part of a psychopolitics that has allowed the logic of domination and exploitation in capitalism to permeate our inner selves. More directly, our psyche has become the last and most recent bastion of capitalist expansion. Now that our desires and will be preemptively calculated, directed, and appropriated, a crisis of freedom has emerged, as we lose any condition of autonomy or decision-making power regarding what we want or do not want.

Human behavior can now be completely manipulable, encountering no resistance—“The person themselves becomes a thing that is quantifiable, measurable, and controllable” (Han, 2020, p. 23, our translation). By shaping our psyche, these mechanisms of power no longer operate through repression but, on the contrary, by exploiting freedom. Freedom as a form of exploitation is the foundation of its own crisis and the condition for the passive self-exploitation of individuals.

In this historical impasse—where interiority and exteriority have become one and where freedom, once an opposition, is now forged into an instrument of domination and exploitation—it is impossible not to recall the notion of “capitalist realism” developed by Mark Fisher (2020). For the author, capitalist realism refers to the understanding that capitalism is the only possible path, making it impossible to develop any viable alternative to it (Fisher, 2020).

When considered in terms of control societies, technology, and surveillance capitalism, Fisher (2020) suggests that it is not manifested in the figure of the “worker/prisoner” of the past, but in that of the “debtor/addict.” He states: “Cybercapital operates by addicting its users” (Fisher, 2020, p. 48). By infiltrating our lives, we become dependent on its logic to survive, even while knowing that everything is going awry.

The side effects of this doping are numerous, but especially in educational terms, we can consider a few issues. The first of these is perhaps the fragmentation of any political,

⁸ Han (2022) states that profiling “[...] makes it possible to better predict a person’s behavior than a friend or partner could.” (Han, 2022, p. 38, our translation).

collective, and emancipatory bias in education due to its subjugation and complete transformation into a commodity. Just as work in a controlled society encourages the creation of a profile that channels the worker's personal characteristics and potentialities for consumption, education follows suit—everyone is driven to assume a “smart” identity (Fisher, 2020).

For some time now, the social, collective, and political dimensions of education have been neglected as various market-driven offerings and possibilities advance to provide education tailored to the particular profiles of individuals. Education is thus abandoning its formative and political potential to increasingly become a range of consumer options catering to individual preferences (Laval, 2019). The debate around homeschooling, for example, seems to be a product of this historical moment when education ceases to be considered in social terms and instead is viewed in its "smart" form.

Another issue related to this era of instantaneity and compulsive, addictive exposure to various digital stimuli concerns the development within populations, especially among the youth, of what Fisher (2020, p. 46) referred to as a “hedonic lethargy.” With the crisis of disciplinary forms of coercion, it was imagined that a greater increase in freedom would encourage individuals, particularly the young, to engage more in activities, projects, etc. (Fisher, 2020). It was believed that this new era—where individuals could self-determine and take control of their lives and schools—would bring greater possibilities for autonomy and freedom.

However, the result has been exactly the opposite. Instead of action, an entire generation has become accustomed to the conveniences of an instantaneous world, where entertainment, doping, superficial or shallow reflection, disinterest in the central issues of our time, and an incessant pursuit of excitement and pleasure define our current society (Fisher, 2020). This diagnosis of our society inevitably impacts education and the processes of formation.

Regarding the relationship between this “hedonic lethargy” and education, and students, Fisher (2020, p. 46) questions: “Ask students to read more than just a few lines, and many—even those with good grades—will protest, claiming they cannot do so.” The inability to engage in such activities, for example, manifests as a complaint that they are tedious. However, Fisher (2020) argues that what is at play is much more than mere boredom. What appears as tedious is actually a symptom of a generation that can no longer conform to the crisis of disciplinary methods.

Consequently, what is evident is that a generation can no longer disconnect from other media and devices, and thus cannot, even for a moment, detach from the stimuli and sensations—often of reward—that the cybernetic and instantaneous world provides (Fisher, 2020). The inability to read a few pages thus represents the addictive relationship that “cyberspace capital” establishes with ourselves, and how this, in the form of “hedonic lethargy,” relates to education today: “Some students want Nietzsche the same way they want a hamburger; without understanding—and the logic of the consumption system encourages this lack of understanding—that the indigestible, the difficulty, is Nietzsche” (Fisher, 2020, p. 46-47, our translation).

Final considerations

In the midst of a crisis where, on one side, disciplinary structures are failing and, on the other, a more established control society is emerging, stands the teacher’s liminal position (or perhaps better described as that of a tightrope walker) between these two worlds. In this era of indeterminacy, where nothing seems to be firmly established, teachers, according to Fisher (2020, p. 49, our translation):

[...] are today under the intolerable pressure of mediating the post-literate subjectivity of the late capitalist consumer and the demands of the disciplinary regime (passing exams and similar tasks). In this sense, far from being something like an ivory tower safe from the "real world," education is the engine room of social reality reproduction, where the inconsistencies of the capitalist social field are directly confronted.

Beyond this zone of indeterminacy, this non-place where not only the teacher but the very educational project of modernity is situated today, there remains the issue of the quality of education and the content taught. We advocate for examining the interstices of education, which are also exposed and implicated in our condition as educators, viewing the current scenario through a perspective that is extremely challenging. Before proposing swift solutions to the ongoing educational crisis, we believe the moment demands a reflective power on the terminology used.

In this time we live in, as Achille Mbembe (2021, p. 88, our translation) aptly noted: "As the cipher has superseded the word, the number has become the supreme guarantor of reality, rather than its indicator." This highlights how the logic of the control society functions and how the quality and social function of education are evaluated within it. More than its

quality, content, and depth, more than its social, civic, and political function, what is currently positioned as the purpose of education is the achievement of targets and the fulfillment of demands set by continuous assessments of competencies and skills (Fisher, 2020). More than the processes of formation, what is central to education today is the number!

In this context, "enough is never sufficient" (Fisher, 2020). The "freedom" sought in this new system does not contradict the increase in bureaucracy, which is manifested in the various forms of evaluation to which teachers and students are constantly subjected (Fisher, 2020). Thus, the process is of little importance, as is the physical and psychological strain on the involved parties, and the quality (whether students are well-formed or well-prepared), what matters is the result and the final number.

The concept of number, as a mathematical notion that can be measured, speaks to us much more about static issues that do not engage with reality. Regarding the real, if we confront it directly, we must also address our issues as education professionals. This requires an urgent dialogue with the virtual and its innovations, bringing us out of historicity, which cannot be recounted or measured.

From the standpoint of epistemic reproduction and didactic-methodological techniques emerge debates that are currently taking place in classrooms and have blinded critical and reflective capacities, which should be the foundation of teaching practice. This places us in what we refer to as the "non-place" of contemporary education and points to a future characterized by impermanence.

This "non-place" is perhaps the current expression of the educational impasse. On one side, there is the difficulty of reflection and critique facing the crisis and the failure of the ideals and values underpinning the educational project. On the other side, there remains the relentless pursuit of renewing Enlightenment-era beliefs, with debates around technology, for instance, permeated by this desire to find, at any cost, a salvation, comfort for our anguish, and a reason to believe and persist, even when everything seems to be failing.

The advancement of informational technology and discoveries in molecular biology (neuroscience, genetics, and immunology) currently impact many areas beyond formal education. Without any pretension of providing answers, what we present in this text are questions of our time: How can we act in the face of the advancement of artificial intelligence? What is the role of education in the face of the extinction of the category of labor? How do new models of surveillance affect the core of educational discussions?

What is here is an invitation that echoes Cesarino's (2022, p. 275, our translation) assertion: "An eventual new order is co-emerging in and through the crisis itself, and its contours are still uncertain." According to this author, we need to "[...] move beyond oscillating between a neutral view of technology (it is just a channel and the real source of problems is social) and a deterministic view (it is capable of controlling social processes)" (Cesarino, 2022, p. 12-13, our translation). It is within this bundle of uncertainties that we live, and clearly, there is no way to separate education from these intersections.

We argue that a progressive, emancipatory utopia, or perhaps an innovation, will not come solely through the methodological use of Digital and Information Communication Technologies (DICTs). The impact of the pandemic on education shows that it is possible to maintain traditional approaches while using applications, games, and live streams. We believe that we face a risky discourse that challenges us to understand technology as a kind of escape route, which functions as such merely by virtue of its existence.

In this regard, we align with Deleuze and Guattari (2012, p. 87, our translation) when they state, "The escape line explodes both segmentary series, but is capable of the worst: rebounding off the wall, falling into a black hole, taking the path of great regression, and reconstructing the hardest segments at random from its deviations." These authors discuss the "dangers inherent to each line." It is within this distressing space that we place the reflections proposed here: a place of danger, pretentiously occupied as an escape route from the educational field, as a salvific object, but one that can abruptly lead us to the abyss.

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